Fighting to keep arts a jewel of Cabrillo and in the community

CABRILLO COLLEGE OFFICIALS

The arts are considered one of the jewels of Cabrillo College and our community. There is great expertise, wonderful opportunity and superb camaraderie within our arts family here at Cabrillo College and within our surrounding community.

We recognize that many community members have enjoyed the arts classes offered in Cabrillo’s Visual, Applied and Performing Arts Division for years, and they are essential members of Cabrillo’s music and theater ensemble courses. These ensemble courses are required courses for students who transfer to four-year programs in the performing arts.

As a result of limited resources in the California Community College system, state funding to support repeated credit courses has been substantially reduced. The California Legislature created new repeatability regulations that went into effect in fall 2013.

The state’s motivation was to focus the state’s community college resources on three core areas: basic skills required for success in college and careers; certificate and associate degree programs that prepare students for work and career advancement; and certificate and degree programs that prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges or universities.

The result of this repeatability regulation is that a student may not repeat a course once it has been successfully completed. In addition, students are now only allowed three attempts to complete a course with a passing grade.

In addition to the repeatability regulations already in effect, the state Legislature and Board of Governors have indicated an intent to eliminate or restrict funding for non-credit courses.

These courses include many of the wonderful ensemble courses for which Cabrillo is known, and that are required for transfer in the performing arts degree areas, such as the Jazz Ensemble, the Cabrillo Symphonic Chorus and Cantiamo Cabrillo, among others.

These courses rely upon community talent to remain viable. If the Legislature follows through with its intent, the elimination or restriction of funding for these non-credit and ensemble classes could happen within the next two years.

Cabrillo recognizes the arts are a substantial part of the vitality of the Santa Cruz County community. However, because the college is funded by the state, it must operate under the requirements of state regulations.

To continue our commitment to serve the learning needs of our students, we are launching a community arts education program that would offer fee-supported, not-for-credit courses to community members of all ages. This program would expand the scope of our highly successful Cabrillo Extension Program, which currently offers more than 500 classes per year, 110 of which are in the arts.

Cabrillo would strive to make these courses affordable and utilize the same facilities and many of the faculty that our community has grown to love.

As Cabrillo builds its new program in community arts education, we are seeking the wisdom and involvement of local community members.

Over the next few months, we will form a committee comprised of community members to advise and guide us in this effort.

We encourage community members who are concerned about the ability to maintain non-credit courses to reach out to your local elected officials.

Though the Legislature’s restrictions on repeatability are now in effect, there is still time to advocate for continued funding of non-credit courses, especially in the arts.

As we continue Cabrillo’s rich tradition of providing world-class arts education it is imperative to communicate that we remain committed to providing our community with the highest quality opportunities for instruction in the arts and humanities.

Though we must comply with state-imposed restrictions, we will continue to deliver on this commitment by seeking innovative ways to maintain and expand the instruction that our community so clearly values.

This letter was submitted by Dr. Laurel Jones, Cabrillo president and superintendent; Dr. Kathleen Welch, vice president of instruction; Dr. John Graulich, dean of visual, applied and performing arts; Rock Motenhauer, dean of education and economic development; and Scott Johnson, director of Cabrillo Extension.