

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

**Open letter to
 President Gonzalez
 on the CSUS
 Budget Crisis
 of 2009-2010**

President Gonzalez,

Since my attempts to make an appointment with your office have so far been unsuccessful, I thought I'd write you an open letter about the future of our campus.

Your motto for our university is "Leadership begins here." I believe that it is time for you to demonstrate your adherence to this slogan. In these grim fiscal times, bold leadership is required. I believe that there are several fresh new approaches to addressing the CSUS budget crisis of 2009-2010 that you must enact in order to protect the core mission of providing a high quality education. I respectfully submit these ideas. Acting on them now can save faculty jobs, help students graduate on time, and protect our reputation as a quality educational institution.

1. Some 250 faculty members are at risk of losing their jobs this Spring semester due to the budget cuts. I believe that all other sources of funding must be pursued prior to firing faculty. I call on you to secure outside funding that will be devoted entirely to instruction (instead of construction of events centers or athletics facilities).

2. If faculty members must lose their jobs, an equal percentage of administrators should also be laid off. In the last ten years student enrollment has increased 25% and administrators have increased in number by 23% while faculty have lagged behind at only an 11% increase. I call on you to keep faculty numbers up in order to protect instruction, and lay off administrators first, or at least in a proportionate amount.

3. This year all divisions of the

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Selecting Furlough Days for Spring

Faculty worked carefully to make sure that the furlough process went easily this last semester. What have we gotten for our cooperation? We know that hundreds of lecturers—perhaps 200-250) of our brothers and sisters—will lose their jobs this Spring. Those who remain have tried to do the same (or more) for less money. We've seen staff laid off and student fees increased (and they probably will be raised again in January). Meanwhile the administration continues to hire for new positions, and the President's son got a transfer and a raise. The CFA respectfully suggests that you use your Spring furlough days to **MAKE A STATEMENT**: if we go quietly into this furlough night, we tempt the administrators to attempt to make it permanent. If we

CHOOSE INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS to furlough we make a public statement about how furloughs impact instruction. Some will say we are punishing students, but furloughs and budget cuts hurt everyone—it is the Chancellor and the Legislature who are hurting our students!

As you chose your days, recall also that the President's designated campus closure day is Monday February 15th. If you used the "clumping option" (more than 2 days in a week or 4 in a month) in the Fall, you cannot use it again in the Spring—it is a one-time only option. Please consider continuing your use of email, voicemail, and door sign messages about the impact of furloughs. And don't forget to *not work* on your furlough day!

CFA-CSUS

Bargaining and Our Common Future

At a fundamental level, labor unions exist to collectively negotiate and enforce contracts that govern our working conditions. One of the most important things the CFA does is to bargain a new contract every few years. Our current contract ends June 30th, 2010. We have a tough choice in front of us in these grim economic times: we can open negotiation on a new contract, or we can seek to extend our current contract by a year (or two).

The Chancellor's Office has sought to open negotiations. They have never done this before (it has always been the CFA that has started the process), and never have we started talking about bargaining before March of the year the contract expires. Some believe that this indicates that the Chancellor's Office may seek "take backs" in a new contract—new language would be proposed removing rights and privileges that we currently enjoy. The fear is that the Chancellor's Office would propose these take backs (possibly including a cut to base salary) and then move the process quickly to "impasse" and then impose their "last best and final offer" which would include the take-backs. Clearly this is a potential reality that none of us wish to ponder. But it is something that we must acknowledge. On this possibility, we at CFA want to know

what your bottom line is.

Some have argued that we should instead pursue a contract extension rather than risk take backs. This would mean that all of the rights we have with the current contract would be extended to a future point, at which time presumably we may be in a stronger position vis-à-vis the California economy to successfully bargain raises. It would also mean, however, that we would not get any raises until we win them in the next contract. The contract extension approach is not guaranteed—both sides have to agree to such an extension—but it would possibly be to both sides' advantage since it would result in some amount of "peace."

What do you think we should do? Extend the contract? Open negotiations? If you think we should open up negotiations, what would you like to see us push for? Obviously we would pursue pay raises, but what non-economic parts of the contract need expanding, or strengthening?

Most importantly, now more than ever there is no CFA without YOU. If we are to have a successful contract campaign, we need you to work with us. Tell us what you want, but also tell us what you are willing to do to help get it! Let Kevin Wehr know by emailing him at cfa-president@csus.edu.

CFA-CSUS

Sick of the Furloughs and Budget Cuts?

Support AB 656

Assembly Bill 656, sponsored by Assembly majority leader Alberto Torrico creates the California Higher Education Fund that would be funded by a new 9.9% oil severance tax. California is currently the only oil producing state that does not have a severance tax. This Fund would be administered by the California Higher Education Endowment Corporation (created by this bill) that would annually allocate the revenue to the three college systems based on the following formula: 60% to CSU, 30% to UC, and 10% to Community Colleges.

Visit www.calfac.org and click on "action center" on the left side to support AB 656.

CFA-CSUS

CFA Holiday Party

The CFA Holiday Party will be held December 10th from 5-7PM in the Redwood Room of the University Union. Join us for a Mexican dinner from Gordito's, some music and wine. All play and no work!

CFA-CSUS

Save the Date: 3/4/2010

Support a statewide common furlough day

There has been a groundswell of activism across the state from all sectors of the education community: K-12, Community Colleges, the UC and the CSU. Plans are being set to march on the state capitol, a March 4th March For Education. Select March 4, 2010 as one of your furlough days and join the fight!

CFA-CSUS

Budget and Class Cuts Require Some Lecturers to Retire

Retire, rather than risk loss of lifetime retirement benefits

Because the number of units taught in a Part-Time Lecturer's final semester determines eligibility for lifetime health benefits in retirement, a number of Lecturers are facing a wrenching decision this semester.

A Lecturer is qualified to retire with lifetime health benefits when he/she is at least 50 years old and is vested in Cal PERS (has worked at least one semester a year for 5 consecutive years). In order to retire with these benefits though, the lecturer must teach at least 6 units (0.4 WTU) in his/her last semester of work. If YOU are qualified to retire with lifetime health benefits, and IF you think the number of units you will teach will be less than 6 this spring, investigate early retirement *in order to keep your lifetime health benefits*. These benefits are worth thousands of dollars over your lifetime, and their loss should be avoided if at all possible.

Retirement Timeline: Retirement is not automatic. A person has 120 days from the last workday to officially "retire". If a person is eligible for lifetime health benefits, but does not officially retire through Human Resources, within 120 days of the last day of work, he/she will LOSE lifetime health benefits, an incredible loss.

Should I Stay, or Should I Go? A Part Time Lecturer who is not sure if he/she will be given enough units to hold onto benefits in the spring is confronted by a very difficult decision. The Lecturer may decide not to retire at the end of fall, and hope to get 6

units of work in the spring in order to keep benefits. But if the person is offered only 1-5 units, he/she will have forfeited benefits for the Spring, as well as the opportunity to hang on to his/her benefits for life. Many lecturers are choosing to retire now, in order to keep lifetime health. It is possible that the lecturer might choose not to retire, work without benefits in the Spring, then be offered 6 units the next Fall, and again be eligible for benefits. But in these uncertain times, there is certainly no guarantee that the Lecturer will be given enough units to qualify for benefits. A department chair can NOT guarantee units in a future semester.

Be informed: If you are concerned about your lifetime health benefits (you are qualified if you are 50 years old and are vested in CalPERS by having worked at least one semester a year for 5 consecutive years), contact Human Resources for an appointment: Mary Ford is an excellent resource at 278-6213. You may also contact CalPERS to learn more about your retirement benefits. Access your CalPERS account at: <http://www.calpers.ca.gov/>.

Return to Work after Retirement: A lecturer may return to teach after officially retiring, but he/she may only teach up to 50% of the unit load taught prior to retirement. The lecturer will also have lost all entitlement for classes, and start at the bottom of the heap for class assignment upon return.

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University budget have been trimmed an equal percentage. If instruction is the core mission of the University, as is defined by state law, then we must disproportionately cut in other areas in order to protect instruction. I call on you to restore some of the budget to Academic Affairs by increasing the cuts elsewhere on campus. University life will certainly be diminished if, for example, Information Technology is cut. But University life will end as we know it if cuts to Academic Affairs continue as they have.

President Gonzalez, I call on you to enact these bold reforms and transform this University from its current anemic state to an invigorated, energetic place of learning and knowledge production. The power is in your hands. Leadership begins with you.

Sincerely,
Kevin Wehr, President
California Faculty Association
Capitol Chapter

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