



Today, the Legislature will be convening a special session of both houses to hear from the state Treasurer, state Controller, Department of Finance, Legislative Analyst's Office. Inside the Capitol, there is a debate over whether to try to reach consensus on corrective action before the holiday season (beginning with Hannukah on December 21), or to wait until after the Legislature returns after the holidays.

The clock is ticking, however, as if the Legislature doesn't take action by January 15, it is forbidden from acting on any other legislation under the "fiscal emergency" provisions of Proposition 58. More critically, the state needs to issue cash management notes by February or March to carry it through the low-revenue months leading up to April tax collections. Without corrective action, many analysts believe the state would have to pay a very expensive premium for those revenue anticipation notes, if they can be sold at all.

While the Legislature tries to find ways to get two-thirds vote for a solution, the calls for protecting the community college budget continue to grow louder amidst a rising unemployment rate creating greater demand. As [reported by Forbes.com](#), "The U.S. government reported Friday that nonfarm payrolls were cut by a staggering 533,000 in November, exceeding even the pessimistic projections, while the unemployment rate hit 6.7%, which was slightly lower than expected. The figures appear to confirm the magnitude of the recession under way."

Meanwhile, California unemployment reached 8.2% in October, and dramatic increase from the 5.7% unemployment one year earlier. In raw numbers, this means that 487,600 more Californians were unemployed this October than one year earlier. And, the governor's Department of Finance projects that unemployment could reach 9.7% by 2010, meaning another 275,000 Californians could be out of work.

This is one of the reasons why editorial boards across the state are voicing their opposition to deep cuts to community colleges. There is no better system to serve this growing number of our unemployed residents. With locations in over 200 communities across California and the ability for someone to quickly apply, enroll and complete job training or a transfer education, community colleges are California's economic stimulus.

## **Cut the right types of spending**

Education will be hard hit, no matter what cuts are enacted -- and higher education is not exempt. Not only are the UC and CSU systems facing major cuts and considering capping admissions, the governor also is proposing to cut an additional 5 percent from community colleges -- \$332 million on top of the \$290 million the system already faced. Is this the best place to cut spending? Community colleges are vital in providing occupational training for the state's workforce. They also accept the students UC and CSU campuses cannot take. Slashing their budgets and making them jack up fees will only keep tens of thousands of students from attending institutions such as Cabrillo College.

As always in a fiscal crisis, the ones who will suffer the most will be lower-income and minority students who will be unable to afford higher fees and will be without the vocational counseling necessary to make the right post-high school career choices.

But these are the kind of choices the Legislature must deal with. The governor is right -- this is an emergency.

[Editorial, Santa Cruz Sentinel \(12/03/2008\)](#)

## **Community colleges need our support**

The Legislature also must be willing to set priorities and spare community colleges the harshest cuts. That is where students shut out of the CSU and UC will turn for transfer credits; that is where laid-off workers will go to be retrained, and that is where high school grads with aspirations but poor basic skills will seek remedial help.

In other down cycles, legislators slashed community college budgets and raised fees without giving colleges the revenue. Attendance plummeted and didn't recover for years; a generation of students gave up on or scaled back higher education. That must not happen again.

[Editorial, Woodland Daily Democrat \(12/04/2008\)](#)

After \$292 million in cuts, public officials and newspapers are stepping up to say that we need to look at community colleges as part of the solution rather than the problem. Community colleges are the most affordable higher education and training solution for both the state and families, and our unmatched network can quickly deliver the tools for economic recovery across the state.

While public opinion continues to grow on behalf of community colleges, we must remain vigilant. Big decisions are likely to be made during this holiday season, and we will have to continue reminding Sacramento that we're still paying attention. For now, thank you for making your voice heard and calling attention to the need to protect access, affordability and quality in our colleges.



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