CSU Faculty: Budget ‘Threatens’ University System

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California State University faculty members expressed concern Tuesday about their budget prospects after watching the governor’s State of the State address.

The governor said he would deliver a new 2008-09 budget Thursday that would propose "across the board cuts."

The budget will include revised proposed funding for the CSU system.

Teachers said they were concerned because during the previous budget crisis, CSU was cut by $500 million.

The California Faculty Association released a statement Tuesday saying that a "bad budget" would threaten the system itself, and that the educators were "not prepared to give up on quality public higher education in the state."

"While the threat to the CSU is very real, we must remember that the governor’s January budget is just the opening salvo," said CFA president Lillian Taiz, a history professor at Cal State L.A.. “Final decisions have not been made. We know that higher education is part of the solution to a struggling economy."

Taiz cited "broad public support" for preserving the state universities and holding down tuition, based on a Public Policy Institute of California survey that found 76 percent of Californians feel the state’s public higher education system is "very important" to California’s future.

The CSU is in one of the more vulnerable parts of the state budget, because it is protected neither by propositions, as is grades K through 14, or court ordered funding, as prisons are.

The state universities never recovered the funding so in inflation-adjusted dollars, the CSU budget remains below the 2002 level, according to the faculty group.

The CSU has turned away eligible students, cut classes and increased class size, all of which resulted in longer times to graduation, faculty members said.
“Most importantly, these cuts threatened the faculty’s ability to offer quality education,” the statement read.

The governor also has indicated he will declare a fiscal emergency for the current budget year which began last July.

If drastic cuts are applied to the CSU, there is the threat of reopening CSU employee contracts, including the agreement that narrowly averted a faculty strike in spring 2007, faculty members said.

More than 400,000 students attend the 23 CSU campuses.

See the details of the CSU 2008/09 budget request at www.Calfac.org