Cabrillo offers expanded extension program

College responds to state-mandated class repeatability limits

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APTOS — Cabrillo College is offering twice as many extension courses in the arts this year and plans to expand further in response to state legislation limiting class repeatability at community colleges.

More than 100 community members attended a forum Tuesday hosted by Cabrillo faculty on the program expansion.

“We are trying to find local fiscally sustainable solutions to new state legislation tied to shifting funding focus,” said John Graulty, Cabrillo’s dean of visual, applied and performing arts.

Since 2009, state funding has increasingly focused on students needing basic skills, career preparation and transfer credit. Lifelong learners, typically older students who take courses primarily for personal enrichment, especially in the arts, are now the lowest priority for state funding.

In an effort to push students through the system, state legislation effective Fall 2013 mandated that successfully completed courses cannot be repeated.

These repeatability limitations restrict community colleges’ ability to offer lifelong learning experiences, said Cabrillo president Laurel Jones.

Starting in Fall 2014, Cabrillo College’s extension and community education center plans to offer new programs and classes in the arts, possibly including a summer performing arts program geared toward students 50 and older and youth programs.

For a fee, lifelong learners will have the option of taking courses they can no longer take due to repeatability limits, Graulty said.

The extension program’s growth will be by community demand, he said.

Pending state legislation, which may go into effect within two years, would defund adult participation in most large music ensembles, he said.

“Should adult learners find themselves in this situation, Cabrillo College is considering fee-based alternatives,” Graulty said.

Carolyn Shimek, president of Cabrillo’s symphon-ic chorus steering committee, said that community singers are necessary for the performance of major choral works, for a diverse vocal range and their experience.

Jones urged the community to attend the next forum on Dec. 11 and post questions and comments at cabrillo.edu in January. She also urged advocating with state legislators such as State Sen. Bill Monning (D-Carmel).

“We have to figure out a way to get to our legislators and say we’re concerned about this,” Jones said.

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