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CSU's Future Requires Investment in Students, Faculty, and Staff, Not Layoffs

As the state and nation cope with stemming the spread of COVID-19 and rescuing our economy, CSU administration is taking a different path: digging itself into a deeper hole.

One of California's largest employers, the CSU has chosen to lay off hundreds of employees, jeopardizing their livelihoods and taking away healthcare for workers and their families during a public health crisis.

CSU management makes these decisions while holding more than \$1.5 billion in reserves. At the same time, Trustees hired a new chancellor-select, offering him compensation topping \$725,000 a year – a 30 percent increase over the retiring chancellor.

Not only do these decisions “look” irresponsible, they illustrate irresponsible leadership.

With the layoffs of hundreds of support staff positions represented by multiple unions, including the CSU Employees Union and Teamsters Local 2010, the CSU has allowed the campuses to make short-sighted decisions in their panic to cut costs. The layoffs affect some of the lowest-paid workers in the CSU.

Support staff are the backbone of the CSU. Classes could not continue without instructional aides; student admission applications would not be processed; and email servers would not be maintained.

CSU management cites a lack of work, though most campuses are registering record student enrollment. Downsizing the CSU's ability to offer support programs harms students.

When approving a 2020-21 budget, the governor and state legislature intentionally shielded the CSU from funding cuts and directed CSU management to use its massive reserves to avoid layoffs and job loss. The CSU needs to put this fiscal faith to good and strategic use.

We need to spend money upfront and put in place rigorous safety protocols – which include:

1. Strict COVID-19 testing on multiple levels
2. Better and more timely information on exposure
3. Effective leave policies to encourage isolation

Layoffs must always be the last resort.

Equipped with a \$1.7 billion rainy day fund, the time is now for the CSU to weather the storm and save jobs to ensure California is primed to recover from COVID-19.