Email sent to students by Chancellor Lee Lambert on March 9, 2015 with an update on the state budget.

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Dear PCC student,

I am writing to update you regarding the State of Arizona’s 2016 budget and its impact on Pima Community College. As you might know, over the weekend the State Legislature passed a budget that completely eliminates state funding for PCC and the Maricopa County community colleges for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Some background information may be helpful here. In January, the state entered its budget process facing a deficit of between $1 billion and $1.5 billion. Gov. Doug Ducey’s budget proposal contained a 50 percent reduction for appropriations to PCC. The College’s own budget process had begun in November 2014, and we had been developing scenarios that anticipated substantial cuts in state aid.

Last week, the news broke that Gov. Ducey and Arizona state legislators were adjusting the budget proposal to end all state aid to PCC. Given the trend of Arizona and other states cutting support for higher education, and the cost pressures facing our state, we were afraid this day was eventually coming. However, we did not expect it to come so soon, and with such little public deliberation.

Included in the budget is the zeroing out of PCC funding for Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, fields that provide our students with skills necessary to compete in the 21st-century job market. The College used this year’s funding to purchase, among other things, laboratory equipment for Physics, Chemistry and Microbiology classes, machines to further the education of our Machine Tool Technology students, and human anatomy and physiology models. These resources are essential as we train students so they can propel our region’s economic development.

The state’s cuts present significant challenges, obviously. The fiscal covenant between Arizona community colleges and the state historically has been based on PCC receiving revenue from state appropriations, property taxes and tuition. By eliminating its support, the state has removed a crucial financial pillar, and we face hard decisions in the coming days and weeks.

The College has a history of keeping tuition low, as we recognize many of our students are of modest means. We must balance the need to keep tuition increases reasonable with the need for revenue to continue to provide high-quality programs and services that deliver value to students and the community.

As has been our practice, College administrators have met with PCC Student Government leaders to share information regarding our tuition and fee proposals, and to gain their insights on the topics. We will consider their perspectives as we move forward with developing our budget.

I have been heartened by the outpouring of support for PCC from students and all corners of the community as the state’s budget direction became clear. Our customers and constituents understand that PCC’s continued delivery of quality education is crucial if students are to achieve their personal vision of the American Dream, and that our students form the backbone of a stable, healthy, economically vibrant Tucson.
Please know that we are working to minimize the damage to the College wrought by the state’s decision, and that we will continue to update you as the situation evolves. Also, please do not hesitate to contact me at chancellor@pima.edu with questions or concerns.

Lee D. Lambert,  
Chancellor