

Gray Panthers of San Francisco

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Protecting California's Public Community Colleges and Adult Education

California's public Community Colleges give affordable and accessible education, training, and life skills to tens of millions of Californians of all ages, and are usually the only post-K12 education source for people who are low-income, minority, senior or disabled, poorly-educated, immigrant, veteran, homeless, formerly-incarcerated, or otherwise disadvantaged.

California's public Community Colleges and Adult Education programs give rapidly-growing senior and disability populations vital programs in coping and life skills, socialization, physical and mental exercise, health and financial information, which enable us to live dignified, independent, non-institutionalized lives. Examples include anti-fraud or current event classes for isolated seniors, nutrition classes for diabetics, or music classes for blind or developmentally disabled students.

But California public governmental bodies, such as the state-wide California Community College Chancellor's Office, and private governing institutions, such as the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), are exerting strong pressures to ultimately restructure Community Colleges across the State to eliminate community service and to serve only full-time students planning to transfer to 4-year colleges or to complete a limited range of vocational certificate programs.

For example, the ACCJC is currently threatening to withdraw accreditation and close City College of San Francisco, the nation's largest Community College, rated among the top dozen in the US, with huge community outreach programs, unless it greatly downsizes and eliminates its community mission. The state-wide California Community College Chancellor's Office has appointed a single outside Trustee who has taken over powers of the locally-elected Board of Trustees. Similar actions have occurred across the State. Adult Education programs in K-12 districts have been badly cut or eliminated.

Elimination of part-time students with jobs and families would force our children and grandchildren to assume tens of thousands of dollars of student loans for private education or full-time public education, which would take decades for them to repay and subject whole generations to debt slavery.

Elimination of community service and outreach programs will do incalculable damage to poor, senior, disability, veteran, immigrant, and other vulnerable populations, particularly following years of budget cuts to safety-net programs.

Therefore, CARA Resolves:

CARA will join and participate in groupings which are dedicated to keeping California Community Colleges funded and functioning as public, community-based institutions, dedicated to fighting downsizing or privatization of these institutions.

CARA CATS are encouraged to publicize, participate in, and otherwise help local efforts to fight downsizing or privatization of individual Community Colleges in their areas.

CARA will contribute its knowledge and expertise in senior and disability issues to groupings seeking to protect and expand public adult education in California.