

March 10, 2026

Dear President Perez,

On behalf of the College of San Mateo Academic Senate, we are writing to request information regarding the CSM administration's response to the current budget shortfall. While the administration has held forums and shared information on opening day, many faculty remain confused and anxious about governance and decision-making in response to the crisis. We are deeply concerned that the response is creating a climate of mistrust and negatively impacting instruction, student services, and faculty and staff morale.

While discussions in Academic Senate and surveys given at college division meetings (attached?) have included a wide range of questions and concerns, members of the Senate executive committee met with a group of faculty to identify four consistent themes:

- Many faculty want **much more specific information about what decisions led to this crisis**. As one survey respondent put it "I keep asking who made the decisions that resulted in this problem. No one seems to have an answer." Another respondent noted "the forums that our cabinet has hosted gloss over many of the important details and seem to be more performative than informative; I leave with more questions than answers, which is frustrating, and I know I am not alone in this sentiment."
- The responses also reveal a widespread concern that both the college and district are giving priority to extremely costly projects while drastically cutting instructional funds in ways that harm our students. Though faculty support the good intentions of free college, the Coastside campus, and student housing, the Senate has received conflicting and troubling information about the fiscal planning around student housing (add link to senate notes from campus housing presentation—or maybe no need to be this specific?) and the use of fund one money to support these programs (add link to senate notes from VPAS' visit last semester?). **What guarantee do we have that these projects are not taking away from [fund one and/or?] instructional funds?**
- Despite the budget forums and opening day presentations, faculty say there is a lack of clarity and transparency around decision-making: we hear about class cuts for summer and fall through the rumor mill, long before any official communication, and are left with many questions about how these decisions are made, leading to a sense that faculty voices are being ignored or excluded. Part-time faculty are left uncertain about their future at CSM. This loss of faculty confidence in the decision-making process is particularly troubling given [Senate's role in the 10+1](#) and [Board policy 2.05](#) that senate will "consult collegially with the administration of the college and district" and that the

Board will rely “*primarily on faculty expertise*” on academic and professional matters including “processes for instructional planning and budget development.” We would like you to address **what we can do to ensure that, going forward, faculty are fully involved in discussions and decision-making about decisions such as class cuts rather than receiving information after the decisions have been made?**

- **Faculty would also like more information about how campus leadership is advocating for College of San Mateo and seeking to improve our financial health beyond making cuts to classes and programs.** Many feel that instruction (faculty and students) are being punished for administrative errors at the college and district level and that the district has not taken responsibility or used reserve funds despite district and college leadership decisions playing a significant role in creating the crisis.

We would like to play a positive role in building a trustful relationship with district and college administration. Towards that goal, we request that you attend a future Academic Senate meeting to directly address the concerns noted above. Despite these concerns, the Academic Senate wants to reaffirm our goal of partnership with administration and our ongoing commitment to CSM’s vision and values.

Dear Chancellor Moreno,

On behalf of the College of San Mateo Academic Senate, we are writing to convey our deep concerns regarding the district’s handling of College of San Mateo’s budget crisis and to request more information about your response to our district’s serious deficiencies in meeting the requirements of the 50% law.

As you know, CSM’s budget shortfall has led to drastic cuts in instruction—60% reduction in summer classes and a rumored 15% cut in instruction to classes in the fall. These cuts cause serious harm to students and to the health of our academic programs, and they have created a climate of fear, mistrust, and low morale as faculty do not feel we are fully informed of the nature or rationale for the cuts until after decisions have been made.

While we might respond to the budget shortfall affecting CSM in other ways, such as raising funds or tapping into the district reserves, our response seems to be entirely grounded in cutting spending—particularly on instruction. This is troubling at a time when we are also pursuing extremely costly projects, such as student housing, bringing back our Coastside campus, and making free college permanent. While most faculty strongly support the goals of these programs, many feel the district is prioritizing them at the cost of instruction, and that the

district's goals prioritize completion and transfer but do little to ensure we are encouraging academic excellence. Students can complete and transfer by having an AI agent complete all of their online work without learning anything

We have also asked for information from our local college leadership as many of these are local decisions, but discussion in our Senate meetings and a recent informal survey of CSM faculty reveal that many faculty feel the district *has the resources to support CSM and bears some of the responsibility for the decisions and lack of oversight that have led us to this crisis*, but that the district response—both to these challenges and to the state Chancellor's office [report on the 50% law](#)—tend to place the responsibility elsewhere and avoid taking the strong actions that are needed.

[Your letter in response to the 50% law](#) is particularly troubling in this regard. The State Chancellor's [report](#) shows that our district is one of only three in Northern California that has failed to meet the law's requirements, and that we have failed for far longer, and at much higher rates, than any other college: while College of Marin and Napa Community College have a cumulative deficiency of seven and nine million dollars respectively, our district is deficient by *over 106 million dollars*. While it may be true that “compliance mandates, expanded student support services, and a strong focus on equity, diversity,” along with the costs of technology, have led to changes in spending priorities, this is equally true of all 116 California community colleges and does nothing to answer the question of why our district alone has failed so egregiously.

As the entire goal of the 50% law is to ensure that districts spend equal money on instructive and administrative costs, it is particularly troubling that the letter includes statements about further cutting instruction, that we are “no longer able” to add new instructional positions and that we are encouraging early retirement incentives (NOTE: not sure whether faculty are getting these incentives or just admin? If just admin, cool)

As noted in our letter to CSM President Manuel Perez, the loss of faculty confidence in the decision-making process is particularly troubling given [Senate's role in the 10+1](#) and [Board policy 2.05](#) that senate will “consult collegially with the administration of the college and district” and that the Board will rely “*primarily on faculty expertise*” on academic and professional matters including “processes for instructional planning and budget development.” Suffice it to say, many faculty do not feel our current relationship is grounded in collegial consultation and transparency.

We hope to improve our relationship and, to that end, would like to invite you to attend a future senate meeting to address the following questions

(ran out of time on draft—questions will be based on the points above and created at the next CSM Academic Senate meeting...)