



Office of the President

Memo

DATE: November 8, 2007

TO: College Community

FROM: John S. Nixon, Ph.D., Interim President/CEO

SUBJECT: **MONTHLY LETTER TO THE CAMPUS**

While the media are in a frenzy over next year's presidential primaries, we should be aware of a proposition on California's February primary ballot that significantly impacts community colleges. Proposition 92, the Community College Initiative (CCI), would amend the State Constitution and the Education Code to stabilize revenues and enrollment fees, reinforce the bilateral structure of System governance, and grant new autonomy and authority to the California Community Colleges (CCC). The changes effected through Proposition 92 would have lasting and significant impact on students and our capacity to serve students, and understanding the changes is essential to forming positions on the Proposition.

The California Community Colleges do not have the level of autonomy in governance that either CSU or UC have. The Community Colleges have a bilateral structure of governance, with locally elected boards of trustees and a Board of Governors, appointed by the Governor. The Board of Governors has authority to enact regulations (Title 5), but the Department of Finance has veto power over the Board's adoption of regulations. In addition, the Board of Governors does not have authority to hire the CCC System Chancellor or Vice Chancellors; the governor currently has that authority. Proposition 92 would give the Board of Governors authority for Title 5 regulations, removing the veto power of the Department of Finance, and give the Board authority over its executive management team. In addition, the Proposition would ratify the bilateral structure of System governance (local Boards of Trustees and State Board of Governors) by placing it in the State Constitution.

Funding of California Community Colleges is both inadequate and unpredictable. Although our System lives under a mechanism of funding guarantees (Proposition 98), those guarantees are always defined in the context of the annual needs of the K-12 sector, which results in appropriations to our System that vary significantly from year to year, as percentages of the total revenue available under Proposition 98. The CCI (Proposition 92) would rectify that situation by redefining the structure of the split of annual revenue between K-12 and CCC. Under terms of Proposition 92, Community College revenue would be calculated separately from K-12 revenue, using measures defined by changes in the population served by our System. In addition, The Community Colleges would have a guarantee of a minimum level of funding, which even under Proposition 98 our System has not had. The Community College System Office has produced data that show a net increase in revenue for Mt. SAC of \$9 million during the first three years of enactment of Proposition 92.

Finally and very significantly, Proposition 92 would eliminate instability in enrollment fees. Our System has experienced significant fluctuations in enrollment fees over the past twelve years – fluctuations that have negatively affected student access. Proposition 92 would set the enrollment fee at \$15 per unit and limit future fee increases to no more than the cost of living. The legislature could no longer manipulate enrollment fees, and students could be certain of the direct costs of Community College education.

I encourage all of you to consider carefully the impact of Proposition 92 on our System, our college, and our students. I also encourage you to vote in February. Should you have any questions about Proposition 92, please contact me.

JSN:dc