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Cabrillo chief sees big problem ahead

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Cabrillo College President John Hurd says that institution faces a large influx of students without the resources to accommodate them unless more money can be shaken loose from the state.

Speaking at Monday's governing board meeting, Hurd said the precarious financial condition of the University of California and the state university systems is forcing those schools to turn away more and more students. Community colleges like Cabrillo often find those rejected students at their doorsteps, Hurd said.

In better times, the four-year schools' curse would be considered a blessing for the two-year colleges. But community colleges are also hurting financially, Hurd said.

Hurd said community colleges will be forced to intensify their battle with the state for more money if the trend continues. He called for school officials — administration, faculty and unions — to create a unified front and recommended that community colleges increase lobbying efforts in Sacramento.

This year, Cabrillo was hit by a wave of new students, a consequence, at least in part, of UC-Santa Cruz increasing its fees by 40 percent this fall and limiting freshman enrollment.

Cabrillo's enrollment of 13,600 is about 1,000 more than capacity, Hurd said. When school started in August, there were 3,000 students on a computerized waiting list, and another estimated 3,000 students on teachers' informal waiting lists. This semester has also seen a jump in the number of students taking more units, he said.

"We are stretched pretty thin," said Hurd. The future, he added, doesn't look much better.

Cabrillo's "open policy," which allows anyone to attend the school, may change, Hurd said.

As more students come to Cabrillo, the school may be forced, as a matter of necessity rather than policy, to turn some of them away.

"The open door is beginning to close," Hurd said.

In other business Monday, the board received a report from the school's Disabled Student Services Program. During the 1990-91 year, the program served 1,014 disabled students through a variety of special services. Some of these services included providing readers and note takers, transcription and interpretation, and job-placement, academic, vocational and peer counseling.

The program is the sixth largest in the state, which has 106 community colleges, each with its own disabled-students' program.