

EDITORIAL BOARD

MICHAEL JUNG: Publisher
DON MILLER: Editor
MIKE BLAESSER: Internet Director
CEIL CIRILLO: Community Member

AS WE SEE IT

What's next for higher ed?

Brown's budget would add to funding woes for UC, CSU, community colleges

Gov. Jerry Brown is, if nothing else, facing reality.

That in itself seems a change in Sacramento. Brown's first budget proposals, released Monday, contain a series of painful choices that almost certainly will be unpopular.

Then again, "It's not going to get better unless we do something," Brown said Monday.

True. But can he sell his spending cuts to his own party and his June tax extension election to Republicans?

The test of leadership will come as he confronts the protests over both. To raise taxes, he has to show he'll deliver the cuts. To get the cuts, he has to also show he's willing to go to the mat for more revenues.

Some of his choices, however, are sure to rankle. Brown's \$12.5 billion in cuts — which would join with \$12 billion in new revenue to close a \$25.4 billion deficit — include massive reductions in "safety net" programs for the poor such as health care, services for the developmentally disabled and welfare.

Brown's budget also includes saving \$1.7 billion by phasing out redevelopment agencies and using their property tax dollars to pay for K-12 public education. Schools were mostly spared in this proposed budget, but their future funding will require voters to pass the tax proposals next June.

Public higher education would get \$1.4 billion less — \$500 million less for the University of California and California State University systems each in 2011-12, while community colleges would lose \$400 million. The community colleges, including Cabrillo, will be asked to hike fees to make up \$110 million of that.

Already, Cabrillo has had to cut classes because of previous cuts. Higher fees could cause other potential students to stay away, even if financial aid is available.

The overall budget situation is similar for public universities. UC has already hiked tuition to where it's unaffordable for many middle-class families who don't qualify for financial aid.

Brown says higher education — which will get about 11.6 percent of his proposed \$119.6 billion budget — is one of a limited number of programs where he has discretion to save money.

For schools like UC Santa Cruz that means cutting more classes and even some majors, along with finding other ways to save money such as unpaid furloughs for faculty and staff.

Also expect the public universities to again raise tuition and fees, restrict enrollment for in-state students and to rely even more on higher paying out-of-state and out-of-country students.

For the first time, UC students and their families will be asked to contribute more than the state toward the cost of a "public" education. The Brown budget proposals continue a huge shift in the state of California's commitment to public higher education.

Tomorrow: Should redevelopment agencies be spared?