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AS WE SEE IT

Financing the dream

*Cabrillo College
financial aid workshop
can pay off for students*

It can be tough getting through college. Taking difficult courses with countless hours of labs. Learning the intricacies of time management. Balancing a job on the side to make ends meet.

With all the challenges students face, the last thing they need is a hard time just getting in and attending classes. But with the current state of higher education, that's exactly what many students are facing.

As colleges and universities look to control costs, class offerings have been pared, making it difficult for students to get the classes they need. Tuition and fees have skyrocketed, and will continue to climb. The costs of a University of California or California State University education have been well publicized, but community colleges, such as Cabrillo College, have not fared any better.

Community college students who now pay \$26 per unit will likely be paying \$36 in the near future. While the total cost for a community college education pales in comparison to the cost to attend a UC or CSU, any raise at the local level can be devastating to students who are on the brink financially.

Students who have traveled the higher education path, or may have brothers or sisters who proceeded them, have a leg up when it comes to navigating the maze of class registration and financial assistance. But what about the student who is the first in his or her family to attend college, or doesn't have the support of family?

For students who don't understand the process, simply getting into college can be overwhelming. Which is why the Feb. 26 Cabrillo College financial aid workshop is so important.

Cabrillo has offered workshops in the past, but this is the first time the college has reached out to all students, regardless of where they plan to attend college. UC Santa Cruz is also taking part, offering financial counselors as volunteers.

Who should attend? The answer, really, is everyone. According to a 2010 survey, only 58 percent of community college students nationwide who were eligible for Pell Grants applied. A lot of students who could have used those dollars never even made it to the application process.

For those who have a dream of getting a college education, the process starts with getting in and paying for it. Cabrillo, along with UCSC, is making that first step easier.

If you think college is out of reach, take advantage of this opportunity. You may be surprised to learn how much help is available.