Brown's Countdown, Day 30: University leaders resigned to Jerry Brown's budget cuts

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The leaders of California's three higher education systems Monday said they are preparing to make budget cuts proposed by Gov. Jerry Brown, but warned that fewer degree programs and enrollment slots would likely result.

UC President Mark Yudof and CSU Chancellor Charles Reed said they would try to avoid raising tuition to generate revenue, while Yudof and community colleges Chancellor Jack Scott said the cuts would likely mean keeping out qualified students.

The state's Master Plan for Higher Education, signed in 1960, guarantees a higher education slot for every qualified student.

The proposed budget cuts $500 million from the University of California, $500 million from the California State University and $400 million from the community colleges. Brown also has proposed a $10-per-unit fee increase, from $26 to $36 a unit, at community colleges.

"We're saying, 'I don't like it. I don't want to do it, but I'm willing to do it for the CSU if there is a future to reinvest in California and have a conversation about what kind of California do we want for our kids, what kind of economy do we want, what kind of people do we want in the work force," Reed said.

"So this one time, sure. I'm willing to sacrifice because every public agency is going to have to sacrifice something."

The UC cuts, Yudof said, would probably mean fewer students and a smaller faculty.

"I hate it," Yudof said. "You know, our campuses are prepared to take another 30,000 to 40,000 students. They feel they have the room for them if we had adequate finances to do it."

Reed said the CSU would not be able to afford all of its degree programs and that some of the programs would have to be organized on a regional level.

The community colleges might have to turn away 350,000 students, Scott said, on top of the 140,000 people the system turned away this year. Many of those students couldn't find class slots or ended up on waiting lists.
Despite the budget crunch, Yudof said raising tuition would be "unpalatable," a message repeated by Reed. Yudof also said he wouldn't institute furloughs to save money.

"We raised tuition 10 percent in November," Reed said, "and I don't plan on doing it again, except if in June the revenue enhancements that the governor is proposing fail and the whole bottom falls out of everything, we'll have to come back and revisit that."

 Asked if Brown had pledged in private conservations to limit the cuts to the current proposals, Reed answered, "He hasn't promised anything other than that if these taxes don't pass, we're going to cut even more."