DON'T FAIL HIGHER EDUCATION

State and federal funding cuts will damage the long-term potential of California’s work force, economy

In failure of California’s Legislature and the U.S. Congress, super committee on the deficit to agree on a balanced approach to resolving state and national budget crises means likely automatic reductions in funding, including across-the-board cuts for higher education. These threaten the very lifeblood that has fueled California’s economy for half a century. Because of triggers built into the state budget adopted last fall, revenue shortfalls are essential for industry. And the per-capital issues at state. Automatic triggers threaten to pull higher education in California into an accelerating downward spiral that would sap its ability to provide the graduates and research and development that are essential for industry. As the perception that a college degree is primarily a personal benefit, with little recognition of its importance to the state’s economy, provides a completely erroneous rationale for cutting student aid. The California Master Plan for Higher Education, an enlightened strategic commitment passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Pat Brown 53 years ago, expanded public colleges and universities and assured access by establishing low fees at public institutions and increasing Cal-Grant assistance for qualifying students at either public or private schools. Return on those investments was stunning. In the mid-1990s the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy argued that the state, which was ranked as the seventh- or eighth-largest economy in the world, was a powerhouse because of five sectors: computers, biotechnology, entertainment, foreign trade and professional services. California attracts about half the venture capital in the U.S. Those investments produced Silicon Valley with its landmark companies in all phases of electronic technology. Nearly 40 percent of biotech start-ups are backed by California’s venture capital. The Master Plan has indeed paid off. But beginning in the mid-1990s California began to neglect its commitment. Last year, the state invested more in prisons than in higher education. And while the state contributed $10,000 per year developing college graduates, it spent $47,000 per person locking people up. Equally glaring: We began to see an exodus to other states of highly productive people and industries. Automatic cuts in funding for higher education that are driven by state and federal deficit reduction legislation are precisely the wrong thing at the wrong time. Rather, we need to update the Master Plan for Higher Education in light of our new global economy and invest accordingly.

DEBORAH LIEBERMAN is president of the University of La Verne in Southern California. JONATHAN DEVORAH is executive director of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

BREAKING BREAD WITH SHIREY

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Sept. 26—Rarely has a town hall meeting been as informative as the one at the Red River Hotel in Sutter Creek, Calif., last Wednesday. Last year, the state invested more in prisons than in higher education. And while the state contributed $10,000 per year developing college graduates, it spent $47,000 per person locking people up. Equally glaring: We began to see an exodus to other states of highly productive people and industries. Automatic cuts in funding for higher education that are driven by state and federal deficit reduction legislation are precisely the wrong thing at the wrong time. Rather, we need to update the Master Plan for Higher Education in light of our new global economy and invest accordingly.

DEBORAH LIEBERMAN is president of the University of La Verne in Southern California. JONATHAN DEVORAH is executive director of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

DON'T FAIL HIGHER EDUCATION

State and federal funding cuts will damage the long-term potential of California’s work force, economy

In failure of California’s Legislature and the U.S. Congress, super committee on the deficit to agree on a balanced approach to resolving state and national budget crises means likely automatic reductions in funding, including across-the-board cuts for higher education. These threaten the very lifeblood that has fueled California’s economy for half a century. Because of triggers built into the state budget adopted last fall, revenue shortfalls are essential for industry. And the per-capital issues at state. Automatic triggers threaten to pull higher education in California into an accelerating downward spiral that would sap its ability to provide the graduates and research and development that are essential for industry. As the perception that a college degree is primarily a personal benefit, with little recognition of its importance to the state’s economy, provides a completely erroneous rationale for cutting student aid. The California Master Plan for Higher Education, an enlightened strategic commitment passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Pat Brown 53 years ago, expanded public colleges and universities and assured access by establishing low fees at public institutions and increasing Cal-Grant assistance for qualifying students at either public or private schools. Return on those investments was stunning. In the mid-1990s the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy argued that the state, which was ranked as the seventh- or eighth-largest economy in the world, was a powerhouse because of five sectors: computers, biotechnology, entertainment, foreign trade and professional services. California attracts about half the venture capital in the U.S. Those investments produced Silicon Valley with its landmark companies in all phases of electronic technology. Nearly 40 percent of biotech start-ups are backed by California’s venture capital. The Master Plan has indeed paid off. But beginning in the mid-1990s California began to neglect its commitment. Last year, the state invested more in prisons than in higher education. And while the state contributed $10,000 per year developing college graduates, it spent $47,000 per person locking people up. Equally glaring: We began to see an exodus to other states of highly productive people and industries. Automatic cuts in funding for higher education that are driven by state and federal deficit reduction legislation are precisely the wrong thing at the wrong time. Rather, we need to update the Master Plan for Higher Education in light of our new global economy and invest accordingly.

DEBORAH LIEBERMAN is president of the University of La Verne in Southern California. JONATHAN DEVORAH is executive director of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.