

January 2020

Restoring Older Adult Classes Cut at City College Pickpocketing the Dignity Fund's Wallet

by Patrick Monette-Shaw

San Franciscans should rally in support of a \$2.7 million budget supplemental appropriation proposal by the Board of Supervisors to restore all of the 345 classes recently cut at City College.

At the same time, San Franciscans should roundly reject and not accept a pathetic \$216,000 Band-Aid foisted on the Dignity Fund to save only 17 of the classes CCSF's cut.

Using the Dignity Fund to replace course cancellations at City College is a rotten Band-Aid that should be roundly rejected and condemned. It amounts to pickpocketing from Peter — the Dignity Fund — to pay Paul (CCSF).

After all, Band-Aids are meant for skin abrasions and minor wounds as a temporary remedy or solution for a short period of time, not to stop long-term hemorrhaging from gaping wounds caused by amputating entire course offerings from departments in a Community College. Band-Aids do not cure the underlying causes from major wounds.

City College Decimates Older Adult Programming

Readers should strongly object to Mayor Breed's and Board of Supervisors president Norman Yee's plan to pickpocket the City's Dignity Fund to pick up the tab for just 17 of the 52 classes for older adults shamelessly cut by City College of San Francisco (CCSF). Nearly all of the College's approximate 50 classes serving seniors and adults with disabilities faced the proposed cuts.

Cuts included virtually all of the classes in the Older Adult Program (OLAD), which provides seniors vital help in overcoming isolation and maintaining interests and acuity. City College administrators claim a newly-discovered budget deficit, but Chancellor Mark Rocha had secretly tried to double some administrators' salaries. He now says the cuts are part of a planned restructuring of City College.

The Dignity Fund should not be forced into donating \$216,000 annually in each of the next three years to fund classes historically funded by CCSF. That's not what the Dignity Fund was created for.

Restoring only 17 of the up to 52 classes cut is less than one third of the 58 classes CCSF offered through its Older Adult Programs Department (OLAD). Shame on Breed and Yee for presuming older adults can be placated by throwing them breadcrumbs to restore only one-third of the OLAD programs cut, essentially outsourcing CCSF classes to non-profit service providers receiving Dignity Fund subsidies.

Back on November 20 City College announced the sudden cancellation of 288 to 345 classes from its Spring 2020 course offerings with no notice, ostensibly to help balance the school's \$13 million budget shortfall, a shortfall caused, "primarily" on planned massive pay raises for top administrators at City College. The course cancellations weren't discussed beforehand with the chairs of each of the College's academic departments, who are typically consulted before cuts are made.



Illustration: Patrick Monette-Shaw

Pickpocketing From the Dignity Fund: Raiding the Dignity Fund to restore only a handful of older adult classes cut at City College of San Francisco is ethically repugnant.

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“ Restoring only 17 of the up to 52 classes cut is less than one third of the 58 classes CCSF offered through its Older Adult Programs Department (OLAD). And restoring only 17 of all 345 classes cut represents just 5% of the courses eliminated. That's pathetic. ”

While Breed’s proposal seeks to restore just 17 OLAD courses, she and Yee aren’t lifting a finger to restore any of the other 345 courses CCSF eliminated. Restoring only 17 of the 345 classes cut represents just 5% of the courses CCSF eliminated. That’s pathetic, at best.

CCSF’s Chancellor, Mark Rocha, noted the College’s \$13 million budget deficit but he failed to note that the types of courses cut represents a major policy change to convert CCSF from its community college mission in the hopes of returning it to the California Junior College System run by the State.

The proposed restructuring of City College portends eliminating community service courses and only keeping courses for students completing Associate degrees who want to transfer to a four-year college to pursue a bachelor’s degree, or are seeking a vocational certificate.

Many state level policy-makers want to see community colleges shift from being community colleges to good-old-fashioned junior colleges for the purpose of helping younger students earn the credits they need to transfer to a four-year institution, ignoring the needs of older students seeking life-long learning courses.

Degree-oriented courses have been a key part of City College’s mission for the past 50 years, but CCSF’s mission also included a key focus on offering life-long learning courses of interest to the community, not just courses for students on a path seeking four-year degrees.

Shouldn’t any changes to both of the College’s missions have a detailed, robust, lengthy public conversation before making such mission changes? It appears that Rocha doesn’t seem interested in conducting, or even having, that public discussion.

On December 30, the *San Francisco Examiner* [reported](#):

“The City will use \$216,000 annually from the Dignity Fund, which voters passed in 2016 to support older adults and adults with disabilities, to fund 17 of the 50 classes cut in the program for the next three years. Nonprofits like the Jewish Community Center, Self-Help for the Elderly, and YMCA Stonestown will take over the administration of the classes, which are expected to serve about 1,000 people.”

The *Examiner* didn’t report that the Dignity Fund receives the entirety of its annual budget directly from appropriations from the General City’s Fund, nor did the *Examiner* report that those appropriations are obviously contingent on the very politicians controlling City Budget appropriations: The Mayor (who appoints three of the Dignity Fund’s Oversight and Advisory Committee [OAC] members subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors), and the Board of Supervisors themselves (who simultaneously influence appointments to the OAC via other agencies eligible to appoint OAC members).

One astute observer noted: *“The idea of using [the Dignity Fund] that was created to help destitute seniors live safely in their homes, in order to provide non-medical essentials is too much for me.”*

I agree: This is clearly and completely an inappropriate use of the Dignity Fund.

Supervisor Walton’s Budget Supplemental Request

On December 10, Supervisor Shamann Walton introduced legislation proposing to allocate \$2.7 million in emergency City funding from the General Fund’s reserve to reinstate the dropped 345 City College classes that CCSF administrators canceled on November 20, the

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“ Shouldn’t any changes to both of the College’s missions have a detailed, robust, lengthy public conversation before making such mission changes? ”

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— Anonymous Astute Observer

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night before Spring 2020 registration began. The legislation was assigned under the Board’s 30-day Rule to its Budget and Finance Committee, where it may be heard during a hearing shortly after January 9, 2020.

Supervisor Walton’s \$2.7 million emergency City funding proposal has public support and is cosponsored by Supervisors Gordon Mar, Matt Haney, Sandra Lee Fewer, and Dean Preston. His proposal requires an additional Supervisor vote to approve it and three Supervisors to override a potential mayoral veto.

Supervisors who have not yet committed to supporting Supervisor Walton’s legislation include Catherine Stefani (D-2), Aaron Peskin (D-3), Norman Yee (D-7), Rafael Mandelman (D-8), Hillary Ronen (D-9), and Ahsha Safai (D-11). What are Peskin, Yee, and Ronen thinking?

Please quickly contact uncommitted Supervisors and urge them to support Walton’s emergency City College funding and oppose restructuring of City College. You can contact them at:

- Catherine.Stefani@sfgov.org
- Aaron.Peskin@sfgov.org
- Norman.Yee@sfgov.org
- MandelmanStaff@sfgov.org
- Hillary.Ronen@sfgov.org
- Ahsha.Safai@sfgov.org

While you’re at it, remind these Supervisors that the Dignity Fund should not be raided in the process.

Governance Issues

There are a number of governance issues that Mayor Breed and Supervisor Yee appear too myopic to see, or are unwilling to consider and fully understand.

CCSF Governance Issues

1. **Issue #1:** CCSF course offerings belong to CCSF’s faculty. And the faculty’s jobs belong to their representing labor union. So, eliminating the 300-plus classes suggests there will be ongoing collateral damage to both the faculty and their union. How much is the faculty losing in wages and healthcare benefits, whether or not they become tenured for pension benefits?
2. **Issue #2:** It seems the class cuts are principally caused as a result of awarding pay raises for senior CCSF Administrators. Balancing CCSF’s budget and course offerings on the back of its faculty — and cuts to students served — is just wrong.
3. **Issue #3:** Part of the battle involves whether CCSF is changing its mission by eliminating of-interest-to-the-community programming, and offering only degree-seeking programs for students who want to transition to other academic settings. That seems to be a governance issue that should be decided by the voters and the Board of Supervisors, in collaboration with the faculty, not unilaterally decided by CCSF administrators.

Dignity Fund Governance Issues

Then there’s the interference of governance of the Dignity Fund by Breed and Yee:

1. **Issue #1:** The Dignity Fund’s governing body — its Oversight and Advisory Committee — has been planning on how to allocate the General Funds deposited into the Dignity Fund for well over a year, or perhaps a year-and-a-half following conducting its community needs assessment process. To now throw a wrench into their planned spending by diverting \$216,000

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“ Changing CCSF’s mission seems to be a governance issue that should be decided by the voters and the Board of Supervisors, in collaboration with CCSF’s faculty. ”

“ The Dignity Fund’s governing body has been planning on how to allocate the General Funds deposited into the Dignity Fund for well over a year. To now throw a wrench into their planned spending seems to be excessive over-reach. ”

annually from its programming budget seems like excessive over-reach. Doesn't this amount to usurping planning the OAC had already assessed needs that were planned and budgeted for?

2. **Issue #2:** More worrisome is that the *Examiner* article suggests that Breed and Supervisor Yee appear to believe that *after* the City made budget appropriations to the Dignity Fund's budget for the current fiscal year (FY 19-20) and on-going fiscal years, that the City can just step in and unilaterally demand that the Dignity Fund pick up the slack and change how it will spend already-allocated funds, any community needs assessment be damned. Isn't that what President Trump got into trouble for by trying to halt delivery of funds for Ukraine that Congress had already appropriated spending? How do Breed and Yee get away with altering Dignity Fund governing body decision-making, and presumably, Dignity Fund-funded "unmet-needs research," to prioritize needs that may not be urgently needed?
3. **Issue #3:** While "isolation" due to a lack of social interaction can lead to adverse health outcomes for the elderly, I have to wonder whether the Dignity Fund will simply re-direct the \$216,000 from other previously-approved programs to decrease isolation (which other programs may then face being cut, too) for an alternative intervention to restore CCSF OLAD courses. Hopefully, other Dignity Fund-funded services — say home-delivered meals, nutrition counseling, or para-transit programs — will not face cuts to increase funds for isolation-prevention to replace the classes CCSF cut.

Act now. Write to the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor today and tell them no pickpocketing from the Dignity Fund's wallet. Also today, e-mail the Board of Supervisors urging them to support Supervisor Walton's budget supplemental to restore *all* of CCSF's course offerings, not just the OLAD classes CCSF cut.

"E-mail the Board of Supervisors urging them to support Supervisor Walton's budget supplemental to restore *all* of CCSF's course offerings."

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