

March 1, 2013

An Open Letter to students, faculty, staff and administration of Shoreline Community College.

Let's work together.

My name is Phil Barrett and I am the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Shoreline Community College. As many of you know, on Wednesday February 26 we held a Board of Trustees meeting. One of the agenda items at that meeting was a proposal for sabbaticals from 8 faculty members. These were, to a large extent, well thought out proposals. However, the board voted to not grant these sabbaticals. More precisely, the board voted to approve a proposal to not grant the sabbaticals. During the open comment period, there were quite a few people that spoke in favor of the sabbaticals and there was a small, highly vocal contingent that unfortunately chose to make this an us vs. them situation. Some rather unfortunate and highly incendiary things were said.

I am writing this letter to do two things: first, to explain why I voted against the sabbaticals and, secondly, to appeal for moderation and unity going forward.

As I am sure you all know, we have been going through very difficult economic times. Over the course of the last 6 years, the state contribution to our budget has been cut significantly and now comprises less than half of our working funding. This has forced the college to make significant cuts in staffing including laying off faculty and staff. We are now facing further budget uncertainty due to the recent State Supreme Court decision in the McCleary case. Basically this says that we have been under funding K-12 education by \$4.5B and directs the Governor and Legislature to make up this amount within 5 years. According to Rep Ross Hunter, this means \$1.7B additional funding must be found in each of the next 5 years. But, that is just a guess. Since new taxes are very unlikely, this money has to come from somewhere. Governor Inslee has yet to provide a proposed budget but it is a near certainty that the Community and Technical College system will feel the pinch. We could see up to a 25% decrease in state funding. The total cost of the proposed sabbaticals is between \$150K and \$180K which translates into about 3 full time faculty members. If we were guaranteed that we would see no budget cuts, the sabbaticals would probably have not been an issue. However, as a trustee, I am responsible for ensuring the college remains on a sound financial footing and there is plenty of evidence that we WILL see another round of budget cuts. When Lee Lambert became President, the college was in weak financial shape with only days of cash reserves on hand. Even the slightest hiccup could have been disastrous. Through President Lambert's and his staff's efforts, the college is now on solid financial ground. I believe very strongly in keeping it there. That is why I voted against the sabbatical proposals.

I do feel that the sabbatical proposals had a lot of merit and would provide significant benefits to the students of Shoreline Community College. I was impressed with the thoughtfulness of the proposals and was, again, reminded how lucky we are to have such great faculty members. It also was heartening in the meeting to hear the administration propose to use a special innovation fund that was created last year. I was happy to see a glimmer of hope. It would be great to fund many of the proposals with this money. I have to admit disappointment that faculty and administration did not try to work together prior to the board meeting. It is troubling to me that two groups of highly educated and dedicated

people could not find common ground to benefit the students. It is important that we not cast blame but rather move forward to find common ground. I am asking all involved to work together and eschew the politics of division. I am asking the broader campus to support them in these efforts. Vilifying those who have a different point of view will not solve the problem. Coming together will.

I believe deeply that there are more difficult financial times ahead. It is going to be hard, but we are all here to see that our students get a great education.

Phil Barrett