MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AFFAIRS TO DEPARTMENT HEADS REGARDING PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE AND FACULTY REDUCTIONS IN FORCE

As most of you are aware, the College will be facing yet another round of budget reductions in planning for the 2013/14 academic year. This year’s budget planning process is complicated by numerous unknown factors that will not become clearer until our processes are well underway. We are, of course, unsure as to whether or not the Governor’s proposed tax initiative will pass; nor do we have clarity with regard to the extent to which the numerous assumptions contained in the 2012/13 state budget will unfold as expected. Consequently we must prepare plans to address a range of alternative scenarios.

At this juncture we are certain that the College will need to reduce its unrestricted general fund budget by $2 million, even assuming the passage of the tax measure and that all of the assumptions included in this year’s budget turn out to be accurate. We must also identify potential targets for an additional $2-4 million in reductions, depending upon factors such as changes in estimated property tax revenues, the fiscal effects of increasing student fees from $36 to $46 per unit and the ability of the State to make good on its promise to backfill redevelopment revenues. Finally, the specter of an additional $4.5 million in budget reductions looms in the event that the tax initiative is not approved by the voters.

Unlike previous years, the next round of budget reductions will directly impact full-time faculty positions. More specifically, we will need to discontinue some of our instructional programs and implement faculty reductions in force. Depending upon the magnitude of the budget reductions we face, I would estimate that the resulting RIFs will affect somewhere between 10 and 20 faculty positions and could result in the elimination of between nine and 15 instructional programs. Overall, it is likely that roughly half of the total amount of proposed budget reductions will be comprised of savings associated with the layoff of full-time faculty members that would take effect on July 1, 2013.

With regard to the process by which we will formulate recommendations concerning program discontinuance, we will make every effort to adhere to the provisions set forth in College Regulation 4024, which specifies processes to be employed and questions to be addressed when considering instructional programs for possible discontinuance. This regulation clearly identifies the role to be played by full-time faculty members who are assigned to programs subject to review; it does not, however, address the role to be played by department heads in this endeavor. Because some of our department heads are faculty members who are assigned to programs to be reviewed for possible discontinuance, they will be included in the deliberations set forth in Regulation 4024, which specifies that all full-time faculty members in the affected programs be so included. To ensure that all department heads who oversee programs under consideration are included in these discussions I will be inviting department heads from each program identified for possible discontinuance to participate, as ex-officio members, of each group that is formed within their respective areas of responsibility.

The process of discontinuing instructional programs and implementing faculty reductions-in-force at LBCC involves multiple steps, including:
• Review of the program by working groups comprised of the Vice President, Academic Affairs, the dean charged with overseeing the program, full-time faculty members assigned to the program and the appropriate department head (September/October);

• Review of the recommendations of the working groups by the Academic Council (early November);

• Review of Academic Council and Executive Committee recommendations by the Superintendent/President (November/December);

• Review of the Superintendent/President’s recommendations and action by the Board of Trustees; (January/February) and, in some instances

• Review of the Board of Trustees actions by an administrative law judge followed by issuance of an advisory ruling (dates dependent upon availability of administrative law judge).

Since, at each of the above steps in the process, the possibility exists of programs and/or positions being removed from the list of those under consideration, there is a need to begin the process with a larger number of programs and positions than may actually be necessary to be reduced in order for the College to meet its budget reduction target. It is, therefore, important to emphasize to faculty and other affected parties that mere identification of a program or position on an initial list of those to be reviewed does not constitute a proposed reduction-in-force or program discontinuance. In fact, as Regulation 4024 spells out, the review process can serve as an opportunity to identify and put forth strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of a program. Nevertheless, the news that one’s program or position is being considered for possible discontinuance can be a highly unsettling event for the affected students, faculty and staff members. As department heads, many of you are likely to be in a position whereby you will need to provide information and support to your faculty, staff and students as the process unfolds over the course of the fall semester.

At the initial stage of this process, commencing early in the fall semester, between 15 – 20 work groups will be formed to conduct an assessment of a like number of instructional programs. Each of these groups will review relevant data in the context of the budget reduction criteria that were approved last fall by the College Planning Committee as well as the questions enumerated in Section 4024.5(2)a-q of the Administrative Regulations on Program Establishment, Modification and Discontinuance. Program faculty and their department heads will be invited to provide additional information to be brought to bear in considering whether or not to recommend discontinuance of the program. Upon the completion of this stage of the process, a list of programs to be considered for possible discontinuance as well as any proposed faculty reductions-in-force not associated with program discontinuance will be presented to the Academic Council, which will be provided a summary report for each work group along with the group’s recommendation concerning discontinuance. At least one and possibly more public hearings will be held by the Academic Council to provide affected faculty, staff and students an opportunity to speak on behalf of their programs. At the conclusion of the hearing process the Academic Council will make a recommendation to the Superintendent-President with regard to each of the programs and positions on the list.
As department heads, your involvement in the process will be especially intensive during the initial stage in which work groups are conducting their assessments of programs under consideration. You should plan to make yourselves available for work group meetings likely to occur between mid-September and mid-October. You can also expect to be the recipients of numerous inquiries from interested parties regarding the status of the budget reduction process.

Please feel free to contact me or your Dean should you have questions regarding any of the information that has been provided in this message.