



## News

### College halves classes as state falters

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Published: Saturday, June 27, 2009 12:37 AM CDT

JOSHUA TREE — Although they don't know exactly what their budget will be, they know it will be bad, so teachers and trustees at Copper Mountain College are braced to sacrifice their own pocketbooks.

The faculty offered to open negotiations for teaching contracts this year against the advice of the union representative, chapter President Carolyn Hopkins told the college board of trustees Thursday.

Copper Mountain College members of the California Teachers Association already have a contract for the 2009-10 year, so ordinarily they would not have reopened negotiations with district officials.

"The state CTA representative advised us, 'If you don't have to re-negotiate, don't do it,'" said Hopkins.

However, knowing the college is bending under state budget pressure, local members voted to allow officials to make their pitch to adjust the contract to save money.

"Budget times are tight, so to just say no didn't seem like a collegial thing to do," Hopkins explained.

"We anticipate we will be asked to make salary concessions," she added.

The trustees made an offer of their own during Thursday's meeting, voting to cut by a third their monthly stipends.

Each of the five trustees received \$240 per month, costing the college \$14,400 annually. By lowering their payments to \$80 per month, the college will save \$9,600.

Although absent from the meeting, board President Liz Meyer sent her written support of the proposal, "in light of the sacrifices we will be asking stakeholders to make."

The college, which depends on state money to pay the bulk of its expenses, is on uncertain ground when it comes to budgeting for the coming year.

Without knowing how much money they can expect from the state, the trustees approved a budget proposal for 2009-10 that officials frankly admitted was almost sure to be wrong. State law requires the college adopt a budget by the end of June.

"This proposed tentative budget was developed with little credible information from Sacramento," said Superintendent/President Roger Wagner.

More than once each week, he said, officials receive new word from the state capital changing the amount of money the college might receive.

"What is clear is, we will suffer deep cuts in our revenues," Wagner warned.

Already, the college has halved its summer school offerings. Students began receiving calls last week

informing them their classes had been canceled.

"I want to offer my personal apology to students and faculty for the inconvenience these cancellations may have caused, however the state budget crisis and anticipated reduced funding for community colleges leave no alternative," Wagner stated in a news release from the college.

Officials expect to reduce the number of fall classes, too, although not by nearly as much.

The superintendent said college leaders' goal is to minimize the cuts' effect on students.

The college has suspended all non-critical travel and purchasing, offered early-retirement incentives and left some positions vacant.

For example, the job of director of programs aboard the Twentynine Palms Marine base will be left unfilled for the time being.

Student fees probably will be raised from \$20 to \$26 in the fall.

The students with the most need are likely to suffer the most, Wagner added. Sacramento intends to slash the budgets for state-wide programs that provide book vouchers, grants, adaptive equipment and tutoring for students who are disabled or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Addressing the community in his news release, Wagner offered a reassurance: "I ask everyone in the community to please take comfort in knowing that the faculty and staff at CMC remains committed to serving students to the best of our ability. The strong sense of community that exists at the college leads me to believe that we will weather this storm and emerge a stronger and more vibrant college."