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Op-Ed

Education Must Remain a Priority for California
By: Trustee Jim Moreno, Board President

By 2014, according to projections by the state Finance Department, there will be 640,000 more college applicants in California than colleges and universities have room to handle.

At the three colleges of the Coast Community College District – Coastline Community College, Golden West College and Orange Coast College – there are far more students than classes and we are planning for further cuts that we will be forced to make for 2010-2011.

The Public Policy Institute of California has estimated that 41 percent of California’s jobs will require college degrees, but only 35% of Californian’s will have any type of degree or certificate. The bottom line? A shortage of 1 million college-educated workers by the year 2025. To have good citizens we have to educate our citizens.

It seems counter-intuitive that California would continue to slash education when it needs it most, but that is the reality of our situation. I understand that Sacramento has some difficult decisions to make regarding funding, but education must be a priority. I strongly support the current review of the “1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education” to get us back to the basics in our State’s effort to provide for the education of our youth.

I will grant that public safety must remain a priority as well, but I hope you all realize that it is our community colleges that train the police, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and nurses that serve to make our community safe.

Our District’s three colleges are serving more students than ever while being asked to make even deeper budget cuts. We’ve tightened our belts and continuously work to streamline our operations -- but the students just keep on coming. Desperate for classes, these students have been rejected by Cal State and UC schools and are willing to drive to two or three of our colleges to stay in school and complete their education. It seems simple to me that with so many willing to learn and become tax-paying members of the economy – we should continue to provide these learning and training opportunities for them.

I am asking you to take a moment to consider what Coastline, Golden West and Orange Coast Colleges have done for you, your family and/or your neighbors. Maybe you went there before transferring to a four-year university, or your child played water polo and earned an Associate’s degree, or your neighbor was trained to be a police officer or nurse. I know that these colleges were the start of wonderful college experiences for my four daughters and I hope that my grandchildren will be able to take advantage of the state’s best educational deal. I hope that when the State budget deliberations are taking place you remind our legislators that our community gives a high priority to education and the future of our children.

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The Coast Community College District is the ninth largest community college district in the state in credit enrollment, serving 60,000 students each semester. The district is comprised of Coastline Community College headquartered in Fountain Valley, Golden West College in Huntington Beach and Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa.

