

# Diversity suffers, too

## Budget crises jeopardizes CSU's motto: The People's University

By Cecil Canton

CFA Associate VP-Affirmative Action  
Criminal Justice, Sacramento

There is a well-known correlation between race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status in America. And there is a strongly established connection between socioeconomic status and college participation.

In other words, it should come as no surprise to anyone who is paying attention that when public funding for the CSU goes down, and the cost for students goes up, fewer poor kids will be going to college.

The cost for a family to send a student, or for a student to pay his or her own way, through a CSU campus is way up while state funding for both financial aid and for the university itself is way down.

And in a state with no "majority" race or ethnicity among the young, like California, that means we will have fewer students of color in the CSU.

When the CSU was established in 1960, the typical student was white and male. Today, many CSU campuses are majority "minority" campuses, and that is celebrated in some national surveys.

Many of us in the CSU laud this as an achievement, too. Having more college-educated people in our collective communities raises our prospects and provides necessary role models for the generations that follow. College-educated people give more back to their respective communities, rely less on public services, and add to the economic basis of local success.

So, that gets us to a deeply disturbing aspect of the immediate crisis in the CSU — the likelihood that it will push the university back to being a smaller, more exclusive institution that serves a higher socio-

economic status group. In other words, a richer and whiter university.

The chancellor has announced his intention to downsize the CSU by 40,000 students over the next two years. Enrollment management is not exact, and chances are that number will be much larger, and the CSU much smaller.

There is a kind of thinking that welcomes the change. We hear that by paring back the university there is the opportunity to seek a "better" student, meaning one better prepared for college, more likely to graduate in four years, and more likely to donate to the university endowment after graduating.

These "better" students will score higher on standardized tests, thereby lending the campus higher national rankings that bring prestige to university presidents.

As a "plus," these students carry on the tradition of their college-educated forbears by donating money to the auxiliaries of the university, thereby enabling the construction of renowned facilities (the Green Music Center at Sonoma State comes to mind) that bring further recognition to the campus, without the need to bother state government about more funding. I refer to the naming of these facilities after the donor (or the administrators who woo them) as an "edifice complex."

That kind of thinking works for some administrations at some universities. But for the CSU it spells disaster for the very people the CSU was created to serve. And, a disaster for the state itself.

*The heroic work is in doing what is difficult—delivering college degrees to those who would not in 'normal' circumstances ever get them.*



At the Northridge "Vent Tent" Theresa Montaño consoles a student who is struggling to get the classes she needs.

The CSU is supposed to serve students representing California's diverse communities.

Huge numbers come from families in which no one has ever been to college. Their parents support them as best they can, but the student must face this educational challenge backed up by the very student services that are rapidly being eliminated on most campuses.

We could, and many of us do, take pride in teaching these students.

But there is another reason why allowing the CSU to become whiter and richer would fail California. It would not allow us to benefit from the potential embodied in California's diverse communities. We need to educate those students who come from diverse communities because the state of California desperately needs far greater numbers of people with college degrees than we are producing.

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## “Alternative Convocation” sets tone of reality for San Marcos fall semester

The convocations on most CSU campuses are hosted by the campus administration and offer time for the campus president to blaviate on topics he or she sees fit.

This semester though, CFA members at San Marcos took the reins of the campus opening with more than 100 faculty members gathered at “Alt-Con” to tackle real issues like budget cuts, furloughs and workload.

Alt-Con was so effective, only a handful of faculty attended what faculty called the “Con-Con.” The room erupted into applause when it was pointed out that several of those being honored as outstanding faculty at Con-Con had joined their colleagues at Alt-Con instead.



Teacher of the Year Soheila Jorjani (middle) was among the faculty members who attended Alt-Con at San Marcos. With her were Kimber Quinney (far left) winner of the President’s Outstanding Award for Outstanding Lecturer 08-09 and Peter Arnade.

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### The hard part: changing it

Yet, as hard as it was to hold the vote, and as hard as it is to ensure the proper implementation of the side letter to our contract that spells out the terms of the furlough, all that is the easy part.

The difficult challenge to us right now is how to turn our anger and distress into strategic action that rebuilds our profession and our university in the way we know it needs to be rebuilt, for the good of California.

We are trained to look at complex situations from a broad perspective and recognize that different takes on an issue have value. That faculty stance allows us to accept that there are different perspectives among us on the furlough. Ultimately, the faculty made a necessary decision for this moment in the context of a much bigger fight.

Now, we can and must move on to the work to turn things around. ▲

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A Public Policy Institute study showed that California would be short nearly one million workers with bachelor’s degrees by the year 2025. More disturbingly, that estimate was made *before* the massive cuts to the state’s public higher education system over the past 18 months.

PPIC found that college-educated workers from other states will not close the gap. Those ranks will only be filled by state schools college-educating more students of color from lower economic backgrounds.

As we pare back the number of graduates from the CSU, that projected shortfall keeps getting worse.

And that will set up the next economic disaster. ▲