



April 3, 2020

Looking to the Future

The health and safety of our students and employees remains our number one priority. As an increasing number of COVID-19 cases are reported around the nation and in our communities, the importance of continuing our physical distancing practices remains vitally important. California and the County of San Diego have extended the guidelines on remaining at home indefinitely, with the likelihood that the recommendation will continue beyond the April 30 date set by the Federal Government. Our district remains committed to comply.

The level of uncertainty during this unprecedented health situation, and the staggering potential impact of this crisis on our economy, makes our work even more challenging. Moreover, the seemingly overnight shift to what is anticipated to be a *new normal* has been difficult for all of us.

Our leadership, in consultation with our governance leaders, has made some difficult decisions in anticipation of what is likely to be a new fiscal reality. However, recognizing how rapidly the situation has been changing, we remain nimble and prepared to respond, which may necessitate occasional course adjustments.

COMMENCEMENT

Regrettably, we have decided to cancel our traditional commencements scheduled for June at both colleges. Bringing together thousands of people is not advisable. Instead, the commencements will be held virtually. Check out [Berkeley College's 2019 virtual commencement](#) to see what one looks like.

We know that foregoing a traditional live commencement will be a disappointment for many of our graduates who have worked so hard to reach this milestone in their lives. It is a joyous day for everyone – and that includes our faculty and staff who are proud and happy to see their students overcome countless obstacles and attain their education goals. However, we know that our graduates' achievements are in no way lessened by completing their education in these unprecedented times, even without a traditional celebration, and we plan to do

everything possible to make our virtual commencement a meaningful celebration of these remarkable achievements.

EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS

The AFT and district have agreed that faculty evaluations will be suspended temporarily due to the transition to remote instruction for spring.

Classified professional and manager evaluations will proceed as scheduled since our peer review teams noted a lack of systematic evaluation and tracking process as an area for improvement in the college accreditation reports last year.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

We recognize that the coronavirus pandemic has had a deep impact on our students, both academically and financially. Several emergency funding sources are being made available to students:

- Both colleges are offering emergency funding grants to students, and the need is evident. More than 4,000 students applied for Grossmont College's \$500 Student Equity and Achievement grants, and more than 1,000 Cuyamaca College students have applied for \$250 emergency grants, with more applications still coming in.
- The California College Student Grant offered a \$500 emergency grant to eligible community college and public university students in California. A day after the grant was offered, the maximum number of students had applied and no further applications are being accepted.
- The Foundation for Grossmont & Cuyamaca Colleges has created an Emergency Student Support Fund to assist students in need. We encourage you to [donate to this fund](#) that supports our students. Promise students at Grossmont and Cuyamaca colleges who meet the need requirements will be automatically awarded a \$250 Promise Basic Needs Grant. The grant will be given to over 1,000 students.

DOING OUR PART

Our district is doing its part to help our community in this time of need. For example, the Grossmont College Nursing and Allied Health Division is lending 16 ventilators to two local hospitals and the California Office of Emergency Services. The ventilators, valued at almost \$400,000, are badly needed at hospitals as the number of COVID-19 patients increases.

SUMMER 2020 AND BEYOND

With the uncertainty of the extent of the economic impact of the COVID-19 situation in California, we are planning to significantly reduce our summer schedule. We will only be offering classes required for year-long programs, those that are part of existing partnership programs, those needed to prepare students for fall sports, and those required for students to complete their programs or transfer in 2020. In addition, all summer offerings will be offered

online only in a late-start summer session running June 22 through July 30. The presidents are working with their academic leadership to plan for a limited schedule of classes that meet these criteria.

As educators, we understand how difficult it is to make decisions that impact students. However, given the current financial situation, we believe it is the most prudent option to avoid having to make catastrophic decisions in the future.

FISCAL OUTLOOK

The pandemic is having a significant impact on the national and state economy. Our statewide community college system leaders and district leadership are actively lobbying state leaders to mitigate the economic impact on community colleges since we play critical role in building back the economy. However, we must be realistic and prepare for reductions now to avoid more drastic measures later. One strategy we are implementing to reduce expenses is limiting hiring to only those positions deemed to be the most critical. The Chancellor's Cabinet, along with both Presidents' Cabinets, will be working with respective leadership groups to implement this direction.

The district will receive \$10 million in one-time federal stimulus dollars to help offset the costs incurred during this crisis. About 50% of these funds (\$5 million) must go directly to provide financial aid to students. The remaining \$5 million will be used to offset the significant costs incurred transitioning instruction and student support online, and mitigate some of the massive revenue loss in a number of areas. We are expecting additional information regarding the use of these funds and will keep you informed.

Our district is facing some tough times ahead, but we're confident we will weather the storm. No matter what challenges we face, we know we can count on our dedicated employees to serve our students and our East County community.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment, and for understanding these rapidly-emerging challenges.

Lynn Ceresino Neault, Ed.D., Chancellor

Nabil Abu-Ghazaleh, Ed.D., President, Grossmont College

Julianna Barnes, Ed.D., President, Cuyamaca College