



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

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Contact: Paige Marlatt Dorr

Office: 916.327.5356

Cell: 916.601.8005

Office E-mail: pdorr@cccco.edu

BlackBerry: PMarlatt@comcast.net

California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott Announces 2009/10 Enrollment Decline

Concerns Mounting as Budget Cuts Impact Student Access

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Reversing five years of enrollment growth, California Community Colleges Chancellor [Jack Scott](#) today briefed the media on the 2009/10 enrollment projections submitted by community college districts. These new figures show a statewide drop in enrollment for 2009/10 of nearly 1 percent or 21,000 students. The current forecasts parallel historical data that show community colleges suffer enrollment declines and loss of student access when funding is decreased. This trend likely will be amplified in coming years if measures are not taken to safeguard community college funding.

“Our enrollment is not dropping due to a lack of demand,” said Chancellor Scott. “As demonstrated by last year’s record high enrollment of nearly 3 million students, our colleges are more popular than ever.”

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation. After peaking at 2.89 million students in 2008/09, the system is now starting to see a statewide decline in enrollments despite the unprecedented demand resulting from record numbers of graduating high school seniors, California’s high unemployment, and students being displaced from the University of California and California State University.

Even with the decline in enrollment, California community colleges are educating significantly more students than the state is funding. The system sustained \$520 million in cuts, or 7.9 percent of its overall budget in 2009/10. This translates to more than 200,000 unfunded students attending a community college campus.

“There is no question that we want to serve all of the students flocking to our campuses during these tough economic times,” said Scott. “The reality is we can’t afford to do so. Our campuses are currently educating more students than the state is paying for which is not a fiscally sound practice. Many colleges are dipping into reserve funds to serve these students. If we continue this practice, some colleges will not survive. I liken this to a family living off of its savings account. If you do this for an extended period of time, you’ll go bankrupt.”

While no system data is available, many community college districts are reporting that approximately 50 percent of new students trying to enroll in a community college class are being turned away. Statewide it is estimated that course sections were reduced by more than 5 percent for the 2009/10 academic year. This number is expected to grow in 2010/11 if funding levels remain the same or are cut further.

“We are aware that in cutting course sections, access has been severely impacted for tens of thousands of students throughout the state,” said Scott. “Unfortunately we will never be able to accurately account for all of the students who had to either put their college dreams on hold or abandon them altogether because they couldn’t get the classes or training they needed.”

In Governor Schwarzenegger’s 2010/11 budget, he proposed \$126 million in growth funding for the California Community Colleges. This funding would allow access for approximately 60,000 students. If the proposal stays intact in the final state budget, roughly 140,000 of the 200,000 unfunded students are at risk of losing access due to course reductions.

“We must look at the fundamental needs of California and the consequences we will be faced with if we fail to meet those needs,” said Scott. “The legislature has the chance to buy access and opportunities for students by investing in the California Community Colleges.”

With baby boomers retiring as the best educated and most skilled workforce in U.S. history, labor experts are concerned that California will lack workers with the critical aptitude needed to replace them.

“We do not have a shortage of bright Californians to meet our state’s workforce needs,” said Scott. “But, we must provide these individuals with a realistic opportunity get the crucial training and education needed to fill California’s future economic demand. Without legislative action our state is likely to face a future of lower wage workers, lower tax revenue, fewer public services and the loss of California’s middle class.”

The [California Community Colleges](#) is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 112 colleges serving 2.9 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training and basic skills education and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor’s Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.*

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* On Feb. 1, 2010, the [Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges](#) approved college status for two Riverside Community College District campuses. [Moreno Valley](#) and [Norco](#) are the two newest independent colleges in the system. The Commission's action in granting each campus accreditation concludes an [eight-year process](#).