

Thoughts on College Fee Increases

This is a response I wrote after spending my entire educational tenure trying to prevent fee increases. Fee increases still pervade our low-income working class creating barriers to education. One silver lining is the Board of Governor Grant in the Community College System. Read on...=====

In response to article in Ventura County Star
(Link article reprint Link)

1/06/2006

Cris Powell and other students like him should be very careful as to how they develop their opinions on this issue of class fee hikes. The state has the absolute responsibility to provide public education through college to its residents as purported in the state charter. Not that I support this Governor either since before the fee hike freeze he introduced the increases at every turn.

The California state charter in its infinite wisdom of its legislators, our representatives, made it clear that the most important factor in the success of CA is that the citizens be educated. We all know this to be true thus the charter reflected this as such by making education as a right in the state to be free of charge with regards to tuition. Instead, all kinds of fees are not considered under the rubric of tuition and education administrators have been exploiting students and their working-class families of which most of the population of the CSU and Community Colleges attend. These fees which are many by category nickel-and-dime students into the poor house. You have registration fees, class fees, lab fees, athletics fees, activities fees, housing fees, parking fees, instructionally-related fees and more. Oh, and, don't forget graduation fees. They won't let you graduate unless you pay, They get you coming and going. It is total gate-keeping. Then there are textbooks. Plus, the legislature *will not* exempt the tax on textbooks in order to ease your pocketbook pain. Then because of the expense, you take out student loans and put yourself and future family into hock. And, when that is not enough, there are always credit cards. Is there a job waiting for you after college to pay these loans back? Can you count on this state's economy to provide for you and family? The national average on student loans alone is over \$3 billion dollars now. Are there \$3 billion in jobs available to pay this debt back so that you can think about starting a family and surviving beyond the back of a station wagon? In fact, most students, as Tamara Gershater purports, fall into the major crack of not being eligible for financial aid and being able to afford the fees. Students who parents can barely send their students to college or those adults who are funding it themselves who have parttime jobs with more than poverty level lifestyles are the most vulnerable to drop-out sooner because of the expense. Additionally, it causes whole family's financial structures to become unstable.

This is a kludge caused by the state without much sensitivity to the majority of the public that supplies the majority of the work force in the state. It's the same old, "stick it to the middle, working class to foot the tax bill." The more affluent population can afford to send their kids to private schools which is why you see such a disparity of age range between public and private colleges. The average age at the CSU is about 28, if not, more now due to the economy. Actually, paying class fees, in general, is double-taxation as the funding from the state *is* taxpayer money.

As a business major, he is still developing his knowledge and skills as a business major and student. As a student he may not be totally informed enough yet to understand the underlying issues, messages, tactics and strategies of the business world. While I don't condemn the entire business education sector as they try to expose students to the world of economics and

marketing, they often tend to throw a slant into it without a mere mention of how the have-nots are affected. Most students are left with that void they might trip over.

So, to all those business majors, don't let your many professors fool you by the economics of the public university you attend unless they are willing to reveal all sides. In fact, it should not be a subject of the classroom whatsoever even though it is real. You must be careful of the real politik or agenda that is being transmitted to you by them without full disclosure of the message, sub-ligual/-liminal or blatant. Many times it is about how to save their personal or departmental budgets over others like the arts, music and physical education. Most of this comes down from above and you do get fooled by it in the end because you are only there for a short time. Again, this is not all or most faculty but some, maybe, many.

Think about your future, the future of the school, your friends, family and maybe your children you leave behind there. How will they be affected by your decisions to support such things?

Remember, the burden is on the state to provide public education. Don't let them leverage or balance their budgets on the backs of students like yours (or us). As reported, there has been a 76% increase in fees since 2002. These fees are compounded on top of each other which has steadily come twice a year. For example, 5% in May then another 5% on top of that in September, then another 5% in January. That is not 15% if you do the math.

Plus, don't let them talk you into that California is the lowest in class fees (tuition) in the country. That is a bunch of baloney. Our cost of living in California is one of the highest in the country and doesn't reflect the complete cost of living compared to other areas. Bruce Wolfe, M.S.W.

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