



## An Update on Planning

September 17, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As I visited our college campuses recently, I was reminded how much I miss the students and interacting in person with colleagues. What were once vibrant campuses full of students are now quiet beacons of hope for the future. Although our campuses are eerily quiet, there is still a lot of activity going on this fall. Students are learning, whether it's at their home computer or in one of the few classes being offered on campus. We also continue to find creative ways for our students to be engaged, including [virtual plays](#) being put on by the Grossmont College Theatre Arts Department or the virtual [Culture and Community Circle workshops](#) being held at Cuyamaca College. Our faculty have also found new ways to virtually teach just about everything from tennis to complex science experiments, and our staff continue to support students through food drives, online chats and virtual updates.

As we near the end of the fifth week of the fall semester, I would like to provide you with some important updates on our planning.

### **Repopulation Plan**

We continue to closely monitor the reports of COVID-19 cases in the region, and plan to strictly adhere to the higher education guidelines from the [California Department of Public Health](#) and the San Diego County Health Services Department in determining what steps we can take to slowly reopen our campuses. The most recent draft of the [District's Repopulation Plan](#) outlines the measures we are taking to protect students and employees from COVID-19 while we plan for a methodical return to campus. The Plan is in the process of being reviewed by constituency groups at the campuses. You can find periodic updates to the Plan on the District Intranet under Human Resources.

In addition to our essential workers who have remained on the campuses, we have begun the first phase of our return, which includes employees who cannot perform their duties remotely. Currently we have close to 200 employees working on the campuses for some or all of each week.

## **Spring 2021**

Given the continued instability of the public health situation in our county along with concerns about a potential spike in COVID-19 cases as the flu season approaches, we are planning to remain largely online for the spring semester. Current plans include a limited number of on-campus classes that are difficult to deliver remotely, particularly CTE and laboratory classes. We are also exploring the feasibility of providing limited student support services on the campuses if public health conditions permit. We are in the process of making decisions over the next few weeks since the spring schedule will be finalized in late October, with spring registration opening on November 16.

The college leadership teams are working to determine what classes will be offered on campus based on four criteria:

- Determination of classes that cannot easily be converted to remote delivery, focusing on CTE classes that rely on specialized equipment and hands-on instruction, and laboratory classes;
- The feasibility of physical distancing, both in the classroom and in passage areas as students move between classes;
- The ability to sanitize classrooms and common areas between class sessions; and
- An expectation that each faculty teaching a course on campus have a plan to quickly transition their class to remote delivery should public health conditions require.

All employees and students on the campuses must have a temperature check, wear a cloth face covering, and practice physical distancing at all times in accordance with public health directives.

## **2020-2021 Adoption Budget**

We are in the final stages of preparing the District's 2020-2021 Adoption Budget that will be presented at the Governing Board's October 13 meeting. The budget includes a 4% revenue deficit. Given the state's uncertainty with the state budget, and the normal budget cycle that can change late in the fiscal year, we may not know our final revenue for 2020-2021 until February 2022, well after the close of the fiscal year. We are continuing to focus on cost containment strategies since current projections show that our expenses will exceed revenue by 2021-2022. With salaries and benefits currently budgeted at 92% of the district's revenue, we are working with our employee groups for assistance. I am hopeful that we can all work together to weather the storm.

Please join me for a virtual forum on the budget to be held Thursday, October 15 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The Zoom registration will be sent out later.

## **Early Retirement proposal**

In an effort to reduce ongoing costs, the District is offering some employee groups who have worked for the District for at least 10 years and are over 55 years old a Supplemental Early Retirement Plan (SERP). The savings from the SERP is contingent upon not replacing those who retired for a specified period of time. Once all the retirement requests are submitted, the District will assess the impact of the retirements and determine whether the program meets



the District's fiscal and operational goals in order to proceed. The final decision will be made on October 9, with subsequent board approval on October 27.

**All eligible employees have been contacted by Human Resources.** For those eligible employees, following is a reminder of the timeline:

- Oct. 2: Last day to notify Public Agency Retirement Services (PARS) in writing to indicate participation in the plan.
- Oct. 9: District to announce decision to move forward with the SERP program pending Governing Board approval.
- Oct. 27: Special Governing Board meeting to approve SERP retirements.
- Oct. 28: District confirms approval of the retirements.
- Oct. 30: PARS will email participants their plan approval and final benefit amount letters.
- Dec. 18: Employee retires from the District.
- Feb. 1: Retiree benefits commence.

### **Voluntary reduction in contracts**

At the request of some faculty and other employees, the District has agreed to consider voluntary temporary reductions in load/contract, as requested by the employee and approved by their manager, to support those with childcare issues or other concerns that require more of their attention at home. Those who are approved to participate will continue to receive contributions to their life insurance, disability and health benefits, and vacation and sick time leave balances will not be affected. No contributions to CalPERS or CalSTRS will be made during the reduction in contract period, which could affect service credits. Please contact Human Resources if you are interested in participating in this program.

### **Goats at Cuyamaca College**

Although only a handful of people are working at the Cuyamaca College campus, much activity is happening there this week with the arrival of almost 200 goats who are being used to clear 50 acres of brush on the campus. They briefly escaped from their fencing yesterday and explored the campus a bit. We have them secured and they are safe, tame animals!

In addition to being incredibly cute and environmentally sound, the goats are saving the District money because their services for the next six weeks are a fraction of the cost of human-powered brush abatement. With recent fires in San Diego County, it is more important than ever to clear brush that could provide fuel for a blaze.

**In appreciation**

With all our challenges locally, statewide, and nationally, I continue to be impressed with the resiliency and strong spirit of our students and employees. It is our spirit of collegiality and resiliency that will propel us into the future.

I cannot thank you enough for all that you are doing to serve our students. No one imagined when we moved to fully remote delivery of instruction and support services in March that we would be planning to continue with remote delivery a year later. Although the ways we are teaching and serving our students have temporarily changed, our commitment to our mission, transforming lives through learning, remains the same.

***Lynn***

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