January 12, 2015

Colleagues:

This past Friday was quite a remarkable day for the Los Rios District and the students we serve. First we learned that President Obama wants to make two years of community college education free for all students. Hours later, we learned that Gov. Brown’s budget proposal for 2015-16 would be one of the most generous for community colleges in recent years.

The president’s proposal requires a closer study, and the details of how it will be paid for still need to be worked out. But it is exciting and welcome news for those of us who believe community colleges and the education and training we provide are the gateway to economic prosperity for the greater Sacramento region. I look forward to seeing how this ambitious proposal develops.

Closer to home, the governor’s budget proposal for 2015-16 for community colleges translates to an increase for Los Rios of about $13.9 million for our basic allocation, growth and cost of living adjustment. That compares favorably with the increase of about $10.1 million we received for the current year. That’s very good news, but we must keep in mind that our costs will be increasing, too. For instance, in 2015-16, our CalPERS and CalSTRS costs alone are projected to increase by $2.5 million, and those retirement fund costs are expected to continue to rise in future years.

For our Student Success and Support Program and our Student Equity Funds, the governor’s budget includes an estimated $9-$10 million increase in 2015-16 over our current year. And the current year budget includes a boost of $8.3 million for SSSP and Student Equity, compared with last year.

Of course, the governor’s budget only signals the beginning of the budget deliberations that will stretch out over the weeks and months to come. Throughout the process, many constituencies and interest groups will visit the Capitol to vie for the same finite resources.

Our District’s Trustees and executive leadership will be engaged in these critical conversations. We will continue to do all we can to impress upon the governor and lawmakers the importance of financial support for Los Rios and our students, and for all of California’s community colleges. Meanwhile, I will keep the Los Rios community apprised of significant developments.

I look forward to seeing you all on Friday, as we kick off the spring semester with our traditional convocation ceremonies. Here’s hoping that this recent good news is the shape of things to come!

Regards,