

**A Critique of Office of Affairs Policy Paper,  
Rationale for Course Reductions, of 2/22/11  
- by Geoff Hagopian, 2/25/11**

In the draft document from the College Planning Council, titled, *Rationale for Course Reductions and Changes to Instructional Delivery Methods* and dated 2/22/11 we find under the section titled *What*, that the authors are “using a rough average of generating approximately 3.1 FTES per section.” In this paper I find that this number is highly questionable and show that a better approximation is 7.0 FTES per section.

Suppose there are  $S$  students enrolled in a section that has  $U$  student instructional units (SIUs). Then the total of units generated by the section is the product,  $S \cdot U$  SIUs. Multiplying this by the conversion factor to FTES, 1 FTES/15 SIUs, yields the formula for FTES per section:  $S \cdot U / 15$  FTES. So if  $S \cdot U / 15 = 3.1$  then  $S \cdot U = 46.5$ , which could be approximately factored, for example, as a 3-unit course enrolling 15 students, a 4-unit course enrolling 12 students or a 5-unit course enrolling 9 students. None of these seems typical of sections I’m familiar with at COD. In fact, a little research reveals that the average enrollment per section in the spring, 2011 term is 29.9, a value I computed from the data available at <http://www.collegeofthedesert.edu/fs/dept/research/Pages/Dashboards.aspx> , after omitting the work/study sections which are a different sort of animal.

Of course this average enrollment per section includes many sections that are more than three units. Let’s say the average units per section is 3.5, then a much better estimate of SIUs per section is  $29.9 \cdot 3.5 / 15 = 7.0$ , a figure 2.25 times larger than the 3.1 figure used in the *Rationale* paper, meaning we would “need” to cut only 92 sections. Cutting this many sections on top of the cuts already done would be a draconian policy violating our mission, the trust that the community has placed in us and the guarantee of open access made law in the Master Plan for Higher Education of 1959 – legislation that’s lasted 52 years– the same time as since COD was established.

I would urge faculty and administrators to find ways to cut the budget that do not penalize the public – after all, the average wage-earner in California is paying more taxes than they have in the past and is already suffering from the rapacious greed of major financial institutions such as Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, CitiBank, Bank of America, Wells Fargo and Fannie and Freddie Mac , who have, with impunity, gutted the tax base through their reckless mortgage policies for homeowners and their strangling of small businesses with miserly lending policies.

Let’s buck the trend and the group-think from so-called leaders like Chancellor Scott and do everything we can to remain true to our commitments to the community, our mission and California’s Master Plan for Higher Education. Many have offered constructive ideas for how to save money without precipitous enrollment reductions. Getting down to the baseline of the Cap is not a “lofty goal,” it is a low, mean and dirty betrayal of who we are.