

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: May 10, 2011**

**TO: Gary Oertli, President**

**FROM: College Council**

**RE: Budget Recommendations for 2011-2012**

**Summary**

Again this year, budget presentations have illustrated SSCC's responsible and effective financial management in a continually difficult economic climate that has seen, in the last few years, over 30% reduction in state funding to colleges. Unfortunately, we are approaching the limits of measured pruning, and are faced with decisions about cost-reduction measures which may be more and more threatening to our mission.

Through the Budget Hearings and feedback from the campus at large (a few selections from which are quoted at points here), the Council has compiled the main issues that involve all our Core Themes, as well as some campus-suggested tactics to help meet our challenges.

**Student Achievement**

Particularly in light of new funding changes that specifically target student performance measurements, the suggested cuts in frontline personnel or hours of service (counselors, advisors, cashiers, financial aid staff) seem potentially counter-productive. Moreover, as distance learning balloons, the need for more support staff will be crucial. With insufficient staffing at any of these points, the likelihood of bottlenecks that discourage students from enrolling and persevering can hurt more than any slight cost-saving here may help.

Some suggestions to help the situation involve cross-training staff to allow flexible backup and support at crucial times, so that students can move smoothly through enrolling, advising, counseling, and financial arrangements. Also suggested is an even stronger promotion and/or reformatting of the Student Handbook to more pointedly encourage students to consult and use its very valuable resources for everything from study tactics to scholarship procedures, thus opening up some extra measure of self-service at points.

**Teaching and Learning**

Instruction is the heart of any college's service to its students, and of course the school has done everything it can to preserve positions and class offerings. This admirable effort may not be as sustainable in the future. We've already needed to cut or shelve a few programs in recent years and will have to continue to examine the viability of others, and of under-populated courses themselves. So far, most personnel "cuts" in this area have involved **not** hiring part time instructors or filling full time vacancies. Ultimately, of course, this practice will result in fewer sections and bigger classes, which may inhibit effective learning at certain points and eventually weaken the college's effectiveness, reputation, and allure.

Also crucial is support for tutoring and lab aides to supplement instruction and contribute to student learning, especially when dealing with our large population of under-prepared learners. The proposed cuts to these, much less the inability to expand effectively with both staffing and space, can ultimately weaken the college's learning environment. (*"Especially in their first quarter, students need just-in-time access to quality tutoring..."* At the hearings we had an *"important reminder that tutoring services need to be a priority."*)

One suggestion to cope with these problems is to enlist qualified volunteers from the community and from our campus, and interns from area universities and businesses as both service and educational opportunities. (This measure could also help form some strong new partnerships and deepen community relationships and involvement, another core theme.)

### **Campus Climate and Culture**

One strongly supported issue is the perceived need for better, more thorough campus-wide communication, both through email and broadcast information and through the campus website. Many sources have expressed keen interest in our having a more easy-to-navigate site, something that will obviously require extra resources in time and personnel but is crucial in this age of increasingly heavy web-communication, not only for ourselves but also for prospective students. Ideally, more accessible information will both knit the campus more effectively and enable students, again, to self-serve more easily in some cases. Though we may be headed toward a district-wide website, that development may be years in the future, and limited IT and technology resources will continue to interfere with overall communication. (*"Please do not cut IT – we are already so far behind in this area."*)

There has been no strong suggestion about how to cope with these problems under such strained financial conditions, much less handle any additional cuts to an already over-strained staff in these areas. Perhaps a specific appeal to local tech corporations (Google, Microsoft) for specific help might offer some valuable mutual benefits.

### **Community Engagement and Partnerships**

Already mentioned several times in earlier themes has been the obvious need for help from the community to try to weather this particular financial storm and the resultant loss of resources. We want to continue to be a point of pride for our community and a valuable ally to the city's businesses. It's especially important to value and nurture our current partnerships as we seek more as well.

Besides enlisting volunteers and interns, we might also investigate the possibility of more flexibility in using donations, allowing more kinds of targeting and re-directing to meet specific time-sensitive needs, such as extra tutoring or staff development.

### **Other considerations**

As in last year's recommendations, we once again wish to suggest other cost-saving measures, many of which were compiled by district-wide College Councils:

- Increased utilization of classroom and lab space by scheduling adjustments
- Increased online instruction
- Increased collaboration among campuses to coordinate class offerings across the district to assure students have access to necessary courses
- Increased collaboration among campuses to optimize services (expedite IT Enterprise)
- Increased orientation for both students and faculty/staff
- Increased information promotion and support through campus resource guides (both print and online)

### **Recommendations for Future Budget Hearings**

Once again, to help better prepare us for our analytical process, the Council would find it very helpful to have access to the unit reports, as well as S&A and UT funds information, several days at least before the actual budget hearings. It would also be helpful to get some overall (non-itemized) sense of the general state of soft monies: increase, decrease, general percentage of overall fiscal resources.

Respectfully submitted,

2010-11 SSCC College Council:

Suzanne Quillian (Chair); Cathy McCollum (Vice chair); Suzanne Sittner (secretary); Ricardo Leyva-Puebla; Paula Herd; Marla Lockhart; Kathleen Kent; Wendy Price; Katie Frazier; Curt Peterson; Eric Owen; Mike Rudnev; Tami Haleva.