Gov. Brown, Legislature approve additional state funding for the CSU

In a laudable show of support for the People’s University, lawmakers improved funding by $364 million for the CSU as part of the state’s 2018-19 fiscal budget.

The Legislature passed the budget plan June 14, with the Senate vote of 27-10 and an Assembly vote of 57-23. On June 27, Gov. Jerry Brown signed it into law, demonstrating a growing appreciation for the role the CSU plays in awarding university degrees to millions of Californians both now and into the future.

The improved funding is a victory for CFA, which led efforts to ensure that lawmakers understood the critical need in our university system.

“Faculty, students, staff, and allies worked long and hard this year to drive home the need for improved funding for our state university system, and we are gratified that our work paid off,” said CFA President Jennifer Eagan. “This is an important step down a path of reinvestment in the CSU, and is critical to ensuring the continued economic and democratic progress of our state.”

Gov. Brown, Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins, and Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon reached agreement over the budget on June 8. The $364 million in additional one-time and ongoing funding will result in enrollment growth to accommodate 3,641 additional full-time-equivalent students and will support that cohort for four years. The increased funding also includes $25 million in dedicated funding for tenure-track hiring with legislative oversight—earmarked funding for which CFA alone advocated.

The increase far exceeds the CSU administration’s original augmentation request of $263 million, and is nearly four times the governor’s original CSU budget augmentation of $92.1 million.

CFA and its members fought hard for the increased funding, from testifying during budget hearings to hosting a Capitol event and rally with Students for Quality Education (SQE) that drew more than 1,000 faculty, students, and community and labor allies, who urged lawmakers to step up and #FundTheDream. We wrote and phoned lawmakers. In January, we held a pop-
up art installation that illustrated the fact that due to budget constraints, tens of thousands of qualified students were being denied access to the CSU each year.

All along, our message was clear: the CSU is the system of the people of California, and as our student population has grown increasingly diverse, funding has been on a continual decline. Reinvestment in the CSU wasn’t just a budgetary discussion; it was one of racial and social justice.

The budget increase not only opens the doors of the CSU to thousands of students, it prevents tuition hikes for our current students, and helps restore past cuts to faculty in the classrooms and repair crumbling buildings.

As President Eagan detailed in a news release, the additional funding is appreciated, and a trend we continue to advocate for.

“While we are pleased at this outcome, we also know that the CSU has been turning away tens of thousands of eligible students for too many years. We know that the huge number of faculty forced to work on contingent contracts weakens the faculty’s ability to support and mentor students toward successful completion of their degrees,” she said. “And, we know that state funding for the CSU is still not back to the pre-recession level.

“We look forward to working with the next governor to secure the future of quality higher education for our students in coming budgets so that we can continue to bring quality public higher education to all of California.”

In other political news...

SEIU-led trailer bill language that adds new protections for unions in light of federal-level attacks on union rights was included as part of the budget signed by Gov. Brown.

The language includes several regulations regarding what employers can communicate to workers regarding union membership, a mandate that employers confer with unions before sending out any information to workers about union membership and dues.

The new stipulations provide helpful protections for labor unions trying to organize members, which in turn builds union strength and power at the bargaining table.

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