

## Community Colleges and the State Budget

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California's budget for 2003-04 will require so many belt-tightening adjustments it is easy to lose sight of the many important things that it will preserve. Most importantly, the revised budget proposed by Governor **Gray Davis** this month (May 2003) maintains the long-held California value of providing accessible, affordable higher education to all citizens who wish to attend. While states across the nation are cutting back on financial aid at the same time they are raising fees, California is holding firm to the most generous financial aid program, and the lowest community college fees in the country. No other state provides as much in financial aid, fees as low or access so broad to a system of colleges that prepares students both for vocational success and transfer to a four-year university. A look at higher education budgets across the nation reveals how fortunate California is in this regard, even in a year when fee increases and belt-tightening are necessary.

This year, while the nation's sour economy is leading 49 states to raise college fees and 17 states to reduce financial aid at the same time, California under Governor Davis is holding firm to its commitment to financial aid for every eligible student. The Community College Board of Governors' (BOG) fee waiver program will continue to ensure that no needy student is denied access to pursue training or higher education goals. Financially needy students, more than a half million, currently have their fees waived through this program. The

Governor's budget proposes fully funding any additional need for financial aid caused by fee increases.

Governor Davis listened to the concerns of community college students, faculty and administrators and prepared a revision to his budget in May that restores \$305 million to community colleges and lowers initially proposed fee increases from \$24 to \$18 a unit. That amount, while an increase from the current \$11 per unit fee, is still lower than fees and tuition charged in all other state community college systems. Along with the Governor's commitment to financial aid, this fee level ensures that community colleges remain affordable.

Further, the Governor's revised budget restores funding to supplemental programs serving the most needy students — Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and the colleges' Disabled Students (DSPS) programs.

Funding for community colleges is just a part of a carefully crafted document that preserves critical investments in our schools, protects funding for public safety and health insurance for children, and makes sure that California's environmental protections will remain the strongest in the nation.

The Governor has shown he is open to other proposals, as long as they result in an on-time budget that responsibly addresses the state's overall budget problem. While painful, both cuts and taxes are necessary to protect our community colleges and all other public services in California through difficult economic times. Any plan, regardless of its content or who is proposing it, will not work unless the budget is on time. Because of the magnitude of the budget shortfall and urgency to begin solving it, this year it is imperative that the Legislature send a budget to the Governor by June 15.

### EAtv launches UCTV San Francisco

As of Monday, June 2, UCTV has been available to approximately 190,000 San Francisco basic cable subscribers on EAtv Channel 27 (Comcast). Every weekday from 1 P.M. to 7 P.M. (Pacific Daylight Time). San Franciscan cable subscribers can enjoy the finest educational and enrichment programming from all the UC campuses, featuring interviews, lectures, documentaries, and performances in diverse subject areas like health and medicine, science, public affairs, humanities, arts and music. Viewers can also enjoy locally produced programs such as UCSF's popular "Mini Medical School" series as well as the long-running interview program "Conversations with History" from UC Berkeley. For a complete program visit the UCTV website at [www.uctv.tv/](http://www.uctv.tv/)