

From: GU.All.Faculty.Association

Sent: Tuesday, May 09, 2017 9:50 AM

Subject: AFA's Response to Dr. Chong's "Important Budget Letter to the College"



On Wednesday, May 3rd, SRJC President Dr. Chong distributed an open letter to the College community outlining his reasons for implementing a hiring freeze for classified, management, and STNC employees, effective in the near future. While many of the faculty who have contacted AFA in response have expressed dismay about the timing of the open letter (AFA and the District are in the final days of negotiating a Tentative Agreement), AFA applauds Dr. Chong's continued commitment to excellence and his open call for ideas for revenue generation and cost savings.

Dr. Chong's open letter rightly addresses the problem of SRJC's declining enrollments and the resulting decreases to our funding. Over the past decade or more, at the negotiating table, in publications to the faculty, and in conversations with District administrators, AFA has consistently offered its perspectives on the District's enrollment planning, fiscal priorities, and public relations efforts.

While AFA appreciates Dr. Chong's stated commitment to getting spending under control, attempts to control spending have long been undermined by the administration's apparent commitment to management hiring and raises. Every dollar that goes to management is a dollar that is not spent on the classroom or direct support of students, and many of our STNCs whose jobs are at risk are the very colleagues whose work directly impacts students' classroom learning. AFA's research on the number of administrative positions over the last few decades indicates an alarming increase*: from 67 during catalog years 1992-94, to 80 in catalog years 2000-02, to 94 for the 2016-17 academic year (sources: *SRJC Catalogs*). Some of the increase in the number of administrative positions is due to categorical money that the State legislature provides the College for specific purposes, but categorical money alone does not account for this bloat.

As we prepare for the conversation that Dr. Chong's letter has initiated, AFA's members insist on answers that may inform the difficult decisions that the College will need to make as it aligns its priorities with its resources. Therefore, AFA asks, on behalf of the faculty and the future wellbeing of the College, the following questions:

- What is the total amount of the savings for 2017-18 that the College expects to realize by freezing/shutting down STNC positions?
- What is the total annual salary amount for the classified and management positions that are "already in the active recruitment phase"?
- What is the total compensation, i.e., salary and benefits, for those positions? (This is of specific

interest to the many SRJC employees, including most of the College's adjunct faculty members, for whom the District pays no benefits at all.)

- Would Dr. Chong please remind the College community of the total amount of the increases to annual management salaries approved by the Board in January of this year? What average percentage increase(s) in management salaries does this amount represent? Also, would Dr. Chong please provide historical data for management raises over the last ten years?
- What is the total amount and percentage increase for the President and Senior Vice President positions approved by the Board earlier this year, and what is the salary increase for these positions over the last ten years?
- And finally, Senior Vice President for Finance Doug Roberts presented to the Board of Trustees earlier this year a plan for resolving the college's *ongoing structural deficit*, to respond to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior College's (ACCJC's) recommendations in the College's most recent accreditation cycle. That presentation did not include the steps Dr. Chong sets forth in his open letter, but the implication—if not the claim—of Mr. Roberts's presentation was that the plan would address the deficit, leading some faculty to question the relationship between Mr. Roberts's plan and Dr. Chong's newly announced strategies. Can Dr. Chong please explain the relationship between the College's *ongoing structural operating loss*, noted in Dr. Chong's open letter, and the *ongoing structural deficit*, noted in Mr. Roberts's presentation to the Board, and the suggestion that the first needs a solution and that second has been addressed?

The members of our unit have forcefully requested that the AFA Executive Council demand answers to these questions. Our unit members and Councilors have expressed deep concern about Dr. Chong's communication: the implications of the timing for the current state of negotiations; the apparent attempt to bargain in public by suppressing faculty expectations in advance of a Tentative Agreement; the adverse economic impact on some of the College's most vulnerable colleagues; the adverse impact on student learning; the perceived disrespect in the contrast between significant management raises and slashing of STNC and other positions.

We are heartened by Dr. Chong's communication to the College community, his call for input, and his commitment to the health of Santa Rosa Junior College. We take his open letter at face value: a genuine first step toward serious, inclusive conversations about how to use the fiscal resources of the College to support first-rate education. In that spirit, we are confident that Dr. Chong will provide specific and accurate responses to our questions and that this exchange will be the first of many as SRJC shifts its priorities to teaching and learning. The faculty looks forward to exercising its rightful place in shared-governance conversations and decisions about the college that we will create, a college whose fiscal decisions prioritize first-rate education, thus serving our community.

* Consider this: Dr. Chong's open letter states that in 2008-09, the District served 21,500 FTES (full-time equivalent students). The 2008-09 SRJC Catalog lists 90 managers for that year. Contrast that with the current 18,500 and this year's management headcount of 94. What was the College's FTES in 1992-94, when the management headcount was 67? How can the College return to administrative numbers in the mid-60s? Note that when the FTES declines or increases, there is a fairly commensurate corresponding fall or rise to the number of courses offered. And declines in the number of course sections means layoffs of adjunct faculty members.