AB 955: A Fast Pass for those with cash

Faculty say legislation will damage access

By Linda Borla, North Orange / Cypress College

As GREAT EQUALIZERS in society, California’s community colleges have long offered an open door to higher education for millions of non-traditional students, including myself. My grandfather was an immigrant who worked as a high school janitor, and my father, a house painter. I am an English professor—a first-generation college student who in 1978 took my first steps into higher education at Hartnell College.

Since 1960 as part of the Master Plan for Higher Education, this vast 112-college system has provided California residents like me unequaled access and upward social mobility by producing an educated workforce, boosting the prosperity of our state, currently the 8th largest economy in the world.

Access eroding

But access began eroding with the implementation of the first fees in 1984. That initial $5 per unit grew to $18 in 2003-04 and to $46 by summer 2012. Currently, in addition to rumors of more fee hikes comes a new, very real threat to equal access: Assembly Bill 955 (Williams, D-Santa Barbara).

This CCA-opposed legislation that could fundamentally change the way community colleges do business was signed into law Oct. 10. The bill created a pilot program that allows six community colleges—College of the Canyons, Crafton Hills College, Long Beach City College, Oxnard College, Pasadena City College, and Solano Community College—to charge over $200 per unit for high demand classes during winter intersession and summer school.

Two-thirds of the fees will be set aside to provide the Board of Governors fee-waiver students the reduced price of $90 per unit. Similar to a plan introduced by Santa Monica College Board of Trustees in spring 2012, which was shot down by widespread student protests and questions of legality, AB 995 surprisingly managed to pass and create a two-tiered system—despite ever-present opposition from students, faculty unions and even the chancellor.

“I see it as educational apartheid,” said Lynn Shaw, president of Long Beach City College CCA chapter that has organized students and faculty at a series of protests. “Community colleges are a great and unique thing, and we are killing that.”

Long Beach is first

Long Beach City College became the first of the six colleges to implement a for-profit intersession Jan 6.

Still, proponents of the bill, including Gov. Jerry Brown, feel extension classes that charge fees to cover actual costs will provide more sections of scarce general education courses, especially English and math. Brown said it “seems like a reasonable experiment.”

On the surface, this oversimplification sounds convincing, especially since 2007-2008, according to a March 2013 Public Policy Institute of California report, system-wide cuts totaled $1.5 billion, course offerings declined 21 percent, and approximately 600,000 students were turned away from our once open doors. Granted, the $210 million Prop. 30 funds opened 40,000 seats in 2012-13, according to the Community College Chancellor’s Office, and 3,300 classes were added in spring 2013. Certainly, this is still far from enough funding or seats. However, is a theme park-like fast pass to the front of the line for the wealthy the solution?

Supposedly affordable

Even the façade of supposedly affordable $90 per unit fees for financially strapped students is a transparent deception. “Under financial aid, that’s still a lot for community college,” said Sandra Ton, a 19-year-old LBCC freshman. Worse yet, despite additional arguments from proponents that the bill allows community colleges to recoup students and funds hijacked by for-profit universities during the financial crisis,
Success has many different meanings for our students

Faculty inspire them to meet their goals

By Lynette Nyaggah, CCA President

WE HAVE BEEN hearing lots of discussion lately about student success. Interestingly, in recent years, student success has evolved as a part of the “reform movement” in community colleges. Many so-called “reformers” have criticized California’s colleges for their open access and have wanted us to focus instead on success. But for most of us, I would venture to say that we teach in community college because we have a commitment to both access and success. For those of you who have lived in other states and other countries, you know that we are blessed to have the most open and forgiving higher ed system in the world.

We offer a second chance

In so many other places, if you are unfocused as a student when you’re 15, you have no second chance. But here in California, if you are unfocused as a student when you’re 15 and you come to your senses when you’re 25, 35 or 45, you have that second chance. I actually have a young relative who is currently working in a warehouse for $9 an hour. He was telling me just the day before yesterday that he was amazed that there were people working with him who had been there for 35 years, doing the same thing every day. This relative had tried college when he came out of high school, and just couldn’t stick to it, but now at nearly 22, he was beginning to realize that his current job was not what he wanted for life. Now to “success.” Is that young man “successful” according to the community college “reformers”? Because he did not transfer or receive a degree or certificate, no, he is not successful. Fullerton College, where he attempted to take classes, suffered in its statistics because he failed classes and dropped out. But for me, and I suspect for most of you, the fact that he is now ready to go forward and work on a degree in engineering is just the success we look for.

In fact, when we hear the words student success, we think of as many meanings as there are students. I teach ESL, and I know that for some of my students, success is getting a promotion at work because they can communicate better in speaking and in writing than they could when they started taking classes. Success may be understanding the letters that come home from their children’s schools and being able to participate in parent conferences. In other fields, success may be completing a finance class so that they can run a business or taking an English composition or geometry class over the summer to make up for high school deficiencies.

In addition, success varies from college to college depending on the community. In communities with higher numbers of college graduates, we would expect a higher number of students to transfer. In communities where we have a high percentage of first-generation college students, we would expect a greater diversity of goals: some students will transfer and take an academic road, but others will choose those very important career-tech fields that we need to drive California’s great economic engine.

Reaching your students

So how do we define success as faculty? What I hear from you, and I share this sentiment, is that success is the joy of knowing that you’ve reached your students, that your students have grown intellectually from being in your class, and that you’ve facilitated the building of relationships in your classroom community that live on after the class is over. I recently attended the memorial of a beloved anthropology teacher at Saddleback College. The room was packed full of his colleagues and his students, who got up one after another and testified to the impact he had on their lives— their careers, attitudes, and friendships. That is the kind of success that probably can’t be measured by Student Learning Outcomes.

So go forward, my brothers and sisters, and keep inspiring your students to higher goals. The Community College Association and the California Teachers Association are working to support you and to make your lives easier so that you can create “student success.” Many of you have joined us at our three conferences every year, in which we get together and talk about what we do and how to make it better and, I hope, have some fun and go home with new ideas. Some have participated in CCA committees and contributed ideas which have changed our association. And many more have served you locally and deserve your appreciation for the time they take doing what is sometimes invisible work. We all need to be acknowledged for what we do, whether it is teaching that pre-collegiate math class or the anatomy class—we are all part of that great institution called the California Community Colleges, and we are all devoted to the goal of student success!

CCA Calendar of Events

CCA Spring Conference and W.H.O. Awards
on "reframing 2014"
Marriott, Manhattan Beach

CTA Presidents Conference
July 17-20, 2014
Fairmont Hotel, San Jose

CTA Summer Institute
Aug. 3-8, 2014
University of California, Los Angeles

www.cca4me.org

ADVOCATE

The Community College Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members through collective bargaining, lobbying and representation activities, thereby advancing universal and quality public education.

It is an affiliate of the California Teachers Association and the National Education Association.

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State Council approves strategic plan

“Our Union, Our Future” to guide organization

AFTER TWO YEARS of meetings, input from more than 30,000 members, discussions and debate by the 100-plus-member Strategic Planning Group, the State Council of Education unanimously approved CTA’s Long-Term Strategic Plan during its Sunday session. The plan, “Our Union, Our Future,” will be CTA’s road map for the next four years and is intended to result in a more vibrant, inclusive, strong and engaged union.

Winning strategies Participants heard from CTA and NEA staff specialists and shared winning strategies with their colleagues during the three-day conference at the Maya Hotel in Long Beach. Among other activities, members analyzed real case studies and reported out on possible solutions. What was clear was that in spite of a rosier financial outlook, California’s community colleges continue to provide abundant opportunities for faculty union organizing on campus. Reports from faculty representatives revealed news that some colleges are hoarding reserves while denying salary increases; continuing to violate the 50 percent law requiring that half the budget go toward faculty; and entering “sub-contracting” instruction outside their service area to boost enrollment numbers.

CTA, however, continues to provide approaches for its members through its three yearly conferences. In addition, its Building Strong Locals Academy continues to provide a pipeline for new leadership. Focused on strengthening local chapters, the primary goal of the academy is to educate members to serve effectively at the local chapter level with confidence and a working knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. The academy graduated its ninth class during the Winter Conference.

CCA’s Spring Conference and WHO Awards Dinner takes place April 11-13 at the Marriott Hotel in Manhattan Beach. CCA’s “Book Club” discussion of The Fall of the Faculty will be among the sessions offered.

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“A three-year quest to sharpen our focus and address the needs of our members and staff has come to fruition. The plan provides a road map to our vision of a vibrant, inclusive, strong and engaged union — a “voice of public education” that is not just the voice of public school teachers, faculty, ESP and future teachers — but, of the broader community of educational activists — interested in what is best for a diverse group of students. Issues like social justice, organizing and community engagement will become not concepts to be embraced, but the foundation of our work."

Now that Council has approved the plan, an Implementation Workgroup consisting of members and staff will be appointed to advise and make recommendations to the CTA Board of Directors about how to implement these goals and how to align governance structures. It will be up to local chapters to determine how they engage in the plan and work with faculty. The workgroup will monitor the progress being made, constantly review the plan, and make adjustments as needed. And then, of course, ultimate responsibility for implementation and oversight lies with the CTA Board of Directors.

Clockwise from top left: Carol Stuardo, Southwestern College Education Association, speaks out in a workshop on part-time faculty; Beth Clary, South Orange CCD Faculty Association, was among the CCA members participating in group discussions; Juan Buriel, College of the Canyons Faculty Association, listens to lunch discussion; Barbara Humphrey, San Joaquin Delta College TA; Ratana Ngo, CTA Long Beach; Phyllis Rowe, Riverside City College Faculty Association discusses a case study with Randa Wahbe, United Faculty North Orange County; Diana Kyle, United Faculty North Orange and Diane Van Deuseen, Napa Valley College Faculty, enjoy luncheon topic; Meridyth McLaren, San Bernardino City College District reports out.

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Part-time faculty Linda Chan chairs CTA State Council committee
One of 21 CCA members in policy-making body

CCA IS NOT ONLY a leading voice for community college faculty on campus, it also is making its presence felt within the State Council of Education, the policy-making body of the California Teachers Association.

That presence includes the recent election of adjunct faculty Linda Chan to chair the State Council’s School Safety/School Management Committee, one of 21 committees that makes CTA policy on everything from curriculum to financing public education. Chan, who teaches math and astronomy at Mt. San Antonio College, Citrus, and Pasadena City College (and was recently appointed as CCA’s official photographer) is one of two higher ed members to serve as chair of a committee. Serving as chair of the Civil Rights in Education committee chair is Gilda Bloom, an NEA director from California representing higher education. Chan is one of 21 elected CCA delegates to attend the quarterly meetings of State Council.

Willful defiance bill
In recent months, Chan and Bloom have come together to work on language that would enable both Council committees to support AB 420, a bill that would make sure that elementary school students can’t be suspended or expelled for the vague reason of “willful defiance,” which has disproportionately affected students of color. Although educators are in agreement that steps must be taken to reduce the excessive suspensions, teachers are also concerned about their safety and the safety of their students in the classroom.

“The School Safety Committee has taken a ‘watch’ position on the legislation until we are assured that there will be funding and programs in place that offer an alternative to suspensions. There will be more bills coming on this topic and we have to make sure students and teachers are safe,” Chan said.

From a community college perspective, Chan is aware that “whatever happens in K-12 eventually will come to the community colleges,” and that the earlier positive intervention takes place, the better. Community college instructors don’t always have the ability or the time to deal with student disciplinary problems. Nor should they since the majority of students attending community colleges are adults and are expected to behave as such.

Votes on policy
As a delegate, however, Chan votes on all proposals that come before Council, whether it is to support candidates for public office or to denounce the Vergara v. State of California lawsuit attacking educators’ professional and due process rights, as Council did at its meeting in January.

To be sure, Chan says she has had an education in policy-making in her two years as a State Council delegate.

“Each committee within State Council looks at specific legislative bills, and when we vote on them, we can actually move the state to create better legislation for education,” she said. “Since we are educating the state’s students, we need to have effective legislation to support students, faculty and education support professionals (ESP),”

With 760 elected delegates representing K-12, higher ed and education support professionals, the quarterly meeting of CTA’s State Council of Education can be a real exercise in democracy. Many participants, like Chan, are amazed at the work that gets done.

“When I was first elected to Council, I was overwhelmed at how many people are involved, and I had no idea how important that decision-making process is,” she said. “Having seen it in action, I encourage everyone to be involved with Council by running for election and in contacting their Council members with specific issues.”

Chan can be reached at linda.chan42@gmail.com.

CCA/CTA ON YOUR SIDE

Part-time faculty benefit from CTA’s workshops on Affordable Care Act

Concerns and questions addressed

WITH 85 PERCENT of CCA/CTA members receiving employer-based health insurance, there has been little negative outcry about the Affordable Care Act (ACA) among faculty.

Already benefitting
CCA members are already benefitting from the program. Among those benefits is the ability for parents to keep adult children up to age 26 on their health plans; new regulations mandating that insurance companies offer a refund if they are spending more than 15 percent of premiums on administrative costs for larger employers; and lifetime limits for essential benefits were eliminated under the Affordable Care Act.

Still, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that many colleges nationwide have increased the share of premium costs in preparation for the law. Other institutions have adopted wellness programs, increased deductibles for in-network care and added financial incentives to encourage healthy priorities. But adjunct faculty across the country have more dire concerns. The law offers the new promise of affordable care.

Questions answered
While no such horror stories have been raised in California, adjunct faculty at CCA campuses have had their share of questions and have had them answered in CTA’s workshops on affordable care.

“My members were asking for the workshop, because we don’t have health benefits.”

While the Affordable Care Act was signed into law March 21, the implementation of the law was a year away. As CCA/CTA members received health benefit statements from their employers, some members had questions about losing their coverage.

Questions answered
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“My members were asking for the workshop, because we don’t have health benefits.”

CTAs health benefits specialist Kathy Rallings has conducted a number of workshops for part-time faculty, both in Northern and Southern California, and has been able to allay fears that some members had about losing their coverage.

“Some small districts, with 50 or fewer full-time employees, may look at health benefits options with Covered California, but overall people with employer-based health care should not see any specific changes due to the opening of the Market Places. For our members who are not eligible for employer-sponsored health benefits, the law offers the new promise of affordable quality coverage,” Rallings said.

Negotiating premiums
“California has done well in negotiating premiums,” she said. “While enrollees may not get a subsidy, premiums are reasonably priced. There’s going to be some anomalies. I did encounter one person who was upset she was losing her individual plan, but she will be paying a lot less for an equally good plan.”

Rallings reminds faculty that the deadline for signing up for health insurance coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace is March 31.
GOVERNOR’S PROPOSAL

CALIFORNIA’S COMMUNITY COLLEGES are set to reap the benefit of the Prop. 30 tax increase as well as a much-improved economic climate if Gov. Jerry Brown’s budget proposal is any indicator.

Somehing for everyone
“The governor’s budget begins to move us in the right direction after years of hardship. There is something for everyone in his proposal,” said Brad Reynolds, CCA Vice President and Chair of the CCA Legislation and Political Action Committee.

The governor’s budget increases funding for California community colleges by 11.4 percent in 2014-15. The governor proposes to focus largely on expanding access in districts with the greatest need in providing basic skills and remedial education, workforce development and training, and preparing students to transfer to four year universities.

GOVERNOR’S PROPOSAL

Continued from Page 1

The Los Angeles Times editorial board sounded off: “The commission that accredits California’s community colleges is under fire from above and below. The federal government has given it a year to improve its performance, noting, among other criticisms, that it has too few educators on its panels. That might help explain the groundswell of discontent among the colleges, which need the commission’s approval to keep their classroom doors open; many of them contend that it is harshly punitive and insufficiently focused on the quality of education.”

The infamous Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has not been eliminated as some faculty might wish, but it has been significantly damaged by a barrage of criticism, rebukes and lawsuits. Hopefully, some sanity will return to the process.

ACCREDITING

Media attention
The issue has also caught the attention of the media. For example, The Los Angeles Times editorial board sounded off: “The commission that accredits California’s community colleges is under fire from above and below. The federal government has given it a year to improve its performance, noting, among other criticisms, that it has too few educators on its panels. That might help explain the groundswell of discontent among the colleges, which need the commission’s approval to keep their classroom doors open; many of them contend that it is harshly punitive and insufficiently focused on the quality of education.”

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AB 955

Continued from Page 1

this pilot program reeks of a money-making venture itself. For example, the list of LRC’s winter intersession classes sounds strangely removed from the English and math class bottleneck arguments: Energy for the Future, Phlebotomy, World Regional Geography, Introduction to Philosophical Issues, Introduction to Business, and Contemporary Health Problems. Are these the classes preventing students from transferring?

Others decline
Currently, the five other districts in the pilot program have decided not to participate in part due to protests like those organized by Ed Gomez, president San Bernadino Community College District’s CCA chapter. Gomez said, “This is no good for anyone we currently serve and will only damage anything good in place to help community college students.”

I can’t help but remember a discussion around my parents’ kitchen table after dinner one night in 1978. Hartnell College was free. Free was all my family could afford, so this policy allowed me to become the first in my family to attend college. How many more families today are having this same conversation and will instead be forced to opt out of higher education?

Barla is an English instructor at Cypress College and a member of the United Faculty North Orange County Community College District.

CCA’s budget principles this year, set at State Council, include more funding for part-time compensation and counselors.

Key budget highlights include:
• $1.1 million non-Prop. 98 General Funds provided for nine positions in the Chancellor’s office to develop indicators and monitor student success;
• $2.5 million Prop. 98 General Funds provided for local technical assistance to support the implementation of effective practices across districts for underperforming students;
• $200 million Prop. 98 General Funds provided to improve and expand student success programs and to strengthen efforts in assisting underrepresented students;
• $100 million will be used to increase orientation, assessment, placement, counseling, and other education planning services for matriculated students;
• $100 million will be used to close achievement gaps in access and achievement in underrepresented student groups;
• $155.2 million Prop. 98 General Funds provided for growth in general-purpose apportionments (three percent enrollment increase);
• The Board of Governors is directed to adopt a growth formula that prioritizes districts identified as having the greatest unmet need in serving their educational needs;
• $48.5 million for a cost of living adjustment of 0.86 percent;
• $235.6 million in Prop. 98 General Funds in 2012-13 and $356.8 million Prop. 98 General Funds form 2013-14 are provided to pay off all outstanding deferrals;
• $33.4 million in 2013-14 and $35.6 million in 2014-15 in Prop. 98 General Funds are provided to stabilize apportionments by shifting portions of redevelopment agency revenues;
• $175 million one-time Prop. 98 General fund increase to be split equally between deferred maintenance and instructional equipment purchase.

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Members benefit from organizing activities

From trustee elections to part-time faculty workshops

CHAPTERS IN ACTION

Chapters successful in electing new trustees
Several faculty-friendly candidates were elected to community college boards of trustees this past fall, due to the hard work of local CCA chapters and assistance from CTA’s ABC Political Action Committee.

Elected to the board of trustees at Rio Hondo Community College was Mary Ann Pacheco, a retired English professor who spent 38 years teaching at Rio Hondo, and held several positions of leadership within CCA and CTA.

Citrus College Faculty Association helped unseat one trustee and elected Dr. Barbara Dickerson, a former educator and current executive director of a nonprofit organization working with at-risk youth.

Faculty at Chaffey Community College assisted in the re-election of two incumbents Kathleen Brugger and Katie Roberts.

The three chapters were also successful in obtaining campaign funding from CTA’s ABC Committee. Funds from the ABC Committee are not intended to finance a campaign, but rather to provide “seed” money for printing and mailing costs, which in many cases, is substantial.

Long Beach City College faculty hope to elect three trustees to the college board in the spring, with the help of a $9,000 contribution from CTA’s ABC committee.

For faculty associations considering supporting candidates, bonds or parcel taxes, the time to prepare is now. Once an association selects a candidate or ballot issue, it needs to organize a budget and send CCA’s ABC director Joan Scholars a letter of intent that it is going to apply for ABC funds. Letters of intent must be submitted at least 30 days before the election, while the application deadline is at least 35 days before. The ABC Committee then reviews the applications and makes its decisions. The link for the ABC Intent/Application is found on the CCA website for an easy download. Contact Scholars at jscholars@earthlink.net.

Merced Binding Arbitration
This past negotiation cycle Merced College Faculty Association had a significant win at the negotiating table: binding arbitration.

“I don’t think it is an exaggeration to claim that, over the years, we may find this to be one of our most significant victories for MCFA’s long-standing health,” said faculty president Keith Law. “Our new agreement will allow us to take any perceived violation of our contract, and that means a violation of any faculty member, to a third party arbiter for a final decision.”

In order to win binding arbitration, the faculty helped elect several new trustees and argued that legal fees paid by the district on past grievances were excessive and unnecessary.

CCA website to be unveiled
The redesign of the CCA website continues and should be ready to be unveiled by March. The website will have a new feel, more content and easier navigation.

College of the Canyons
Faculty negotiators at College of the Canyons are successfully employing Interest-based Bargaining in their contract negotiations this round. Both sides are making progress on non-monetary issues and the faculty negotiations team is pressing the district hard on the claim that there is no additional money, despite a huge reserve and over $10 million from Prop. 30 this year.

CCA Book Club
CCA’s successful book club will continue in the spring with a discussion at the Spring Conference of The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters by Benjamin Ginsberg. The author is the David Bernstein Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. In his stock of what ails higher education and finds a single, unifying cause: the growth of administration. The selection marks the third book that has been under discussion by members participating in the conference.

Rio Hondo Faculty Association makes discipline an issue
The Rio Hondo College Faculty Association is making faculty discipline a key issue in its contract negotiations this year. There has been a growing problem with the college handing out 15 red ink suspensions to unit members, sometimes for relatively minor infractions. There are no procedures in place in the contract and little consistency for application of discipline. While CCA has represented faculty well in these matters, it is fighting an uphill battle many times.

South Orange faculty association reaches out to part timers
The association is making a special outreach to its part-time faculty by offering targeted workshops. Workshops scheduled for this year include retirement for part-time faculty, applying for unemployment benefits, and the Affordable Care Act. In addition, a recent survey on negotiations indicated a high priority would be salary increase for part-time faculty, securing paid office hours and improving the current part-time faculty health benefits.

Shasta College Faculty Association negotiates new contract language for adjuncts
Shasta College has negotiated new language for part-time faculty including “stipends for committee attendance and shared governance, $10,000 more in office hour funding, the same evaluation process as full timers to be applied and a guarantee of an interview for a full time slot should the part timer have a satisfactory evaluation on the current period.

Dems release findings on adjunct faculty
The Democratic staff of the House Education and Workforce Committee recently released, “The Just-in-Time Professor,” a report on the state of contingent faculty in higher education. The findings from the eForum detail working conditions, the role those conditions play in affecting adjunct instructors’ career prospects and ability to earn a living, and how the instructors working conditions may impact teaching.

“What’s been happening to the higher education workforce during the last couple decades should give all of us pause,” said Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), senior Democrat on the committee, who launched the eForum on the Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty in Higher Education in November 2013, after a witness testified before the committee about the difficulties she faces as an adjunct professor. “The number of part-time contingent faculty at institutions of higher education has been rising rapidly, with more than one million people now working as adjunct faculty, providing a cheap source of labor even while tuition is skyrocketing. These are people who have played by the rules and found employment in a highly skilled, in-demand field, but are being put under extreme stress—with some even living in or on the edge of poverty. The stories from this eForum have provided us with valuable insight into the world of contingent faculty and raised a number of issues that deserve further scrutiny.”