

CABRILLO COLLEGE

Groups rally to save Chinese classes

Donations from Ow, others pay for language instruction

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APTOS — A coalition of community groups has successfully raised enough money to fund Chinese classes at Cabrillo for the next school year, reinstating the classes after they were eliminated due to budget cuts a year and a half ago.

More than \$16,000 was donated to pay for one introductory class in the fall term and for Chinese Two in the spring term. Prominent local businessman George Ow Jr. donated more than half the total amount.

"Chinese is the language of the future," said Ow, who has supported Cabrillo for more than 20 years. "It will help our country for more people to understand Chinese to do business to do diplomatic work and to be able to communicate with so many people who speak Chinese throughout the world. Cabrillo's Chinese teacher Yaming Shen is tremendous."

The proposal to fund the classes with private mon-

ey was brought by several groups, including the Watsonville-Santa Cruz Japanese American Citizens League, Asian Pacific Islanders for Community Awareness and the Friends of Chinese Classes at Cabrillo College.

Advocates for Chinese classes argued that, with China as a growing power, it is more important than ever to maintain continuity in the Chinese language program.

"We should present this to our young people as an opportunity," said Cynthia Berger, a member of the Friends of Chinese. "There are local businesses that actually give bonuses if you speak Chinese."

There have been no Chinese classes offered since fall 2009, when more than 400 classes were cut as the campus coped with a decline in state funding. Renee Kilmer, Cabrillo's vice president of instruction, said courses were cut from all divisions on campus at that time based on several factors including enrollment numbers and how well established the class was. Even though Chi-

nese had been offered decades ago, Kilmer said, it had only been around in its current incarnation since 2006.

"Chinese One had very strong enrollment and Chinese Two had very low enrollment," Kilmer said. "Part of the decision around Chinese was that not enough students were continuing into the second semester."

In order for the introductory class to be held this fall at least 18 students must register for the 30-seat class. As of Thursday, according to the Cabrillo website, 18 students had signed up. Friend of Chinese member Marlene Majewska said that there will always be fewer students interested in advanced Chinese classes than the introductory class, and more than one section of introductory Chinese should be offered to sustain the higher-level courses.

On Aug. 1 the Cabrillo Board approved a framework for accepting private donations to fund specific courses in order to prevent circumventing the standards in place for academic review

of the curriculum.

Money will only be accepted for classes already approved by the Faculty Senate, and the process for selecting the instructor must be the same as for any other class.

The general operating budget at Cabrillo for 2010-2011 was \$59 million, down \$5.6 million since 2008. State funding was reduced again for the 2011-2012 budget year, leaving Cabrillo to close a \$5.2 million budget deficit for 2011-2012 with reserves and cuts to classes, staff and programs. The budget picture is not expected to improve in the short term.

"To the extent our crystal ball has any merit it is very unlikely that we will have new money next year," Cabrillo President Brian King said. "All predictions say the state will cut funding even more."

Ow said it was much easier to keep the Chinese program going than to try and restart it after a hiatus, and he would consider donating again if need be for the 2012-2013 school year.