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Governor signs AB 955, Two-Tier Fee Pilot for Community Colleges

Statement from CFT president Joshua Pechthalt

Community college faculty are deeply disappointed that the Governor signed AB 955 into law. While the stated motivation for this pilot project is to accommodate demand for popular classes, and create greater student access to affordable higher education, its effect will be the opposite.

AB 955 opens the door to a two-tier fee system in community colleges by authorizing one or more colleges to charge its students exorbitant fees for intersession courses as a “pilot project.” AB 955 fees will run over \$750 for a typical 3-unit community college course. Current fees for this course are \$138.

The original bill proposed a pilot project that would have been broader, involving more colleges.

Because CFT members and our supporters in the community raised our concerns with legislators and the governor, the negative impact of the bill in its final form was reduced.

But by raising student fees in even one college dramatically, AB 955 will effectively deny equal, open access to the working class Californians who depend most on our community colleges for public higher education and social mobility. This is not the best approach to solving a problem created by underfunding. The best approach would be to tap progressive revenue sources to properly fund a community college system that can meet student demand.

The California Federation of Teachers represents 25,000 community college faculty and more than one hundred thousand education employees in all, from Head Start through the University of California. For more information, www.cft.org.