

Cabrillo's new boss faces challenge

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Cabrillo College's new president is really asking for it.

On the one hand, John Hurd wants to diversify and increase the school's enrollment. On the other hand, he must walk a precarious path on which the school's finances are not expected to keep up with the demand.

How does he expect to solve this problem?

"If I knew that I'd be the governor or the president of the United States," he said with a laugh.

Hurd, 48, comes from Norwich, Conn., where he was president of Mohegan Community College. He was selected in May out of a field of 65 candidates to replace Robert Agrella, who left last summer to become president of Santa Rosa Junior College.

Hurd said one of the main projects he wants to work on is increasing the school's outreach efforts in the Scotts Valley and Watsonville areas. While few people can argue with the value of that goal, Hurd realizes that once the students start coming, it may

become difficult to serve them adequately.

Cabrillo, like most colleges in the state, is feeling the dollar squeeze and has had to trim spending. Its present financial condition prevents it from filling eight faculty vacancies and several staff positions.

As of last week, Hurd said the school already had 5,000 students registered, 1,000 more than last year at the same time. The school expects its enrollment to be close to 14,000 this semester, up from nearly 13,500 last year.

Even with a financial cloud looming over the school, Hurd maintains a cheerful outlook, saying the school "will find a way" to make things work out with "a lot of creative ingenuity."

Hurd comes to Cabrillo with a strong background in both education and public finance. Before going to Connecticut, he was vice president of Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Mich., from 1981 to 1986. Before his appointment as president, he was head of school's business department. While in Michigan, he

also spent four years as controller and chief financial officer for Washtenaw County and served as township supervisor for Lydon Township, Mich., for eight years. The supervisor position was an elected post. Hurd has bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration.

Even though the California Legislature this year imposed a 20 percent hike in fees effective this fall for community colleges — raising Cabrillo's fees from \$5 to \$6 per unit — Hurd thinks students here have it better than students at Mohegan Community College. The tuition there for a student attending full time was more than \$800. To Hurd, Cabrillo's low tuition seems like a "foreign concept."

To help alleviate Cabrillo's financial pinch, Hurd hopes to enlist the business community. He wants various school departments to form partnerships with area businesses.

Even with the most creative budget management, Hurd admits the school's future financial picture is somewhat bleak. The task



John Hurd

of keeping the school solvent, he said, is going to be the most complicated and demanding of all.

"It's going to be the major challenge for years to come," he said.