



Frequently Asked Questions

On November 15, 2007, the University of California Board of Regents voted to oppose Proposition 92, which will appear on the February ballot. They did so, even while recognizing the vital partnership that the University has with the California Community Colleges, because they consider that Prop. 92 could result in a reduction in the University's state-funded budget, which in turn could result in an erosion of University programs and services. This FAQ was prepared to address questions that have arisen about the Regents' vote.

In a nutshell, what is Proposition 92?

The proposed state measure on the February 5th primary ballot – known as the Community College Governance, Funding Stabilization, and Student Fee Reduction Act – would establish a separate Proposition 98 funding guarantee for the California Community Colleges apart from K-12 education funding, as well as a separate enrollment growth formula. Prop. 92 also contains constitutional and statutory provisions to reduce student fees and alter the governance of the community colleges.

What are the California Community Colleges?

The largest system of higher education in the world, the 109 campuses of the California Community College System provide educational, vocational and transfer programs to more than 2.5 million students each year.

Why do supporters want to establish a separate Prop. 98 funding guarantee for the community colleges?

According to the state Legislative Analyst's Office, it is estimated that California's population of college-age adults will grow faster than K-12 attendance. That growth, supporters argue, means the state investment in community college education is imperative. Under current Prop. 98 funding formulas, the community colleges receive about 11% of the education funding while 89% goes to K-12 schools.

How much money is involved?

According to the state Legislative Analyst's Office, Prop. 92 would require the state to spend more for K-14 education than under current law – nearly \$1 billion over the next three years.

The Legislative Analyst's Office also notes that the Prop. 92 reduction in community college fees would also result in a \$70 million loss in student-fee revenue in 2007-08, with unknown financial impacts in future years.

How does Prop. 92 affect student fees?

Prop. 92 contains constitutional and statutory provisions to reduce community college student fees from \$20 to \$15 per unit. To keep fees more stable, it further restricts future increases to no more than 10% annually or to the increase in per capita personal income, whichever is lower. To trigger a \$1 fee increase, for example, California per capita personal income would have to increase by 6.7% or more – a growth rate that has occurred only once in the past 20 years.

Prop. 92 does not cover fees for students at the University of California or the California State University. (Nearly a third of UC's undergraduate students transfer from community colleges, however.)

What effect does Prop 92 have on taxpayers and the State Budget?

When the Legislature and Governor negotiate the annual state budget, there will be new obligations to fully fund community colleges as required under this initiative. In years of budget shortfalls, there will still be a requirement to fund community colleges as detailed under this Initiative. Some may wish to cut other programs and services or increase taxes to pay for these programs and services.

Why did the UC Regents vote to oppose Prop. 92?

Prop. 92 requires automatically spending more state funds, with no regard to the State's economic condition. Accordingly, it reduces student fees for one segment of higher education (the community colleges) without regard to the needs of all of higher education in California. Critics maintain that since it does not create or identify any new revenue sources, unprotected state programs such as the University of California and the 23-campus California State University system (CSU) would be competing for a smaller share of available state General Funds.

What are the trends in state funding for UC?

UC's share of the state General Fund has fallen from 7% in 1970 to just over 3% today. Since 1990, the state's contribution to the cost of education for each UC student has fallen 34%, from \$15,830 to \$10,370 in constant inflation-adjusted dollars.

What effect does Prop. 92 have on the state budget process?

Prop. 92 creates a voter-mandated, defined spending formula to determine future Community College funding levels. According to an in-depth study conducted by the State PTA, the net effect would further reduce the already constrained discretionary part of the overall state budget. Because there is no new revenue source identified to pay for the increase in funds going to the community colleges, there would likely be a decrease in the amount of non-Prop. 98 General Fund money available for programs other than education that affect children and youth.

As a result, the only significant areas where the state could make budget cuts would be in funding for UC, CSU, health and human services, and prisons. It could restrict the ability of the Legislature and the Governor to set state spending priorities in the annual budget process at a time when the state is expected to face even larger budget deficits.

Can the provisions of Prop. 92 be changed later?

Yes, but Prop. 92 would be extremely difficult to alter because changing its funding provisions would require a four-fifths vote of the Legislature. Under the fee formula in Prop. 92, community college fees could very rarely be increased; and, even in years when they could, a two-thirds vote of the Legislature would be required.

Who supports Prop. 92?

Prop. 92 supporters (www.prop92yes.com) include the Community College League of California, the California Federation of Teachers (the state's second-largest teachers' union), the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild, the California School Employees Association, the Sacramento Metro Chamber, the North Bay Labor Council, the Sacramento Central Labor Council and the California Community College Association.

What do supporters say is the benefit of Prop. 92?

Supporters argue that it would guarantee needed funding for the state's community college system, which is the largest system of higher education in the world. It would set a predictable, stable and affordable student fee structure and change college governance policies for the better, they believe.

Who opposes Prop. 92?

A diverse spectrum of organizations oppose Prop. 92, including UC, CSU, the League of Women Voters of California, the California Chamber of Commerce, California Teachers Association (the largest teachers' group in the state), California Faculty Association, California Taxpayers' Association and California Business Roundtable. (www.noprop92.org)

Where can I read more about Prop. 92?

For a full text of the ballot arguments for and against Prop. 92, visit the Secretary of State's web site at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/bp_02052008_pres_primary/arguments_92.pdf.

The University of California also has more information about the proposition at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/prop92.