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‘WE’RE SHRINKING!!’



Photo by Amy Kent

Associate VP of Human Resources Shairon Zingsheim, Ohlone President Gari Browning, and Mike Calegari, VP of Administrative Services addressed Ohlone’s current fiscal situation at a Budget Forum Monday at the Jackson Theater. Browning said, “We are shrinking. We are shrinking in response to state cuts.”

Up to 5 layoff notices to be sent by March 15

By KATHRYN DIXON
Staff writer

President Gari Browning projects that Ohlone will face a \$ 2.5 million budget deficit in 2010-’11. This is a projection that is based upon future decisions by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the state legislature and federal government that are to be made in the midst of the recession. To close the \$2.5 million gap, the college set forth various options at the Budget Forum in the Jackson Theater on Monday.

Ohlone will replace CIG, a company it contracts with to manage Internet technology at the campuses. CIG employs three people. Last year, the amount paid to CIG was reduced from about \$900,000 to \$600,000. This year, the college will hire a new Associate Vice President in charge of IT for about \$138,000 plus benefits and probably manage two other employees, with a cost savings of an estimated \$300,000 over the cost of using CIG.

There were only two certain options put forth by the administration. First, that the college will save \$500,000 in materials, supplies, and services as it did last year. Second, the Ohlone will give layoff notices to no more than five counselors on March 15, the legal

deadline for doing so.

The Board of Trustees meets on March 10 and the layoffs will be part of the agenda. The board will vote to ratify or not ratify the notices. As of press time, the college shows not intention to back down in issuing the notices despite the firestorm of shock and dismay among faculty and staff that these counselors will suffer the pain of potential layoff.

Regarding the layoff notices, President Browning said, “It is my responsibility to keep the college fiscally sound.”

“We have an idea about how to be able to close the gap and avoid layoffs. However, we don’t know what will happen with state funding and with negotiations. Because of that we can’t avoid the option of giving notices. However, we do have the time to avoid these layoffs.”

According to Wayne Takakuwa, a counselor, his department includes four general counselors, four counselors in Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS), one mental health counselor and one Extended Opportunity and Services Program (EOPS) counselor.

Takakuwa said, “We are all teachers in addition to counseling. We teach study skills, career planning, career testing, and how to succeed in college. I think this matter of the layoffs could have been anticipated earlier by the administration and there could have been college-wide discussion, planning and strategies in advance of having to give notices.”

At the Budget Forum, Rob Smedfjeld, math professor, criticized President Browning for hesitating to reveal who among the faculty are going to receive layoff notices and the amount of money to be saved from any such layoffs. He said to waves of applause from the audience, “You had to have known that this is why we are

here -- to hear these things.”

Browning replied in part, “We don’t have any proposal to notice classroom faculty at this time, nor do we have any proposal to notice educational administrators, because both of those areas are much depleted as are librarians. You saw the numbers in response to the SERP (early retirements). No counselors took SERPS. The number of counselors we have

“It is my responsibility to keep the college fiscally sound.”

--Browning

at this time is 20. Our class offers, student enrollment, and headcount are all down.”

Browning continued, “We have to respond by reducing student services where possible. Again we are only considering notices, we are going to continue to work to find out possible solutions. Our counselors are doing incredible things for students. But the number of counselors we have had in the past has been designed for growth, designed when times were better. Cuts from the state are draconian and are targeting student services to the most fragile students.”

According to Ron Travenick, VP of Student Services, who is working on demographics, there has been about a 5 percent decrease in student population, in part because there are fewer classes available for students.

Mike Calegari, VP of Administrative Services, projected that the 2010-’11 will have a \$2.5 million deficit. He made it clear that is a projection based on the governor’s speech about community college funding in January and based upon the Legislative Analyst’s report of last week and based on Ohlone’s prior budget experience.

He anticipates that the deficit at the close of the 2009-’10 budget year will be \$300,000

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