



## **An Open Letter to Our Peralta Colleges Students and Community**

**Wise E. Allen  
Chancellor**

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As a government of the people, by the people and for the people, we Americans have the freedom to determine our future national and state budgets, and public policies. Whatever your feelings on policies or budgets, I urge you to exercise your right to vote, to petition lawmakers and to exercise your freedom of speech.

Why the patriotic call to action? Because public funding for California's community colleges is declining precipitously and it drastically affects each of us at the Peralta Colleges – Berkeley City College, College of Alameda, Laney College and Merritt College.

Community colleges statewide must be prepared to cut \$400 million from our budgets. As I announced at a community forum on the budget at Berkeley City College recently, the state has proposed eliminating funding for at least 3,000 full-time Peralta Colleges students. That's a reduction of up to \$13.8 million in our budget. Additionally, without passage of a statewide ballot measure this June, the budget cuts we already face today will be dramatically worse in a few months, perhaps as deep as \$21 million in cuts to our district alone.

That's why I urge you to be involved in state and national government long-term. And the long-term may come as early as June, when voters may decide on a measure on the state ballot to fund education and other essential services.

For now, the proposed state budget envisions a rise in enrollment fees from \$26 a unit to \$36 for all state community college students. Sacramento sets the enrollment fees and the State collects the money. One less cloudy note is that lower-income students will likely continue to be insulated from the increases, to some extent, by government grants based on need.

Over the last few years of the state's on-going budget crisis, we've worked hard at Peralta to keep budget cuts out of the classroom. This fiscal year, we already made massive cuts in administration costs, such as:

- **District Office Consolidation Saves \$643,686:** I implemented a consolidation of the District offices and reorganized support services, eliminating the positions of the Associate Vice Chancellor of Students Services, Director of Research and Development, Director of Employee Relations and Director of Development, with their duties assumed by other administrators. Altogether, the net savings to the District totaled \$643,686.
- **Travel Budget Cut 70 percent:** The District has already cut travel budgets by 70 percent this past year, and we will remain diligent in looking closely at our travel costs going forward.
- **5% Management Pay Cuts:** Our administrators now take 12 unpaid furlough days annually, nearly a 5 percent salary reduction by management, who are working harder and more efficiently. This compares to a pay cut of half as much for classified staff (2.5 percent), while faculty (0 percent) were spared any pay cuts or furloughs.
- **Total District Office Budget Cuts: \$2,030,334:** Effective July 1, 2010, a total of \$2,030,334 was reduced from the District Office budget as a result of our re-organization and other cost-cutting measures. These are significant cuts by any measure, and they are as far from the classroom as possible. And next year, the District Office is planning on cutting up to \$1.4 million more.

Of all salaries and benefits paid out of our General Fund, the vast majority go to faculty and staff, with management only making up seven percent. At Peralta, this salary budget, outside of faculty, funds staff support, including admissions, records, payroll management, class scheduling, facilities planning and maintenance, health services and other essential services. Nonetheless, these administration programs will also undergo further cuts, since our budget gap is too large. We have to do everything possible to keep classrooms open.

While I hear some people say that we can simply cut "administration" this coming year and we'll be fine, the truth is that we need to look at every program, every function and every service to make ends meet. These are tough, life-changing decisions that have to be made.

### **WE NEED TO FUND TECHNOLOGY AND FISCAL MANAGEMENT TO PROTECT STUDENT FINANCIAL AID AND CREDITS**

Further cuts in management and administration will be particularly difficult to accomplish in the future, since we are already stretched to the limit. And we are required to spend money needed on technology and fiscal management to ensure that the colleges remain accredited. To do otherwise would be

irresponsible, jeopardizing student financial aid, the transfer of credits and the validity of students' degrees.

We all have much to be proud of, as well as difficult challenges ahead. These challenges associated with the budget are not primarily of our making. Our students, staff and faculty did not cause the nation's economy to tank or tax revenues to shrink. The state's long-standing structural budget imbalance did not originate with Peralta. In short, the national economy and politics and the state's budget crisis have forced us to look at hard alternatives.

I am currently undertaking a review with our management team to examine other savings that will be the least harmful to classroom instruction, yet maintain essential services. I will also be meeting with District unions to determine whether other reductions can be made. Nonetheless, along with other community colleges across the state, we have been forced to significantly reduce classes. We avoided cutting summer school last year, unlike some other community college districts. This year, everything is on the table for consideration.

### **HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

I am calling for a committee of faculty, staff and students to recommend how volunteers can participate in augmenting student services. This may help preserve administrative services or academic programs that would otherwise be closed.

Finally, don't leave participation in government to others. Our government belongs to us all, so stay informed, participate and vote. You have the opportunity to engage with your legislators as they decide the budget now, and to participate in government if there is a special election this year to decide whether even more cuts can be avoided.

Whatever the outcome of the budget, the Peralta Colleges will provide our students with an affordable education in a quality-teaching environment. Thousands of our students will continue to transfer to four-year colleges or graduate with an Associate Degree; thousands more will hone their job skills with specialized courses or full-time training programs. Our career and technical education programs successfully train students for good jobs in business, health care, "green" technology, biotech and other high-demand fields.

Though the numbers of students and programs may decline, we will continue to offer life-transforming opportunities to our students despite tough economic times.

Thank you for your continued support during these difficult time.