More budget cuts on the horizon for Cabrillo College

By ERIK CHALHOUB

APTOS — Cabrillo College is preparing for another round of cuts in May. According to Kristin Fabos, Cabrillo’s director of marketing and communications, the college plans to cut a structural deficit of $5.6 million for the 2012-13 school year by nearly half, to $3.2 million.

To achieve this, Cabrillo will be cutting 20 classified staff positions and three management positions. In total, this will be a 10 percent reduction for both departments.

These cuts are known as a “first phase,” Fabos said, and will likely be approved in May.

The next phase of cuts could take place starting in November, if Gov. Jerry Brown’s tax initiative doesn’t pass, and could paint an even grimmer picture.

“We will be looking at really significant cuts,” Fabos said. “We would have to reassess the whole situation.”

In the first phase of cuts, Cabrillo is looking at possible reductions across departments. While not finalized, three departments — journalism, real estate and welding — could face further reductions and possible elimination if Brown’s initiative doesn’t pass.

Brad Kava, chairman of Cabrillo’s Journalism department, said the elimination of the program would be devastating.

“It would be tragic to lose a program like this,” he said. “Journalism is not only a career path, but it’s great for learning how to write succinctly and effectively.”

Cabrillo’s student-run publication, The Voice, has been published since the college opened 52 years ago, and would be one of the casualties if the journalism program were eliminated.

Despite the financial struggles of the department, Kava said it remains popular with students.

“Every year I get more and more students,” he said.

Kava attributes this to the growing number of Latino students, and their embrace of journalism and desire to have a voice in the community.

There is no other journalism program “on this side of the hill,” Kava said, a further blow to students in Watsonville and surrounding areas.

For now, Cabrillo’s strategy is not to eliminate, but rather reduce.

Students already have to face another increase in enrollment fees. Effective summer 2012, fees will increase $10 to $140 per unit. This is the second time in less than a year the fees increased. In the fall, the fees increased from $26 to $36 per unit.

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