

## OPINION

It was Friday, March 2, 2018 during the CCLC CEO Symposium morning general session group discussion of the merits of the potential new Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF). Two outcomes stood out to me from that morning: 1) We believed the idea of substantive changes to existing enrollment funding mechanisms was dead on arrival; and, 2) Unified agreement that should this funding formula move forward, the result would avoid, at all costs, fiscal inequity or undue harm on districts.

We were wrong.

Irrespective of one's view about the formula, the core intent was a long overdue recognition and commitment to provide additional resources to districts serving large numbers of low income and disadvantaged students. Instead, the formula today preserves only the status quo through 2021-2022. The funding formula has eroded substantially from its original intent: equity. The very districts serving larger numbers of disadvantaged, low income students in the far north, the inland empire, in inner cities, and the central valley bear the burden of this failure. It is, once again, an illustration of how poor communities stay poor.

The West Hills Community College District adopted a 2018-2019 budget based on projections from the State Chancellor's Office that included full funding of the SCFF and a \$7 million increase in revenue. On April 29, 2019, the P1 allocation rocked us with a gut punch; our anticipated revenue would be \$7 million short of our adopted \$50 million budget. With our nearly 10% budgeted reserve, West Hills could have weathered the scenario in isolation with a minimal impact to students and operations. However, the combination of a late-in-the-year funding decrease combined with the promise of little to no anticipated growth for 2020-2021 meant that our budget and, more importantly, our ability to serve students in the valley was devastated.

The P2, released in June, offered minimal relief. Today, West Hills is spinning from a summer fueled by the continued funding shortfall inequity of nearly \$5 million. Our labor groups have stepped up in assisting us through this crisis utilizing furloughs and salary freezes because they have heard from their groups that this was a failure of leadership at the state level, not our doing. While we hope for improvement to the funding formula and true rural college district representation on the oversight committee, we have sacrificed in all ways excluding one: access for students. Our enrollment goal remains the same as last year, which is a testimonial to our employees who believe in student attainment as a pathway to prosperity and productive lives, above all else.

The aftermath of past year alterations is contrary to the core intent of the new funding formula. It decimated us for doing all the right things to support the state's new Vision for Success. Local districts depend on our state agency to make correct decisions. Why are we forced to fight to get the funding due us? I think many of you know the answers. I thought I had seen every door, every window, every silo, every initiative, and every success and failure of our system. I was wrong.

Nevertheless, if you know me at all, even this fiscal disaster is not enough to move away from standing up for this remarkable system that is a springboard of opportunity for all Californians. I hope our students can have the same visions of upward mobility from their poverty roots with changes to the formula in the future.