

Chancellor's Memo

Eastern Iowa Community College District

April 1, 2009

The Situation

I have decided to use this month's memo to communicate primarily about how our district will be responding to the severe budget cuts we have encountered in the 2009 budget year and will experience next year, FY 2010. For those of you who expected to see other topics covered, I apologize. I still have the verbiage and the pictures and will get to many of them in May.

First of all, I want to let everyone know that I understand how difficult it is to live with the kind of ambiguity we've been experiencing – waiting to learn how much our budget will be cut so that we can adjust our staffing and workloads in response. In the past few days, the magnitude of our expected budget cuts has become clear enough for us to begin concrete planning. Here is the state of affairs (give or take a few last minute changes by the legislature or Governor):

In FY 2009 (which ends June 30, 2009), we have experienced a 1.5% cut already and are expecting an additional 2.2% cut from the State so that Iowa's budget can be balanced in the face of a shortfall in this year's revenue. We were able to accommodate the original rescission and are prepared for a second primarily because we began, in December, to cut back on expenses, not fill vacancies, froze out-of-state travel, and drew on the contingency moneys set aside last July to cover possible additional enrollment drops.

Yesterday, we learned that the legislature's allocation to community colleges appears to have been decreased by an additional minimum of 8.2%. This assumes an infusion of stimulus funds from the Governor which has not occurred yet but is expected. Please note that this cut is on top of the cuts we have already taken.

We have calculated that in the current scenario, EICCD needs to find another **\$1,871,247** in cuts from our general fund budget just to stay even with 2008.

I hope everyone knows that we haven't been twiddling our thumbs waiting for the final numbers to emerge. Rather, we have had a number of retreats, meetings, and strategy sessions drafting plans and processes for a variety of contingencies. (I have provided a summary of decisions made in a variety of settings on some of the many wonderful suggestions on cost-cutting collected at the end of this memo.) Of most interest to many, the Board also instituted an early retirement program that has worked well enough that we will be able to rely on attrition rather than layoffs to reduce staffing levels this coming year. Many of you have assisted with ideas that have been incorporated, and I thank you. Some of you have already had to step in to assist to cover the workloads of those who left this year. I thank you for that also.

What Next?

We now have a clear estimate of the amount we need to find to balance our new budget. Now that the deadline for requesting early retirements has passed, we also know how position vacancies that emerged from both resignations and retirements. As we anticipated, the impact of retirements and resignations that came in has not fallen evenly on all colleges, departments, or job classifications. We have to plunge in now to devise ways to even out the impact across the district.

I have asked Karen Vickers to lead an effort to draft a very concrete, ready-to-implement staffing and assignment plan that evens out the impact of position vacancies through reassignments, expansion of job duties, and consolidation. This plan will be presented to an expanded Cabinet group on April 15, to our Board of Trustees at a retreat near the end of April, and to the college community through a number of Chats with Pats the last week of April. This is a very challenging job, and Karen has already expressed her desire to have you share your ideas and concerns with her.

I have asked Tom Coley to head up a related effort to provide a ready-to-implement plan to outline how we will continue to meet our educational commitments to students, in particular how we will staff our sections, to prepare for expected enrollment growth in the next two years. Expanding our adjunct pool, using distance learning technologies, and exploring hybrid courses are just a few of the strategies that will be considered. As with the other plan, the product of Tom's team will be presented at the expanded Cabinet meeting on April 15, refined, and presented to the Board for final go-ahead.

I have proposed to the Board that we freeze all non-union salaries for next year. Clearly any additional funding for salaries would add to the total we would need to cut elsewhere, and we will be struggling to balance the budget as it is. For those who are not retiring, it will be challenging to do more work or take on extra functions for the same salary. I would rather do this, however, than institute furloughs, pay cuts, or layoffs.

In the last week of April, I will come to all sites for Chats with Pats to go over the reasons for these changes, the final plans to balance out the impact of cuts on departments and campuses, and outline our plans to capacity to maintain or grow our enrollment. I will encourage everyone to attend those sessions so we can hear your concerns, fine-tune our plans, and celebrate the can-do attitude that I know we can all summon up so we can serve our students and community well in these hard times.

Challenges to Come

You cannot cut almost two million dollars from a budget and maintain everything as it has been. We are faced with the challenge of doing "more with a great deal less." Our core mission is to provide learning opportunities to those who turn to us. We need to provide the classes and services they need to succeed, particularly in these hard times. All of us should be prepared to

assume additional duties, assume different functions or even work at different locations, as we work to balance the effects of attrition throughout the district so that all of our students and colleges are treated fairly. I ask everyone to please be willing to step up to the plate as we adjust to a rather dramatic decrease in staff positions while maintaining service and instruction to all students and communities in our district.

Early Retirements

Our bottom line will benefit from the many people who exercised the early retirement option, but I am truly saddened by the pending retirements of so many fantastic, long-serving pillars of EICCD. Our challenge is not merely to find people to take on the duties of others – it is to move forward when so much energy, expertise, history, and commitment to students and district is walking out the door. We are in the process of planning a district reception to honor the retirees, and I will let you know of the date and time as soon as possible. If you have any suggestions on how we can best honor the 27 full-time faculty and staff who have opted to retire, please let me know.

The Future

Additionally, I do want to reassure you that EICCD will remain sound financially and that I believe we will thrive and grow in the hard times ahead. Now is the time to find new ways of doing things, to focus really strongly on growing our enrollment and to strengthen our ability to function at a quality level, to make changes that will position us as a leader in community college education once the economy shifts the other way. We are going to have to really learn to "work smarter" but we will not just hunker down and wait it out. We will "hang in" for better times, but we will look for ways to transform ourselves while we wait.

At a recent meeting with the Faculty Association leadership I participated in, faculty member Monica Kurth made an important and motivating point. While all of us who work in the district have to adjust to change, privation, and insecurity, the same will be true – or even truer – for our students. We have already seen our enrollment grow as people who have lost their jobs or seen their income reduced turn to us for a quality alternative or retraining. For each student who comes to us, we want to provide understanding and support. Each of us will have to cope with a "who moved my cheese" situation while helping large numbers of students build their path to opportunity. We can do it. We will do it. And I will acknowledge and affirm the extra effort each of you will make in the next year or two.

Pat