



Community and technical college board declares financial emergency

OLYMPIA, Wash. – The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges declared a financial emergency for the community and technical college system yesterday, after determining the system’s budget reduction in the current biennium met the threshold established by the legislature in state law. The last time the board declared a financial emergency was June 2009 for the 2009-11 biennium.

The board tabled the motion to declare a financial emergency at its June meeting to provide additional time to monitor the state’s financial situation. Given the overall state budget cuts of \$165 million (22%) since 2009 and the Governor’s recent request to state agencies for 5 and 10 percent budget-reduction scenarios, it was clear the state’s economic outlook is not improving.

The emergency declaration provides the colleges the authority to expedite layoffs for tenured and tenure-track faculty. The legislature adopted the process in the 1980s to address the job security provided for faculty in the state’s tenure laws.

Following public testimony, the board voted unanimously (with one absent) to declare the emergency. The board discussed and recognized the conflict between record budget cuts and the system’s record enrollments, noting that faculty members and college staff are busy preparing a skilled workforce which, ultimately, improves our state’s economy.

“These are extraordinarily challenging times, requiring us to make many difficult decisions, including this one,” said SBCTC board chair Sharon Fairchild. She acknowledged the collaborative decision-making process colleges engage in when addressing the impact of budget cuts on faculty, staff and students and encouraged continuation of that collaboration.

The board also approved a tuition waiver for low-income Running Start students who choose to take credits in excess of what is currently covered by the state. In May—as part of their cost-saving measures—the Washington Legislature limited the reimbursement for students in the Running Start program to a combined high school and college enrollment of 120 percent of full time, which requires Running Start students to pay for college credits exceeding the new limit. The waiver also applies to low-income Running Start students taking more than 15 college credits.

The board approved the tuition waiver to allow for full and equitable participation in Running Start for all students, not just those who can afford to exceed the credit limit. The waiver takes effect this winter quarter.

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