

VALLEJO, CA TIMES HERALD

California teachers join peers across the nation in campaign for more funding

[By Sarah Rohrs / Times-Herald](#)

Posted: 01/27/2011 01:08:24 AM PST

To keep public college and university doors open to all students, teachers intend to write a nationwide lesson plan on the need for better funding.

Following a weekend summit on higher education in Los Angeles, faculty leaders held a tele-press conference outlining the need to save higher education from more punishing funding cuts.

The California Faculty Association is among many groups who have vowed to "help out in developing a national new campaign to try and help save our higher education system," union spokeswoman Alice Sunshine said.

Among the 70 in attendance, Sonoma State University political professor Andy Merrifield said the gathering represented 250,000 teachers and millions of students from 21 states.

"The essential plan is that it makes sense for all people concerned about higher education to work together," said Merrifield, CFA associate vice president for the Northern California region.

Colleges and universities face similar challenges in states across the country, regardless of their size and strength, he said.

"We need to find the best way to promote quality education in a time of austerity and a time when there seems to be a movement away from funding quality public education," he said.

More funding cuts could be on the way, as well. Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed state budget calls for a \$400 million cut in community college

funding and \$500 million cuts each for the California State University and University of California systems.

Merrifield said faculty leaders will meet again and formulate a plan to take their message to the public and lawmakers.

Faculty leaders said the debate over higher education funding must include voices from the actual classroom, according to comments made during Monday's teleconference.

CFA president Lillian Taiz said the future does not bode well for colleges as more students are turned away, and teachers are being pushed to do more with less.

Public universities need to be open to all students, regardless of their economic backgrounds, said Barbara Bowen, Progressive Staff Congress president and a City University of New York professor.

"The funding is being deeply curtailed and opportunities for students are being cut," she said.

Taiz lamented so-called "reforms" in which students are being channeled into large online courses with limited, or no, access to teachers. Meanwhile, Bowman said a college education is essential for building and maintaining the country's middle class.

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