



Publication of the California State University Emeritus and Retired Faculty and Staff Association
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Legislative Report: Budget Cuts Could Devastate Some Campuses

By Robert Girling: CSU-ERFSA Legislative Director

Governor Newsom’s budget plans for a 7.95% cut—totaling \$375.2 million—to the CSU system, a reduction that would significantly impact the academic program and student services. With recent optimistic state revenue projections, CSU Chancellor Mildred García hoped that funding would be restored if the state’s fiscal conditions improve.

However, Governor Newsom warned that “California is facing a new federal administration that has expressed unalloyed and uninformed hostility toward the state, threatening the funding of essential services for political stunts.” Coupled with global financial instability, stock market

volatility, and likely conflicts with the Trump administration. Newsom cautioned that California’s revenues could decline.

CSU Budget Crisis Hits Sonoma State Hard. The California State University (CSU) system’s financial struggles are creating serious challenges for several campuses, including Sonoma State University (SSU). Interim President Emily Cutrer, who retired in 2023 as president at Texas A&M – Texarkana, recently announced major budget cuts that would:

- Eliminate six academic departments
- Discontinue nearly two dozen degree

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ASCSU Report: Budget/Admin Issues

By Jerry Schutte, CSUN, Emeriti Academic Senator

The Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU) convened its plenary session of the year on January 16–17, 2025. The meeting began with the approval of the agenda and the minutes from the November 14–15, 2024, session. Committee reports were presented, covering topics of academic affairs, faculty issues, governmental relations, diversity and inclusion, and general education.

Conference and Policy Updates. A major topic discussed was the upcoming ASCSU Conference, scheduled for March 15, 2025, focusing on faculty experiences and their contributions to the CSU system. The theme, “Adelante: Forward Teaching the Grace, Mobilizing the Grace, Moving Forward in the CSU Faculty,”

draws inspiration from Michelle Obama’s speech and emphasizes action-oriented discussions and breakout sessions.

A Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) update was given regarding a California Faculty Association (CFA) complaint related to the handling of Cal-GETC policies by the Board of Trustees. Settlement discussions have started, and senators were asked for input.

Administrative and Legislative Discussions. Key administrators and guests attended the session, including Interim Vice Chancellor (VC) for Human Resources Al Liddicoat and Assistant VC

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CSU-Emeritus and
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2023-2024**

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The *Reporter* welcomes submissions by members of CSU-ERFSA or other appropriate individuals of advertisements for academically oriented materials or services, to be printed at the discretion of the editor. The views expressed in the columns and articles in The CSU-ERFSA Reporter are those of the author, and not necessarily the views of CSU-ERFSA, its officers, or the editor. Editor's email: tanagno@calstatela.edu.

From the President

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you are all having a good start to the new year. I always enjoy watching the changes in the weather and soon Spring will be upon us.

The executive committee met via Zoom on January 21, 2025. We heard reports from the officers, Executive Director Pawlowski, and standing committee chairs and approved a motion to invite the CSU-ERFSA ASCSU Senator and the CFA liaison to all the executive committee meetings as guests. After much discussion, we decided that the spring State Council meeting will be a virtual meeting on the morning of April 30, 2025. We very much hope that the fall State Council meeting will have an in-person component.

This year we have elections for President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer so a nominating committee was appointed. You should have received a message from Bethany Shifflett, the Chair of the nominating committee inviting you to volunteer for service in CSU-ERFSA. We encourage

you to get involved in the organization – and bring your retired friends.

We had an inquiry about support for those who suffered loss during the terrible fires in Southern California. Although we have many generous members who have personally donated, the organization does not have the ability to provide that sort of support. We have discovered that some of the campuses in Southern California have established fire recovery funds. Please check the website of your campus to see what is available. We are all keeping everyone affected in our thoughts.

We look forward to seeing members from each of the CSU campuses at the spring State Council in April and wish all of our members a wonderful spring.

Sincerely,

Sue Holl
Professor Emerita of Materials Science
California State University, Sacramento
sueh@csus.edu

Health Benefits Report: Aging in Place, IRMAA

By Tom Krabacher, CSU-ERFSA Director of Health Benefits

Aging in Place. In spring 2024 CalPERS launched its Age in Place Program AgeAssured, as an add-on to its long term care coverage. The program has been developed in partnership with Assured Allies, an established specialist in long-term care, and is intended to allow retirees to age and live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. The program offers a wide range of support services at various levels to facilitate

continued home living. The program is for LTC policyholders aged 75 and older and not yet on claim. Participation is voluntary and is offered at no cost. Detailed information can be found online at: CalPERS → Members → Health Benefits → Long Term Care.

Expanded regional coverage: Starting in 2025 CalPERS health plan coverage has expanded into the following counties (relevant health care providers indicated): Napa, Solano, and parts of Contra Costa Counties (United Healthcare), Monterey County (Kaiser), and Imperial County (Health Net Salud y Mas HMO).
Reminder: In case you are unaware, CalPERS automatically reimburses the basic Medicare Part B monthly premium for retirees who are on Medicare. (The amount increased to \$185 in 2025.)

Income-Related Monthly Medicare Adjustment (IRMAA). If you are subject to the Income-Related Monthly Medicare

The CSU-ERFSA Reporter

The Reporter has been published since 1987 under the editorship of:

1986-1996 — Fred McMahon
1996-2001 — Ralph Bigelow
2001-2006 — Harold Seeman
2006 — Iris Shah
2006-present — Ted Anagnoson

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Long-Term Care Issues & Information

By Ted Anagnoson, Editor

“California’s Aging Population.” In January the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) issued a report on “California’s Aging Population,” noting that the present 14% of California’s population that is 65 and over will be 22% in 2040, only 15 years from now. 22% of them will be below the poverty level, and more of them will be in the labor force. Only 3% of the total older population is expected to live in institutional settings, and a vast majority will remain – and want to remain – in their own homes. About six in ten will live with their spouses, but one in three over 80 will have difficulty living at home without assistance. There will be an increased demand for long-term care. See <https://tinyurl.com/mu2bezst>.

Long-Term Care and Supports Almanac for California. The California Health Care Foundation (CHCF) has published its new Long-Term Care Almanac (2024 edition), which notes that:

- Medi-Cal is a key payer for long-term care. Medi-Cal has adopted several initiatives in California to provide care for older persons and those with disabilities.
- Just from 2017 to 2022, those on Medi-Cal using LTC grew by 20%.
- “The average number of deficiencies per nursing home in California (16.0) was nearly double the average nationwide (8.9) in 2023. One in four nursing homes in California and nationwide received a deficiency for actual harm or jeopardy of residents.”
- Only 15 of California’s 58 counties had “better availability” of assisted living facilities, defined as less than 800 adults 65 and older per facility.

The Almanac is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/38jnax8f>.

The Crushing Financial Burden of Long-Term Care. If you didn’t see it and can get access to *The Wall Street Journal*, a series last fall on “The Crushing Financial Burden of Aging at Home” was eye-opening, with the first vignette of someone paying \$240,000 per year for 24-hour caregiving at home – in Nebraska! I am sure the cost in California would be

higher! Many examples of people exhausting their retirement savings, having to liquidate assets and sell houses, taking out home equity lines, etc. to pay for long-term care.

If you are still at a point where you can save for the future, you will take action after reading these articles. See: <https://tinyurl.com/yckxkhdr>.

CalPERS Long-Term Care Program Newsletter. If you are NOT a member of the CalPERS Long Term Care Program, read this anyway. First, the newsletter is a good source of information on long-term care issues in California. Second, it has information on “Age Assured,” a contractor CalPERS has hired to help members of the long-term care program stay in their homes (and thus out of institutions, where their care costs the program \$!). There are many good ideas here, everything from small ramps to help people get in and out of their homes more easily to rolling laundry baskets, the latter of which I recommend – inexpensive on Amazon.com). If the Age Assured people call, you should definitely talk with them. I did, and it was worthwhile.

There was also an article on how to apply for benefits, which I used when I was applying for my wife, who just entered memory care. Helpful. And one on senior scams.

I’ve also found the CalPERS Long Term Care Program website invaluable; they have the exact status of every piece of paper submitted. The website is at: <https://tinyurl.com/2ab32nxx>.

You can find last summer’s issue, the most recent I think, at <https://tinyurl.com/bdz4hamb>.

Footwear for the Shoeless

Past President of CSU-ERFSA Bill Blischke reports that of the 8 billion people on Earth, about one billion don’t have shoes or adequate footwear. An international non-profit called Soles4Souls (S4S) collects and distributes them in 127 countries.

CSU-ERFSA Half Price Membership Offer On Until June 30, 2025

CSU-ERFSA’s half-price membership sale expires June 30, 2025. The offer is for new members who join by this date and is for the first year of membership only.

To be eligible for this discount, you must mail the information requested at the following link including your check as payment: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3c8hu4>

You will receive an annual dues renewal notice during the month you originally joined CSU-ERFSA. At that time, you will be given several easy options to renew your membership at the full rate.

- Monthly dues deductions from your CalPERS warrant
- Payment via credit card online
- Check payable to CSU-ERFSA

Membership dues are calculated as a percentage of your gross monthly retirement benefit. For your dues amount, please locate your gross **monthly** retirement benefit in the chart below and corresponding discounted membership rate for the **first year**:

Gross Monthly CalPERS Benefit	First Year Dues
Less than \$3,000	\$30
\$3,001 - \$3,600	\$36
\$3,601 - \$4,300	\$42
\$4,301 - \$5,300	\$48
\$5,301 - \$6,300	\$54
\$6,301 and above	\$60
Donor Member	\$66+

I have been working with S4S for over 5 years and have been able to collect over 50,000 pairs through CSUDH, Rotary, homeowner groups, and other organizations.

Zappos pays for me to mail them via UPS to the S4S Central Warehouse. If you go to the S4S website, you can get very explicit instructions on how to set up a shoe drive and send them to the warehouse. I strongly recommend that you kick in on this simple way to make the world a better place! Please feel free to contact me at wblischke@csudh.edu if you have questions about this program.

CSU-ERFSA 2024 Grant Recipients

By Marshelle Thobaben, CSU-ERFSA Grants Committee Chair, Humboldt

The CSU-ERFA Foundation funded eight proposals in the 2024 grant cycle. The allocation for this cycle was \$6,000. The CSU-ERFSA grants committee consisted of George Diehr (San Marcos); Marshelle Thobaben, Chair (Humboldt); and Don Wort (East Bay).

The following CSU-ERFSA members received grants to support their research or creative projects:

Dr. James Brady's (CSULA) grant will cover the cost of radiocarbon dates run on human skeletal remains that he recovered as director of the Petexbatun Regional Cave Survey (National Geographic, February 1993). His research seeks to discover if the structural violence that became endemic in ancient Maya society during the Late Classic Period (600-900 A.D.) was not already well-entrenched centuries before. The results of his research and the radiocarbon dates will be presented at the 90th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Denver, CO in April 2025.

Dr. Kimberley Garth-James (CSUS) plans to complete her book, *Revolutionary Widows ACT to Transform Societal Norms and Values*, which explores the transformative power of faith and resilience. By integrating historical narratives and events, she highlights the significant contributions of marginalized women to early communities. Drawing connections from past to present, her work aims to enrich higher education curricula and inspire new perspectives on societal change and resilience, all imbued with faith.

Dr. Gamini Gunawardane (CSUFU) plans to survey post-retirement scholarly and other activities of retired CSU faculty, and their overall satisfaction in post-retirement life. He also intends to ascertain whether pre-retirement planning helps to enhance post-retirement life, and whether support available from the university and faculty associations (such as CSU-ERFSA) helps to enhance post-retirement needs such as acceptance and recognition and the opportunity to exercise skills, intellect, and social commitments for positive accomplishments. He plans to submit the results of his study to a professional journal.

Dr. Leigh Kennicott (CSUN) will develop a template that may be duplicated in other retirement communities aimed at enhancing and contributing to the retention of memory in older populations through performance. During her six-week course, with her guidance and help, the residents will develop a timeline of significant events in their lives, followed by series of writing sessions aimed at developing monologues based on participants' selected moments. By consensus, each participant will choose one or two of those moments to aggregate them into a performance at the end of the class.

Dr. Christopher Kondo (CSUF) has pursued a long-held interest in filmmaking. He plans to make a short video that conveys the benefits of joining the Emeriti of CSU Fullerton to encourage new emeriti to join the chapter and contribute to their scholarship fund.

Professor Alexis Krasilovsky (CSUN) wrote "Tuki the Tiger," an animated children's musical screenplay (co-written with Shameem Akhtar of Bangladesh) and Middle Grade (ages 8-12) novel about a timid young Bengal tiger who learns to fight to reunite her family against a backdrop of poachers, a cyclone, and the Bangladesh Liberation War. She also wrote the novel, "A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Woman," and its screenplay adaptation, "Floating Lessons."

Among the many awards her work has received, she was a finalist in the Gemfest International Screenplay Awards and won Honorable Mention in the New York Screenwriting Awards. She plans to bring her screenplays to the American Film Market (AFM), as well as bringing both of her novels to the Association of Writers and Writers Programs (AWP) Conference in 2025.

Dr. Katharine Davies Samway (SJSU) plans to write up to 10 op-eds by July 2025 focusing on education issues that are often controversial (e.g., book banning, rewriting U.S. history, the role of phonics in reading instruction). Her goal in writing the op-eds is to inform the public about some key education-related issues that are often misunderstood. They will be submitted to online and traditional print

newspapers and magazines, including those directed at parents of school-age children.

Dr. Art Shulman (CSUN) is a playwright who wrote the full-length play, "BIAS." He plans to do a live production of his play at a local LA theater. The play, partially based on a true story, concerns a college professor who is accused of bias and discrimination by a student from a protected class whom he caught cheating. It was selected by a prestigious Los Angeles area theater as one of ten finalists among 325 submissions.

In Memoriam

East Bay – Alexander E. Cassuto

Fullerton – Stuart E. Bloom
James O. Friel

Humboldt – Doris L. Allen
Judith K. Little
C. James Lovelace

Long Beach – Dorothy Abrahamse

Pomona – Mary E. Mogge

Sacramento – Peggy J. Cavaghan
Joseph R. Heller
Kathryn J. Hohlwein
Rodney J. Sime

San Diego – John A. Hobbs
Jerome M. Sattler

San Francisco – Howard E. McNier
Raymond J. Roberts

San Jose – Lorraine A. Pedretti
Ruth Hafter

San Luis Obispo – Norman Lerner

Sonoma – Libby Byers
Clyde R. Nance

Spring Book and Film Reviews

By Sherry Keith, English, SFSU

I'm Still Here (Ainda Estou Aqui), directed by Walter Salles. Reviewed by Sherry Keith.

This is a film you might want to see. I am lucky enough to have an independent movie theatre in the community where I live. It screens pre-releases as well as oldies. Last weekend I went to see *I'm Still Here*. Directed by Walter Salles, hero of Brazilian cinema (you may have seen "The Motorcycle Diaries"), *I'm Still Here* is prescient both for Brazilian and American audiences. Brazilians are still worrying about ex-Brazilian President Bolsonaro, a buddy of Donald Trump, while half of the population in the USA is worried about the recently inaugurated president.

This film is adapted from a memoir written by one of the movie's characters who was Salles' neighbor and childhood friend. The story begins in 1970 with the arrest of Reuben Pavia, an elected Congressional Deputy, who opposed the Brazilian military dictatorship. Focusing on the family left to cope with his disappearance, Eunice, Paiva's wife, becomes the film's central character. Shortly after Paiva's arrest, both Eunice and her eldest daughter are detained for interrogation. This casts a deep chill over the family's lives that never completely thaws even decades later. Eunice remakes her life investigating and demanding that the government reveal and admit responsibility for what happened to her husband.

While the setting is Brazil, the story of the de-democratization of a society in the grip of arbitrary power is one of its central themes. *I'm Still Here* is a Red Flag warning to both Brazilians who are too young to remember the military years and to us "north" Americans who may be on the cusp of a situation that parallels the authoritarian governments ruling so many Latin American countries in the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

While it might be difficult at first pass for an American audience to imagine this film's importance to us, we should take notice. Fortunately, *I'm Still Here* also conveys a forceful, positive message: That being, with determination and resilience, people can outlast even the worst. *I'm Still Here* isn't easy, but it is well worth

your viewing time and reflection.

Coldwater, by Mardi McConnochie. (Doubleday 2001). Reviewed by Sherry Keith.

I found *Coldwater* in a little library. Because it is set in Australia during the mid nineteenth century, I took it home. (My grandmother was an Aussie). *Coldwater* lifts Emily, Charlotte, and Anne Bronte along with their father out of 19th century England transporting them to an island penitentiary off the coast of Australia. Captain Wolf rules this penal colony with an iron fist. His sense of self is predicted on his "perfect" record of no escapes or successful uprisings. A tyrant at work, but a devoted father to his motherless daughters, he has seen to it that they have become well-educated women.

All is well until a notorious prisoner arrives from Britain while his bored daughters begin to turn their energy to writing. Inevitable conflict festers between the Charlotte, Anne and their father. Then Emily becomes enamored with the notorious prisoner. The contemporary relevance of this twice told story – first of the Bronte sisters' lives and again as the inspiration for this novel, is its treatment of authoritarianism. What first appears to be unassailable power inevitably has fissures. And those closest to that control may become the very ones to turn against a "benevolent" dictator.

The Second Mountain by David Brooks (Random House, 2020). Reviewed by Robert Girling.

In *The Second Mountain*, David Brooks presents a compelling roadmap for a life of deeper meaning, contrasting two distinct phases of human existence: the pursuit of personal success (the first mountain) and the search for greater purpose (the second mountain). With his signature blend of intellectual rigor, personal reflection, and cultural commentary, Brooks challenges the dominant ethos of hyper-individualism and makes a persuasive case for a more relational, service-driven life.

The First Mountain: The Pursuit of Personal Success. The first mountain represents the traditional path of achieve-

ment—career success, financial stability, social recognition. It is a life shaped by external validation, often driven by ego, ambition, and the cultural expectation of individualism. Many people on this mountain are what Brooks calls "insecure over-achievers," highly accomplished but internally restless, always striving for more but never feeling truly fulfilled.

The Valley: A Crisis of Meaning. For many, the first mountain eventually leads to a descent into the valley—a crisis that shakes one's worldview. This can come in the form of personal loss, professional failure, or a deep sense of emptiness despite outward success. The valley forces introspection, breaking down old paradigms and opening the possibility for transformation. It is here that people begin to realize that happiness alone is not enough; they must seek joy, which Brooks defines as a deeper, more sustaining fulfillment rooted in connection and service.

The Second Mountain: A Life of Meaning and Service. Emerging from the valley, some individuals embark on the climb up the second mountain—a life dedicated not to personal achievement but to community, relationships, and moral commitment. This stage is characterized by what Brooks calls "relationism," the recognition that life's greatest rewards come from meaningful connections with others. Instead of prioritizing personal ambition, those on the second mountain seek to serve—through their families, professions, faith, or social causes.

Brooks illustrates this transition with powerful examples of people who have shifted from self-centered goals to service-driven lives. He argues that true fulfillment comes from four central commitments:

1. Vocation – Choosing work that aligns with one's moral values.
2. Marriage & Family – Deep, lasting relationships that require selflessness.
3. Faith or Philosophy – A guiding belief system that provides meaning.
4. Community – A commitment to social causes or collective well-being.

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Legislative Report: Budget Cuts Could be Severe

(Continued from page 1)

programs

- Lay off more than 60 faculty and staff
- Cancel all 11 intercollegiate sports programs

The proposal was met with swift and widespread opposition from students, faculty, alumni, and labor groups. Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 2015 joined the criticism, with its president, Arnulfo De La Cruz, stating: “It is unconscionable to see such drastic measures taken when reserves and resources exist within the CSU system to prevent this harm. These cuts will have a lasting impact on students’ lives, workers’ livelihoods, and the broader Sonoma State community.”

In response to questions from SSU’s faculty and the Sonoma Emeritus and Retired Faculty & Staff Association (ERFSA), the administration cited market demand, student demand, and program costs, measured by admission, enrollment, and graduation data, as key factors in its decisions.

With a \$130 million operating budget for the current school year, Sonoma State anticipates a \$21 million budget deficit heading into 2025-26. The university notified the faculty union in October that layoffs were imminent.

In a campus-wide message, Cutrer emphasized that the cuts were strategic, aimed at realigning staff and resources. The budget reductions include:

- \$1.3 million in university-wide administrative cuts
- \$8 million in reduced instructional costs
- \$3.7 million from discontinuing NCAA athletics

However, critics argue that some program eliminations make little sense. ERFSA member and former Dean Bob Karlsrud expressed frustration, stating: “The most foolish aspects of these cuts are the elimination of programs with strong community ties, such as athletics and the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program, which has produced many leaders in local organizations. These should be the last programs on the chopping block if the goal is to maintain enrollment and preserve SSU’s reputation.”

He also criticized administrative bloat,

noting that during his tenure as dean—when student enrollment was higher—SSU operated with just a president, a provost, and a single vice president of Administration and Finance. In contrast, President Cutrer now has five vice presidents. Previous studies have shown that SSU has twice as many managers per student compared to similar CSU campuses.

Other critics have questioned the need for cuts that harm students, particularly given the high salaries and benefits of CSU executives. They note that campus presidents receive housing allowances exceeding many faculty salaries, while their base pay can be twice that of the California governor.

Interim President Cutrer addressed critics in an interview, stating, “This is not a final decision, and several factors are still in play. The key issue is our ‘meet and confer’ discussions with the unions, which could influence the outcome.... Similar to what we did at A&M Texarkana, we (intend to) really work with the major employers in the region and ask them what degree programs they think students need moving forward. One of the key areas we are going to be developing is health care. Health care is embedded in this university, but we need to expand it. There are much more job opportunities in health care and much more need, particularly as my generation gets older, for health care. So that is one area.” She added that SSU needs to work to improve its recruiting, especially with the students at the community colleges.

Interim President Cutrer rejected a voluntary offer to take a pay cut by the university’s vice presidents asserting that it would set a bad precedent. “If we took the cuts that our group volunteered to take, it would put pressure on (other) institutions. Frankly, our salaries are good. I’m not complaining about that, but they are well below the national average. So, the problem is that we would put undue pressure on other institutions to do the same thing when they are, in fact, underfunded in that area already.”

Retired professor Bill Crowley said, “Long Beach has tremendous resources, and even though the governor’s budget proposal reduces funding for state universities, the CSU system has abundant reserves — \$776 million as of June 30. What’s needed

is the will to offer support.... Humboldt State faced enrollment problems similar to those of Sonoma State. Five years ago, Long Beach said, OK, you’ll be Cal Poly Humboldt, and here’s \$25 million. Establish a marine sciences program and go on from there. This example suggests Long Beach can find funding if the chancellor and trustees are so inclined.”

Today Cal Poly Humboldt has been completely redesigned with over 40 majors and research centers in such areas as energy systems, applied fire science, and geospatial analysis. It is now the number one campus for STEM students going on to earn Ph.Ds. See <https://tinyurl.com/5cw79he6>

CSU Faces Uncertain Future Amid Enrollment Shifts. The California State University (CSU) system is navigating an uncertain future. On one hand, the system faces a long-anticipated decline in recent high school graduates across California. Yet, in contrast, the Public Policy Institute of California projects that CSU enrollment will continue to rise through 2035, driven by:

- More high school students completing college preparatory coursework
- Increasing college-going rates statewide

One campus bucking the trend is California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM), which has seen significant growth over the past decade. Enrollment has surged to 14,655 students, a nearly 15% increase since 2015—one of the sharpest rises among all CSU campuses. This growth is largely attributed to:

- Guaranteed admissions agreements with school districts and educational partners
- Collaboration with Murrieta Valley Unified School District and Mt. San Jacinto College to develop coordinated coursework, particularly for students pursuing software engineering degrees

However, this growth is not uniform across the CSU system. While some campuses have expanded, overall system-wide enrollment remains 2.7% lower than a decade ago, exacerbated by sharp declines during the pandemic. Several campuses have faced double-digit enrollment drops over the last decade, including:

- CSU East Bay: 30% decrease
- CSU Channel Islands: 21% decrease

(Continued on the next page)

Legislative Report: Severe Budget Cuts Possible

(Continued from the previous page)

- CSU Chico: 15% decrease
- San Francisco State: 25% decrease since 2019, with 1,000+ course cancellations

As the CSU moves forward, it must adapt to shifting enrollment trends, balancing declining high school graduates in some regions with rising college attendance rates statewide.

CalPERS: Managing Investments

Amid Uncertainty. CalPERS serves 2.3 million members, including public sector employees and their beneficiaries. Approximately 70% of its members work for schools and local government. A critical concern for both members and employers is CalPERS' funded status, a measure of how well the pension system is positioned to meet future obligations: the overall pension fund was approximately 75% funded as of June 30, 2024.

CalPERS investment strategy may face extreme volatility and uncertainty introduced by the incoming Trump administration. The California constitution mandates that CalPERS Board carefully assess risk in its investment decisions, but balancing risk and reward remains a complex challenge and will be a key issue for CalPERS' Board and investment managers as they navigate shifting economic and political conditions in the coming four years.

Legislation Update

AB 2925: Strengthening Anti-Discrimination Protections, signed by the governor in September 2024. In contrast to recent federal directives, AB 2925 would reinforce California's commitment to equity in higher education by requiring postsecondary institutions to actively combat discrimination. The bill mandates protections against discrimination based on disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality or national identity, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other specified characteristics.

Additionally, AB 2925 expands the definition of "nationality" or "national identity" under the Equity in Higher Education Act to include a person's actual or perceived shared ancestry, ethnic characteristics, citizenship, or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious

identity.

CSU vs. Community Colleges:

Ongoing Dispute Over Bachelor's Degrees. A 2021 law allows California's community colleges to create up to 30 new bachelor's degree programs annually, provided they address local labor needs and do not duplicate programs offered at California State University (CSU) or the University of California (UC). Seven proposed degrees that received provisional approval in 2023 remain in limbo due to CSU objections over program overlap.

Despite these disputes, community colleges have successfully introduced 32 new bachelor's degree programs, adding to 15 existing pilot programs. Recent approvals include:

- Drone and Autonomous Systems – Fullerton College
- Emergency Services Administration – Mission College (Santa Clara)
- Water Resource Management – San Bernardino Community College

CSU has objected to a small number of proposals, citing program duplication. For instance, CSU San Bernardino opposed San Diego Mesa College's proposed Physical Therapy Assistant degree, arguing that three upper-division courses—biomechanics, nutrition, and exercise physiology—overlap with its own kinesiology bachelor's program.

However, disagreements over what constitutes duplication have stalled several proposals, and no resolution has been reached between CSU and the community colleges.

Wildfires. California's wildfire crisis is no longer seasonal—it's now a year-round threat. Each year, devastating fires destroy homes, lives, and ecosystems, causing billions in damages and leaving deep emotional scars. The growing intensity and frequency of these fires, exacerbated by climate change, demand bold action. California must take immediate steps to protect our schools, communities, homes, infrastructure, and businesses.

The recent wildfires in Los Angeles alone are expected to cause losses exceeding \$225 billion. While insurance may cover some damage, the emotional toll, economic disruption, and the cost of rebuilding infrastructure will last for years.

How You Can Help.

California Volunteers is the state office tasked with engaging Californians in service, volunteering, and civic action to tackle our state's challenges. The office suggests ways to make a difference during this difficult time:

- **Donate** — Donate through *Philanthropy California* (click on *California Response Funds*). *Philanthropy California* is a partner of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) that thoroughly vets everything listed on its site.

If you're a CSU-ERFSA member affected by the current wildfires, resources include:

- **CalPERS Resources** — For how to access your health care in an emergency or update your contact information, call 888 CalPERS (or 888-225-7377) or send a secure message via myCalPERS.
- **General Resources** — California's official website — CA.gov — includes insurance and housing help, FAQs, and more.
- For the latest information on the status of the wildfires plus resources for those impacted, visit www.ca.gov/lafires.

CSU-ERFSA New Members

Channel Islands – Karen Gundelfinger

Dominguez Hills – James Katzenstein
Clarence Augustus Martin (Gus)
Michael Wynne

East Bay – Katherine Bell

Fresno – Joseph Daniel Herring*
Michael Russler
Agnes Tuska

Fullerton – Catherine T. Atwong*

Northridge – Harry Gamboa, Jr.

Sacramento – Mark Rodriguez

San Jose – Tzvia Abramson
Scott Sublett

Stanislaus – Deborah H. Kavasch*

* Indicates lifetime member

ASCSU Report: Budget/Admin Issues

(Continued from page 1)

for Civil Rights Hayley Schwartzkopf. They discussed Title IX, discrimination policies, and compliance with state audits. A systemwide report on civil rights programs will be publicly shared, addressing staffing shortages and best practices.

Additionally, concerns were raised over the CalPERS Gold PPO administrator change from Blue Cross to Blue Shield, which disrupted faculty healthcare access. The issue was acknowledged, but the decision was a CalPERS decision, not one made in the CSU.

Support for Students and Faculty.

Several initiatives were discussed to support students and faculty, especially those impacted by wildfires and budget cuts. Deputy VCs Dulcie Perez and Nathan Evans provided updates on identifying students affected by wildfires and addressing financial aid concerns. The California Dream Act remains a vital resource for undocumented students, even amid immigration enforcement actions.

CSU Chancellor Mildred Garcia emphasized budget concerns, particularly the proposed 7.95% budget cut by the governor. She reassured senators that the chancellor's office will absorb part of the reductions and will continue advocacy efforts to restore funding.

Legislative and Policy Priorities. CFA President Charles Toombs reaffirmed the association's commitment to fighting budget cuts and advocating for faculty equity. The equity conference scheduled for March 11–16, 2025 will include in-person participation for the first time since the pandem-

ic. CFA is also focusing on immigration policies and ensuring that ethnic studies remain a strong component of CSU curricula.

The federal and state legislative update included concerns about Title IX enforcement, artificial intelligence in education, and student financial aid. Efforts to prevent community colleges from duplicating CSU degree programs were also highlighted.

Resolutions and Action Items

Several resolutions were approved, including:

- CSU General Education vs. Cal-GETC policy adjustments
- First-Year Experience initiatives
- Greater budget transparency
- Increased funding for financial aid (approved unanimously)

Full text can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/45fu73sb>.

Additionally, a waiver was granted and approved unanimously for a resolution addressing the exclusion of certain mathematics courses from Cal-GETC standards.

Reflections and Recommendations. In a plenary ending capstone discussion, senators expressed appreciation for the organization of the plenary session but raised concerns about the intensity of three full meeting days. Suggestions were made to spread discussions across different times or incorporate breakout rooms for informal discussions. There were also calls for improving new member onboarding processes with Zoom recordings and logistical resources.

law that could reduce their Social Security benefits, known as the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). The law limited benefits for anyone in a “non-covered” position unless they had 30 or more years of “substantial earnings” from a different job where Social Security taxes had been collected. (No matter what your work history is, Social Security has no impact on your CalPERS pension.) The WEP was repealed by the Social Security Fairness Act, signed into law by President Biden on January 6, 2025. The new law is retroactive to benefits paid in 2024, but it is currently unclear how long it will take the Social Security Administration to fully implement its provisions. CalPERS manages neither the changes brought about by the new federal law nor the eventual additional payments. The Social Security Administration will have more information.

What was the Government Pension Offset?

The Social Security Fairness Act also rescinded a federal law known as the Government Pension Offset (GPO). This law applied to those who 1. receive a government pension that is based on employment not covered by Social Security, and 2. are eligible for a spouse or a surviving spouse's Social Security benefits. The GPO provisions did not impact members whose employment has always been covered by Social Security. As with the repeal of the WEP, some members are likely to see additional benefits paid once the Social Security Administration implements the change.

Where to Obtain More Information.

Read the Social Security Administration's update on the new law here: <https://tinyurl.com/2vpfswdb>. This page is updated as new information is received.

Dreaded WEP and GPO Are Gone: The Social Security Fairness Act

The following is drawn from CalPERS sources. Not all CalPERS members have the same access to Social Security benefits during retirement. Those benefits depend on whether your employer withheld Social Security taxes from your salary. Those who didn't have Social Security taxes withheld served in what are often called “non-covered” positions, with many of these being safety personnel. The “non-

covered” positions exist at both the state and local government level in California. [Ed.: Elementary and secondary teachers in California, as well as some city and county employees (LA in particular) are especially likely to be affected.]

What was the Windfall Elimination Provision? Prior to January 6, 2025, these members were subject to a federal

Pocket Calendar

The pocket calendar is currently being sent ONLY to those who have opted in - please notify the office at the email, phone, or address on page 2 if you would like to continue receiving the calendar.

However, if you have opted in already, you do not need to opt in again. You will remain on the list to receive the calendar.

Spring Book Reviews

(Continued from page 5)

Intellectual Virtues: A Higher Form of Learning. One of the most thought-provoking sections of the book (pp. 196ff) explores intellectual virtues and the ideal of the intellectual life as a journey toward service and love. Brooks challenges the notion of knowledge as mere accumulation of facts and instead advocates for an intellectual path that fosters wisdom, humility, and compassion. True learning, he argues, should elevate us beyond self-interest and toward the betterment of others.

Final Thoughts. The Second Mountain is an inspiring and deeply human book, offering a much-needed counterpoint to the culture of individualism and relentless ambition. Brooks' insights push readers to question their values and consider whether they are chasing success for its own sake or striving toward something truly meaningful.

While some may find Brooks' moral vision idealistic, his argument is grounded in both philosophical thought and real-world examples. He does not suggest abandoning ambition but rather redirecting it toward relationships and service. His ultimate message is one of hope: even those who have spent years climbing the first mountain can choose to embark on a more fulfilling journey toward the second mountain. For readers in search of deeper meaning in their own lives, *The Second Mountain* is an essential and transformative read.

The Silence of the Volcano by Almudena Konrad. Amazon, 2023. Reviewed by Robert Girling.

Almudena Konrad's *The Silence of the Volcano* is a deeply moving and unflinchingly honest memoir of resilience, transformation, and triumph over adversity. From the very first page, Konrad's story captivates with its raw emotional intensity, chronicling her journey from a childhood overshadowed by an abusive father to becoming a distinguished computer scientist and professor.

Konrad's life was marked by seemingly insurmountable obstacles—an unforgiving, abusive father who dismissed her intellect, an arrival in a foreign country without money or employment, the crush-

ing disappointment of failing an essential exam, and the systemic discrimination she faced as a woman in menial jobs. Yet, time and again, she picked herself up, demonstrating an indomitable will to succeed. Her acceptance into UC Berkeley's engineering program was the first in a series of triumphs that led her to earn a PhD in Computer Science, establish a career as a professor at a prestigious women's college, and receive numerous accolades for her research—all while raising three remarkable children.

Konrad spares no detail in recounting the struggles and setbacks she endured, and it is this unsparing honesty that makes *The Silence of the Volcano* such a compelling but at times difficult read. Her narrative does not gloss over the pain, but rather embraces it, allowing readers to witness the full breadth of her resilience. Her ability to channel her emotions into fuel for her success makes her story not just inspiring but empowering.

Readers will find much to admire in Konrad's tenacity, but they will also be drawn to the rich tapestry of relationships that shape her journey. Her mother and sisters, Carmen and Ana, emerge as beacons of support, while her husband, Mike, plays a steadying role. The book also offers glimpses into the cultural charm of Southern Spain, painting a vivid picture of the seascape and traditions that shaped Konrad's early years.

Ultimately, *The Silence of the Volcano* is more than just a personal story—it is a testament to the transformative power within each of us. It is a book for anyone who has faced hardship, doubted their own worth, or struggled against injustice. It is a call to courage, perseverance, and self-belief. Konrad's journey proves that through relentless study, unwavering hard work, and the willingness to stand up against adversity, we can forge our own paths to success.

This memoir is an essential read for anyone seeking inspiration, reassurance, or simply a powerful story of a feisty, effervescent woman who refused to be silenced.

Join CSU-ERFSA Today!

For information, see www.csuerfsa.org and choose Membership, or see the box on the main page.

CFA Report: Budget Cuts By Jay Swartz, CSU-ERFSA Liaison to CFA

As CSU executive posts and administrative salaries continue to increase statewide, quite the opposite continues to happen in the trenches, in our system's classrooms.

Things have deteriorated so drastically that at one campus, Sonoma State, the campus president proposed that more than 60 faculty and staff be terminated, of the approximately 900 full-time faculty and staff. Six entire departments are slated for elimination, many programs are slated for merger, and 23 entire academic programs are slated for the axe.

In addition the entire NCAA SSU Seawolf athletics program will no longer exist in June.

With declining enrollments and administrative mismanagement, smaller cuts are planned elsewhere such that CFA leaders are heating to a boil. More than 4,000 have signed a protest letter. The Chancellor reports that several campuses, led by Sonoma, are deep in the red.

This only adds fuel for the newly structured and energized bargaining team, a group now of forty plus that must hammer out a new deal given that the current contract expires June 30. Stay tuned for an early fireworks show this spring.

CSU-ERFSA Nominating Committee Update

The CSU-ERFSA nominating committee has made good progress filling open seats. Thank you to members who volunteered to serve!

Next steps are for the nominating committee to finalize the slate of officers and prepare an update for the Executive Committee by March 15th.

Information related to proposed officers, liaisons, and Committee members will be sent to state council members by March 31st. Elections and confirmations of appointments and nominations from the President will take place at the State Council Meeting on April 30th.

An Egyptian Odyssey

By Merry M. Pawlowski, Executive Director, CSU-ERFSA

Spending twelve days in Egypt was such an overwhelming experience for me that I can only record the highlights here – if I tried to tell it all, we’d need several issues of *The Reporter* to capture every nuance of the journey. I’ve been determined for several years to cruise the Nile River, finally bringing that dream into fruition this past November. I chose Viking River Cruises because I’d taken a Viking ocean cruise of the Mediterranean and loved it. This trip did not disappoint.

One of the most striking features of touring Egypt for me was the sharp contrast between Egypt then and Egypt now. Egypt now is poverty stricken, the streets are filled with rubbish, donkey carts and camels abound on the major thoroughfares, there are few streetlights – traffic is largely controlled by speed bumps. Along with the donkeys and the camels, Cairo sidewalks, alleys, and tourist sites are frequented by stray dogs and cats, looking for a handout and compassion from visitors and natives alike.

Multi-family housing tends upward, floors being added as generations of families move in one above the other, so rods of rebar, waiting for a new floor to be added, dot the roofs of many Egyptian buildings. And laundry waves in the breeze to dry as it hangs outside windows. Our program guide often spoke about the ineptitude of the contemporary government in dealing with infrastructure – streets, roads, highways, bridges, tenement buildings, garbage collection, all need improvement.

Street hawkers aggressively dominate every tourist attraction, eager to make a few pennies – the dollar is strong against the Egyptian pound. Cottage industries line the back streets of Cairo as workers weave highly prized Egyptian cotton into cloth and pound cotton for batting. At every street bazaar hang racks of galabeyas (the Egyptian “dress” worn by both men and women) along with blouses, scarves, bags, trinkets, jewelry, and spices. Everything is for sale, and everything is up for barter. Of course, I paid too much for my galabeya – suckered by a vendor who confused me with the exchange rate of dollar to Egyptian pound and who insisted it was hand embroidered – hmmm – it’s not, but it’s pretty. The Egyptian seller expects you to bargain (I was not

very successful) and always offers his item for sale at the highest price first – here’s where reliance on your program tour guide for good advice about price comes in very handy. As we walk the streets of Cairo, through villages along the Nile, and major tourist sites, we’re accompanied by a guard packing a handgun – he stays at the back to make sure that stragglers from our group don’t get lost in the crowds, and sometimes he’s needed to help us escape the clutches of an especially aggressive street vendor. Often, too, we see Egyptian police armed with AK 47’s and rifles. hilariously, we’re not even immune from hawkers in rowboats on the river pulling alongside our ship, waving cotton tablecloths and yelling “Hallo, hallo, one dolla, one dolla!” Of course nothing is just one dollar – buyer beware!

Yet just 23 miles south of Cairo lies our first view of ancient Egypt: the necropolis of Saqqara, where more than 4000 years ago, the architect Imhotep built the first pyramid, the “step” Pyramid of Djoser, in the Third Dynasty, circa 27th century BC. Just 16 miles from Saqqara, the majestic Sphinx guards the tombs in the great pyramids of Giza.

Blending the old and the new, our group rides camels for a photo op with the great pyramids as a backdrop. Having survived



NEVER AGAIN! I’m over 7 feet off the ground on top of the camel’s hump, holding on for dear life to the front saddle horn. Do you know how you get on a camel? He (or she) is kneeling when you mount, then he raises his back legs, you’re thrown forward, and when he rises to his full height, you’re thrown backwards – what fun!

the camel ride, we’re back to Cairo where the river flows through the city’s chaotic modern scene on its endless journey to the sea. Our river journey begins in Luxor where we board our ship, the Viking Sobek, named for the crocodile god, brand new, comfortably housing its 82 passengers and crew. It’s relaxing to be away from the chaos of Cairo and watch the river glide by, its banks dotted by palms and papyrus.

Now we’re on our way to immersion in ancient Egyptian tombs and temples – the Valley of the Kings and Queens, the temple of Queen (Pharaoh) Hatshepsut, the temple of Abu Simbel, among several others.

The Valley of the Kings is vast, encompassing tombs from the 16th – 11th centuries BC. To date, the total number of tombs is 63, including one just excavated in 2006 and two entrances discovered in 2008. This is the most famous archaeological site in the world, largely due to Howard Carter’s discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922. Because Tut (Pharaoh from 1332 – 1323 BC) died so young, the tomb meant for him was not ready and he was buried in a small, out of the way tomb, which perhaps saved it from being vandalized by grave robbers like so many of the other royal tombs. The range of paintings and hieroglyphics on the tomb’s walls tell stories of the journey through death to resurrection and rebirth. Especially interesting are the paintings of baboons (see top right, next page).

The walk down into Tut’s tomb was easy compared to the challenge of climbing down 450 feet into the tomb of Pharaoh Seti I (19th Dynasty) – it is one of the most decorated and the largest and deepest tomb in the valley; I was warned about the strenuousness of the downward climb but against my better judgment I went down anyway. The tomb is covered from floor to ceiling with well-preserved murals and reliefs, including depictions of Seti

(Continued on the next page)

An Egyptian Odyssey

(Continued from the previous page)

with divers Egyptian gods. This is a fine illustration of the Pharaoh with Isis, often depicted, as she is here, with a vulture-shaped crown. (See below, this column.)

The furthest southern point of our Nile cruise was the Aswan High Dam, constructed between 1960 and 1970 to regulate the flooding of the Nile. The construction of the dam, however, threatened the survival of major historic sites, including Abu Simbel, the temple of Pharaoh Ramesses II. To save the temple, its stones had to be relocated one by one to higher ground to avoid being submerged by Lake Nasser. The \$40 million operation involved cutting huge blocks of stone, some weighing up to 30 tons, and moving them 213 feet up and 656 feet back from the river – one of the greatest challenges of archaeological engineering in history.



Pharaoh Seti I with Isis, often depicted, as she is here, with a vulture-shaped crown

The size of the temple is awe-inspiring, where four colossal, seated statues of Ramesses II wearing the crowns of upper and lower Egypt soar 66 feet in the air.

At the base of Ramesses are statues of his queen Nefertari and their children, their much smaller size underscoring the Pharaoh's might and importance. Imagine this vast temple largely covered by a sand

dune until it was rediscovered in 1813; how many more temples and tombs still lie under the sands of Egypt?

As I strained my neck to take in the massiveness of Ramesses's statues, I was reminded of Shelley's brilliant sonnet "Ozymandias":

Ozymandias (1818)

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

The wrecked statue of Ozymandias (another name for Ramesses II) depicts the overweening hubris of a "king of kings" who leaves behind nothing but fragments in the sand. Shelley's poem anticipated the arrival of the head of the first statue on the left of the entrance to the temple of Abu Simbel at the British Museum. It is unlikely that Shelley ever saw the head, which arrived in the British Museum in 1821 after the publication of the poem, however he was clearly inspired by the major news story about its impending arrival. The poem serves as a cautionary tale for the times we live in as it has served through the course of its history. And it serves, for me, as a symbol not only of the magnificence and vast scale of the architecture of ancient Egypt but also of the ease with which these monuments passed into obscurity only to be found again by chance or by luck.



12 baboons on the western wall of the tomb; revered as embodiments of Thoth – the god of wisdom, magic, and the moon – they stand as a metaphor for Tut's passage to the afterlife.

As we left the temple of Abu Simbel, we were nearing the end of our journey, so sailing back to the north on the Nile, we reached Luxor to take flight back to Cairo. Our last night in Cairo was bittersweet – it was hard to say goodbye to friends we cultivated on the cruise, to our wonderful program directors, to our beautiful ship, and to enigmatic Cairo and the treasures of ancient Egypt. Would I go again? In a heartbeat! I've only scratched the surface of what there is to learn about this land.

Local Government Campaign Finance Site

In January, California Common Cause announced it had updated its California Municipal Campaign Finance Index (MCFI), an innovative index and report that summarizes campaign finance laws in every California city, to reflect the 2024 changes in local campaign finance laws across the state. You can see the information for your city at <https://tinyurl.com/4pju9c8r>.

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**California State University
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**Personal and
Professional**

Daniel Kessner, professor emeritus of music from CSUN, composed the music for a new opera, *The Camp*, described as “a powerful new opera that follows the Shimono family’s journey through a World War II concentration camp in the US. Created by librettist Lionelle Hamanaka, a descendant of camp survivors, and composer Daniel Kessner, *The Camp* sheds light on the emotional and physical toll of imprisonment and the strength found in familial bonds and collective resistance.” The Camp is being performed at the JACCC Aratani Theatre in Little Tokyo in February and March 2025.

Henry Reichmann, professor emeritus of history from CSU East Bay, is the editor of the Winter 2025 issue of *Academe*, the journal of the American Association of University Professors. The issue examines the impact of war on higher education, especially in Palastine/Israel and Ukraine. The special issue demonstrates how colleges and universities are “by no means immune from the direct and

<p style="text-align: center;">CSU-ERFSA Calendar of Events</p> <p>April 30, 2025 - 10 am - 12:30 pm. Spring CSU-ERFSA State Council Meeting. On Zoom.</p> <p>August 11, 2025, 10 am - 12 pm - Summer Executive Committee meeting. On Zoom.</p> <p>October 31, 2025 - CSU-ERFSA Research Grant Applications due. 2 p.m.</p>

indirect effects of war.” Articles examine the academic freedom of Palestinian and Israeli scholars, the silencing of dissent in the Russian academy, the “multilayered and multidirectional” development of Ukrainian universities, and the experience of exile.

2024, some retirees received two letters, one from the Social Security Administration and the other from CalPERS on this topic.

The letter from Social Security is sent if IRMAA applies to you in 2025, and the letter from CalPERS outlines the process for requesting additional CalPERS reimbursement for Medicare Part B if you are subject to IRMAA. If 2025 is the first year you have to pay the IRMAA you may not have received this letter.

Health Benefits Report

(Continued from page 2)

Adjustment Amount (the IRMAA), you may be eligible to have all or part of your IRMAA reimbursed, depending on the level of your annual total adjusted income. In November or early December

For more information, see the CalPERS information sheet at <https://tinyurl.com/3dudf2t8n>.