

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: May 20, 2010**

**TO: Dr. Jean Hernandez, Interim President**

**FROM: College Council**

**RE: Budget Recommendations for 2010-2011**

### **SUMMARY**

Budget presentations illustrated the conservative financial stewardship under which South Seattle Community College has operated. South personnel have committed to maintaining high educational standards in this difficult financial climate. A review of departmental budgets confirms the majority of costs are salaries and benefits, reflecting South's commitment to being "a people place." However, salaries and benefits have not increased in accordance with workload or inflation, and South's frugal economic approach and multiple years of fiscal downsizing have left no room for reduction without compromising the quality and character of the campus.

The College Council observed two overarching themes in this year's budget presentations. First, all campus divisions unanimously report they are at or have exceeded capacity. Second, necessary budget cuts have been largely met by shifting costs to short-term, unsustainable funding alternatives. It is the opinion of the College Council that the proposed budget will not adequately support South Seattle Community College's mission, address recommendations of the Accreditation Committee, and support anticipated further increases in enrollment. Difficult and practical decisions must be made.

### **ADDRESSING SOUTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT CAPACITY**

The Council applauds the college-wide dedication to averting campus layoffs. The bulk of budgetary cuts have been made by reducing part-time hourly staff and leaving positions vacant. These measures have required all personnel to increase their workload, substantially taxing employees, and wide-spread exhaustion is evident. This has resulted in a shift in the campus climate, as students, staff and faculty all face additional pressures and tensions.

Campus personnel are working at a level that cannot be maintained and cannot withstand additional increases in workload without an attendant increase in staff and infrastructure support. The issue of capacity must be addressed in the context of South's college-wide priorities and the recommendations of the Accreditation Committee, half of which directly address college capacity.

- 1. The evaluation committee recommends that South Seattle Community College design and distribute effective advising information to meet the needs of all students. This may be implemented through distribution of effective printed materials, an updated web page and through academic advisers. (Standard 2.C.5)**
- 2. The committee found evidence of at least one academic field in which the college hires only part-time faculty. The evaluation committee recommends that South Seattle Community College should employ professionally qualified faculty with primary commitment to the institution and representative of each field or program in which it offers major work. (Standard 4.A.1).**

- 3. The Committee recommends that South Seattle Community College support educational and student service programs by acquiring and properly maintaining computer equipment and computer systems. The Committee further recommends increasing the usefulness and improving the design of the current website. (Standard 5.B.1)**

### **UNSUSTAINABLE SHORT-TERM BUDGETARY SOLUTIONS**

Current proposed budgets are not consistent with the college-wide priority to ensure future financial health. The College Council noted budgetary cuts primarily in four areas: in addition to leaving open positions vacant and reducing part-time hourly staff, travel and goods and services expenses were also curtailed. Other major reductions to the State budget have been achieved by shifting costs to local dollars. This reveals a potential “false economy.” For example, the AANAPISI grant, ending in 2010-2011, funds numerous staff positions not exclusive to that grant that will need funding after 2011. The Council is further concerned that shifting salaries and benefits to local funds may detract from services previously covered by these monies, or alternatively, staff members may be asked to cover additional responsibilities linked to receiving support from local funds.

Increased enrollment at South has been concurrent with a decreased operating budget, resulting in fewer resources to educate more students. Proposed budgets barely support existing campus programs and thus do not allow for further increases in enrollment, nor can the proposed budgets withstand additional reductions from the state, anticipated for the next biennium. These circumstances are exacerbated in programs and activities with fixed funding, effectively a budgetary reduction as the cost of doing business increases due to inflation.

### **COLLEGE COUNCIL SUGGESTIONS**

The difficult decisions facing the College seem to be either reconsidering proposed budgets for 2010-2011 or, for the first time, restricting enrollment and cutting programs. The College Council suggests the following strategies.

- PRIORITIZE INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT AND INSTRUCTION**

College Council feels that South cannot continue to grow without infrastructure to support that growth. In the recent economic environment, infrastructure has been neglected, which does not promote student learning and success and future growth of the college. This neglect has the potential to impact student services, quality of education, and state funding, now based on the current Student Achievement Initiative. College Council recommends investing in staff positions that support students (e.g. registration, financial aid, advising, security).

The reoccurring issue of inadequate IT support and outdated technology was referenced several times during the budget hearings. The Accreditation Committee specifically noted the paucity of campus IT resources. South’s dated equipment and software threaten technical literacy and students’ marketability.

With instruction being the soul of South Seattle Community College, College Council also supports funding requests for all instructional positions. Conspicuously absent from budget requests were additional positions supporting instruction (e.g. technicians and aides) and increased enrollment.

- **REDUCTION IN COLLEGE OFFERINGS**

South Seattle Community College has continuously accommodated increased enrollment; however, resources and capacity to do so are exhausted. Difficult alternatives may be to cap enrollment, limit services, and/or cut programs. Unfortunately, in this economic climate, other community colleges in the State have been forced to cap enrollment and limit offerings. The Council recognizes the paradox the College faces, attempting to meet the increased FTE allocations for the upcoming year with reduced class offerings (e.g. Worker Retraining), and suggests entertaining new strategic planning that addresses current enrollment increases and anticipates future enrollment decreases in an economic recovery.

- **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

College Council suggests that South's new strategic plan integrate creative solutions that stress innovation and efficiency. Several specific considerations were proposed at recent District-Wide College Council meetings and are summarized below.

- Increased utilization of classroom and lab space achieved via scheduling adjustments
- Increased online instruction
- Increased collaboration between campuses to coordinate course offerings across colleges and within the state to assure students are able to take required courses (e.g. BTECH)
- Increased collaboration between campuses to optimize services

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE BUDGET HEARINGS**

College Council commends the College's ongoing commitment to transparency in the budgetary process. In keeping with this policy, the Council suggests presenters make PowerPoint presentations available to the entire campus via SouthNet.

Ideally, budget presentations are a balance between efficiency and sufficiency, but College Council does rely on receiving enough solid information to make educated recommendations. The Council requests presentations include more detail and specific monetary values, and given the current reliance on grant and contract monies, requests these budgets also be summarized along with state funding. College Council will refine the budget template to aid this objective. Based on this year's reports, the Council requests Division presentation be submitted one week before the budget hearings to allow us to solicit supplementary materials.

The Council appreciates Student Services and Activity budget report, requests this continue and that it also include information on Student Universal Technology fees.

### **COLLEGE COUNCIL 2009-2010:**

- Suzanne Quillian (Chair), Wendy Price (Vice Chair), Patience Browne, John Nordling, Colby Keene, Cathy McCollum, Jason Gruenwald, Ricardo Leyva-Puebla, Kathleen Kent, Curt Peterson, Julie Rowe, Nardos Asfaw, Monnii Boatwright, Suzanne Sittner (Secretary).