



**California Federation of Teachers**  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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**California Federation of Teachers:**  
**Keep the Promise of Affordable Higher Education for ALL**  
*Fee Hikes Represent “Failure” and are “Unnecessary”*

SACRAMENTO, CA - The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) today told a Joint Committee of the State Legislature considering California’s Master Plan for Higher Education that legislators and the governor must “keep the promise of affordable higher education for all.” “California must maintain our higher education vision linking the economic blueprint for the state’s workforce to the moral, intellectual and political purposes of providing our state’s citizens with the means to participate in our democratic institutions,” said CFT Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Smith. “Political and economic circumstances have undermined the Master Plan’s promise today, and threaten, if unaddressed, to renege on its promise for future generations.”

Smith, an Accounting Professor at Sacramento City College in the Los Rios Community College district and a teacher in California for more than thirty years, told the joint committee reviewing the Master Plan that cutbacks and layoffs are undermining higher education at all levels. Smith has participated in prior reviews of the state’s Master Plan. “The CFT represents librarians and lecturers in the UC system, and we have followed closely the deteriorating circumstances in which they work, with increasing workloads; and now more recently with furloughs and layoffs,” said Smith. “In the community college system, we represent full and part-time classroom faculty, counselors, librarians, and paraprofessional classified staff. All of these educators and staff are facing unprecedented student needs with dwindling resources and support. That situation cannot last.”

Smith cited his own personal experience in underscoring the importance and value of accessible higher education. “When my family of eight arrived here from Mississippi in the winter of 1963, California had a Master Plan for higher education that held for me and my siblings the opportunity for a future that no one in our family had ever imagined possible. Anyone who wanted to could get into a college. The community colleges were really great, the state colleges were excellent, and the universities were world-class. Best of all, they were affordable for everyone. After graduating from high school and completing four years of military service, I was able to complete my education, prosper economically, pay taxes, and participate in my community. We owe that same opportunity to California’s young people today and in the future.”

Smith pointed to several areas for policymakers to address:

**Eligibility and Access:**

CFT views with great concern the student fee hikes in each system.

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The historical data shows that a one dollar increase in community college student fees means that as many as ten thousand students will have to drop out. Fees were just increased by six dollars (30%) per unit.

CSU has closed its doors to admission in the spring after a 20% fee increase.

UC fees have been increased eight times since 2002, and now top \$10,000.

“These fee increases represent a failure to uphold the vision of the Master Plan, and they are not necessary. In the worst economic recession since the 1930s, students need to be able to improve their skills, their employability, their human capital potential,” Smith said.

**Accountability:**

“The UC Regents, the CSU Trustees, and many of our elected officials have bought into a mistaken notion that we should run our educational institutions with a strict business purpose – complete with an excessive focus on short-term financial management tactics, simplistic non-research-based learning metrics, outsourcing services or hiring temporary employees whenever possible, and increasing use of counterproductive outcome based funding schemes,” Smith told legislators. “The people who should be most accountable for driving up costs and driving out students, and for choosing student fee increases, program cuts, and thousands of employee layoffs while raising top administrator salaries, are the Regents, the Trustees, and the governor and legislature.”

**Affordability and Financing:**

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, in 2009, California was one of only six states to resort to higher education fees as a strategy to reduce its budget pressures.

California joined three other states and raised fees again in 2010.

Since 1991, when the top one percent of income earners in California took in 13.8 percent of the income, its share of annual income has increased to 25.2%.

At the same time its share nearly doubled, the top income tax rates have fallen, depriving the state of billions of dollars in revenue every year.

Smith called for the Legislature to enact an oil severance tax to help address higher education funding needs. “California is the only state in the country that does not have an oil severance tax, losing on average over a billion dollars per year. What do Texas and Alaska know that we don’t know?” asked Smith. “The Legislature and Governor need to value the future of our students and California more than excess income in the pockets of the superrich and the corporations. The continued decline of public higher education is not inevitable. Reversing that trend is possible.”

Smith urged legislators to renew the promise of affordable higher education for all Californians. “Along with the educational vision of the Master Plan we need to renew the vision of how to pay for it,” said Smith. “The deal was worth it in 1960, and it is worth it today.”