

With no state budget, colleges in Vallejo area consider deeper cuts

By Sarah Rohrs / Times-Herald

Posted: 06/18/2011 06:25:51 AM PDT

With Gov. Jerry Brown's veto of the new state budget, local colleges are back to worrying and waiting.

Solano Community College and California Maritime Academy are considering new cuts to make up for shortfalls contained in another spending plan lawmakers will hammer out this summer.

The worst-case scenarios include more class cuts, higher fees, staff layoffs and other reductions in services.

"We are still very uncertain about what the issues are going to be for us. We will continue to plan as if there will not be the resources there that we need to operate on the same level we did last year," Solano College President Jowel Laguerre said.

"We had high hopes this year would have been different. It's disappointing we don't have a budget so we can make firm decisions," he said.

In the budget Brown vetoed, community colleges did not sustain cuts beyond the \$290 million reductions in a January budget proposal, according to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's office.

However, the plan would have deferred \$129 million more in funding until later this year making it harder for community colleges to create spending plans, officials said.

That deferment of funding would bring the cumulative total of delayed state payments to \$961 million, or about 17 percent of the system's annual funding.

The new uncertainties have led vice president of finance and administration Yulian Ligioso to present a tentative budget that includes a 25 percent cut in summer school, and nearly 200 cuts in classes.

Even with those cuts, the school still must make \$1.9 million in reductions, Ligioso said.

College officials have been negotiating with teachers and classified staff while administrators have made some concessions to help make up the budget shortfall, Laguerre said.

Those include eight days of furloughs, forgoing both a 1 percent salary increase and regular increases in pay which are part of the administrators' contracts.

The California State University campuses are in a similar predicament, Chancellor's Office spokesman Mike Uhlenkamp said.

Funding cuts to CSU campuses, including California Maritime Academy, could range between \$500 million and \$1 billion, Uhlenkamp said.

However, because of its small size Cal-Maritime may be spared the brunt of the budget ax, Uhlenkamp said.

CSU campuses are bracing for steep reductions in any state budget lawmakers may devise this summer, Uhlenkamp said.

The budget package Brown vetoed contained an overall \$500 million reduction proposed in an early budget plan, plus an additional \$150 million hit, he said.

The CSU schools have been asked to cut a total of \$281 million, Uhlenkamp said. A tuition increase and reductions in the Chancellor's Office would also be made to make up a budget shortfall, he said.

Because of its small size Cal-Maritime will not be expected to participate in that system wide cut, though the school is being asked to hold down spending and cut where it can, Uhlenkamp said.

As such, the Vallejo campus is consolidating services, not filling open positions and making other cost-cutting changes, Director of Communications Jennifer Whitty said.

One possible change is for Cal-Maritime students to take one, not two, international cruises year aboard the Golden Bear training ship per year, she said.

"We're waiting to see what's going to happen. We hope there won't be any additional cuts," Whitty said.

Contact staff writer Sarah Rohrs at srohros@timesheraldonline.com