

Editorial: Will CSU funding ever be enough?

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Our view: When the CSU finally gets additional funding and still says, "That's not enough," it's time for a reality check.

It was time for change in leadership in the California State University system, and Tuesday's first board of trustees meeting with the new leader was promising on several fronts. New Chancellor Timothy White hinted at new ideas, such as controlling costs and improving efficiency, that seemed to be beyond the desire of former Chancellor Charles Reed.

Addressing the board and Gov. Jerry Brown, White said: "We're going to be strategically focusing on the kind of investments that make us better. I think you'll be pleased with what we bring to you (at the next meeting) in March."

While those are good signs, there was one disturbing development that makes us wonder if things have really changed: Even after getting more funding than last year, CSU officials said it still isn't enough. A CSU assistant vice chancellor told trustees that while \$125 million more in funding is appreciated, the system actually needs \$371 million more. The governor called that request "a dream more than reality."

He's right. After years of cuts, the CSU should be thankful funding appears to be on the rise again. Granted, the request for more money may be just a new chancellor's way of showing the trustees that he'll stand up for the CSU, but it also makes the system look unrealistic and ungrateful.

"Look," the governor responded, "it's a tight ship and it's going to get tighter. We're going to have to do some — how shall I say it? — very creative, very thoughtful, very caring adjustments."

What kind of adjustments? Well, Brown said the CSU's request for \$86 million for 3 percent salary increases might not sit well with the Legislature, knowing that other state employees have received no raises and, unlike CSU employees, don't have all of their health insurance paid by the state.

A "very caring adjustment" might mean giving raises, but having employees pick up part of the rising cost of insurance.

It's likely upsetting to many students that the moment CSU gets more funding, raises are among the first thing mentioned. We hope the CSU will focus on freezing tuition, cutting costs, figuring out less expensive ways to operate and opening more seats for people who want to learn.

We have no doubt that can be done, but it starts with being realistic about funding.