

[Email Communication, dated 1/19/10]

To: The College Community

From: Robert F. Agrella, President

Subject: Re-Engineering the Sonoma County Junior College District

It is evident that the current fiscal problems California (and the nation) is facing are not short term. Consequently the budget problems that Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) faces are not short term either. During the past two years the state financial support for community colleges has steadily eroded. This erosion has affected every area of college operations as even highly regarded programs such as Disability Resources and Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS), once thought to be immune to severe budget reductions, experienced categorical cutbacks as much as 60% in 2009-10. Prevailing wisdom holds that the financial difficulties California faces are not only unprecedented but there is no clear path to a long term resolution of these difficulties.

The mounting financial challenges in California are dramatically illustrated by the projections of the Legislative Analyst and the Department of Finance that the annual budget deficit will continue to be approximately \$20 billion through the year 2014-15. To place this \$20 billion dollar deficit in proper context and to estimate what the corresponding impact to the SRJC budget could be requires some simple calculations.

According to Proposition 98, 40% of the state budget (or in this case the deficit) is to go to K-14 education, and approximately 10% of the 40% is to be provided for the community college system budget. SRJC's share of the community college system budget is approximately 2%, so the impact on our college is calculated as follows: $(.40) \times (.10) \times (.02) = (.0008)$, or .0008 percent. Using the figure .0008 percent means that SRJC's share of the \$20 billion deficit would be a loss of \$16 million from a current district-wide budget of nearly \$129 million! While no one really believes this figure of \$16 million will become a reality, it does illustrate the magnitude of the problem that SRJC could face. Even given the unlikely circumstance that there are no further budget reductions from the state, based on the ever increasing cost of utilities, goods and services, etc, college programs and services will need to be reduced for a number of years before the process of restoration of selected items could even reasonably be expected to begin.

The previous paragraph certainly paints a sobering picture of the fiscal circumstances California is in, as well as how SRJC could be affected despite the Governor's 2010-11 budget plan. Given this scenario there are several choices we can make. One choice is that we can do nothing except be reactionary and reduce our budget in response to the reduced revenue we receive from the state (while constantly griping about what "they" have done to us). Meanwhile imbalances and inequities in our programs and services will grow to the point of affecting the overall quality of what we do and damaging our reputation. A better choice is to look at the situation in which we find ourselves as an opportunity to take greater control of our destiny by approaching the future in a much more proactive manner. A more

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prudent action is to immediately accelerate the rate of review of the college's operations with the intent of "re-engineering" how we staff and how we offer programs, courses, and services. Inherent in the concept of re-engineering the college is the realization that the budget pressures at the state level are forcing colleges to downsize by more closely examining course offerings and services, and to prioritize activities to a much greater degree than in the past. Many believe that colleges destined to be successful in the future will demonstrate a strategic return to the fundamental principles upon which junior colleges were founded and a corresponding shift of resources to support those principles.

One may ask what is different about re-engineering from what is being done currently at the college to review operations. Re-engineering an organization is meant to convey a sense of urgency in response to changing conditions and projections of future events. For SRJC this means not only stepping up the pace of review but also assuring that every program, process, or operation of the college is scrutinized at a more detailed level. Some of the data that will be required for such a review may be available currently through the Program and Resource Planning Process (PRPP). The PRPP data, however, is sometimes not timely or at a level of detail to make an accurate assessment of how a program, degree, certificate, service, or administrative operation is performing, particularly when the need arises to compare our internal metrics with comparable institutions or statewide data.

With appropriate care and attention to detail the re-engineering of Santa Rosa Junior College will lead to a more streamlined organization that will be better prepared to meet short term and long term problems, as well as opportunities. It is important to keep in mind that re-engineering is not meant to eliminate regular faculty, staff, or administrative personnel, but rather to "re-purpose" them, as appropriate. It is highly likely that re-engineering will require greater flexibility in work assignments, credible assessments of workload, and a desire for the entire college community to work together to transform the college into a more efficient organization, leaner to be sure, yet steadfast in its dedication to quality.

Re-engineering SRJC needs to be performed within a context, and the best context within which to begin is by examining the college's Mission Statement:

Sonoma County Junior College District's Mission is to promote student learning throughout our diverse communities by increasing the knowledge, improving the skills and enhancing the lives of those who participate in our programs and enroll in our courses.

While this Mission Statement has well served the college and the district's residents it has, like most Mission Statements, been interpreted to allow virtually anything to be done under its aegis. Thus "being all things to all people," something California's two year colleges once proudly proclaimed, now has to be seriously scrutinized and questioned. Under greater scrutiny, and given the pressures of the budget, the interpretation of the college's Mission Statement needs to be refined to mean a greater concentration of effort in the following areas :

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- Lower division academic education, to support transfer to four-year institutions
- Vocational education, to support economic development and job growth
- Basic skills, to include English language skills acquisition
- Student and academic support services, to improve student success and retention

The process for limiting the scope of activities has already begun within Academic Affairs with the review of the schedule of classes, and the development of guiding principles for schedule planning and schedule reduction. These principles focus on scheduling those courses necessary for degree and certificate completion first, establishing realistic rotation plans for Career Technical Education (CTE) certificates, and setting hard targets for both full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF) and full-time equivalent students (FTES) each term, and increasing enrollment efficiencies at all campuses and sites. Further, Academic Affairs and the Academic Senate have begun significant revisions to the policies and procedures regarding program addition, discontinuance and revitalization. The revised policy and procedure 3.6 and 3.6P, respectively, incorporate the academic departments PRPP's with the express goal of supporting vital, healthy programs and identifying programs that are in trouble earlier and taking definitive action when necessary.

Student Services has already experienced a severe 40% to 60% diminution of categorical funding for special programs and services: CalWORKs, EOPS/CARE, Disabled Resources Department, and Matriculation (Credit and non-Credit). As a result, 2009-10 program budgets were established according to a framework of priorities, determined by the following principles: adherence to legal mandates, regulatory compliance, preservation of all regular staff, sustaining unique program integrity and support for institutional initiatives. With the intent to maintain quality and responsiveness many student services departments were required to reduce their weekly public office hours, an unavoidable result of diminished resources. Meanwhile, Student Services leaders have focused attention on a necessary retrenchment strategy that will propose to maintain the essential aspects of access; retention and student development functions. Critical to the success of this strategy is the investment of technology that enhances efficiency or "student self-service", shared staff resources among and across campuses, departments and sites along with a clear alignment of student service priorities with district priorities.

Further review and refinement of both Academic Affairs and Student Services activities will need to occur as we move forward.

Serious thought must also be given to developing a collective vision of the college for the year 2015 and beyond. Thoughts regarding the future vision of SRJC need to include the development of such concepts as:

- A college committed to the delivery of high quality instruction as evidenced by:
 - the ability of SRJC to attract and retain high quality faculty and staff
 - the transfer rate of graduates to the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems

- the GPA of students at the UC and CSU systems compared to other community college students as well as students who begin their studies at a CSU or UC
 - the percent of recent high school graduates who go on to post- secondary education who choose SRJC as their point of entry
 - the number of students completing CTE certificates compared to institutions of comparable size
 - the rate of completion and transition of our non-credit students through the pre-college courses to college level courses
- A college committed to the delivery of high quality student support services as evidenced by:
 - favorable responses to student service surveys
 - student retention from semester to semester
 - program success as measured by standard performance indicators
- A college in which financial and human resources are equitably and efficiently utilized across permanent locations as evidenced by:
 - equitable staffing ratios between locations
 - favorable comparisons of activity expenditures (per FTES, FTEF, FTEE or other basis) between individual district locations, and between the district and other comparable districts
 - establishment of a district-wide approach to resource allocation
- A college supported by the communities it serves as evidenced by:
 - level of donations (both corporate and individual) to specific areas of the college, as well as the college as a whole
 - college contributions and impact on the economic development and well-being of Sonoma County communities
- A college committed to long-term fiscal health as evidenced by:
 - maintaining adequate reserves
 - funding long-term liabilities
 - affording on-going costs within on-going revenues
 - performing regular and necessary building maintenance
 - development of external funding sources through grants and other means

In attempting to more fully respond to the above statements the college needs to be prepared to respond to numerous questions. These include:

- If SRJC were re-created for success in today's economic climate and into the economy of the future, what would that look like? What would be different? What would stay the same?

- What inter- as well as intra-campus human and fiscal resources need to be shared at a higher level and frequency than currently exists?
- Which campus programs need to be down-sized or restructured? In what way, and upon what basis, will these determinations be made? (Programs include academic, student services, administrative, athletics, etc.)
- How can the organizational structure of the college be modified so that the two campuses better share faculty, staff and administrative resources?
- What does it mean to be a “comprehensive community college campus”?
- What contractual changes or agreements will the district need to negotiate in order to facilitate the re-engineering it seeks?

The questions and considerations that must be addressed to effectively implement re-engineering the district are significant. Because re-engineering has the potential to affect all areas of operations, the entire college community becomes the stakeholders in assisting in the development of strategies and recommendations for consideration by the President and Board of Trustees for possible implementation. Accordingly, the President will be reviewing the activities of current task forces and committees to determine which, if any, as a part of their ongoing charge can assist in the re-engineering process. As necessary, additional volunteers will be sought from college constituent groups to support these efforts. Under any circumstance the timeline for having the first set of recommendations will be June 1, 2010.