Faculty questions on the College of San Mateo budget cuts

Collected in Spring 2025

Counselling Division Budget Feedback (From 4/9/26)

1. To what extent do you feel you have been informed about the budget challenge at CSM?

- To a great extent 3%
- To a good extent 52%
- Very little 45%

2. If you have been able to attend any of the budget forums or discussions on campus, did you find the information

- Very helpful: 0%
- Helpful: 14%
- Somewhat helpful: 38%
- Not at all helpful: 14%
- I was aware of the forums but unable to attend: 24%
- I was not aware of the budget forums: 10%

3. What questions do you have about the CSM budget?

- transparency
- How much longer do we anticipate operating in a deficit?
- How have the current cuts divisions have been making affected our budget. We are still being told that we are $8 million over budget when divisions have been reducing spending. Why has the deficit not been affected, or how has it been affected?
- How much are we really in deficit as of now. Especially with all the positions that are not being replaced.
- Will the budget impact staffing? If so, how?

- We have a fund 1 for a reason to support faculty on campus. If programs are being told to cut or not allowed to request important positions for lack of finances then why are positions that are fully funded through outside sources being denied?
- What has been the systemic process for class reduction? What was taken into account and who was involved in the decision making? (Especially for summer)
- How can we find positions that are needed to support our most disproportionately impacted students, especially those who are not connected with special programs?
- Want to give admin grace and acknowledge that they inherited a pretty crappy situation. And though I would like more specific details I feel like they are also trying to figure it all out while it's happening.
- What is the earliest timeframe that we can receive updates regarding future academic year budgets?
- What's going on with the budget ? Where do we Stand right now and what changes are we implementing in the coming semesters or years
- Not a question, but a request of what major changes have happened since CSM budget restrictions. Transparency around hire freezing, what positions were let go, and why those were determining factors of those positions.
- What are we, as a college community, able to know about plans? We have yet to hear anything like that
- When do we project based on estimates that the budget "problem" won't be a problem no more?
- N/A
- Why is CSM the only school in a budget crisis?
- Where is/has the money gone? And why are we the only college in the district struggling so much, if the district is well off.
- Programs are asked to plan further ahead but also have no idea of what budgets look like for 26-27. What is the timeline in which we will know what is allocated for next AY?
- CSM had a leader during our budget crisis and why is that leader not being held accountable or given answers as to why we are in this crisis?
- I would like to hear the overall development plan of how money is typically raised and how funding is distributed on campus.
- What's being prioritized? What's getting cut or left behind that hasn't been done in the past?
- Why are we really in the red?

ASLT division budget feedback 4/13/26

1. To what extent do you feel you have been informed about the budget challenge at CSM?

- To a great extent: 13%
- To a good extent: 25%
- Very little: 63%
- Not at all: 0%

2. If you have been able to attend any of the budget forums or discussions on campus, did you find the information

- Very helpful: 0%
- Helpful: 38%
- Somewhat helpful: 38%
- Not at all helpful: 13%
- I was aware of the forums but unable to attend: 13%
- I was not aware of the budget forums: 0%

What questions do you have about the CSM budget?

- How is SB 893 impacting the college budget? i.e., how much money is CSM spending annually on Free College purchases/rentals of course material for students? Have they considered promoting adoption and use of no-cost OER materials to reduce fiscal impact of course material purchases and practice fiscal responsibility in alignment with CCCCO vision 2030?
- I feel that CSM is being punished by the District for spending during a time when the District had control of CSM. The Library needs better communication about cancellations & cuts so we can properly plan. Asking the Library to cut 60% for the summer as if it was the same as another department would result in no library services being offered during times that in-person classes are being offered.
- I'm curious about the length of time it will take to resolve, what are the specific methods for resolving (cuts to what areas, at which times), and how that relates to other spending for larger projects currently running at CSM
- A lot of budget lines in ASLT are not stable (not fund 1). What is the long term plan to put professional development and learning communities on a stable financial footing

- What will the district be doing to support our budget after the student housing project is complete and impacts to our campus resources become more visible?
- Why was administration "surprised" in Spring 2025 that the library budget for Summer 2025 was a separate budget from Fall/ Spring budgets? What information sources, conversations and documents resulted in this oversight?
- How long will it last, and what will the new normal be?

More feedback from library faculty:

Where are the current budget priorities and what is the justification for these priorities? The more details the better. Core services and positions are being cut in favor of costly projects (such as HMB center or special programs) and there is little ROI so to speak for these (Can't even keep HMB properly staffed). There is the concern that this is more of a sunk cost fallacy rather than a informed decision. While we are aware that cuts must happen, it should never be at the cost of enrollment and if the numbers don't justify the spending then we must change course. The whole district is going to struggle this year because of funding but admin should never pivot to make themselves look good at the cost of the institution as a whole. Hard working faculty (and classified) are being hurt by current financial decisions made by both our president and VPAS.

Questions and feedback from division meetings in early March (posted for 3/24 Academic Senate Meeting)

Budget Feedback

Note: These comments were submitted during visits to division meetings in late February/early March: Math-Science, Language Arts, Business-Technology, and KAD.

To what extent do you feel you have been informed about the budget situation at CSM?

- To a great extent: 3%
- Good extent: 30%
- Very little: 63%

- Not at all: 5%

1. **If you have been able to attend any of the budget forums or discussions on campus, did you find the information:**
    - Very helpful: 3%
    - Helpful: 3%
    - Somewhat helpful: 33%
    - Not at all helpful: 8%
    - I was aware of the forums but was unable to attend: 45%
    - I was not aware of the budget forums: 10%

What questions do you have about the CSM budget?

Math-Science

- Why has the admin not shown more concern for the budget issue? The responses feel rather nonchalant.

- Ideally, there would be a detailed breakdown of where money is going at the department/project level, and in particular where the budget increased a lot over the last ~6 years. And then maybe also explanations of why the larger increases occurred. I know this could get political, but I think we need to understand where all of this new spending is going.

- Why we have this budget problems (nobody reported to us the reasons) and how avoid it on the future.
- Why was there no oversight in the spending? from the District or an oversite committee
- Specific line items considered faculty expenses qualifying for the 50 percent rule
- Are we improving? When will we be ok?
- Where has the money been spent? How does this differ from 5 years ago? 10 years ago? What are the reasons for the differences?
- I don't understand why we are in a 5 million dollar deficit. I also, don't trust when we are given numbers around how much "faculty" are costing the college.

- Why does only CSM have a problem? Who did the mismanagement ?

- unprintable

- Why are CSM faculty and students being penalized for a budget issue that happened under the watch of a District Cabinet member?

- None of the moment.
- Just how broke are we?

CASS

1. [Why is] Money moved around between different accounts, such as from instruction to other acccounts.2. How much comes out of our budget to pay for salaries of high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses. 3. What's the cost of services planned to be provided on-site at planned student housing? 4. How much out of our budget for construction costs of student housing? 5. How much are we losing in fees from free college to affluent students? 6. If the budget problems at CSM occured under the leadership of Dr. Storti, why isn't the district reimbursing the CSM budget for this? 7. What is the operating cost of the coastside campus?

- Why can't the powers that be get it together and create a comprehensive budget?
- How serious are the budget issues?
- Where to start?
- Why don't we have a budget for faculty to teach?
- Not that haven't already been addressed. Thank you.
- How did we become so in debt compared to our sister schools?
- Why is csm being held accountable for district mismanagement of money?

LAD

- I want CSM to be completely transparent regarding our current financial situation. Specifically, 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.
- CSM's current budget "crisis" is largely manufactured, and faculty morale is low.

- How is CSM going to work on fixing the budget?

- What specific fundraising efforts has the President taken to help bring in additional revenue to our college to make up for our current budget shortfall. If memory serves me correctly, this issue (raising funds) was one of the questions asked of our presidential candidates in our college-wide forums as part of the interview process.

- Is the CSM budget accurate?

- What programs and positions are being cut besides instruction/classes for students? How are we "right-sizing" the other part of the campus? Can we explain why the chancellor's approach of hiring only part-timers to save money on salary is cynically short-sighted, inherently inequitable, and devalues essential contributions to the campus from both PT and FT faculty? Can we plainly have leadership say whether they want to serve more people in the community or not? Because we are cutting classes that will fill and that students need (and cancelling classes prematurely).

- If cuts affect my programs I want to know before July or August

- Seeing that CSM is the only college in the district that is currently facing a budget crisis AND much of our overspending occurred under Storti's interim position as CSM's president, WHY has the District not provided direct financial support so that we at CSM can continue to support our students? To what extent has our current president advocated for our college and its financial needs? What specific steps has the President taken to advocate for additional support?

- Why is CSM currently in the current position as far as the budget is concerned? This has never been made clear. We've had a lot of upheaval in the district since the issues with Galatolo, and still, the district has not been transparent. It is not enough to simply state, "I've inherited this from the former administration."

- Was this caused by the weird exodus of most of cabinet in or around 2023? I want candor around this, and I don't want faculty to pay for irresponsibility of upper administration.

- How are decisions being made about what to cut, and who is making them?

- Is there any discussion of District accountability for the deficit at CSM?

- I would like to know: 1. How much has "Free College" cost the district in terms of lost revenue from tuition, in dollars and cents, as well as a clear and thorough explanation of how the college/district has made up for this deficit. Has "Free College" affected our ability to offer classes to our students?

- I keep asking who made the decisions that resulted in this problem. No one seems to have an answer. Why is this?

- What steps are being taken to right the budget so we can center students and faculty going forward? The class/fte cuts hurt our students, and degrade their trust in our institutions, and will harm our programs long term.

- Impacts on course availability for adjunct instructors
- How are decisions made? How can we make sure instruction is prioritized? What options are there other than cutting ckassrs?

- What's behind the austerity measures (cuts to classes)? It seems irresponsible to break ground on a major housing project when we can't supply students with classes

- I think understanding how the CSM budget fits into the larger district budget and how we plan to move forward holistically.

- Would like to be informed by the dean at division meetings.

- Why isn't the district giving us money? Why are they so secretive about it?

- Why are we not revisiting the idea of free college if we do not have enough money? If that's not possible, what other revenue sources are being considered?

KAD

- Why is this happening?
- Why do we not find out about cuts until the las minute
- As an athletic department, our course load and cuts can't look like other, purely academic departments. Our practice time is getting cut in half, which makes it extremely difficult to be prepared for our season. I know the entire campus is being affected by cuts, but I wish we could be considered, given the nature of operations.
- Why are we cutting so much with a drop in enrollment
- Is there any oversight over Dean's decisions on course cuts? Are they given blanket authority to choose which course sections are offered & cut? Are there any safety notes for courses that are needed for students to earn degrees and certificates? I know there is a course not being offered next session at many students need in order to earn a certificate and begin their careers. However, I was told it would not be offered due to budget cuts.

- What level of risk is there in full time classified positions being cut?
- How did this budget debacle happen?
- How many classes will be cut next fall?

BUSTECH

- Why do we have so many administrators?
- How are decisions being made about what to cut, and who is making them? Is there any discussion of District accountability for the deficit at CSM?
- Why do we prioritize social services over the classroom?
- Why do we violate the 50% rule?
- How did this happen and how is CSM working on fixing the budget?
- Why are we not revisiting the idea of free college if we don't have any money?
- Impacts on course availability for adjunct instructors
- When is it going to get better? We keep having to cancel classes that our students need.

Questions and comments sent via email

With respect to free college, we are continually being told that the money being lost there is minimal. That should be noted, but then the emphasis should be put on the fact that we still aren't being given an accounting of the money which makes it impossible for us to see if their assessment that it is a minimal loss is as they say.

Transparency is key if they want us to swallow a bitter pill, and it is indeed a bitter pill that they are asking us to swallow. I would add that I have had students express to me that since college classes are free that they take more classes than they normally would and don't worry about dropping them later since they are free and it is not costing them anything. I have seen a huge drop in class enrollments after the initial signup. This drop occurs with students who just disappear and I then drop and with those that drop just before the "W" deadline. If students are indeed signing up for classes just because they can and then making decisions to drop the ones that are "too difficult and won't result in As" then that is harmful to students who need the courses for completion of degrees, for transfer, and for certificates. Meanwhile, if we are pressured to lower our "bar" for passing transfer level courses, we will not have the notoriety with the four-year schools where our students transfer and it will make it harder for them to transfer, again decreasing our enrollment and the trust that the students put in our institution.

As a member of the Math Department I would note that the math department is very concerned about the decreasing enrollment and cuts being made to our classes. We aren't able to add classes where we need them without cutting others. This seems wrong. If we can add a class because other courses are full, then we should be able to without cutting other students out. We have also as district instructors asked for reduced class sizes in our math courses since AB-705 and AB-1705 have given us students who are unprepared for the courses they are being told that they are capable of completing. Reduced class sizes allow for instructors to provide more one-on-one instruction and feedback to struggling students. In addition, we can't continue programs like Math Bootcamp, working with other programs like the DRC to provide specialized help to students who can't begin at the level they are being told is all that is offered despite students' inability to step into the only classes we can offer. Just last week I was approached by a colleague and asked if we could have a conversation about Math Bootcamp for students who are attempting to prepare for a board test in a CTE program. Over the summer or last spring, the DRC asked if we could do something with them to offer continued support that Math Bootcamp was providing for some of their students.

In addition, the Math Department is preparing for potential forced retirements and the possibility that there won't be enough classes for our faculty to teach. This is causing stress, stress not only for full-time faculty but also for our part-time faculty. We have gone from 19 part-time faculty members, most with two classes, down to 5 part-time faculty with only one teaching more than one class. I can speak for myself about the stress of possible loss of more classes, which is very real as AB-1705 is set to eliminate 5 or more sections of Precalculus and Trigonometry in the Fall of 2027. Our faculty met recently to discuss the losses and what possible mitigation might result. The discussion was grim and morale was low afterward.

Other comments sent via email:

1. 1. Exactly how did this supposed financial problem arise?

a. by whom?

b. did they overspend or just steal the (taxpayers') money?

c. if they overspent it, where were the financial controls (on vacation?)

d. who was responsible for approving the spending requisitions or actions?

e. what actions have been taken regarding those that approved these actions?

f. what actions have been taken to recover the lost $$$$$$?

g. what actions have been taken to fix the systemic financial controls system

to prevent this from happening again?

2. Why hasn't the SMCCD provided the funds to prevent damage to CSM

a. schedules/ class offerings

b. students and their study plans

c. college reputation

d. employees

3. Why are cuts being made to instructional offerings and programs

a. when the spending problem was reportedly created mostly in non-instructional accounts

b. why are cuts being made to programs that had nothing to do with the problem, never

having over-spent a penny

c. for the portion of spending that reportedly was run up on expensive overtime accounts,

why haven't these been corrected instead of “hitting” class offerings, programs,

and employees who had nothing to do with, were innocent of this problem

4.Visible institutional impacts of the current approach

a. student study plans are placed in jeopardy

b. some students cannot complete their study plans on schedule

c. some students cannot complete their study plans within their available personal time windows for their academic and career-oriented studies, goals. Some students only have X months available for college studies due to economics, housing, care-giving, or employment

priorities. Sometimes "a class delayed is a class denied, especially if it is a one-section-only offering.

d. having to advise students to enroll in other colleges because CSM has just cancelled the class(es) they need, is not helpful for CSM's enrollment goals (upon which a great deal of time, energy, and money is being expended)

e. another area where we've been working a great deal is Accreditation. There are patently several aspects of these issues that an accreditation review would find quite distressing about a college and its functions

e1. Decision-making processes

e2. Participatory governance

e3. Transparency of operations

e4. Employee relations