

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
7TH DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Subcommittee on Parks, Forests and
Public Lands – *Ranking Member*

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary and Secondary Education
Subcommittee on Higher Education and
Workforce Training

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS,
Co-Chair



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Sherryn Vikki Marshall
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Dear Governing Board Member,

I am deeply concerned with the proposed admission changes recently presented by Chancellor Flores. This proposal, that would create more rigorous entrance requirements and make fundamental changes to remedial education, would be a terrible offense against the unique trust relationship that Pima County Community College has with the students and families across Pima County.

Ever since the voters in Pima County first approved the creation of the college in 1966, Pima has embraced a cooperative philosophy that has reflected an understanding of the important commitment the college has made to the community. The first Pima College district board adopted the “open door” to education opportunity that has been a hallmark of Pima’s community philosophy ever since. This proposal before the board would abandon that founding principle that has defined the public commitment of Pima Community College for almost half a century. That is why learning that the governing board is seriously considering this proposal is nothing short of shocking.

That founding board insisted that Pima County Community College “is more interested in what a student is ready to do than in what he has done.” This commitment has been reiterated regularly throughout the college’s history.

A community college has a fundamental responsibility to serve the educational needs of the adults of the community. To do so, the college must be prepared to meet students where they are. This strategy serves to better the lives of individuals, which in turn improves the community as a whole. An inherent part of this commitment is that a community college will often be called upon to provide remedial education to address the needs of student who, for whatever reason, may be unprepared for a postsecondary curriculum.

The proposal abandons this remedial role, a role that is fundamental to community colleges everywhere, and leaves it to some other, unknown source to administer and fulfill. I ask you today, who fulfills this role, the role we have entrusted you with since your creation by this community? I submit to you that this remedial role is a fundamental

Sherryn Vikki Marshall
August 31, 2011
Page two

part of the expected responsibility that any community college has to its community. That was a fundamental part of the expectation of Pima County voters when they created Pima College, and that remains a fundamental expectation of the taxpayers who continue to fund and support their community college.


This move is particularly alarming in light of the current state of the economy. Families in our community are struggling with unemployment, underemployment, and simply making ends meet. Many of those families depend on the opportunities that become available only through training and adult education classes. All the institutions, both public and private, that are dedicated to aiding and improving our community must work harder than usual to see these needs are met. Pima most certainly shares this responsibility.

Pima County Community College began as and remains an institution dedicated to the preparation and improvement of our entire community. Pima has been a great equalizer in educational opportunity and access for many families and individuals who may have missed opportunities to have a second chance. The college has provided access to higher education and job training for low income individuals who would otherwise have not considered such possibilities. Pima has helped to create a vibrant, diverse and talented workforce across Southern Arizona.

However, the policy changes currently before the governing board threaten to permanently end all that. These changes will mean that no longer will the college be interested in second chances. No more can we see the school as the community's solution to enhancing the lives of adults who are ready to improve their lives. This worries me deeply. It worries me because of how it will starkly disadvantage the people in our community who hit a bump in the road because when they get their feet back on the ground, they will require remediation. It worries me because it creates a dangerous precedent for community colleges across the country that they can opt-out of serving those in need of extra preparation. It worries me because it fundamentally transforms the mission of Pima County Community College.

I urge you to reconsider this decision – a decision to reverse a half-century of community support by closing the door on potential students who may be under-prepared for postsecondary education.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

cc: Dr. Roy Flores