

# CHAPARRAL

By and for the Employees of Glendale College – Primary Funding by the Glendale College Guild AFT 2276



## How Prop 92 Grows California's Economy (and provides good outcomes for all)

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*Los Rios College Federation of Teachers*

California's politicians, trapped by the demands of a 2/3 majority for passing our annual state budget, have created a mess. Every year, the state's expenses exceed its revenues, and every year, the governor and legislature devise deceptive accounting mechanisms that allow us to muddle through another year...if we can avoid catastrophic events that could easily topple their house of cards. The only choices we're ever presented with are cutting services or imposing new taxes, but those aren't the only choices we have.

**A better option is to grow the economy!** We all know that a healthy economy is dependent on a trained workforce, and employers all over the state tell us that community colleges are educating a huge percentage of their employees. With over 2.5 million students, that shouldn't be a surprise, but community colleges are so well integrated into their local communities that they're often taken for granted.

Public higher education is most often thought of in terms of the University of California and California State University, but community colleges educate 84% of all the students in California's public college systems, and they do it for 50% of what it costs the CSU system and only 30% of what it costs the UC system.<sup>1</sup> Add in the fact that most of California's college students start at a community college,<sup>2</sup> and community college transfer students obtain GPAs as high as students who start as freshmen at UCs or CSUs,<sup>1</sup> and the value of community colleges becomes readily apparent. Universities produce graduates with Bachelor's and graduate degrees, but 59%

of the jobs that need to be filled don't require that level of education.<sup>2</sup> A huge number don't need any kind of degree or certificate, but they do require basic skills in English and/or Math, customer service skills, a good work ethic, and the ability to learn on the job, all of which are taught in community college classes that are small enough for students to regularly interact with their instructors and be expected to frequently submit assignments, which contributes to the strong work ethic they'll need in the workplace.

One of the best-kept secrets in California is that higher education can be enormously valuable even if students only take a few classes. Consider the potential employees whose poor English skills interfere with their ability to communicate until they take some ESL courses, or the stay-at-home mother whose children reach an age where she can re-enter the workforce but needs to update her workplace skills. How about the student straight out of high school who only has to take a few business technology classes to work in an office, or the returning veteran who needs just enough law enforcement courses to be a viable candidate for an agency's academy? And consider the hundreds of certificate programs offered throughout the state that allow students to complete a program in anywhere from four months to two years. Completing these programs doesn't just help students; it helps the state in two very important ways.

The first wave of baby boomers will turn 65 in four years. Many have already retired, and most will have done so by 2011. Who's going to teach our preschoolers, fix

our cars, clean our teeth, and do everything else we rely on trained workers to do for us? Most people who could be taught to do those jobs are not going to invest the multi-thousands of dollars charged by private trade schools, and many leave the K-12 system with such poorly developed basic skills that they can't complete those programs anyway.

The community college system is the only entity that provides training at a cost students can afford without incurring unacceptable levels of debt *and* provides them with the academic support services they need to succeed. All its vocational programs have advisory boards consisting of members from local industry, and they ensure that the curriculum is up to date, which is why graduates of these programs generally go straight from the classroom to the workplace. Their employers know that community colleges produce the workers they need to replace those who are retiring.

The second way that community colleges help California is that a well-trained workforce allows businesses to prosper and, at the same time, allows workers to transition from being users of state services (such as education) to fully enfranchised taxpayers and consumers. For every \$1 invested in community colleges, \$3 comes back to the state in increased revenue from income, sales, and other taxes, "an amount that, over the

lifetime of a cohort of 18-year-olds, will translate to a windfall of \$3 billion to the state in additional net tax revenue."<sup>3</sup> There is also the potential for attracting even more businesses as we increase our trained workforce.

Instead of continuing to fight about whether to cut services or raise taxes, why not give community colleges the resources they need to strengthen the state's economy while providing replacements for the massive wave of retirements that has already started? Best of all, this can be done within the existing tax structure, and California can begin moving toward fiscal solvency.

Too good to be true? Not in the least. Join us in teaching our fellow Californians that fighting for a bigger piece of a smaller economic pie makes no sense when training our incoming workforce can create a larger and more stable state budget. Community colleges have been held back too long by inadequate investment in their potential, but the Community College Initiative finally offers a way to address the state's history of fiscal irresponsibility. Help us grow California's economy by working to pass Proposition 92!

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.facc.org/initiative/CCCFacts.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Public Policy Institute of California Report, May 2007

<sup>3</sup> Return on Investment: Educational Choices and Demographic Change in California's Future, November 2005

## Yes on 92 Campus Rally



Photos: San Jose City College, 12/07

### Join us!

**Tuesday, Jan. 15, 2008**

**Noon–1 pm**

**San Gabriel Plaza**

**Speakers! Music! Extra Credit!**

Please join your colleagues, local elected officials, and our STUDENTS to support Prop 92, the Community College Initiative. Students will be doing voter registration (deadline to register and vote on Feb. 5 is Jan. 22). This is great extra credit, so send your students!

## Come share the spirit of 92!