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For Immediate Release

Will the wealthy Colorado Community College System use tsunami of fed funding to invest in faculty, finally?

Denver, March 11, 2021 -- A hefty third wave of federal funds is headed to higher education, and millions of it to Colorado's Community College System. Today Pres. Joe Biden signed into law the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The bill includes \$40 billion for public higher education. These funds follow the 2020 CARES Act that sent \$14 billion to higher education in March and another \$22.7 billion in December (Murakami).

Will the 13-college Colorado Community College System use these waves of money to invest in its faculty, which it has impoverished for decades? Since the funds are expected to be distributed largely along the same lines as in the previous 2020 federal packages, it will likely mean nearly \$80 million more into CCCS coffers this spring, atop the nearly \$80 million it received just a few months ago (see chart below). By drawing on U.S. Department of Education statistics, the *Inside Higher Ed* searchable database shows the 13-college Colorado Community College System was slated to receive nearly \$80 million from the December 2020

distribution under the CARES Act (Seltzer). According to *Inside Higher Ed* reporting today, distribution of the ARPA is expected to send approximately \$80 million more to the CCCS now (Murakami). Of interest is how the *IHE* chart illustrates that only a fraction of the funding each college receives must be used for student aid. The snapshot chart below includes statistics for student aid/other institutional expenses in the CCCS, distilled from the *IHE* searchable database (Seltzer).

<i>Distribution of CARES Act funds to the Colorado Community College System</i>				
	Name of Institution	Total Award	Maximum Amount for Institutional Portion	Minimum Amount for Student Aid Portion
1	Arapahoe Community College	5,512,598	4,472,793	1,039,805
2	Colorado Northwestern Community College	898,356	699,357	198,999
3	Community College of Aurora	7,224,037	5,706,224	1,517,813
4	Community College of Denver	9,998,358	7,776,769	2,221,589
5	Front Range Community College	16,023,686	12,500,541	3,523,235
6	Lamar Community College	1,049,005	754,795	294,210
7	Morgan Community College	966,838	761,209	205,629
8	Northeastern Junior College	1,708,469	1,274,289	434,180
9	Otero Junior College	1,839,224	1,387,763	451,461
10	Pikes Peak Community College	16,312,451	12,540,562	3,771,889
11	Pueblo Community College	8,728,074	6,908,847	1,819,227
12	Red Rocks Community College	6,889,441	5,531,932	1,574,509
13	Trinidad State Junior College	2,068,234	1,549,031	519,203
System Totals:		\$79,218,771	\$61,864,112	\$17,571,749

The tsunami of funds coming into the CCCS now is newsworthy, especially considering the most recently published 2020 CCCS Financial and Compliance Audit CCCS Independent Auditor's Report (BKD, LLP), shows CCCS operating revenues rising more than \$10 million per year. By June 2020 those revenues had topped \$505 million. The report shows CCCS operating revenues grew by more than \$13 million and that by June 2020 had grown more than \$33 million since 2018. The same report shows an enrollment increase of 1.5%, in 2020, and an increase of \$8.7 million in 2020 student tuition and fees by mid-summer (BKD, LLP).

Such statistics are an interesting counterpoint to startling reports faculty hear from department chairs and administrators that the CCCS “is always broke” and is, once again “experiencing a dramatic decline in enrollment and funding.”

Will CCCS administrators use any of this flood of money to reward faculty for their valiant work as they built, overnight, college classrooms atop their own kitchen tables and garage workbenches when the historic coronavirus forced them to teach from their homes online instead of face-to-face on CCCS campuses? Will the CCCS create a straightforward, professional reimbursement process to refund adjunct faculty for the countless printers, cameras, tripods, laptops, and increased WiFi speed they had to purchase to conduct CCCS classes instead of requiring them, as it does now, to provide a hardship narrative? Will the additional funds and the continued promising financial outlook spur the CCCS to finally send to its adjunct faculty a much-needed pay increase? Those 4,600 teachers (the faculty majority in the CCCS) are in dire need of a pay raise to get them even close to the 28% pay raise the 2014 CCCS identified as immediately necessary then (“Recommendation #8”). CCCS wages to its adjunct faculty – many of whom work a full-time course load and second jobs – remain \$10K below the poverty level (MIT). Scholars in the AAUP Colorado Conference have been urging the CCCS to stabilize its faculty by making more full-time positions; positions that would draw from the already high-performing adjunct faculty ranks. Abundant research shows how student success and student retention are attributes directly linked to a stabilized faculty. More full-time positions would also benefit the 20% remaining full-time faculty in the CCCS, whose outsized workloads make it difficult for them to maintain any work/life balance whatsoever.

Finally, in spite of wave after wave of good financial news, will administrators in the 13-college CCCS continue to promulgate the same specious and tired myth that the CCCS is barely hanging on? They like to paint that picture in countless, flowery thank-you notes that faculty ostensibly might use to buy groceries or to pay rent. This is the workplace culture of the CCCS, even while the credit-rating agency Moody’s continues to assign the CCCS the Aa3 rating, describes the outlook for the CCCS as very favorable, and notes how the CCCS is unusual among community colleges in its wealth.

The AAUP Colorado Conference urges the CCCS to take this opportunity to build back better. It should alter its pattern of assigning poverty wages for most of its teachers and of stockpiling \$20 million per year in its so-called “reserve fund,” while spending \$40K per day on wages for its 63 presidents and vice presidents (Lytle).

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