As more cuts loom, Cabrillo eyes reserve funds

Board must bridge a new $1M shortfall

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SCOTT VALLEY — Cabrillo College, already battered along with the rest of the state's community college system, is bracing for yet another round of cuts, with plans to dip into reserve funds to help bridge a widening budget gap.

Earlier this week, the state's 113 community colleges learned of another $149 million in cuts, largely resulting from demand for student fee waivers and meager property tax revenues, according to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

In a message posted on the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office website, Chancellor Jack Scott wrote that the latest reduction “is unexpected and even larger than the mid-year trigger cut that the community college system has already endured,” referring to a previously announced $102 million cut.

For Cabrillo, that translates to about $1 million — and that's on top of a $400 million reduction statewide in funding for the current fiscal year.

“There’s usually just two shoes, It’s like we’re in Marnie’s closet as far as shoe filling, so many have fallen,” said Cabrillo's president, Bryan King, referring to the Filippino politician and her notorious footwear. More than half way through the fiscal year, he added, “suddenly the state sends us a note that we’re losing more than a million more than what we told you.”

But administrators will avoid layoffs and further cuts to classes and services — for now, anyway — by dipping into reserves. At the March board of trustees meeting, members will be asked to approve transferring $1.2 million to help bridge Cabrillo's share of the cut, or about $1.5 million.

Despite the constant chipping away at its budget, Cabrillo's board recently voted to renew a lease at the building that serves as a satellite campus in Scott Valley. The lease goes through 2015 and can be terminated early — but not until June 2013, after Cabrillo has already made payments in the neighborhood of $225,000.

Feb. 17 was the last day to add classes, and as of this week, 149 students were enrolled in the seven courses offered there three nights each week. That's about 20 students less than full capacity, and a dramatic drop from nearly three years ago when, at its peak, almost 100 students were enrolled in 30 classes.

In late 2010, King and board member Gary Reece started talks with Scott Valley officials about moving out of the building on Whispering Pines Drive and into a larger and more visible site on King’s Village Road. Then in January, Gov. Jerry Brown proposed cutting $400 million from the community college system budget. Cabrillo pulled out of those talks in April, citing financial concerns.

Asked whether board members ever considered shutting down the Scott Valley campus, King and Reece said they did. But Reece said maintaining a presence there is important to Cabrillo, especially because it's more convenient for students coming from Scotts Valley and the San Lorenzo Valley.

King said he "understands the disappointment from the city's perspective" that the move didn't happen, but "whom we were able to negotiate some relief on the rent (at the current site), that was the tipping point."

See Cabrillo on C3

AT A GLANCE

SCOTT VALLEY CENTER — CABRILLO SATELLITE CAMPUS

SPRING 2007: 25 courses / 528 students
FALL 2007: 34 courses / 480 students
SPRING 2008: 33 courses / 463 students
FALL 2008: 38 courses / 682 students
SPRING 2009: 30 courses / 470 students
FALL 2009: 14 courses / 198 students
SPRING 2010: 11 courses / 325 students
FALL 2010: 9 courses / 250 students
SPRING 2011: 11 courses / 283 students
FALL 2011: 8 courses / 210 students
SPRING 2012: 7 courses / 189 students

SOURCE: Cabrillo College