

The Civil Rights Project



Proyecto Derechos Civiles

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Education for Students at CSUs Shortchanged by State's Fiscal Crisis Faculty Say Budget Cuts Put Quality of Education in Peril

Essential Skills May be Jeopardized by Rapidly Deteriorating Situation

LOS ANGELES – The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA today released two reports about the devastating effects of state budget cuts on the quality of education that faculty at the California State University (CSU) campuses across the state are able to deliver to their students. The reports find that many professors in the CSU system feel that the cutbacks already implemented, coupled with the substantial cuts projected, put the quality of a CSU education in a rapid spiral downward. The studies reveal that faculty are extremely concerned, that the students are losing out, and that their learning experience is significantly undermined by the fiscal crisis.

Taken together, the two reports note the succession of cuts sustained by the CSUs over the years, and the additional budget cuts set for the system, have the ability to critically change the mission of the educational system with long-term implications for the system's welfare. CSU is the largest system of higher education in California and is the key to mobility for young people in our state, with particular importance for students of color. The CSU is a huge network of 23 universities that provides the greatest amount of BA level of education in the state and educates a substantially larger group of Latino and African American students than the UCs do. Many CSU students are first generation college students struggling to get an education in difficult times. There is substantial research showing that a great number of middle class jobs, and incomes that go along with them, are available to college graduates only.

The first study, ***Faculty Under Siege: Demoralization and Educational Decline in the CSU***, by CRP co-director, Gary Orfield, is based on the responses of more than 400 faculty members who responded to an electronic survey from across the CSU system. The survey was emailed to a random sample of faculty¹ by Civil Rights Project researchers. Obtaining responses from all levels of faculty at many campuses, this survey offered a view from a large group of faculty working at many campuses.

The reports find that faculty members are stressed and demoralized, unable to do their job the way they know is best, and many are thinking about leaving their positions. "The essence of what higher education provides," says Orfield, "is good teachers effectively educating and developing the crucial skills of the students. At the CSUs many professors believe the cutbacks have made it impossible for them to do their job well."

Orfield continued, "One of the most chilling issues for me was that many professors were no longer able to help

¹ A sample of the members of the California Faculty Association, which represents CSU faculty, was the only accessible data set of faculty contact information from across the system. The study does not assume that the same necessarily represents the views or experience of all faculty.

their students develop such a fundamental skill as writing. The demoralization of the faculty because of setbacks in their basic teaching and research was severe. Many were losing their long-term commitment to a campus that does not provide the basic essentials for their professional work.” If students are not developing the essential skills, and faculty are skeptical about their work situation now, the report notes that it is difficult to imagine the consequences of very large additional cuts coming next fall.

The second study, *The Worst of Times: Faculty Productivity and Job Satisfaction During the CSU Budget Crisis*, is culled from in-depth interviews with 23 faculty members at one campus, unnamed to protect anonymity. Those interviews, about the impact of the fiscal crisis on faculty job productivity and satisfaction, were recorded and analyzed by the three researchers, Helen Hyun, Rafael M. Diaz and Sahar Khoury, who conducted and wrote the study. Unlike the first study, this one draws on the point of view of a small group of faculty members. Although the research focus is the faculty, the study finds that they are deeply concerned for students and their learning, as well as for the future of faculty life on campus.

“It’s just the daunting numbers, especially with budget cuts,” noted one faculty who was interviewed. “I used to have 40 students max and now I have 60-70 just because there is less offered and students need to get in there.” When a class nearly doubles, then the time to work with each student plummets, participants reported, and the methods developed for a smaller class often no longer work. “Before, I used to have a lot more assignments because I think that gives students practice to do, to write, practice, to understand the material. But now, with 50 students, it’s just really difficult to grade that much.”

Another talked about the diminished ability to assess their students learning in large classes, “I don’t have as good a sense of their knowledge base, their understanding of the material... it makes it really difficult to make the professional training personally meaningful to each of the students. They start to become a sea of people rather than an individual I know by name.”

A professor spoke at length about her preoccupation with the potential impact of the budget cuts on her students and junior colleagues, “I have been teaching 50. They told me that when I come back in the fall, it’s going to be 60. There is a loss in quality because of this budget and priorities... and it’s so disrespectful to the students to treat them like that.” Another faculty also felt that students were losing out, “they don’t tell people’s parents that there have been funding cuts. They don’t tell people, ‘you’re not paying for a place, you are paying for a fishing license.’ You know, there are too many students, not enough classes. And those of us who are faculty are trying to maintain and deal with that and maintain a quality education.”

-Key Findings-

- The majority of faculty interviewed reported feeling overwhelmed by the increased class sizes and decreased support. Many faculty estimated increases in class size to be between 50-75%. Overall, this increase in class size was also cited as negatively impacting teaching effectiveness.
- Within a 2-year period, the campus highlighted in the second study experienced an 18% decline in the number of instructional faculty. The participants interviewed identified this as a major source of stress due to the “over-teaching” effect it had on their individual teaching loads.
- The majority of faculty reported the lack of time for scholarship activity, and decreased resources and support for scholarship as a common concern. Not having time for research, impacts promotion and salary in the system. It also directly affects the ability to prepare grant proposals for extramural funding, which are an important source of revenue for the university. Scholarship allows the faculty to stay abreast of new knowledge, which is very important for effectively preparing students for future careers.
- Nearly all CSU employees took furloughs. Faculty reported increased workloads during the

furloughs, and therefore the policy amounted to an approximately 10% cut in pay. Many faculty also said they had to take additional employment to make ends meet.

- Faculty of color in the second study perceived the cuts as compromising their ability to support and counsel students, many of whom are first generation and underrepresented minorities, and were more likely, on average, to report advising and mentoring students of color compared to their white peers. Female faculty of color appeared to disproportionately shoulder this important work, which has been documented in the literature to enhance the persistence of students of color.

-More-

The on-line survey collected data on 424 faculty; the response rate was not sufficient to claim that it was a representative sample of the total faculty. 76% of the respondents are considered full-time employees of their institution, and the majority of respondents teach at only one campus. In addition, 47% had tenure at the time of the survey, with an additional 22% on tenure track. Both studies were conducted independently from each other and by different researchers, yet their findings were congruent. The on-line survey shows that many faculty across the system are facing a crisis in their work. The Hyun study adds much more depth in terms of qualitative data collected from faculty interviews, which gives voice to individual faculty members and supports the findings of the larger faculty survey conducted in the Orfield study.

The CSU system overall reported 11,712 full-time faculty in the 2009-2010 academic year, approximately 4,600 full professors, 2,700 associate professors, and 2,700 assistant professors, as well as many lecturers and part-time faculty teaching particular courses. Most professors were 50 years old or older and a fifth were over 60, suggesting that many will need to be replaced in the foreseeable future.

These reports are the second in a series called, *THE CSU CRISIS AND CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE*, designed to analyze the impact of the fiscal cutbacks on opportunity for higher education in the California State University system. The first report, *Squeezed from all Sides* documented the struggle of many students to continue their education in the face of soaring tuition, diminished offerings, and a financial crisis seriously hurting them and many of their family members. The students reported essential classes disappearing, rising financial barriers and large delays in finishing their studies.

The research was commissioned by the Civil Rights Project and reviewed by a panel of outside experts. Upcoming reports from this series will look more deeply at student financial aid issues.

The full text of the report is available at: www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA: Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors Gary Orfield and Christopher Edley Jr., the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles is now co-directed by Orfield and Patricia Gándara, professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 450 studies, published 13 books and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country. The Supreme Court, in its 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision, cited the Civil Rights Project's research. This study is financed by grants from the Ford Foundation, the CSU Faculty Association, and the Civil Rights Project with all work under the complete independent control of the Project and cooperating researchers

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