

Monday's Message – April 12, 2010

Good afternoon everyone... Thank you for joining me today.

At last week's *Brown Bag with the Presidents*, we heard – firsthand – how relatively small programmatic cuts can cause severe pain to those affected. When you are forced to cut nearly \$31 million, there is no magic fix, no way to delay until things get better, and no way to postpone planning. This is what keeps me up at night.

As announced recently, the Division of Student Affairs must cut \$3.2 million. The first wave of those reductions came with the decision to close the CalWorks office, the National Student Exchange, the Visitor Center and to discontinue intercollegiate tennis. These four programs will account for less than a quarter of the total cuts in Student Affairs. What's more, these cuts pale in comparison to the fiscal challenges and reduction plans facing Academic Affairs, the largest division on campus. Every division is facing similar challenges.

These cuts hurt – at a deep, personal level.

If you were in the Quad last Tuesday at noon, you heard emotional and heartfelt stories from our CalWorks students. If you don't know, these are student-parents who are seeking to move out of the welfare system through the pursuit of a college degree. Many have experienced countless challenges in their lives, and they cannot understand why their program has been targeted. While Vice President Freer and others have developed a strong contingency plan for CalWorks, the students feel as if they have been sacrificed.

I only wish our state representatives could hear their stories and come to grips with the real outcomes of their decisions to underfund higher education.

What is equally frustrating is the well-intentioned, but uninformed impression that there is an easy solution to the crisis. It disturbs me when members of our community irresponsibly tell students, faculty and staff that the Chancellor's Office is not doing everything in its power to prevent these cuts and acquire new revenue.

That kind of reckless rhetoric and finger pointing only damages our efforts to achieve real change in Sacramento. Just as important, it creates a false sense of reality. It's not you versus me. It's not us versus them. We ALL clearly care about this university. Once again, there is no magic fix to the very real and very painful budget cuts we must endure. Greater support for higher education in California will only come from a united front of passionate educators, students and parents as well as industry and civic leaders.

From my perspective, the only real solution to our long-term funding crisis is the Governor's proposal to amend the California Constitution. Under his proposal, no less than 10 percent of taxpayer money would be allocated to fund public higher education and no more than 7 percent would be allocated to support the state prison system.

To give you a point of reference, this year the CSU received only 1.8 percent of the state general fund budget. In 2009-10, California spent 45 percent more on prisons than universities. Those are the types of facts that should make each of you angry.

I remain committed to fighting the good fight for our students. I am calling on each of you to work with me so we can collectively achieve a better future.

Again, thank you for joining me.