

Jolley, Kate

From: Sonkaynar, Zehra on behalf of Chong, Frank
Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2020 9:45 AM
To: Chong, Frank
Subject: Update on coronavirus impacts on enrollment and budget

This email is sent on behalf of President Frank Chong

(Bcc'd: Board of Trustees, Student Trustee & dl.staff.all)

Dear Colleague,

The coronavirus pandemic in Sonoma County, as across the nation, has completely disrupted employment and education planning for many in our community. Due to uncertainties in higher education, some students have chosen to delay departures to four-year universities and have turned to SRJC for what they see as a reliable alternative. At the same time, with a dramatic increase in unemployment, local workers are seeking out SRJC to update their skills while preparing to reenter a rapidly evolving workforce.

We believe these are some of the factors that have resulted in a rapid and significant increase in SRJC's summer 2020 enrollment. Currently, most summer courses are at capacity, with each student taking a larger than average number of units. The summer 2020 schedule was set in collaboration with departments in early April when we were only just beginning to understand the impact of this pandemic, and long after many departments had decided to allocate the majority of classes in the spring and fall when most of our students typically enroll.

While this increase in enrollment is a positive indication that SRJC continues to be a resource to our community during this difficult time, it created a surge of students who have tried to register for classes that are currently full. Given these circumstances, many of you have asked why we can't simply add more sections to the summer schedule, easing the concern and worry expressed by faculty and so many others of you desiring to do what SRJC does best – serve students and our community. The answer to that is not simple.

The District is still implementing its five-year plan to bring us back to fiscal stability, and that plan requires another \$500,000 in schedule reductions in 2020/21. The fire waiver does not provide us with additional funding; it only protects our current funding and allow us time to achieve necessary reductions to balance our budget by 2022 when the fire waiver will expire. In addition, operating remotely causes additional revenue loss from decreased commissions from the bookstore, no commissions from food or vending services, no parking fine or permit revenue, no facility rental fees and many other reduced or eliminated revenues that only apply when we operate face to face.

Another impact of the current economic situation is that community colleges throughout the state, including SRJC, will be subject to budget reductions in the coming year. While the amount of reductions remains unknown until the budget process is concluded, it has the potential to be devastating. Our fire waiver will not protect us from those reductions.

Given our fiscal instability, we are carefully considering any additional expenditures and will not be adding classes to our schedule until we have more information.

In the meantime, there is much we can do to support students. Currently, Student Services is focusing efforts to ensure that local students receive priority over out-of-area students by guiding and supporting them through the steps required for priority registration. Counselors will be assisting students by helping them identify alternate courses. We also

recommend that students check for available seats during the first week of class, which occasionally open when enrolled students make schedule changes.

At SRJC, our goal is to be a resource for quality education and vital student services for our community, and it's hard on all of us when circumstances beyond our control prevent us from doing what we do best. At a time when students need community college opportunities more than ever, we find the governor's proposal to cut funding to this vital community resource very disappointing. For those of you who recall the budget cuts we endured from 2008/09 to 2011/12, you know what a hardship this could mean for students trying to complete their education. It is our hope that the state, especially in these difficult economic times, will find a way to provide sufficient financial support for California Community Colleges so that we may continue to help all students achieve their higher education goals.

Thank you for your support and collective understanding as we continue to advocate for our students, and all those who have faced unprecedented challenges throughout this crisis. We will provide more information on this evolving situation as we learn more about the impact the state budget will have on all of us.

Sincerely,

Frank Chong, Ed.D.

President/Superintendent

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