Dear Campus Colleagues,

As part of my ongoing effort to improve campus communication, here’s my latest message to the campus.

**Presidential Update:** Last Wednesday, the Board of Trustees decided not to do a search for an interim president and to continue me as Acting President for up to a year. Instead, the Board will concentrate on the process for choosing a permanent president. Acting presidents can serve for up to a year without special permission from the Chancellor’s office. The board felt that since two months of that year have already passed, it needed to address the process for choosing a permanent president right away. Representatives from each of the campus constituency groups at the meeting (classified staff, faculty, managers, and students) agreed that the Board should prioritize choosing a permanent president.

**Enrollment Update:** Monday, September 8, was the census date for 18-week classes and provides a good barometer for enrollment. As of that date, we were up by 11.1% in headcount (2568 more students than last fall), up by 8.31% in overall FTES (Full-Time Equivalent Students), and up by 9.25% in credit FTES.

**Facilities Update:** On Wednesday, September 10, Interim Vice President of Business Services Jim Albanese, Director of Facilities Robert Riffle and I met with Cerritos City Manager Art Gallucci, Cerritos Director of Public Works Hal Arbogast, and Director of Community Development Torrey Contreras. Our purposes were twofold: (1) to establish relationships with key employees of Cerritos (for Jim and me; Robert has been working closely with the city as we have moved through our bond projects) and (2) to provide updates on the changes to our master plan. Specifically, we showed them conceptual drawings of the new facilities building which, as the board approved, will now be located on 166th Street. We listened to the city’s concerns and demonstrated how they were all addressed. At the end of the meeting, we asked if all their concerns about the building and its location had been addressed and they said yes.

**Chamber of Commerce Address:** My September 4 presentation to the Cerritos Chamber of Commerce on “The State of Cerritos College 2008” was well received. There was a packed room of audience members who seemed favorably impressed by the college. They had many questions about our programs and building initiatives and I was glad to answer the questions and let audience members know more specifically about the good work we are doing.
Facilities Master Plan Forums: We held two forums on the campus master plan on Thursday, September 11. The morning session was attended by over 100 people and the afternoon session drew a smaller crowd. Master plan architect Deborah Shepley presented the two options the Campus Transformation Committee (CTC) has focused on for the placement of the Liberal Arts Building and Classroom/Lab/Office (CLO) Building #2 and highlighted the committee’s discussion of pro’s and con’s for each proposal. This was in preparation for an advisory vote by the campus on which option is preferred. The results of the advisory vote are in and the CTC will now review the results before finalizing a recommendation for its preferred option.

State Budget Update: As you have probably read in the press, we think we have a budget, though, as of this writing, the governor has not signed it yet. Here is part of Vice Chancellor of Fiscal Policy Erik Skinner’s summary of the budget passed by the state assembly and senate:

Late this afternoon, the Senate and the Assembly, as anticipated, approved the final pieces of the 2008-09 state budget package. There were no surprises as the Legislature adopted changes to the budget package passed early Tuesday morning. The amendments reflect an agreement brokered with the governor in order to avoid a threatened veto.

For the California Community Colleges no changes are reported. Budget highlights include:

- $38.9 million to provide a 0.68 percent COLA on general purpose apportionments (no COLA is provided for categorical program funds). K-12 schools also received this same level of COLA.

- Enrollment growth is funded at 2 percent

- Categorical programs are flat-lined at 2007-08 levels

- Student fees remain level at $20 per unit

- $75 million is provided to partially backfill a property tax shortfall for the 2007-08 fiscal year. The total property tax shortfall for 2007-08 was $92 million.

- A new deferral of apportionment payments was instituted in order to address cash flow concerns at the state level. Specifically, $250 million in general purpose apportionments that normally would be paid in January, February, and March will now be paid in April, May, and June.

- A $200,000 cut to the Chancellor’s Office budget. Earlier versions of the budget had proposed a $1 million cut.
The Competitive Cal Grant program is sustained rather than eliminated as earlier proposed. This program, operated by the California Student Aid Commission, provides support to students in all segments of California public higher education.

Governor Schwarzenegger has indicated that he will sign the budget, most likely in the next two or three days. Because the budget funds K-14 education at the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee, it is unlikely that he will veto much from the colleges or schools. If he does, he would be required to set the funds aside for reallocation back to schools and colleges. We will provide updates on any vetoes.

The State Controller has indicated that he will expedite payments once the budget is in place. We are hopeful that the overdue July and August payments will be out to districts within a week of signing. As noted in earlier updates, System Office staff have ensured that all necessary paperwork has been submitted to the Controller in order to ensure rapid action.

More updates to follow.

Regards,
Erik Skinner, Vice Chancellor for Fiscal Policy
Chancellor's Office
California Community Colleges

As always, I’ll keep you posted on these and other issues as things unfold.

Sincerely,
Bill Farmer
Acting President, Cerritos College