

There have been a lot of issues, concerns and genuine fear from the bargaining unit members in the past couple of months. The news media indicates that layoffs are going to be inevitable with current climate of the economy. Gary and Pat continue to hold fast that layoffs will be the last resort for classified. Gary, Joe, and Pat, I believe are making every effort to keep us all working. I continue to channel this information to the chapter, in an attempt to keep them abreast of our situation. As the president of CSEA I can't tell you how busy my job has become, working nights, weekends and spending hours meeting with administrators and employees on issues. I believe it is due to a fear of the unknown and again, I can't stress enough how important, especially now, communication from the District and the transparency of the budget are. We need to work together to alleviate the fear and questions that are invading the minds of our workforce. Gary, I would like to recommend that you consider doing an open forum Q and A in the very near future, where not only employees, but the community members could come out and get the straight scoop of where the District is with the budget and how it could affect the education we deliver to our students and the affect it could have on the employees of the District. The campus community and the community at large want to know what the plans are going to be to weather this financial storm that is burdening our District.

The CSEA negotiations team met with the District recently and settled on a TA and MOU. I am pleased to report that on 6-5-09, I was able to bring this agreement to a special chapter meeting and have it ratified by the CSEA chapter. On many levels this was a success for both CSEA and the District. We were dealing with the best choices that we had, even though the health plan settled on is a lesser plan and CSEA made concessions on their contract. CSEA also voted to supplement its active and eligible members with disbursements from the CSEA Health Fund, and this was well received and ratified at the same meeting.

The health plan premiums are shocking and each and every group that this campus supports should be making concessions in order for the District to operate and continue to serve our students and community, and yet still be fair and equitable to all these groups.

The burden of balancing the budget should not lie on one group, but on all groups collectively. If we mean what we say "We are all in this together," then we should back it up with our actions. The District is not going to balance its budget by looking to classified and faculty solely. We all have to chip in. It's a crisis and from CSEA's perspective this includes Faculty, Classified, Classified Confidential, Administrators and the Board. We all work hard for the District and we all reap a benefit from that hard work through salaries and health care benefits. We all stand to lose something, whether it is a perk, a benefit or foregoing an increase in pay. If we do not do this equally and fairly across the board, then the ones who really lose are the students we serve. We must not forget why we are here, and for the majority of us, it is not just to collect a paycheck and have our health care paid for. I believe that most of us are here because we love making a difference in the lives of students, being

apart of their educational successes along their educational journey. We must be like minded in our motivation to helping students, for without them we do not have a reason to come to work, or work to come to.

I have been with the District for approximately eight years and it is apparent and clear that this District takes care of its employees. But it is not an entitlement program, we are paid by taxpayer dollars, and some of those dollars belong to all of us. We must be smart and strategic with the finances, but we are also obligated to be good steward's of the money and not be wasteful and not become greedy. Times are changing and we must be adaptable and willing to bend in these difficult times.

As I stated to my chapter recently, ***“We can either break under the pressure like an Oak tree or we can bend like a Willow tree, the choice is ours.”*** The Willow will survive and bounce back, the Oak is forever wounded.

The climate on the campus is gloomy and from my perspective morale is low amongst not only classified but runs the gamut across all groups. The morale is low for many reasons, but the main reason is fear and frustration. Again, communication can alleviate a lot of this.

Shrinking revenue and increased operating cost is a tough place to be. We look to the District for answers; after all they are in charge and running the institution. We believe our top level administrators are considering and pondering all angles and solutions, yet as a unit of workers who support this District and are on the front line daily, we are not consulted and many of us are the experts in our field. We could all benefit from a culture of encouraged collaboration and the fostering of openness. We talk about it, but we haven't been able to make it happen, communication is the key, but it doesn't just happen we have to make it happen.

Respect, compassion, teamwork, acknowledgement, communication, and a desire to achieve our goals at this institution should always be in the forefront of our thinking, without these core values how can Shasta College remain the respected and polished institution of higher education that we all want it to be. We are in this together and CSEA wants to be a part of the solution. We owe it to one another and to our students, because this college belongs to all of us and to our community.

Respectfully,

Sherry Nicholas

President CSEA

Chapter 381- Shasta College