

To the Seattle Community Colleges community –

Our colleges are caught up in an economic emergency that is unlike anything our state has ever experienced. Declining state revenue forecasts will mean sharply reduced funding for both the current budget year and for the next biennium. Unfortunately, community colleges in about half of the states across the country are facing the same situation.

According to the most recent information from Olympia, the state's two-year colleges need to reduce budgets in two steps: We will lose 4.1% (close to \$3 million) this fiscal year, which ends in June 2009. Colleges have also been asked to prepare for a 20% (\$14.5 million) reduction for the next two-year budget cycle which starts in July 2009.

For the first reduction, each college is creating an individual plan which will be presented to our Board of Trustees in January. For the deeper cuts starting in July, we will need to work together as a district and to look at things differently than we have in the past. It is evident that everything will be on the table, including programs and positions, reducing enrollment and increasing tuition.

At the district and at the colleges, we are pledging an open and collaborative process to create budgets in line with anticipated cuts. College forums and meetings are already being held. To help address the cuts starting in summer, a district-wide budget review committee will be established and will begin meeting in January. The committee will include faculty, staff and administrators from our colleges and from the district office. As budget planning nears completion, we will schedule district-wide forums for information and feedback.

As part of this process, background information about the district budget and state revenue situation is being posted on the district intranet at www.insideseattlecolleges.com. Look for the heading titled "Budget Emergency" near the top of the page. These materials are also located in the Document Center on the intranet under the heading "Legislative Information."

Ultimately, our budgets are determined by the state legislature, which begins its session Jan. 12. Our state-wide two-year college system has a well-respected tradition of working together as the legislature crafts the budget. The contribution that community and technical colleges make to our state is unique and crucial, especially at a time like this, when so many residents are out of work and looking for career retraining. We will continue to carry that message to policymakers and leaders throughout the session.

Charles H. Mitchell
Chancellor
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