



Dial ogue

October 13, 2004 • An Open Forum for Faculty at Santa Rosa Junior College •

THE AFA *Dial ogue* HAS BEEN CREATED TO AIR CONCERNS OF ALL FACULTY. THE AFA *Update* WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE FACTUAL VOICE OF THE AFA, WHILE THE AFA *Dial ogue* WILL ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION AND PUBLISH OPINIONS ABOUT WORK PLACE ISSUES AND POLITICAL CONCERNS. WE INVITE ANY FACULTY MEMBER TO SUBMIT LETTERS, ARTICLES, OR OPINION PIECES. AFA RESERVES EDITORIAL PREROGATIVES.

An Amazing Budget Story

by Janet McCulloch, AFA President and Regular Faculty in English

As part of my job as AFA President I attend the Board of Trustees Meeting the second Tuesday of every month. I go to observe the proceedings and to try to glean information about what the College is doing and how it works. Sometimes I wonder why the information is so sparse or closely guarded, and other times I wonder why there is not more discussion during the meeting. Nevertheless, this is a public forum and information about the College legally must be presented in this arena.

On September 14, Vice President of Business Services Ron Root presented the District's Budget for 2004/05. Although I had tried to get a copy of the budget earlier, I received the document at 5:00 PM on September 13 right before my English 1A class. I reviewed the document the next day and was very surprised when I noticed that of the 3.2 million dollars that the Board had committed to paying out of the Reserves, only \$369,000 had actually been spent out of the 2003-04 Reserves!

The next most interesting item to note was that under Budget Assumptions (Major Expenditure Assumptions) there were "No budgeted salary increases." I thought to myself, "Hmmm . . . how could this possibly be?" In an article in The Press Democrat published on September 19, 2004, Dr. Agrella is quoted as saying, "One of our No.1 priorities is to try to restore our salary program. We can't go on year after year without giving salary increases and expect to stay competitive." This would appear to be a mixed message.

I was very confused at the reaction of the Board. Several Board Members thanked the Faculty and Staff (forgetting the Managers who also took unpaid time off) for saving "them" almost \$3 million while not acknowledging the cost to the students in terms of the quality of their education. The thanks did not directly address the hardship that our college community has suffered over the last two years. Despite their thanks, not one Board Member questioned the

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Faculty Have Given

by John Daly, AFA Negotiator and Regular Faculty in Counseling

The SRJC Board of Trustees approved the use of \$3.2 million for the 2003-04 academic year from the Reserves for several reasons, but we were told that the primary reason was to prevent further erosion of our programs, especially where faculty and classified jobs were concerned. Only \$369,000 was spent. Approximately \$2.9 million remains in the Reserves because faculty and staff made sacrifices to serve our students. Possibly the \$369,000 expenditure was the amount needed to keep the classified staff from being laid-off, but it's a far cry from the \$3.2 million committed by the Board.

In good faith and collaborative team spirit, faculty increased class size, gave up readers, froze salaries, postponed sabbatical leaves, lost 25% of the adjunct faculty teaching assignments, and agreed to a 10% reduction in the discretionary budgets including all of the travel budget, and substantial decreases in graphics

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Amazing Budget *(continued)*

“No budgeted salary increases” as part of next year’s Budget. It was as if the commitment to spend \$3.2 million from the Reserves had all been a dream, forgotten in the excitement of saving all that cash. I felt exactly the same way I feel when the clerk at Safeway tells me how much money I “saved” by using my Club Card—I didn’t save anything while they made money.

Kimberlee Messina, President of the Academic Senate has the chance at each Board Meeting to address the members about what is going on with the Faculty and the Senate. She took the opportunity to say what I would have said were I invited to do so, “The Faculty would like to accept your thanks for the savings during last year’s budget crisis. But it wasn’t something that we had intended to do, and we really can’t, since we did not intentionally act to save the Board 3 million dollars. In fact, we are very surprised at this amount of savings. In the future the Faculty will be much more involved in the development of the Budget.” The Board and the audience were somewhat stunned. Here they had been congratulating themselves and US for a job well-done, and we didn’t see this as a success. Yet again, amazing.

The point of this narrative is to remind you that the Faculty has more power than we realize. We cannot simply stamp our feet and demand whatever we want, but we can make our voices more clearly heard. It is time for us to take back the budget process. Without meaningful input from the Faculty and Staff, negotiating the Contracts becomes more and more difficult. It is always much easier to make budget decisions when the priorities are agreed upon by majorities within the constituent groups. It’s called “buy in,” and it can really work.

We invite your responses. Please e-mail your comments to afa@santarosa.edu. *In deference to those who may not wish to participate in the discussion, please do not use the Staff Distribution List.*

Concern of the Month

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL NEED TIME OFF TO VOTE ON NOVEMBER 2?

IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR DEPARTMENT CHAIR. STATE LAW GIVES WORKERS THE RIGHT TO TAKE TIME OFF TO VOTE.

Faculty *(continued)*

and supplies. For the 2002-03 year, there was a 24% reduction over the previous year in the total cost of the base hourly assignments — a 17.5% reduction in the lecture hourly, a 14% reduction in lab hourly and a 4.8% reduction in non-credit hourly. Similar cuts have been carried over to the 2004-05 budget year, and for the spring 2005 semester, some — but not all — departments are being required to further reduce class offerings.

I am concerned that there is no “master plan” for reducing or ever restoring classes, programs, or curriculum, and yet the current cuts continue to have a negative affect on program quality, student access to required classes, and faculty workload. There is no vision of curriculum in relation to transfer programs, SRJC certificates, or AA/AS degree programs. These ongoing across-the-board cuts gravely affect the students’ ability to complete programs in a timely fashion.

SRJC is not a for-profit organization. We do not pay dividends to shareholders. Faculty accommodating students earned the money in the Reserves. We have so often been told by the Board and the Administration that the Reserves are to be used to maintain quality instruction and programs for students in financially difficult times, the proverbial “rainy day.”

Faculty have given. It’s time to use the Reserves in support of the quality programs and faculty who accommodate students.