

Letters

PCC and the question of a college winter session

On May 30, at the district's insistence, over 35 faculty and staff, the press and the court stenographer were shut out from an otherwise open fact-finding hearing at Pasadena City College. Hearings can successfully be conducted in public, and it's unacceptable that one of the district's three lawyers insinuated that the proceedings would be used as an "opportunity for public posturing and rhetoric." Her own posturing reminded me of the April 3 board meeting, when board President John Martin referred to himself as the "ring master" and reminded the public commenters to keep their "acts" to three minutes. Attorney Gail Cooper and Martin are the ones posturing with their comments, not the faculty or public.

The faculty and staff present at the contract hearing wanted one thing only: transparency. I seriously wonder what the district is hiding when it ejects the court reporter whose job is to merely compose a transcript.

The article states that the board cut the winter session in order to add more classes, but that doesn't make sense. Winter could have been a mechanism to add classes and give students the opportunity to retake a class that they need, but they eliminated it.

To date, the board has not

given a clear reason for its decision. First, it was to save money, but that was unfounded (with \$19 million in reserves and the school reporting to the chancellor's office that there is no fiscal crisis at PCC); then it was supposedly for student success, but that too remains unsubstantiated. Indeed, the Calendar Committee has presented to the board that years with winter yield higher success rates than years when PCC didn't have winter (before 2006), and now the school is in limbo as it waits for the board to make a decision about reinstating winter.

This year, the PCC administration created an ad-hoc "Spring 2" six-week session to make up for the fact that they canceled winter. Classes are under-enrolled, and every colleague I've talked to remarked how unusual this is. They are making the cancellation of winter a faculty contract item, when in fact it is a student success/shared governance item.

The last thing we faculty want to do is strike — but with the school's \$19 million in reserves (when the Chancellor's Office only recommends up to \$6 million), when the school shuns transparency, oversteps democratic decisions made by shared governance committees, has wreaked havoc on students' educational goals, is planning to increase the number of students in its classes, won't offer any job security, health benefits or office hours to the 817

adjunct faculty that teach here (compared to 340 full time, the disparity of which causes PCC to be out of compliance with state law AB1725), the district is forcing us into a difficult situation that will continue to harm our students.

— *Melissa Michelson, Pasadena*