To Occupy Chico State
From: Paul J. Zingg, CSU, Chico President

This is a follow-up to my e-mail of Wednesday, Nov. 30, and a fuller response to your one-page letter sent to Chico State administrators and read at Kendall Hall on Thursday, Dec. 1. As I wrote last Wednesday, I appreciate the opportunity to be in dialogue with you about matters that concern all of us: namely, the state of our university system and the processes and factors that contribute to its quality, or, in some cases, which work against it. This response further underscores the trust I have in your statement of “common purpose,” namely, “to make Chico State better.” If this is what Occupy Chico State is about, we will work well together.

I mentioned at the Occupy assembly meeting on Monday, Nov. 28, that using accurate information is crucial to the credibility and success of any group. I have heard among some of your members in last week’s assemblies a commitment to pay attention to accuracy. This is very reassuring, and will be beneficial to your cause. Below I want to share information I have that both pertains to your stated demands and can help us go forward on these issues.

1. “We demand that the CSU Board of Trustees become democratized. We demand that their campaigns be publicly funded and rid of corporate donations. The Board must be accountable to the citizens of California and the students they serve for their actions, not corporate, bureaucratic, special interest groups.”

Here is a webpage that describes the California laws governing the CSU Board of Trustees: http://www.calstate.edu/bot/overview.shtml?source=homepage. With one exception, the alumni trustee, members of the CSU Board of Trustees are appointed by the governor: not by the chancellor, not by the board itself, not by the presidents. They are not elected, and they do not publicly campaign for appointment. Campus presidents, however, have the ability to nominate members for the Board and I have done so twice, successfully. These are Dr. Glen Toney, a CSU, Chico alumnus; and Jillian Ruddell, the student trustee, also from Chico State. Both of these individuals bring diversity and a student-oriented focus to the board. I will continue to nominate and advocate for the appointment of such individuals who support the mission of the CSU and its attention to issues of access, affordability, diversity, and quality. In addition, I will discuss with Glen and Jillian and other board members your concerns and facilitate conversations that convey these concerns to the chancellor and governor.
2. “We demand that for every tuition increase, we also see tangible educational benefits, including, but not limited to, more classes and smaller class sizes.”

Over the past three years California has seen double-digit state budget deficits in the billions of dollars and cuts to the higher education systems of one-quarter to one-third of all funding. This has decimated CSU campus operating budgets, brought furloughs to employees in 2009-10, and caused enrollments to shrink, resulting in some instructors losing teaching opportunities and some prospective students being denied a place in the university. Below I will provide some data that details the crisis in funding for the CSU, but here is one compelling statistic: in 1998-99 the CSU received $2.16 billion dollars from the state to educate 273,928 full-time equivalent students. This fiscal year, the CSU received $2.14 billion to educate 331,716 FTES. This constitutes a $1.6 billion gap in unfunded support for educating students. Further, we anticipate the state may cut the CSU an additional $100 million this fiscal year. This situation has also necessitated, as you point out in your letter, a cycle whereby the three higher education systems raise fees as they try to compensate for the loss of state funding support. Unfortunately, increases in tuition do not replace lost state funding. Since 2007-08, state budget cuts to the CSU total $868 million while student fee revenue over that same period totals $592 million. That is a $276 million shortfall, not counting the $100 million additional cut expected later this year.

Nevertheless, despite the tremendous hardships inflicted on everyone in our campus community, there have been substantial educational benefits to students during this period. In Academic Year 2010-11, our campus received $2,188,700 in one-time Federal stimulus funding. These funds were used solely for adding class sections and providing academic support for students, such as more tutors in our Student Learning Center. The Division of Academic Affairs received $2,088,700—the other $100,000 went to the Division of Student Affairs—and 371 sections/courses were added to help students get classes they needed to make progress to their degree completion. Although we have had to cut spending in many areas as mentioned above, we have added funding, and gained private support from philanthropic foundations, for programs such as the First Year Experience Program. Programs like these have helped make Chico State’s first year retention – those students staying in school from freshman to sophomore years – second only to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo in the CSU. Regardless of our funding situation we will continue to focus, first and foremost, on providing classes and services to students. That is our primary mission.

Accordingly, despite the absence of state or federal funding, I have directed the Provost to use one-time reserve funds in the spring in order to help address the backlog of demand for key classes that students need to sustain their degree progress. The exact number and kind of these classes remain to be determined as the Provost consults with the deans and ascertains the pent-up demand. But, make no mistake about it, we will add classes and make other investments to support student success and progress to degree. I will direct the Provost to provide a full report on these steps.

3. “We demand increasing the weight of student evaluations in the tenure process. We demand that the student evaluation process not be privatized into the hands of external interests.”

The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the California Faculty Association and the CSU assures that student evaluations are a part of the review process for faculty. In addition, the guidelines in this matter adopted by the Chico State University Academic Senate underscore that “teaching effectiveness is the first, minimum, and indispensable requirement for retention, tenure, or promotion of teaching faculty.” The precise determination of the weight of student teaching evaluations is the prerogative of the faculty of our University as informed by the Collective Bargaining Agreement and its own strong
commitment to teaching effectiveness and quality. The teaching evaluation process is not controlled or
directed by any external interest. Rather, it is part of the responsibility of a public university to
demonstrate to its constituencies and stakeholders that the interaction between faculty and students is
characterized by clear standards and high integrity. Here is a link to our Faculty Affairs web page with
links to more information on these agreements [http://www.csuchico.edu/faaf/](http://www.csuchico.edu/faaf/).

4. “We demand full transparency of where and how our tuition and tax dollars are being spent. Full
disclosure of use of funds should be made available to students, community members, and tax-payers.”

Details of both the CSU system and Chico State campus budgets are readily available at their respective
web sites. These are [http://blogs.calstate.edu/budgetcentral/](http://blogs.calstate.edu/budgetcentral/) and [http://www.csuchico.edu/budget-central/index.shtml](http://www.csuchico.edu/budget-central/index.shtml). In addition, specific information on the Academic Affairs budget and budget
process at Chico State is available at: [http://www.csuchico.edu/bud/](http://www.csuchico.edu/bud/). The principal oversight body for
the Chico State budget is the University Budget Committee. Its membership includes representatives
from students, faculty, staff, collective bargaining units, and administration. Details of its meetings and
other aspects of its work can be found at: [http://www.csuchico.edu/budget-central/ubc.shtml](http://www.csuchico.edu/budget-central/ubc.shtml). The
meetings of the UBC are open to anyone and are regularly covered by The Orion and other media.

5. “We demand that a more localized pay scale be used that reflects the Average Per Capita
Income of our city. We demand a salary limit of $150,000 (still more than five times the 2009
annual APCI for Chico) for any CSU, Chico employee. The money saved should be used to cut
students’ tuition and increase the salaries of lecturers, educators, professors, and non-
instructional staff who are all working harder than ever.”

Both CSU system and state government codes and regulations govern salary issues in the CSU and on
this campus. These include collective bargaining agreements with all represented employees (which
includes faculty, counselors, coaches, physicians, custodians, skilled services providers in facilities and
housing, police, et al.); the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA) which governs
employment rights, benefits and conditions for all management and supervisory positions; and a
separate provision in Title V of the State Education Code which governs “confidential” positions such as
the chancellor and campus presidents and which sets system wide salary rates. In other words, no
campus has the authority or ability arbitrarily and unilaterally to establish its own salary levels or caps
for any of its employees. Where there is flexibility with employees outside of the boundaries of
collective bargaining agreements and other guiding protocols, salary considerations acknowledge both
local conditions (such as the regional Cost of Living index) and competitive market factors. They also
acknowledge the fact that there has not been an across the board salary increase for any CSU
employees since 2007, except for a very modest 2% salary increase for faculty in 2008.

At Chico State, besides the mandated salary freezes, we have also severely restricted new and/or
replacement hires partially to handle the reduction in state funding of nearly $30 million to our campus
over the past few years. With the savings from this strategy, we have directed funding, first and
foremost, to support instruction and adding classes. And we will continue to do so. We will also
continue to support the quality and morale of our workforce by providing fair and competitive salaries
and benefits to all University faculty and staff. So, in this environment of state laws and codes, and
collective bargaining agreements, it is neither permissible nor fair to impose an arbitrary, campus-based
cap on the salaries of Chico State employees.
These responses indicate actions both taken and pledged that reflect institutional and personal commitments to the goal of strengthening our University. The beneficiaries of these actions will not only be our students but the state of California. We have an obligation to serve both. I look forward to the consequences of informed, focused, and joint attention and advocacy in accomplishing this goal.