

## **On Receiving the Boot: a Comic Response to Provost Hellenbrand's Essay "Time to Reboot"**

This essay was written in response to the article "Time to Reboot", see [http://www.csun.edu/academic.affairs/time\\_to\\_reboot.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/academic.affairs/time_to_reboot.pdf)

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The CSU's budget shortfall is compounded by incentives that do not bring the campus divisions together to promote the academic good.

Decreases in state appropriation have exceeded increases in student fees.

Yet many campuses have added expensive capital improvements, equipment, and technology. Such projects have dominated management's time and interest, absorbing hundreds of people in thousands of hours of CSU salaried time working on projects only marginally concerned with instruction. These building projects have drained valuable resources -- they require maintenance, supplies, equipment, technology, and staff, all increasing the cost of college but doing little for instruction in the strict sense. Indeed direct instruction of students was curtailed, while capital projects were completed.

Why? Leaders are seldom thoughtful or sincere. They are interested in advancing their own legacy and interests.

The CSU has created a university system that does not recognize academic achievement. "We cannot teach more or well, because it is counter to our mission of delivering mediocre instruction" is the message received by faculty from local and central management.

This strategy must not become the norm. California must re-boot its academic drive.

No incentives steer leadership to reward scholarship or research.

We indeed are in trouble well beyond budget woes.

Marginal achievement hurts those whom it is supposed to help. To restrict academic success this year in order to dramatize the need for more funding next year shortchanges students every year.

To change such outcomes, we must change behavior; to change behavior, we must change incentives. The major incentive has been more state revenue for construction of buildings not primarily concerned with instruction.

We have become a university of construction rather than instruction; a university of entertainment over academics. The Valley Performing Arts Centers is the SUVs of the university

presidents, depleting the campus of more than \$30 million in revenue.

The CSU Board of Trustees have not adjusted their spending priorities to reflect concern with the graduation initiative.

Despite glib allusions to shared governance or contract negotiation, true interest in higher education is illusory. Leadership behaves as if commuter and non-traditional students pay fees for entertainment of local students and prefer online instruction or no instruction at all.

However, we are not in sequel but rather blockbuster . . . or bomb. Phoenix University was already developed by a former San Jose State faculty member. Too bad we did not value our own faculty's ideas. Many years too late, management has decided to pursue the pack of online universities. Loss yet, our enrollment policy is driving students towards the for-profits, an inferior educational substitute.

The CSU Board of Trustees and CSU management have little patience with aligning spending with instruction. They are content to spew forth ill-thought out 10 Year Resource Plans.

The separation of divisions in the university functions has led to further limiting of instructional resources. Management claims to care about the graduation initiative, but they show no visible sign of concern with those who teach the courses that lead to the degree.

CSU faculty have been rewarded very little for instructing nominally college-qualified students from beleaguered school districts to graduates and post-bac programs.

For the health of the state, we need to educate more students. Yet, management displays only disdain for shared governance. The faculty are there to do their jobs and shut up.

All increase in efficiencies in instruction have been matched by wasteful spending on anything but instruction.

Neither hardware nor software will not lead to improved graduation rates.

The lip-service paid to the STEM initiative guarantees that we will not return us to the moon any time soon. We are neglecting instruction and instructors required to develop our scientific base.

We are in desperate need of managers who value higher education and academic accomplishment of students and faculty.