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Faculty and Staff Association
<https://www.csuerfsa.org>

Legislative Report: Much Happening in State, CSU, Legislature

By Robert Girling, CSU-ERFSA Legislative Director

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CalPERS. Value of CalPERS Investments as of 3-26-2026, \$596 Billion. The Retiree Roundtable focused on CalPERS' private equity performance and transition to a more diversified investment strategy. Although the system ranked last among a broad peer group over three years, it has improved to become a top performer among large state pension funds. CalPERS staff asserted that over a five-year period, private equity outperformed public market benchmarks. However, retiree representatives raised searching questions about performance measurement and expressed concerns about valuation practices, including reliance on private equity fund managers' valuations rather than objective market valuations.

Investment Risk. CalPERS' investments face broader risks, including geopolitical uncertainty, rising oil prices, healthcare costs, and concerns about private equity's opacity, illiquidity, and growing role in pension portfolios, which may increase long-term risk and reduce flexibility. Private equity was linked to six hospital closures and 31 bankruptcies, according to a report. Cerberus, the fund managed by CalPERS, exited the investment after hospitals incurred debt, but the damage had already occurred. A report from S&P Global highlights, among trends public pensions should watch in 2026, increasing portfolio risk due to higher allocations to private investments. "We generally view private investments as higher risk due in part to their opacity as well as limited and inconsistent disclosure," the firm stated, citing a study from investment advisory firm Cliffwater that reported U.S. state pension funds nearly doubled their private

investments over the past 10 years. "We see a notable increase in risk embedded within pension trusts."

CSU. Cal State Dominguez Hills offers free tuition through financial aid. Starting this fall, CSU Dominguez Hills will offer four years of tuition-free education for first-time college students and two years for transfer students, the university announced. "CSUDH's mission is rooted in affordability and accessibility, and the Toro Tuition Pledge builds on our longstanding effort to expand opportunities so every student can succeed," said Interim President Mary Ann Villarreal. "This initiative reaffirms our commitment to transforming students' lives and economic prospects." The free tuition program is available to California students who qualify for Pell Grants or have a Student Aid Index at or below the Pell Grant threshold. Eligible students must enroll in a full course load and maintain satisfactory academic progress, among other requirements.

Assembly Bill 1818: Shielding Union Raises. California State University (CSU) leaders and labor unions are in conflict over whether workers are entitled to contracted raises tied to full state funding. CSU officials argue the 2025 budget did not meet that condition because of a \$144 million cut—offset by a one-time, zero-interest loan—and have offered bonuses instead of permanent raises. Unions and lawmakers dispute this, and Assembly Bill 1818, introduced by Assemblymember Liz Ortega, aims to

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From the President

Dear Colleagues,

It is finally Spring!

Not only have we passed the vernal equinox, but the weather here in the lovely Sacramento Valley has been feeling like our 2026 Spring is here. We have had very warm weather, and lots of much-needed rain, and now the sun and blue sky seem to be here more reliably. I hope you are all able to get outside and enjoy your personal part of beautiful California.

Making Progress. As was announced earlier this year, Merry Pawlowski ended her tenure as the CSU-ERFSA Executive Director on March 31, 2026. Fortunately, we had a diligent group of members serve as a search committee developing a position description and criteria for the search. After a successful call for applications, interviews with the candidates were held and Dr. Christine Miller (Communication Studies) from Sacramento State was appointed CSU-ERFSA Executive Director. She will now be a regular contributor to *The Reporter* (see page 3).

The organization remains on solid financial ground and we are doing the work to make the changes necessary for a smooth transition to our new Executive Director.

The Spring Council Meeting. The CSU-ERFSA Spring Council Meeting was held on April 2, 2026. It was a very productive meeting with detailed reports from the various committees on topics that impact the CSU and CSU retirees. We had some lively discussion about various bills that are being considered in the legislature, about CalPERS investment strategies, and about proposals from the community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees.

We also heard about some issues that have occurred because of the CalPERS change to the pharmacy benefits management company, and a data breach that may impact some CalPERS members.

We are excited that all the committees have full membership and are ready to start working with members and campus affiliates. We heard from Bethany Shifflett on the results of the member survey. The two items most requested are help with campus affiliates and help getting post-retirement access to campus resources.

These are topics that will be discussed in committees. If you are interested in particular committees, or are not sure about what committees are working on, I encourage you to visit the CSU-ERFSA website (www.csuerfsa.org).

The last of our pending amendments to our policy documents was presented to the State Council and approved. These small but meaningful changes will make things much easier as we move forward.

We heard from our ASCSU liaison Jerry Schutte (CSUN), who detailed his work with the ASCSU and the state legislature. We also had a comprehensive report from the Faculty Trustee, Darlene Yee-Melichar (SFSU) about what the Board of Trustees is considering. It is still early in the year so not yet clear what will eventually emerge, but we were encouraged to make our voices heard in both the legislature and at the Board of Trustees.

Budget and Personnel Policies Committee. The ad hoc Budget and Personnel Policies Committee (Holl, Schoenwald) has begun work on a handbook for officers that clearly documents CSU-ERFSA practices and policies. This handbook will serve as a valuable resource as leadership transitions occur and will support our broader goals of increasing membership, engagement, and organizational effectiveness. This will be presented to the executive committee in July.

Upcoming Meetings. Next Executive Committee Meeting: July 23, via Zoom, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Happy Summer! As we enter April it is not too early to think about the beginning of Summer. I hope you all have some relaxation planned. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. We very much look forward to continuing our work together.

Sincerely,

Sue Holl, President
sueh@csus.edu

Join CSU-ERFSA Today!

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

From the (New) Executive Director

By Christine Miller, Executive Director, CSU-ERFSA, CSU Sacramento

By the time you read this, I will have been serving as Executive Director of CSU-ERFSA for just under a month. In that short time, I have already attended my first meeting with a campus delegation. Admittedly, it was my own campus, but the Sacramento State Retirees Association board of directors had the good sense to gather for lunch about an hour after the State Council meeting at which I was appointed Executive Director. The photograph accompanying this piece captures what I am choosing to regard as an efficient beginning in my role (Dr. Miller is the second from the left in the picture below).

For those I have not yet met, I am professor emerita of Communication Studies at Sacramento State. Over the course of my career, I served as chair of the statewide Academic Senate and as interim vice provost for student academic success on my campus. I continue to teach through the Faculty Early Retirement Program, most recently with incarcerated students in the Transforming Outcomes Project at Sacramento State. Those experiences have given me a long view of the CSU. This position gives me a different one.

What I have been doing in these first weeks is learning. Some of that learning has been practical: understanding the rhythms of the organization and the responsibilities that come with supporting a statewide association sustained largely by volunteer effort. Some of it has taken a more archival turn.

For example, recently I found myself following two unrelated questions – one about our recruiting brochure and another about retirees’ access to campus AI resources – into the same CSU-ERFSA rabbit hole. That rabbit hole led to a rather consequen-

tial Board of Trustees resolution from June 1989 (RFSR 06-89-03), which established that emeritus faculty “shall be deemed to be continuing members of the academic community” and “shall have such privileges as are enjoyed by the general faculty.” Melanie Mamakos located the language of that resolution, as reprinted in the September 1989 issue of *The Reporter*, but I have also reached out to the Trustee Secretariat to see whether an official copy can be retrieved for our records. It seems to me a statement of that significance should not require excavation.

That same issue of *The Reporter* was fun to read because it had the screaming headline, “CSU Parking Battle” that made me reminisce about how often parking has been the subject of discussion over the decades. But the issue also contained a gem that I want to highlight. Milton Dobkin wrote this in his President’s Report: “We hope we are building an organization which has not only intelligence but a heart and soul of sorts.” In September 1989, I was two years into my appointment as an Assistant Professor in the CSU. I was not reading *The Reporter*, and I was certainly not thinking about retirement. I would not have predicted the path my career would take, and I would not have anticipated that CSU-ERFSA would become part of it.

What I can say now, having spent even a brief period of time in this role, is that Dobkin and his colleagues succeeded. Everything I have seen so far, from the work of the State Council to the engagement of campus affiliates, reflects an organization that combines intelligence with something more difficult to define but easy to recognize. The phrase “heart and soul” is not an overstatement, and I will do my part to protect it.



Most Retirees to See 2% COLA May 1st

CalPERS has announced the Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) this year as follows (CSU retirees):

Year of Retirement	Allowance Increase
1965-86	2.63%
1987	2.12%
1988-2024	2.00%
2025	Not eligible

The allowance increase includes both the COLA and PPPA. It is effective May 1, 2026.

Affiliate News: CSUCI Panel Discussion on Retirement

By Dan Wakelee, CSUCI

In March, the CSU Channel Islands Retiree Association held a panel discussion for faculty and staff preparing for retirement. This panel followed with the first in-person CalPERS workshops held on campus since the pandemic. The panel

was not intended to provide specific financial or CalPERS advice, but to help people ask questions about their readiness for retirement and share the experience of retirees in adjusting to their new roles and in navigating the various retirement-related bureaucracies, such as CalPERS, Social Security, Medicare, etc.

About 45 faculty and staff who attended

reported that they found the event very helpful. Our association looks forward to offering similar panels in the future on an annual or semiannual basis. The event was co-hosted by the campus human resources department and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). The event also provided an opportunity for current faculty and staff to become familiar with the retiree association.

ASCSU Report: Focus on AI Issues

By Jerald Schutte, CSU Northridge, Emeriti Academic Senator

The plenary of the Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU) convened on March 5th, 2026 featured extensive reports from all subcommittees, systemwide updates, policy discussions, and legislative actions, reflecting a focus on artificial intelligence (AI), student support services, budget advocacy, enrollment strategy, and shared governance.

A major presentation centered on CSU's expanding AI initiatives. Leslie Kennedy, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Technology Services, outlined the AI Commons platform and systemwide efforts to integrate AI into teaching, learning, and operations. These include faculty and student training programs, AI tools embedded in platforms like Microsoft and Google, and research initiatives, such as a year-long AI literacy study. Discussion highlighted ongoing concerns about data privacy, ethical implications, environmental impact, and the future of AI-related academic programs. Contract renewal with OpenAI and the use of AI detection tools such as Turnitin were also addressed, with an emphasis on campus discretion and responsible use policies.

Student basic needs were another priority, particularly through a presentation on CalFresh. Stephanie Bianco, Director of Healthy Communities at Cal State Chico, emphasized the program's critical role in reducing food insecurity and improving student success, noting that benefits average over \$200 monthly per student. However, significant federal funding changes—reducing reimbursement rates from 80% to 25%—pose a serious threat to campus outreach programs. Senators were urged to support tracking of faculty and staff referral efforts to sustain funding and maintain services.

CSU leadership provided updates on academic planning and budget advocacy. Vice Chancellor Junius Gonzales and AVC Nathan Evans described a developing Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) framework focused on access, affordability, flexible pathways, and improved data systems. Proposed innovations include new

bachelor's degree types (e.g., Bachelor of Education), streamlined program development, and expanded multi-campus collaboration. Concerns were raised about workload, duplication reviews, and resource allocation, as well as potential impacts on financial aid eligibility.

CFA President Margarita Berta-Ávila reported ongoing contract negotiations, with unresolved issues including salary increases, workload, academic freedom, and AI protections. The union challenged claims of budget scarcity and highlighted recent organizing successes in preventing program cuts. Legislative priorities include bills addressing data privacy, AI oversight, governance transparency, and executive compensation.

CSU Trustees Diego Aranbula and Carson Fajardo emphasized shared governance, communication, and student outcomes. Discussions included the need for a faculty trustee appointment, concerns about community college baccalaureate expansion, and the importance of maintaining liberal arts education. Trustees expressed openness to collaboration and faculty input, including allowing the ASCSU President to speak more fully at Trustee meetings.

The CSU Alumni Council president, Hayden Harrell, presented the 2025–2027 strategic plan, focusing on advocacy, alumni engagement, and improved data tracking of post-graduation outcomes. Efforts aim to strengthen connections between alumni and students through mentorship, experiential learning, and career development, while addressing challenges in data collection and engagement.

Chancellor Mildred García, attending in person, emphasized budget advocacy and implementation of CSU Forward. She highlighted a proposed \$509 million increase in state funding to support enrollment growth, compensation, infrastructure, and student success initiatives. Key efforts include expanding direct admissions, improving credit mobility,

launching AI-related internships, and enhancing employee compensation frameworks. She also addressed shared governance concerns, communication gaps, and ongoing tensions around community college degree expansion.

Vice President Katie Karroum of the California State Student Association (CSSA) reported on AI policy, legislative advocacy, and student well-being. Priorities include mental health services, financial aid access, and student employment. Concerns were raised about AI classroom policies and maintaining campus-based mental health resources.

Numerous resolutions were also approved, including AS-3774 (meeting schedule approval); AS-3775 (Amending Senate Bylaws); AS-3776 (Systemwide review of Chancellor's policies), AS-3777 (responsibilities of the Academic and Educational Program Committee), AS-3778 (Appointment of Ethnic Studies Faculty Reviewers), AS-3779 (Revised Plenary hours), and AS-3788 (Legislative Advocacy Positions).

Grant Award Program

By Kathleen Roe, Grants Committee Chair

Applications are due in the CSU-ERFSA Office no later than October 29, 2026 – Noon PDT. Awards will be announced by December 2026. CSU-ERFSA encourages members involved in research and creative projects to apply for a grant. They are available to members to support research and creative projects that are in accordance with the goals listed upon the website – go to csuerfsa.org and then choose Grants from the top row.

Grant applications and guidelines can be downloaded from the CSU-ERFSA Grant Awards Program web page, by calling the CSU-ERFSA office at (818) 677-6522, or, by emailing csuerfsa@csun.edu.

The CSU-ERFA Foundation welcomes tax deductible contributions to support the award program. See csuerfsa.org for more information. The CSU-ERFA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Trustees expressed openness to collaboration and faculty input, including allowing the ASCSU President to speak more fully at Trustee meetings

Health Benefits Report: PBMs, Data...

By Thomas Krabacher, Director, Health Benefits

Two Major Topics:

Change in Pharmacy Benefits Management. As a reminder, in Fall 2025 CalPERS entered into a five-year agreement with CVS Caremark (working with SilverScript) to serve as pharmacy benefits manager (PBM) for members in its HMO and PPO plans. The process was expected to be completed by early 2026, and letters went out to members in August and September explaining what the changeover entailed. Drug coverage was for the most part identical to that under the prior PBM (OptumRX), and impact on members was expected to be minor. By and large this has been the case.

There have, however, been cases of unclear communication where doctors have assured patients that their prescriptions are covered while CVS Caremark/SilverScript has said they are not. Such complaints have generally been resolved, but the process often involves frustration and confusion for members along the way.

Potential Member Data Breach. CSU-

ERFSA members may have already received notification of this, but in case you have not: In March CalPERS reported a data breach involving Conduent Business Services LLC (a third party contractor) of members enrolled in the following health plans: Anthem Blue Cross, Blue Shield of California, Health Net, Kaiser Permanente, and Western Health Advantage. The number of potentially affected active and former CalPERS members has been estimated at over 55,000.

Notification letters regarding the breach are being mailed by Conduent to affected members, who are being offered free credit monitoring and identity restoration by Conduent. For members who have not received a letter, that likely means their data remained secure.

Individuals who have questions should contact CONDUENT's Dedicated Assistance Line: 877-332-1658 (toll-free) Monday-Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Or contact CalPERS_Stakeholder Relations@CalPERS.CA.gov

CSU-ERFSA New Members

A very warm welcome to our newest CSU-ERFSA members:

Bakersfield – Wei Li

East Bay – James C.W. Ahiakpor

Los Angeles – Jorge F. Ribeiro

Northridge – Ali Kiani

Sacramento – Roger S. Miller

San Luis Obispo – John W. Lawson

Sonoma – Barbara J. Ritter

COLA Update. Finally, the upcoming Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will appear in members' monthly benefit beginning in May. For most members this will be 2%. See article p. 3.

Further details can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/872au8vj>

CFA Report: Salaries!

By Jay Swartz, CSU-ERFSA Liaison to CFA

California Faculty Association (CFA) activities this spring have focused primarily on legislative matters in the wake of yet another successful two day journey to Sacramento as part of its annual lobby days routine.

Predictably, executive salaries have remained at the forefront in the wake of Chancellor Mildred Garcia nearing a \$1 million annual salary package and SLO President Jeffrey Armstrong scooping up a raise of more than \$100,000 to boost just his annual salary without benefits north of \$611,000, and Assembly Bill 1831 sits squarely at ground zero in this eternal battle between CSU management and its faculty union. The bill proposes that executive salaries within the system be capped at 125 per cent of the salary of the state governor, which would place into question

the packages of the campus presidents, along with members of Garcia's leadership team above \$300,000.

This bill headlines a package of six pieces of legislation that lobby day attendees advanced in Sacramento in March that included customary speeches by union leaders and friendly legislators along the capitol's entry steps. As always, the mood was united, strong, spirited.

Among the other sponsored bills CFA supports:

- AB 2068: to mandate that campus presidential searches be based on campus needs, with greater input from local faculty and staff, lesser on chancellor dictates.
- AB 2159: to eliminate federal language in its identification of what antisemitism means.

- AB 2523: to create easier paths to reach and dialog with CSU trustees.
- SB 928: to require that all classes be directed by a member of the faculty and not an AI platform and to provide further safeguards against the encroachment of AI into CSU coursework.
- SB 1101: to require all faculty be notified when management is sharing personal information to any outside agency.

Finally, CFA has issued a statement regarding the cessation of Cesar Chavez homage and the reversion of that state holiday into a generic farmworkers day. It states in part, "Movements for civil rights and social justice are not immune to patriarchy and all its violence. They are too often embedded in them. This includes organized labor and academic spaces as well. There is no place for violence against women and gender non binary folks in the fight for justice...no movement is one person; it will take all of us to stay united and create a safer world for the generations that will come after us."

Voice in the Performance of Life!

By Dr. Joan Melton, Emeritus Professor of Theatre, CSU Fullerton

Voice is an amazing physical instrument that announces its presence the moment we're born, and identifies us throughout life. No two voices are the same; each is unique, with infinite potential in multiple directions. Vocal changes occur naturally across a lifespan, training along the way makes for greater efficiency, and emotion plays a significant role in it all.

Infants produce sounds as loud as adults, in spite of smaller lungs and vocal apparatus, because higher pitches (frequencies) guarantee higher intensity. In addition, lung pressure is 50 – 60% higher in children than adults, thus children make up for the smaller size by working harder.¹

In childhood, the larynx (voice box), vocal folds (which vibrate), and surrounding tissues grow rapidly, and as the folds lengthen, the fundamental frequency (sound that we hear) drops. "For the first 20 years or so of life, the growth rate is approximately 0.7 mm per year for males, and 0.4 mm...for females."¹ Hence, male voices develop lower pitches, though high sounds are still available.

In adolescence, major vocal changes occur during puberty. The male hormone testosterone causes significant changes that include rapid growth of the larynx and increased length and thickness of the vocal folds. Longer folds lower the pitch of the voice, and thicker folds produce a change of quality, or timbre.

Female changes in puberty are often less obvious. However, girls' voices may exhibit increased breathiness, occasional cracking, lower habitual pitch when speaking, and occasional inaccuracies when singing.

Physiological components that contribute to voice changes include: facial development, which relates to voice resonance; descent of the larynx, which lengthens the vocal tract (resonating space in the mouth, nose, and throat); and increased size of the chest wall and lungs, which provides greater capacity for breathing.¹

In adulthood, roughly ages 20 – 60, voices remain relatively stable if we are healthy. However, physiological changes do occur in early 40s – early 60s, "most significantly, ossification (hardening) of the laryngeal

cartilages."¹ For some people, this can actually improve the voice for singing, as a bony, rather than flexible, framework better supports vibratory actions of the vocal folds.

Other, less beneficial, changes may occur in middle to advanced years. Nevertheless, Jennie Morton, Specialist in Performing Arts Medicine, says: It's really a matter of "Use it or lose it." All the soft tissues in the body have a tendency to lose elasticity with age, which [may] affect tissues of the vocal and breathing systems. However, if you are diligent with conditioning, training, and overall health, then there's no reason why the voice should lose stability with age.²

Below are basic areas of voice training. Even a few sessions with a knowledgeable tutor can address and resolve problems of hoarseness, loss of pitch range, vocal fatigue, and other frequent concerns. Participating in group work can also be highly valuable, when integrative pedagogy encourages listening, helping one another, and communicating successfully with audiences.

- Breath Management – via lateral abdominal muscles. Voicing in a range of physical positions reminds us of what we did naturally at birth!³
- Movable Parts of the Vocal Tract – larynx, soft palate, walls of the pharynx, allow exploration of optional sounds

- Speaking and Singing with the Same Voice – using the same physical techniques, pitch range, and dynamic options⁴

- Extended Voice Use – efficient production of laughing, crying, calling, and other extremes⁴

- Communicating in a Range of Environments - attention to language, phrasing, genres, styles, and appropriate physicalities

Practical Observations and Clarifications. While the terms "speaking voice" and "singing voice" may be heard in a range of contexts, neither is accurate, as we have one vocal instru-

ment, not two or more! And the pitch (high/low) and dynamic (loud/soft) range available for speaking is the same as for singing—demonstrated magnificently by classical actors doing classical material in a range of theatre environments.⁵ Voice can be used safely in virtually any physical position, moving or still; voice-movement exercises are ideal for daily warmups;⁴ and singing in the shower is a great way to start the day!

Endnotes:

¹ NCVS (National Center for Voice & Speech). "Voice Changes Throughout Life," website, 2026.

² Morton, J. *Conversations regarding Voice and Aging*. 2025.

³ Melton J. *The Technical Core: An Inside View. Voice and Speech Review*. 2009; 431-435. Ultrasound Imaging: <https://tinyurl.com/2r57uava>

⁴ Melton J. Tom K. *One Voice: Integrating Techniques across Performance Disciplines*, 3rd ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland. 2022.

⁵ Melton J. Bradford Z. Lee J. *Acoustic Characteristics of Vocal Sounds Used by Professional Actors Performing Classical Material Without Microphones in Outdoor Theatre. JVoice*. 2020. <https://www.joanmelton.net/articles>

Resources:

Individual and group work available online or in-person. Contact 1voiceproductions@gmail.com, 1-917-991-5199. www.joanmelton.net

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.

Summer Book Reviews

By Sherry Keith, Prof. Emerita of History, SFSU

Kaye Gibbons. *Charms for the Easy Life: Three Remarkable Women, A Matriarch Healer, and Unconventional Strength in WWII North Carolina*. Harper Perennial, 2005, 272 pp. \$4.99 to \$10.98 on Amazon.

Two Southern Stories: I recently completed a short trip to the South and read two southern novels in the process: *The Invention of Wings* (Sue Monk Kidd, 2014) and *Charms for the Easy Life* (Kaye Gibbons, 2005). It's more likely that you might have read the former because Sue Monk Kidd is a "New York Times Best Selling Author" and not without good reason, while Kaye Gibbons a southern author of less notoriety but an equally wonderful story teller.

Charms for the Easy Life is narrated by Margaret, a young girl who grows up over the course of the novel telling the story of her extraordinary grandmother, Charlie Kate, from Pasquotank, North Carolina

and secondarily her mother, Sophia. Pasquotank is the back water of back waters, but Charlie Kate, without money or opportunity, becomes a sought after and famous healer/doctor. She is mistress of both traditional and modern medicine and has acquired through time and practice the competence of a trained surgeon. The novel traces the arch of the lives of Charlie Kate and her daughter Sofia, both abandoned and mistreated by worthless husbands spanning the early to mid-twentieth century. Margaret's narrator voice is frank southern charm overlaid on acute perception and intelligence. All three female characters will amuse, amaze and seduce the reader. This is a read you won't find easily in a bookstore or Amazon, but worth looking for.

Sue Monk Kidd. *The Invention of Wings*. Penguin, 2015, 400 pp. \$5.73 to \$14.69 on Amazon.

The Invention of Wings amalgamates all of Sue Monk Kidd's literary talent to intertwine history with imagination of the details that were never recorded. In this novel, we meet Sarah Grimke, the noted 19th century abolitionist/feminist and

Handful, a slave girl and Sarah's age twin, given to Sarah as a present for her eleventh birthday. Sarah's family was powerful, prominent and slave owning in Charleston, South Carolina during the 18th and 19th centuries. We are told the gripping stories of two women who lead parallel, but horrifyingly different lives in the Antebellum south. Although presented as a work of fiction, you will intuit immediately that the story is founded on considerable historical research.

I chanced on both these novels: *The Invention of Wings* in a Little Library near my house and *Charms for the Easy Life* on the bookshelf of my cousin in North Carolina. She hadn't read it yet, but I am going to insist that she does.

Both these reads are available on Better World Books, an American company that sells used and new books online and donates books or money to literacy programs worldwide. Founded in 2002 by Notre Dame students, it has partnered with over 3,000 libraries and 1,800 colleges and universities to collect books. Go to: betterworldbooks.com

AI and Academic Work

I'm condensing this from a Political Science blog I receive called "Good Authority." In it, there's an article about producing an article for a journal using an AI system called Claude.

The author is Prof. Brendan Nyhan, Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. He reports that he had Claude Code fully replicate and extend one of his older papers estimating "the effect of universal vote-by-mail on turnout and election outcome...essentially in one shot."

He wrote Claude a series of "careful prompts." Claude then downloaded the old paper's tables and reproduced the past results, at the same time translating his Stata code (a statistical package) into Python. Then Claude searched the web to find the official election and census data that would serve to update the paper's analysis. At that point, it ran new analyses "extending the results through 2024," created new tables and figures, updated the literature review, and wrote a wholly new paper. It then published the paper on an online repository called GitHub Repo (Repository), which according to AI, is "a

If you are reading *The Reporter* online and would like to drop your paper subscription, please write csuerfsa@csun.edu.

central digital storage location for all the files, code, and revision history related to a specific project."

The whole thing, according to Nyhan, took about an hour.

If that is the case, we can see future journals consisting of little more than one or two pages per paper with the title, authors' information, and abstract, plus a URL showing where to obtain the paper. I'll just say that I'm happy I'm retired.

Ted Anagnoson, Editor

In Memoriam

Chico – Ralph J. Gagnon
Juanita B. Jones

Fresno – Donald D. Pogoloff

Humboldt – Susan J. Armstrong
Milton J. Boyd

Long Beach – Bonnie E. Kellogg

Northridge – Virginia E. Akers-Elwood
James B. Cunningham
John R. Swanson

Pomona – Ruby L. Trow
Patricia Zambell

San Diego – William F. Eadie

San Francisco – Pamela C. Hunt

San Jose – Thomasyne L. Wilson

Legislative Report: CSU Happenings, Legislative Doings

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close what she calls a loophole that allows CSU to avoid honoring pay agreements while blaming the state. The bill, still in development and backed by multiple unions, aims to ensure future compliance with negotiated raises. Workers report significant financial strain, with some expecting substantial monthly increases but receiving minimal adjustments, and many holding multiple jobs despite remaining committed to supporting students.

Governor's Budget Aims To Protect Core Higher Education Commitments Amid Growing Fiscal Concerns.

Governor Newsom's 2026-27 \$349 billion proposed budget includes increases for higher education amid growing fiscal uncertainty and aims to protect core commitments across higher education, workforce preparation, and student financial aid. It provides some of the promised funding for California's three public higher education segments in line with the Governor's multi-year compact agreements and roadmap, though it also defers significant amounts to future years.

The budget proposal maintains and, in some cases, bolsters funding for core higher education and workforce programs, as well as initiatives that break down silos among education, workforce, and economic development systems. The 2026-27 budget proposal defers substantial promised higher education and workforce funding into future years, shifting risk to future years amid even more economic and revenue uncertainty, projected cost growth, and potential federal reductions and changes that could impact the stability of California's higher education system and economy.

CSU to back three proposals on nursing education, campus safety and more. California State University leaders have endorsed a suite of legislative proposals to funnel new nurses into high-need areas of the state, reengage students who started but never completed college, and respond to threats of violence targeting CSU campuses. Trustees voted to approve those priorities at a Board of Trustees meeting and urged support for a statewide bond measure to fund higher education facilities and affordable housing

for students and employees. Gov. Gavin Newsom again vetoed a bill that would have allowed 10 community college districts to offer bachelor's degrees in nursing, a move CSU has repeatedly opposed because of duplication concerns.

Easing the path to associate degrees for former CSU students. Around 5.9 million California adults ages 18 to 64 have some college education but no degree, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. This means they have borne the costs of education without necessarily gaining the financial benefits of higher-paying jobs that require a college credential. Trustees agreed to support legislation by offering one incremental response: granting associate degrees to former CSU students who completed 60 or more units but left college without finishing their studies.

The measure would authorize a pilot program in which a community college and a Cal State campus coordinate their curricula so former CSU students can earn a joint associate degree without taking additional courses. Cal State Long Beach and Long Beach City College are already in preliminary talks about how a joint degree could work. CSU Board Vice Chair Arambula expressed a desire to see the pilot program study job and wage outcomes for former CSU students awarded associate degrees, aligning with the university's new focus on job placement.

State law allows community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees in fields with a labor market need as long as they don't duplicate what's offered at CSU and other four-year universities. About 60 degrees have been approved, most of them without much debate. But disagreement over what counts as duplication has left more than a dozen proposed degrees stuck in limbo, in some cases for years.

A Golden State Teacher Grant for future nurses. Predictions of a growing shortage of registered nurses in the state are among the reasons supporters say California should expand the number of bachelor's degrees offered at community colleges. CSU has many such efforts and is cooperating with community colleges on nursing-related initiatives in regions including Los Angeles and the Central Coast. CSU is now proposing a different

way to boost nursing graduates. Trustees plan to sponsor legislation modeled on the Golden State Teacher Grant, a financial aid program for teacher candidates who commit to working in high-need schools. The Cal State-backed proposal would similarly award grants to nursing students who commit to a period of service in a "medically underserved area" of California.

Bonds for aging infrastructure, research and housing. Cal State leaders have long bemoaned aging infrastructure on their campuses. The university system estimates that its backlog of deferred maintenance exceeds \$8.6 billion. CSU is now banking on a statewide bond measure to chip away at those towering costs. Assembly Bill 48, a state general obligation bond act, seeks to raise an unspecified amount of money to build and renovate educational facilities at community colleges, the University of California, and CSU. It would also finance affordable housing for students and employees.

Rising Student Fees. Cal State's average fees increased by more than 17% over the decade in real terms. The average Cal State student was charged roughly \$1,860 in the 2016-17 school year, adjusted to 2025 dollars. That figure rose to about \$2,190 by 2025-26. At Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, which charges the highest campus fees in the CSU, total mandatory fees climbed from roughly \$4,846 to \$7,000 in inflation-adjusted terms.

Legislation. Legislation of interest to CSU-ERFSA members introduced during the current legislative session include the following bills:

- **AB 1831 (Ahrens): California State University: employees and contractors: compensation restrictions.** CSU executive compensation would be capped at 125% of the California Governor's salary (\$307,411/year). The bill would also prohibit executive salary increases in years when student tuition rises and eliminate the 2025 executive compensation raises by 2027. Sponsored by the California Faculty Association, it aims to limit executive pay in response to recent salary increases for university presidents and top administrators.

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Legislative Report: Proposed Bills, AI, More

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In November 2025, the California State University (CSU) system approved salary increases for 13 of its 22 campus presidents and several vice chancellors, raising top pay to over \$611,000 and framing the move as an investment in student success and institutional strength. The bill was introduced in response to CSU's updated compensation policy, which allows faster salary growth and up to 15% in performance-based bonuses funded outside tuition and state dollars.

While unions have criticized rising executive pay, CSU leaders argue higher compensation is necessary to remain competitive, noting their salaries lag behind peer institutions like the University of California. Officials declined to comment on whether leaders would stay if salaries were reduced. Michelle Ramos Pellicia, a professor at Cal State San Marcos and vice president of the California Faculty Association, said the CSU faces a trade-off—they can pay presidents and executives more, but that leaves “no funding for departments, no funding for hiring the high-caliber faculty members who are going to be in the classroom teaching our students.” Introduced on 2/11/2026. Status: Referred to Assembly Higher Education Committee, hearing date TBD.

• **AB 2068 (Connolly): California State University: campus presidents: hiring process.** CSU presidential searches will prioritize campus community needs and input when selecting a campus president. Introduced on 2/18/2026. Status: Referred to the Committee on Higher Education after author's amendments.

• **AB 2523 (Fong): Public postsecondary education: governing bodies: biography and contact information.** This bill would require the CSU and the California Community Colleges to post on their websites the name, a short biography, and the contact information (for conducting official business) of each governing body member: email address, phone number, and mailing address. It would also request that the UC do the same. Introduced on 2/20/2026. Status: Referred to the Committee on Higher Education.

• **SB 928 (Cervantes): California State University: faculty employees.** This bill

would define a faculty member as a real person, preventing their replacement by AI. This bill would also require that an instructor of record for a course be a real person. Introduced on 1/29/2026. Status: In committee.

• **SB 1101 (Pérez): Postsecondary education: sharing personal information: notice.** The sharing personal information notice would require the CSU and UC to notify faculty, students, and staff before sharing information with the federal government and would prohibit the CSU and UC from sharing information unless legally required. Introduced on 2/11/2026. Status: In committee.

• **AB 1790 Corporations Tax Law: water's-edge election: global intangible low-taxed income.** This change would require multinational corporations to adopt mandatory worldwide combined reporting in order to close tax loopholes, generate an estimated \$3 billion+ in revenue for state services, and support climate goals. Status: Referred to Committee on Revenue & Taxation.

• **Senate Bill (SB) 98, the Sending Alerts to Families in Education (SAFE) Act.** This Act, approved by the governor in 2025, requires K-12 schools and higher education institutions to issue alerts if immigration enforcement authorities are present on campus. CFA President Margarita Berta-Ávila, a professor at Sacramento State, said, “California is home to the largest number of undocumented students enrolled in higher education, and the current attacks on our immigrant communities put our very own college students at risk, especially at the institutions that are supposed to be safe spaces for learning... spaces that our students and their families have sacrificed to be at. Students being fearful affects their ability within the classroom and what they can and cannot do, what they're willing to do, and what they're not able to do based on that anxiety. That's why this bill is so critical.”

• **SB 895, California Science and Health Research Bond Act.** This bill would establish a \$23 billion fund for scientific research in anticipation of potential cuts to federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Status: In

committee.

CSU requests that two housing bonds, Assembly Bill 736 and Senate Bill 417, be amended to include housing for students, staff, and faculty.

An Impact of AI on Higher Education. AI is exerting tremendous pressure on new college graduates as unemployment and underemployment rise and early-career opportunities decline. Entry-level jobs, traditionally the main starting point for graduates, are being replaced by more experienced workers who have access to advanced AI tools.

There were early signs of this in spring 2025, but each new report and anecdote makes it clearer how AI is affecting early-career job searches. Recent layoffs at Block were justified by AI, and although this might be a cover for cost-cutting, what truly matters is the actual job loss. This creates a problem because colleges will find it harder to explain why students should pursue education when secure employment after graduation is less guaranteed. Additionally, upcoming changes in federal policy will further complicate this situation.

Impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The earnings test provision of the so-called One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the tax and spending law pushed through by the Trump administration in 2025, compares graduates and non-graduates using statewide average earnings. If graduates in a particular major fall below the non-graduate baseline, those college programs are placed on probation, and eventually students will no longer qualify for federal loans in that major. This probationary status, along with what it signals to prospective students, could trigger a downward enrollment spiral for any program and will soon influence institutional decision-making.

The connection between these trends is clear: declining pay and employment caused by AI, especially for graduates of mid-tier colleges, will result in more programs falling below the earnings test thresholds. According to an interactive analysis published by *The Chronicle of*

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Higher Education, nine CSU undergraduate programs and four UC programs—including fine arts and studio arts at four CSUs and rhetoric and composition at UC Riverside, among others—already appear at risk of failing the proposed earnings test based on current data.

Higher Education’s Challenges. State Senator Christopher Cabaldon represents California’s 3rd Senate District, which spans portions of Contra Costa, Solano, Sacramento, Napa, Sonoma, and Yolo counties. He brings a rare breadth of experience to conversations about higher education, having engaged with the system from nearly every vantage point: as a UC Berkeley graduate and student activist, a Vice Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, a faculty member at Sacramento State, the Mayor of West Sacramento for two decades, and now as a state legislator. He’s also held influential roles as a commissioner on the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education and as a former board member of California Competes. Senator Cabaldon addresses how California can create meaningful coordination to build seamless pathways that turn policy reforms into tangible results.

Dr. Su Jin Jez: How have these different roles and perspectives shaped your thinking about informing a better California via higher education?

Sen. Cabaldon: It is a great question in retrospect. It wasn’t the plan to stop by all these stations in higher education, but I began as a student government leader and activist during the apartheid movement and affirmative action work at Berkeley, seeking to understand how to change the world and improve my campus and state policies for diversity, investments, and other issues. I thought, ‘Well, all the power is in Sacramento,’ so I decided to work in the legislature. I was the head of the higher education staff at the state assembly.

I worked on one of the Assembly revisions

of the Master Plan, as well as other tasks, and I kept thinking, ‘It’s just really hard to make policy from the Capitol.’ It’s the administration. That’s where it’s at. So when I got the opportunity, I became vice chancellor at the California Community Colleges and worked closely with the faculty members. I thought that’s where the power lies.

I later became a faculty member, and then at one point, Governor Brown said, ‘Would

This gave me an important perspective; however, it didn’t take long before I realized this elusive search for where the decisions are actually being made – there’s no such place.

you want to be on the Interstate Commission for Higher Education?’ This gave me an important perspective; however, it didn’t take long before I realized this elusive search for where the decisions are actually being made – there’s no such place. Having now been on a lifetime treasure hunt for where

the actual higher ed decisions are being made, I came to the conclusion that they aren’t. That decisions and actions are kind of an emergent property of the chaos.

We’re sort of all cohabitating in this higher ed world together, without any sort of coherent decision-making structure. So that might lead us to some of the conversation about coordination, but it’s a constant reminder I give myself that it’s never as simple as you think.

Students are showing up at our colleges and universities because they have been convinced by us that this is the key to prosperity and social mobility. And so, our job is to make sure that we do put that front and center, even when it’s uncomfortable for us and our institutions.

[Excerpted from a conversation with Dr. Su Jin Jez, CEO of *California Competes*, a nonpartisan research and policy organization focused on higher education and workforce alignment. A former Public Policy professor at CSU Sacramento, Dr. Jez leads efforts to improve economic mobility for adult learners and drive cross-sector collaboration.]

Large Bills Possible, Even With Dental Insurance

By Blake Farmer, Nashville Public Radio, et. al., and KFF

Russell Anthony made eight trips to the dentist last year. The 65-year-old retiree in Nashville, Tennessee, hopes to go less often in 2026, but he’s already made a few visits. “I had a root canal just last week that was like \$500,” he said. “The week before that, I had a crown that cost me several hundred dollars. And as we speak, I have a broken tooth, and I have to go and see the dentist soon.”

In all, Anthony — uncle of HealthQ host Cara Anthony — expects to pay about \$2,000 for dental care this year, even though he has dental insurance. “Trying to weigh the cost of when to go to get dental care and paying for it, versus the other needs that I have, is something that’s very important,” Russell Anthony said.

The American Dental Association reported that 77% of adults in the U.S. had dental insurance in 2021. But that coverage does not necessarily protect against large bills. In fact, 1 in 4 adults with dental insurance reported costs as a barrier to care, according to a 2023 survey by KFF, a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News. Here are three things to know to better understand your insurance plan and keep your dental costs as low as possible:

1. Even With Dental Insurance, You’ll Have To Pay for Procedures. Dental plans typically cover routine care in full but pay only a portion of additional work. Benefits vary, but many plans follow the “100/80/50” rule, covering 100% of preventive care like cleanings and exams, 80% of basic procedures like fillings and root canals, and 50% of other major procedures. Plus, dental plans often have a maximum annual payout, usually between \$1,000 and \$2,000. Patients are responsible for any costs above that. For example, if your plan maxes out at \$1,500 and you need \$4,000 of dental treatments, you will be on the hook for the difference of \$2,500.

2. Facing a Big Dental Bill? You Have Options. It might feel uncomfortable to talk about finances directly with a dentist,

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IRMAA Reimbursement for 2026

As you may know, CalPERS automatically reimburses the basic Medicare Part B monthly premium (\$202.90 for 2026, up from \$185 for 2025) for its retirees who are in Medicare. What you may not know is that if you are subject to the Income-Related Monthly Medicare Adjustment Amount (the IRMAA) because your annual total adjusted income exceeds certain limits, you may be eligible to have part or all of the IRMAA reimbursed by CalPERS as well.

For 2026, you will be covered by IRMAA if your 2024 modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) exceeds \$109,000 for individuals or \$218,000 for married couples filing jointly. If your income is at or below these levels, you will not pay an extra surcharge.

The amount of additional reimbursement will depend on how much excess money is available from the monthly health insurance contribution made by the CSU for CSU retirees. This will vary depending on how many of your dependents, if any, are enrolled in CalPERS basic or supplemental health plans. For 2026, CSU is contributing \$1,084 monthly for coverage of the retiree only; \$2,057 for coverage of the retiree plus one dependent; and \$2,638 for coverage of the retiree plus two or more dependents.

CalPERS mails a letter about the IRMAA to members who previously have received the additional reimbursement in the fall of each year. This letter will include a cover sheet that should be included when you request additional reimbursement. However if you are new to Medicare or if 2026 will be the first year that you have to pay the IRMAA, you may not receive this letter.

If you think you may be eligible for reimbursement for all or part of your IRMAA, you have to notify CalPERS in writing. Include in your letter to CalPERS a copy of your annual letter from the Social Security Administration describing your benefits for the coming calendar year. This will include the amount of your IRMAA. Be sure to include a copy of this ENTIRE letter.

Request reimbursement using secure upload. To ensure secure and timely processing, upload your or your dependent's SSA notice online by logging in to your myCalPERS account by selecting the Health tab, then the Health Summary option. Scroll down to the Health Deductions section and select the Submit Documents link.

Within a few weeks you should receive a response from CalPERS, which indicates the amount of additional Part B reimbursement you will receive for 2026. Processing time is up to 60 days, and it can take longer for the additional reimbursement to begin to appear in your retirement check or deposit.

Note that state law prevents CalPERS from providing any additional reimbursement for the Part D (drug benefit) IRMAA.

CSU's First-Ever Systemwide Survey on AI

CSU has released findings from its first-ever systemwide survey on artificial intelligence (AI), marking the largest and most comprehensive survey to date on generative artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education. The survey draws on more than 94,000 responses from faculty, staff, and students, offering key insights into higher education's relationship with AI, one that is both promising and complex.

Key Findings. The survey results reveal that AI awareness across the CSU's campuses is high and that most students, faculty and staff are engaging meaningfully with it. What is also clear from the results is that adoption of AI is not without concern. While engagement is high, respondents are taking a cautious approach to AI use, not entirely trusting AI's accuracy and expressing the importance of verifying AI outputs. There is also a near universal demand for transparency, ethical use, and responsible regulation of AI.

The following are some of the survey's key findings:

- **AI use is widespread.**
 - More than half of students, six in 10 faculty and two-thirds of staff regularly use AI-powered tools.
 - Ninety-five percent of respondents used at least one of the 21 AI tools listed in the survey.
- **Demand for training is real, and the students who need it most want it most.**
 - More than eight in 10 staff respondents and roughly seven in 10 faculty want formal AI training.
 - About half of student respondents express the same interest—but first-generation students lead at 53% compared with 45% of non-first-generation students.
- **Ethical lines are being drawn.**
 - About 80% of student respondents are not comfortable submitting AI-generated work as their own.
 - The majority of faculty, staff and student respondents say it is necessary to verify the accuracy of AI-generated content.
- **Faculty are addressing AI in the classroom and guiding students on how to use it.**
 - More than half of faculty respondents use AI to develop course materials, and 69% provide students with guidance on how to use AI effectively.
 - Two-thirds include an explicit AI statement in their syllabi.
- **There is widespread belief that AI is the future—paired with job security fears.**
 - About 82% of staff respondents, 78% of faculty and 69% of students believe AI will become an essential part of most professions.
 - 82% of students, 78% of faculty and 74% of staff express concern about AI's impact on job security.

To view the full report, including a chapter on faculty, go to <https://tinyurl.com/c5w9dmxm>

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Dental Insurance

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but it's helpful to be up-front about what you can afford. Many dentist offices offer financial options to help patients manage the cost of care, including pretreatment estimates and payment plans. If you get an estimate that seems especially high, talk through the items and consider getting a second opinion. It never hurts to ask the office for a discount. If you need a lower-cost alternative, consider looking into dental schools, which often offer discounted care, or federal community health centers, which use sliding scales based on a patient's income.

3. Seeing Your Dentist Regularly Can Help Keep Costs Low. Sarah Olim, a general dentist in Katy, Texas, encourages her patients to come in for visits every six months. "The best thing that you can do to mitigate the cost of going to the dentist is make sure that you are going regularly and trying to take care of things early," she said. Olim welcomes patients no matter how long it's been since their last visit. But she cautioned that patients who wait

CSU-ERFSA Calendar of Events

July 23, 2026 - Summer Executive Committee meeting, 10-12, on Zoom.

October 29, 2026 (Thursday) Noon - Deadline for the 2026 small grant awards program.

a few years between visits may find their appointments are more expensive and more uncomfortable.

The reason? Dental problems often don't resolve on their own. For example, a small cavity that needs a quick filling might cost \$200. If left untreated, it could turn into a larger issue requiring a root canal and crown — and cost thousands.

Your dentist will also encourage you to follow the best preventive maintenance: brushing your teeth for two minutes twice a day. Olim tells her patients to use a timer or listen to a favorite song to make sure they brush long enough.

People and Policy. Federal lawmakers have tried to increase children's access to dental insurance. Under the Affordable

Care Act, dental care is considered an essential health benefit for children, so health insurance plans on the individual marketplace must offer dental coverage for those 18 or younger. State Medicaid programs are also required to cover dental care for children.

Personal & Professional

In early 2026, Ted Anagnoson (LA) taught a course on Congress focused on the question of whether Congress can regain the powers and prerogatives lost over the years.

The course was offered through Vistas Lifelong Learning of Santa Barbara and attracted 80 senior citizens. The course was offered over a four week period at 2.5 hours per week.