



## Schwarzenegger's budget cuts are bad for state colleges

By Kristyan Kouri  
07/29/2009  
LA Daily News

I just saw a curious image of Arnold Schwarzenegger brandishing a large knife, which was apparently taken from a video he had posted on his Twitter Web site last week.

Although not even his press secretary could guess the meaning of this gesture, I immediately took it as a metaphor for spending cuts. The governor delivered a similar message in his recent heavily rotated TV commercial stating that the only way to cure the state's ills is to cut public services and refrain from raising taxes.

But his narrow view fails to take into account the many Californians who will suffer from the loss of social services and the thousands of jobs that will be lost as a result of his cost-saving measures.

One such group of people impacted by these policies is the lecturers who work for the California State University system. As a result of Schwarzenegger's draconian cuts, CSU campuses have been forced to cancel large numbers of classes, and as stipulated in their contracts, lecturers are the first to lose their jobs.

At the present time, scores of instructors at California State University, Northridge, have either had their course loads reduced or have lost their jobs altogether. In the wake of Gov. Schwarzenegger's budget deal, there are sure to be more casualties.

Just who are lecturers? They are highly educated instructors who are hired to teach individual courses at the university. A good number of them have been teaching on the CSUN campus for years. Though their pay tends to be poor, lecturers who teach a preset number of courses per year do receive health care benefits. So with the loss of jobs comes the loss of medical insurance.

If an individual is hired into a lecturer position, he or she is basically locked into an inferior place in the academic hierarchy. There is no way that person can ever earn tenure unless they reapply for increasingly hard to come by tenure track positions. At present, about half of CSUN's faculty is made up of lecturers.

Why is it so? The California State University system is following a trend that is prevalent throughout the country: Rather than hire people into seemingly more expensive tenure track positions, universities and colleges contract people to teach individual courses.

The inequalities most lectures face aren't, however, solely the result of institutional discrimination. There are cultural aspects to the problem as well. Many departments on the CSUN campus bar lecturers from attending department meetings, and a majority of lecturers

are crammed into substandard offices. Some lecturers take to holding their office hours outdoors so they won't interfere with other instructors who might be meeting with students in the same office at the very same time.

These individuals, mind you, are the very people who spend a large part of their time attending to students as they teach the bulk of the university's courses. Hence, lecturers are at the forefront of achieving the university's mission to educate the citizens of the state of California.

In recognition of this fact, a top-ranking official at CSUN recently referred to the CSUN lecturers as the backbone of the university.

But the administrator's comment raises the following questions: If lecturers are truly the backbone of the university, why are their working conditions so poor and why are they so expendable? And why is Schwarzenegger's method of putting California back on track so callous?

When it comes to his solution for fixing the budget mess, he has not only turned his back on Californians who rely on the state's public university systems, but has also turned a blind eye to the plight of many California state employees.

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