

HOW WE CAN WIN PROP 92

an article by John McDowell

As I write, the governor is proposing deep cuts in all state programs, including education. California is in crisis due to a deep structural budget deficit exacerbated by the housing crash, rising unemployment, high gas prices, and a tanking economy. Community colleges can ill afford deep cuts to our already lean system, or higher student fees that will deny students access.

That damage doesn't have to happen. With the passage of Prop 92 on February 5th, California voters can lower and virtually cap student fees, stabilize college budgets, fund growth based on need, and protect governance. Prop 92 will not solve all of the funding problems of community colleges, but its long-term benefit is great.

Lower fees will allow many of the 305,000 students who were denied access when fees spiked from \$11 to \$26 to re-enroll. Furthermore, the new growth formula in Prop 92 will provide funding for 114,000 more students over the next three years.

Reducing fees is important, but the most far-reaching impact of Prop 92 is to prevent future increases. The greatest allowable fee increase under Prop 92 is \$1 a year, and even that is unlikely since it would require a two-thirds vote of the Legislature. Prop 92 is a bulwark against spiking fees that would put a college education out of reach.

FACCC is one of the central partners in a coalition* that wrote and helped qualify Proposition 92 for the ballot. Prop 92:

- Is proactive and forward looking
- Improves and protects student access and educates more students
- Above all, puts the interests of students first and foremost

**Proposition 92 is sponsored by Californians for Community Colleges, comprised of FACCC, CFT, the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild and the Community College League of California.*



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Passage of Prop 92 would mark a sea of change in higher education, reversing the trend of reducing funding for higher education and shifting the cost to students. Prop 92 truly protects the chance for every Californian to go to college.

How do we win? How do we overcome the opposition?

Educate - don't advocate. To pass Prop 92, we need to educate our students and help motivate student leaders and activists in student government and clubs to vote, to urge their friends, family and neighbors to vote, and to plaster the campus with signs and posters reminding all to vote on Feb 5th. Don't advocate in class; rather, explain Prop 92 and let students vote in their own interests. Informational materials are available on the FACCC Web site or at: www.Prop92yes.com.

Public Message. We need to put our message on TV in California's major media markets for 2 weeks before the Feb 5 election. The cost for TV is \$4 million. We also need some direct mail slates, and radio for a strong campaign. Prop 92 will not pass just because it is good policy. Good ideas have failed in statewide balloting, while bad ideas have passed. The major determinant is the amount of money spent to get the message to the voters.

Fundraising. No group has invested more than FACCC as a percentage of total budget. CFT, along with other unions and faculty, have stepped up big-time. To win, everyone needs to give, and all community college districts must meet their fundraising goal.

What can you do? Write a check for \$100 or more (\$40 for adjuncts and staff) toward the campaign, and urge your friends and colleagues to do likewise. Think of it as an investment (high yield, long term dividends, at no risk) in community colleges - in your future.

We can win. Yes, we have opposition, but how could it possibly be a bad policy to lower fees and educate more people? It isn't! Our opposition is misguided and on the wrong side of this issue. We can win because:

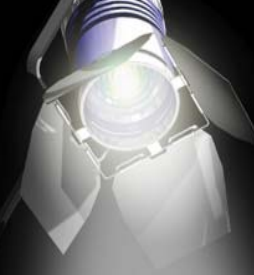
- Lowering fees and educating more people is good policy
- We have a compelling message
- The public loves community colleges
- We can raise the money needed to get our message to the voters

We cannot rely on lawmakers to keep fees low. Witness the dramatically escalating tuition at UC and CSU to make up for lost public funding. State support for UC undergraduate students has plummeted from 96 percent in 1970 to barely 50 percent last year. The tragic result is that today's university graduates begin their careers saddled with massive debt from student loans.

Colleagues, don't believe it can't happen to us - we're next! Numerous reports have referenced the national average of \$80 per unit for community colleges. Fees at that level would generate almost a billion dollars, tempting to lawmakers who are unwilling to raise taxes and unable to balance the state budget.

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, if we believe we can win and take the necessary steps, we will win. If we don't believe and sit on our hands, it won't happen.

We can make history and perhaps reverse the nationwide drift toward making college unaffordable and piling tons of debt on our young college graduates. ■



HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Vote Yes on 92
2. Contribute to the effort
3. Educate friends, relatives, colleagues & neighbors
4. Inform your students about Prop 92, and all items on the February ballot

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**The chance
for All
Californians
to go to College.**

www.prop92yes.com

FACCC
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

**Yes 92
on PROP**

Above: FACCC Window stickers produced and distributed to all members. If you are a FACCC member and did not receive your window sticker, contact us at (916) 447-8555 or info@facc.org (good while supplies last).