MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Affairs Community

FROM: Joseph F. Sheley, Provost

RE: Spring Update

With recent enrollment census data in hand, we can take stock of our situation in 2010-11 and focus upon how we are approaching the coming year in terms of enrollment and budget. I am writing to provide an update on these and related matters.

Enrollment

Recall that we began this year anticipating an approximately 11 percent reduction in enrollment. As it happened, in November the state provided the CSU with combined baseline and one-time funding tied to a significantly expanded enrollment target. We scrambled to admit students for spring on short notice, adjusted the course schedule to accommodate them, and did quite well considering. We came in just a fraction under "meeting target." We had much company throughout the CSU in this regard. I am grateful to everyone who worked so hard to make all of this come together: Vice President for Student Affairs Lori Variotta, Ed Mills and his staff in Student Affairs, Lakshmi Malroutu and Chevelle Newsome in Academic Affairs, Deans and Chairs who had to sprint, faculty members wishing to work with us, and students who exhibited great patience. A truly heartfelt, special thank you goes to our many staff members who, on the front lines, handled people's problems, frustrations and, in some cases, hostility with grace, dignity, and good humor.

We have been given an FTES (resident) target of 21,625 for 2011-12, very close to where we ended up in 2010-11. Given projected budget pressure, accomplishing this will not be easy. The various parties to enrollment planning have begun crafting a strategy to bring us to target in the most effective and efficient way. Everyone agrees that, above all else, we need to do our best to maintain quality of instruction, maximize enrollment, provide sufficient credit hours for our students, and help those students progress toward graduation. We cannot leave much to chance. Therefore, we will continue:

- Controlling graduate FTES flow so that it amounts to about 10 percent of total FTES (admission decisions will begin soon); we must also develop reasonable teacher credential FTES goals.
- Setting maximum student credit hour caps (still to be determined) so that we can provide reasonable equity in the registration process.
- Building course schedules so that entering freshmen and transfers have a running start toward accumulating required course credits.
- Focusing on seniors so that those close to graduation actually accomplish it.
Within this framework, we will also adhere to the following principle in constructing course schedules: if we require it, we deliver it first. Thus, in prioritized order, we will:

- Meet demand, above all else, for courses designated to meet “graduation requirements.”
- Provide enough courses in the schedule to meet demand for GE requirements.
- Address major program core requirements.
- Address major program electives listed among required sets of program options.
- Address, finally, whatever else we are able to accommodate (minors, certificates, etc.).

This will be a challenge, obviously, since it counters somewhat our traditional “balanced” scheduling. But it is also obvious that, three years from now, we cannot have cohorts of juniors and seniors with portfolios of elective courses, and GR, GE, and major requirements yet to be completed.

Budget

As President Gonzalez indicated at the recent town hall, serious budget challenges await us, no matter what the outcome of a potential voter referendum on renewed taxes. He is now working with UBAC to craft the best approach to budget reductions, one that calls for very careful use of one-time monies now in hand. These must be stewarded well over the next few years and must be utilized in prioritized fashion in the wake of baseline budget reductions.

We face exactly the same situation in Academic Affairs -- further baseline reductions and the need for strategic uses of one-time funds. Once we receive the planning parameters from the President (following UBAC recommendations), I will work with the Academic Affairs Budget Advisory Committee to identify the least injurious reductions, prioritize uses of one-time dollars, and, given the likely duration of the state’s financial troubles, develop plans for two and three years out. The key use of such funds will be supplementing the course schedule as necessary, but other requests and proposals regarding those same funds will remain extensive. I have begun preparations for AABAC discussions by asking Deans and Chairs to focus on funding issues attendant to sabbaticals (which, if backstopped fully, would require about $1 million) and immediate, critical instructional and IT equipment needs (reportedly in the range of $2 million).

Graduation Initiative

I am pleased to report that our collective effort to improve the graduation rate of our students is gathering momentum. I appreciate the recent passage by ASI of a call for greater attention to advising. Also much appreciated is the launching of the Graduation Initiative Steering Committee, jointly chaired by Marcellene Watson-Derbigny and Kathryn Palmieri, whose 36 members will now convert multiple inventories of possible policies and actions into achievable priorities. Strengthening advising surely will be paramount, as will a hard look at what we require within our curriculum and the extent to which our curricular ambitions for our students are being accomplished.

Academic Affairs Personnel

I want to thank publicly the many “Provost’s Fellows” who have stepped in to help address challenges occasioned by Mike Lee’s assignment as Interim Vice President for Administration and CFO. These
faculty members and many members of the Academic Affairs professional staff have helped us maintain our momentum, especially regarding WASC accreditation, the Graduation Initiative, the piloting of new GE offerings, and transitions within the Center for Teaching and Learning. Mike’s absence also means that I have asked Lakshmi Malroutu and Don Taylor to assume many more responsibilities, requiring greater delegated authority and more time and effort, than was the case previously. To accomplish these changes, I have converted their assignments to those of interim MPP. Lakshmi is now serving as Interim Assistant Vice President for Academic Enrollment and Resource Planning; Don is now serving as Interim Assistant Vice President for Academic Programs and Global Engagement. I very much appreciate their willingness to expand the range of their assignments and their schedules.

Finally, the Graduation Initiative and increasing budget pressures have necessitated greater levels of coordination (internally and with the CSU) of academic advising, EOP programming, and efforts aimed at “Closing the Achievement Gap.” I have added to and re-prioritized the elements of Dr. Marcellene Watson-Derbigny’s current assignment and, with these significant changes in mind, have promoted her to Associate Vice President for Student Retention and Academic Success. Marcellene graciously has taken on all of the new assignments. Please join me in congratulating her on her promotion.

In closing, we need only look at the calendar to know how fast this semester is moving. We have much to do in a short time. I look forward to our continued, collective effort to overcome the challenges we face and to make graduation a reality for increasing numbers of our students.

Thank you for your attention.