

Budget cuts hit California State University

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In December 2011, the California State University system announced that it will slash an additional \$100 million from its general budget. This came after a \$650 million reduction, as a result of lower-than-projected state revenues. The additional cut reduces the California State University system-wide funding to only \$2 billion—a 27 percent reduction from 2010.

To compensate for the cuts, six California State Universities over-enrolled students for the Fall 2011 semester. California State University Northridge (CSUN)—located 25 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles—over-enrolled the most students. The California State University system administration is threatening to withhold an additional \$7 million from the campus if it doesn't partly roll back enrollment by 2,800 students for the current spring semester.

In response to the mandatory enrollment rollback, CSUN announced a cap on the number of credits most students can carry, which will be enforced during the current add-drop period. Except for graduating seniors and a few other groups, that will mean no more than 15 units per student, per semester.

The California State University administration had previously announced that it would not raise tuition mid-year, even with the additional \$100 million cut. To get through the remaining months of this fiscal year, ending June 30, campuses are expected to take short-term measures such as drawing on one-time reserves, and delaying equipment purchases and facility maintenance work. However, starting with the next fiscal year, the schools may opt for additional cuts to academic programs or further increases in tuition.

For the past three years, the California State University system has instituted a number of cost

savings measures including decreased enrollment, employee layoffs and furloughs, deferred maintenance, and travel restrictions.

In two of the last four fiscal years, state funding to the California State University system has been dramatically reduced, forcing the administration to approve sizable tuition fee increases. However, increases in revenue from tuition hikes have not kept pace with state funding cuts. For the current fiscal year 2011-2012, tuition increases raised approximately \$300 million, but the California State University system's budget has now been cut by \$750 million.

In its report, *Squeezed from All Sides*, the Civil Rights Project analyzed how CSUN students are being impacted by the economic crisis and system-wide budget cuts. Not surprisingly, the report reveals that students at CSUN are struggling to finish college as tuition soars, class offerings shrink, and families are devastated by the economic downturn, the housing crisis, and the very high levels of joblessness and underemployment.

The report finds that two thirds of students say they are unable to get the classes they need to progress towards their degrees; most think it will take at least one additional year to graduate. Eighty percent of all students say it is harder to meet expenses today than two years ago; 30 percent say it is much harder or they simply cannot meet their costs. A staggering 58.6 percent of students said their families relied on them more now for financial support.

California used to be the national model of accessibility of public higher education for working class students. But today, with soaring enrollment, impacted classes and now substantially higher fees, a

college diploma is out of reach for hundreds of thousands of California's youth. The California State University crisis mirrors the nationwide attack on public university education that is being led by the Obama administration.

In a speech just days after his State of the Union Address, President Obama told University of Michigan students that the centerpiece of his university education reform plan is to tie federal student aid to university tuition rates. "Let me put colleges and universities on notice: If you can't stop tuition from going up, the funding you get from taxpayers will go down" Obama declared.

The hypocrisy of this announcement is underscored by the fact that the Obama Administration has categorically ruled out any aid for states, like California, facing trillion dollar budget deficits. Universities will therefore either raise tuition and lose federal aid, or respond to budget cuts by slashing programs for students and pay for workers.



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