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## Supply and Demand of Higher Education

MODESTO, CA – The Yosemite Community College District is feeling the pinch of state budget cuts at a time when the demand for higher education in transfer/general education, vocational/career and technical education, and basic skills courses is bursting at the seams.

The reputation of California's community college system as the economic engine of the State, where displaced workers are retrained and skills are upgraded, is in its highest demand. Stanislaus County's unemployment rate is over 17%, and with higher unemployment residents look to the community colleges for job market retraining and upgrading skills. Coupled with the fact that the California State University system and University of California system have limited enrollment and raised fees, eventually community college enrollments soar.

Two weeks ago it was apparent that the District's two colleges, Modesto Junior College and Columbia College, were heading towards experiencing full courses and high waiting lists. The situation has worsened progressively each day.

On August 31, the first day of classes, at Modesto Junior College, 91% of the 1,476 courses offered are full. Of those, 1,432 (97%) have students on waiting lists. The number of seats on those waiting lists totals 25,783. That is an average of 18 students per waiting list. When the waiting list at Columbia College is added, the total seats at the District that could be filled by the actual demand for courses is a whopping 27,821.

This shortage has been created by a lack of funding by the State to the community college system at a time when it is needed the most. Resources have created an educational and training shortage.

With no foreseeable solution in sight, this situation is feared to worsen in succeeding semesters. The District anticipates there will be continued pressure to cut community college budgets, which assuredly will lead to cutting even more courses and putting more students on waiting lists. Community colleges need adequate funding to do the job they have been entrusted with during economic downturns.

According to YCCD Chancellor Roe Darnell, "It is essential that the state legislature recognize the negative impact that additional budget cuts to community colleges will have on our economy. Particularly in our region, where high unemployment already exists and the need to access higher education is unmet."

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