



CSU chancellor talks dollars and cents at Cal Poly Pomona

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By Beau Yarbrough

Despite the state's improved fiscal outlook, financial issues were the top issue on the minds of Cal Poly Pomona students, faculty and staff in meetings with California State University Chancellor Timothy P. White on Tuesday.

The newly appointed White, who has vowed to visit all 23 CSU campuses in 2013, met with student government representatives, faculty and the general campus community during an open forum.

Although the meetings were mostly light in tone, with White frequently joking with others in attendance, the CSU's financial health came up repeatedly.

"We are going to continue to be challenged with finances on this campus," he told student leaders. "I want to manage expectations ... We have very, very serious economic problems going forward."

White regularly meets with legislators to push for more support from the state, but said students and their families need to do the same.

"Get a hold of Sacramento by phone, email, postcard and tell them 'what we do here matters,'" he said. "I'm the hired gun; they expect me to go up there and say 'hired education matters.' Your voice really carries."

CSU students were instrumental in helping get Proposition 30 passed in November, argued student government president Chris Osuala.

"Is it fair students only receive 2 percent of the revenue it will generate?" he asked.

Although White said it's fair for students to ask for more Proposition 30 revenue, he warned that the additional tax burden is a real issue locally in the Inland Empire, where unemployment is at 10.5 percent, as of April.

“A lot of folks who are still really, really hurting still have to pay more for universities,” White said. “It’s hard to pay the bills, and I’m very sensitive to that, but we still are a great deal for the quality of education.”

Although CSU tuition will remain stable for the next two years, “beyond that, who knows? ”

Gov. Jerry Brown is seeking to tie performance measures to an additional \$125 million in higher education, which White said is a mixed bag: Tying more money to higher graduation rates is an “honorable goal,” but how that might be accomplished is problematic.

“What about the half-time single mom?” he asked, or students needing remedial classes or on major financial aid or part-time students. Cutting those students is not “to California’s advantage, but those are in as part of the conversation on performance measures. ”

White believes that public-private partnerships will be necessary to break CSU’s dependence on state funding and tuition hikes to balance the books.

“If we only rely on state and student resources, it’ll be a slow slide to mediocrity,” he said.

The CSU has also stopped hiring as many instructors for tenure-track positions in recent years, as a cost-cutting measure.

“I think now that we’re back into a growing economy ... we’ll get back to a growing percentage” of tenure-track hires, White said, although he said the exact breakdown of tenure-track and non-tenured positions is a “campus-based decision. ”

The CSU system has also, somewhat controversially, discussed raising fees on students who take too long to graduate, in an effort to move more students through the system and free up space for students who might otherwise get turned away. But White acknowledged the danger of penalizing students for doing what college students have always done.

“Part of campus life is you come here intending to be a civil engineer, and you discover (agricultural) economics, which you didn’t know existed,” he said.

White will visit Cal State San Bernardino on Thursday. It will be his tenth CSU campus visit since his appointment in January.

Gov. Jerry Brown is preparing to submit a revised budget proposal for the coming fiscal year later this month. Brown in January proposed a state spending plan that eliminates the deficit and provides \$6.3 billion more in spending than the previous year.