

CR to reduce budget shortfall, suspend some fall athletic programs

June 4, 2020



College of the Redwoods has weighed the emerging fiscal impacts of the Governor's May Revised Budget on their 2020-21 budget forecast with the Board of Trustees' Audit and Finance Committee. In that meeting, the committee was informed that, unless immediate cost containment measures are implemented, the college expects to end the 2020-21 fiscal year with a budget shortfall of nearly \$1.5 million with potential for greater losses in 2021-22.

In an effort to bolster its fiscal position and avoid further negative reserves, CR has implemented a hiring freeze district-wide, paused the hiring of temporary and contract services with exceptions for essential services and frozen discretionary spending across the board.

"We are facing considerable financial impact as a result of the pandemic. We have had to make several very difficult expenditure reduction decisions over the last few weeks to address our forecasted budget shortfall,"

said CR President Keith Flamer, adding this includes a reorganization of several administrative functions to reduce costs and improve organizational efficiency.

Unfortunately, although every effort was made to reorganize rather than lay off employees, a number of classified and managerial colleagues were released from the district, several positions were reduced from fulltime and several vacant positions were eliminated in the reorganization. Staff who have been laid off will be added to a rehire list and have first right of refusal should the fiscal situation improve and new positions open up.

“One of the decisions was to redirect nearly \$475,000 from the Health, Physical Education, Kinesiology, Recreation, Dance and Athletic departments,” Flamer said. “This reduction necessitated the suspension of the football and beach volleyball programs. While this was a difficult but necessary decision to make, it was the most efficient way to reduce costs while at the same time making sure that the college is fiscally solvent, that we meet our Title IX requirements and ensure women and men are provided equitable opportunities to participate in sports, and that we are better positioned to financially support the sports we are preserving.”

“We understand the level of fiscal constraints that have been created by the economic downturn for the college,” said Bob Brown, CR’s Athletic Director. “We acknowledge that many in the community may not understand the decision we’ve had to make. It has always been and will continue to be my effort as athletic director, to work with coaching and support staffs and the senior-level administration to continue to provide the highest level of educational and athletic opportunities for all student athletes at CR.”

Although this will not close the budget gap, CR believes this is the best way to support the mission of the institution, which is to offer exceptional open-access education to the community.

“Like so many institutions, organizations, and businesses, CR must maneuver ominous financial straits as a direct consequence of the pandemic crisis” said CR Trustee Colleen Mullery. “The Board of Trustees applauds the exemplary leadership displayed by President Flamer throughout this unprecedented period. His decision making has been dictated by the fiscal exigencies of the moment and grounded by three overarching goals: student success, the health and well being of staff and faculty, and open, honest, and timely communication with all members of the CR community. While the layoff of employees and the suspension of two team sports are unfortunate outcomes of necessary financial prioritization, the Board fully supports these difficult decisions.”