



MOHLONE COLLEGE MONITOR

Vol. XLI No. 2

Fremont, California

February 11, 2010

Students plan to march against budget cuts

By DENISE ANN BURGAN
Staff writer

Ohlone College suffered an overall \$3 million budget cut last year because of the lack of state funding for all community colleges. And on the precipice of more cuts, a movement called “No Cuts to Education” continues to gain momentum, with two mass rallies slated for March.

New organizations have formed in defense of equal access to quality education.

During the first week of classes,

the Civic Engagement Club set up a table in the Quad and asked students and faculty to write down how the budget crisis has impacted them.

According to Andie Morehous, president of the Civic Engagement Club, “We are trying to raise the awareness of students regarding the budget cuts.”

She went on to emphasize that students need to put pressure on our state legislators.

Most students wrote about how their classes are overcrowded or that they were unable to get into specific ones they need in order to transfer

to a four-year institution.

“My plans to transfer to Berkeley have been postponed because the few remaining classes that are necessary for me to take are no longer available,” Civic Engagement Club V.P. Joshua Quinterez said.

The college cut 110 classes during the fall 2009 semester and also removed 110 this academic semester.

Approximately 50 percent of summer sessions courses are scheduled to be cut as well. Salaries were cut across the board.

The Student Senate for California

Community Colleges has provided funding for the upcoming protest in Sacramento, expecting more than 5,000 to participate. The governing body for the 110 community colleges throughout the state anticipates a marked increase in attendance over the March 2009 march.

“Our goal is to have students march at the Capitol before the legislature does its May revision, in hopes that they will not cut community college funds,” Morehous said.

The California state budget will not be finalized until after July.

Congressman Pete Stark (D-CA) and State Assembly member Alberto Torricco have agreed to meet with Ohlone students who participate in the march in Sacramento.

Students, faculty and administrators are strongly encouraged to join forces by marching March 4 at 5 p.m. at the Civic Center Plaza in San Francisco or in Sacramento on March 22.

For more information, contact the Civic Engagement Club at nocuts2edu@gmail.com

Staff writer Kathryn Dixon also contributed to this report.



Photo by Alex Glanville

Civic Engagement Club President Andie Morehous, left, and club member Yoesbelia Ramirez last week asked students and faculty to share their stories of how the budgets cuts have affected them. Their table in the Quad drew many responses.

53 investigated in student loan scam

By KATHRYN DIXON
Staff writer

Fifty-three people are under investigation for trying to obtain a total of \$450,000 in fraudulent federal student loans during the fall 2009 semester at Ohlone College.

According to authorities, an individual would enroll for a course, obtain a Stafford loan, and then fail to attend classes, with the intention of keeping the money from the loan.

The federal Stafford loan provides about \$4,500 to a student for a single semester.

“Discrepancies and similarities were noticed last term regarding 53 student financial aid applications,” said Ron Travenick, vice president of Student Services.

Federal loans are divided into

three or four disbursements per year. A student must complete at least 66 percent of his or her total course load per semester to continue to receive aid.

If a student falls below that percentage, he or she must pass a probation period.

According to Travenick, before the second disbursement of federal funds last semester, the administration reviewed student files and discovered students who did not attend any courses, although they were registered.

An internal investigation revealed misrepresentations by some loan recipients.

When these recipients went to the cashier’s desk to obtain their loan proceeds, they were stopped.

Travenick said, “This prompted the Financial Aid office to report possible fraud to the Department of

Education. Ohlone held disbursements to all students pending the investigation.

“The students involved were notified of this action. Stopping these loans at this point meant saving about \$600,000 in future loan proceeds that these people could have obtained.”

These cases are under investigation by Natalie Forbot, who is a special agent in charge of the Long Beach branch of the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education.

An officer from that agency was on campus last week conducting an investigation.

According to Department of Education spokesperson Kathryn Grant, the Office of the Inspector General cannot comment on this matter.

Joanne Schultz, Dean of Bus-

ness Services, said, “We caught the scammers early and the college did not lose any money.

“However, the student body was hurt in that the scammers took seats in classes, which other students could have taken,” Schultz elaborated.

Travenick said those who allegedly committed this scam ultimately hurt Ohlone and the student body.

The State of California looks at the student census data for the first two weeks of classes to determine Ohlone’s proportionate share of the total state budget for community colleges.

The state requires attendance be taken for at least the first two weeks of class.

The “no shows” caused by this scam will decrease the total number of students Ohlone submits to the state in order to obtain budget

money.

This type of fraud could have possibly damaged the excellent credit rating and credibility of Ohlone regarding federal loans because the scam has created an inaccurate account of how many pupils were enrolled in particular courses.

The scam also negatively impacts the U.S. Treasury because the defrauded lenders were backed by federal funding and are unlikely to obtain repayment of the loans. The interest on them from those committing the fraud.

According to Travenick, Ohlone has never before experienced people committing federal loan fraud.

Ohlone has a system in place to check paperwork for truth and accuracy and to detect loan fraud.

To obtain Stafford loans, the
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New job for Feliciano as statewide senator

By EAN TAJERON
Staff writer

As spring semester begins, Associated Students of Ohlone College President Kevin Feliciano has been sworn into a new legislative position, for the student body of California Community Colleges.

He is now one of 13 regional senators in our region, as well as one of 30 representatives of community colleges statewide.

Feliciano said, “I am super excited to do this job and the people there are very nice.”

His job will include attending the General Assembly and voting on important decisions that will affect our schools.

The majority of the CCC’s student body’s focus is aimed at the March in March protest.

The protest will be held in Sacramento on March 22 against the budget cuts in California schools.

In other ASOC action, the student government has “updated” the cafeteria with new chairs and tables under the Cafeteria Modernization Program.

The official grand opening for the newly refurbished cafeteria in Building 5 took place Wednesday.

ASOC allocated \$100,000 to this project. The cafeteria has been repainted and there are new furnishings. The district has already sold the old furniture.

Campus Activity’s Bingo Ballin’ took place after the grand opening at noon in Building 5.

Campus Activities Coordinator Renee Gonzales said, “The purpose of this event is to bring the campus

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