

Attn: Chancellor Joan Smith (smithj@yosemite.edu)

Cc: President Angela Fairchild (fairchildsa@yosemite.edu)
Dr. Tim Elizondo, Vice President, YFA, Columbia College (elizondot@yosemite.edu)
Michelle Christopherson, Faculty Consultant to Trustees (christophersonm@mjc.edu)
Board of Trustees: Dr. Lynn Martin; Don Viss; Abe Rojas; Anne DeMartini; Linda Flores; Mike Riley; Tom Hallinan; Jann Mathies, Executive Secretary, mathiesj@yosemite.edu

Dear Chancellor Smith,

We write as a group of current and former Columbia College students concerned about the recent practice of class cancellations at the college. Specifically, we see a conflict between these practices and the College's stated claim that, "Helping [students] achieve [their] educational goals is the highest priority of the faculty and staff and administrators here at CC" (2016-2017 Catalog, p.2). In our case, the Social Sciences have been the most impacted by these cancellations. The recent history of class cancellations both compromises students' abilities to achieve their academic, personal, and professional goals, and causes additional challenges for those whose lives are already strained by other existing conditions. Our communication identifies the following issues:

1. The social, economic, and cultural conditions that we personally face in attending Columbia College.
2. The political and legal implications of class cancellations.
3. Our experience with and assessment of the online environment (which is increasingly sought as a substitute for face-to-face classes), and
4. The social costs of the College's focus on institutional efficiency.

All of the signatories to this letter are attending or have attended Columbia College with the intent to transfer to a four-year institution. And we have made significant sacrifices to do so. As students of the College, we plan every dimension of our lives around the semester schedule. For many of us, this requires changing our work schedules and travelling a significant distance to attend Columbia College. We move, we budget, we borrow books, we borrow computers, and we ride the transit — all in order to make it possible to attend Columbia College. The cancellation of courses imposes a tremendous burden on students like us. For one, it makes negotiating our schedules with our employers extremely difficult. It also can add semesters, if not years, to our academic careers, thus preventing us from achieving our academic goals, including transferring to a four-year institution and completing degrees in the Social Sciences, including Political Science, Sociology, Anthropology, History, and Geography.

Class cancellations also have implications in terms of the relationship between the College Catalog, the students, and accreditation standards. While we recognize that the cancellation of courses is a college prerogative, course cancellations break the contract between the College's advertised offerings (the Catalog) and the accreditation claims for a comprehensive community

college — particularly when such cancellations are conducted on a recurring basis. While such practices are questionable from a legal perspective, they also run the risk of marginalizing students such as ourselves, and forcing us to seek educational opportunities at other colleges. For those of us who are not in a financial position to relocate or commute even longer distances than we are currently, the effects of ongoing course cancellations can be particularly devastating. Our situations are compounded by the current practice of charging students full fees before classes begin and making financial aid available only long after classes have been in session. This creates significant, and often unbearable, barriers for student enrollment and access — particularly when class cancellations are based on the level of enrollment in classes *before* the classes begin.

Some College administrators have defended the cancellation of on-campus courses by arguing that these same courses can be taken online. We understand that online courses may represent the same unit value and fulfill the same technical requirements as face-to-face classes, but in our collective experience they are not comparable as educational alternatives. Research involving online classes among community college students is overwhelmingly driven with institutional efficiency goals in mind, particularly enrollment and completion rates. These goals do not address, however, the well-documented deficiencies common among the disadvantaged individuals that typically reflect the community college population. Technology-driven instruction does not necessarily cause learning-related problems, but it does appear to reinforce those already in place. Our academic experiences are living testimonies of this reality. In our collective experience, online classes do not encourage critical analysis but instead are based on task-oriented student learning outcomes. In such classes, assignments are perfunctory and do not foster the acquisition of authentic collegiate competencies necessary for the economic, social, and political demands of the 21st century. This is not a criticism of technology but reflects research that is widely available.¹

Finally, the “costs” of class cancellations and the College’s investment in institutional efficiency are particularly great in areas such as ours — rural, low income, low population density, and with limited opportunities. For those who have already begun our journey in higher education, cancellations block, hinder, and disrupt our educational aspirations and goals. In short, class cancellations create insurmountable barriers for individuals who don’t have many choices to begin with.

¹ For additional research on this topic, please see: Turkel, Sherry. 2015. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. New York: Penguin Books; Moore, Michael Grahame (editor). 2013. *Handbook of Distance Education*, Third Edition. New York: Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group; Turkel, Sherry. 2011. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. New York: Basic Books; Head, Simon. 2014. *Mindless: Why Smarter Machines are Making Dumber Humans*. Philadelphia: Basic Books; Carr, Nicholas. 2011. *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.; Lanham, Richard A. 2006. *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Oppenheimer, Todd. 2007. *The Flickering Mind: Saving Education from the False Promise of Technology*. New York: Random House; Tufts, Edward R. (2003) *The Cognitive Style of Power Point*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press; Attewell, Paul and Norbert M. Seel (editors). 2003. *Disadvantaged Teens and Computer Technologies*. New York: Waxmann; Healy, Jane M. 1998. *Failure to Connect: How Computers Affect Our Children’s Minds – For Better and Worse*. New York: Simon Schuster.

We strongly urge that the College develop an alternative approach to the current strategy of course offerings and programmatic structure. The College claims to provide, “comprehensive, exemplary educational programs and services which respond to the individual learning needs of our students and the collective economic and cultural needs of the diverse communities we serve” (College Vision Statement, 2016). The recent practice of cancelling courses is inconsistent with, if not antithetical to, this vision. We hope you will take this as an opportunity to listen to students, and to address the real struggles we face. Consistent course offerings — whether or not the number of enrolled students meets the College’s quota — is perhaps *the* most critical dimension of achieving the College’s stated vision.

The following students have granted permission to use their signature. Please also find additional personal testimonies regarding the effects of cancellation policies on students.

Danielle Kenna
Columbia College, Current

Sara Keene
Columbia College, 2002
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2004
PhD, Development Sociology, Cornell University, 2017
Assistant Professor, Southwestern Oregon Community College

Ian Bailey
Columbia College, 2002
BS, Environmental Science and Sociology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2005
PhD Candidate, Development Sociology, Cornell University

Krista Sabados
Columbia College, 2003
BA, Sociology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2005
EdM., Human Development and Psychology, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2009

Donald Orr
Columbia College, 2006
BA, Geography, University of California, Berkeley, 2009
MA, Cities, University of London, 2012
PhD, Geography, University of London, 2017

Dylan C. Avery
Columbia College, 2013
BA, Public Health, University of California, Berkeley, 2016

Mandy Truong
Columbia College, 2015
BSN, School of Nursing, University of Maryland, Baltimore, 2018

Nalatie Alpers
Columbia College, 2005
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 2007

Carson Brian Watts
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Sociology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013

Jenny Fuqua
Columbia College, 2006

Patrick Mandell
Columbia College, Current

Jennifer Turner
Columbia College, 2009
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2012
Preliminary Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, University of California, Davis 2015
MA in Education, University of California, Davis, 2016

Rebecca Forbes
Columbia College, 2015
University of California, Berkeley, 2018

Robin Cook
Columbia College, 2013

Julie Glahn
Columbia College, 2016
San Jose State University, 2018

Christiana Bush
Columbia College, Current

Nicole R. Rager
Columbia College, 2013
BA, Sociology, University of California, Davis, 2015

Elyse Dooley Bailey
Columbia College, Current
Transferring to California State University, Monterey

Stephen Schillo
Columbia College, 2012
University of Nevada, Reno, 2016

Katie Billiet
Columbia College, 2010
BA, English, California State University, Stanislaus, 2013

Sierra Hampton
Columbia College, 2012
BA, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2014
MS, International Development and Management, Lund University, Sweden, 2018

Alex Casteel
Columbia College

Emily Freda
Columbia College
San Jose State University, 2016

Hillary Liljedahl
Columbia College, Current

Katie Slocum
Columbia College, 2011
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2015

Danea Palmer
Columbia College, Current

Heidi Sophia Mika
Columbia College, Current

Jeff Borden
Columbia College, Current

Gabriel Bridges
Columbia College, 2004
University of California, Davis, 2007
Gaia Institute, 2013

Alexandra Kalise Roberts
Columbia College, 2009

Sonja Goranson
Columbia College, 2014
California State University, Sacramento, 2016

Garrett Johnson
Columbia College, Current

Emily Moore
Columbia College, Current
Anticipated Graduation Spring 2017 to transfer to CSU

Sue Battaglia
Columbia College, 2016

Brent Mohr
Columbia College, Current

Clara Bobrycki
Columbia College, Current

Stephanie Taylor
Columbia College

Christopher DeMars
BS, Computer Science, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002
Columbia College, 2009
PhD Candidate, Hydrology, University of California, Davis, 2009-Present

Shane Casebeer
Columbia College, 2008
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2010
MA, Library Science and Information, University of Washington, 2012

Jessica Robertson
Columbia College, 2006
Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training, 2016

Matthew Connot
Columbia College, 2014
BA, Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, 2016

George Prest
West Valley Community College, 1980
Columbia College, 1984-1987 and 2009-2012
University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013

Lauren Fields
Columbia College, 2015
BS, Public Relations, University of Oregon, 2017

Garrett Brown
Columbia College, 2012
BA, Liberal Studies, University of California, Riverside, 2015

Rae Davis
Columbia College, 2003
BA, History, California State University, Sacramento, 2006

Arthur Crist
Columbia College, 2012
BA, Political Science, University of California, Davis, 2015

John Ulloa
Modesto Junior College, 1998
BA, History, San Francisco State University, 2000
MA, History, San Francisco State University, 2004
MA, Anthropology, San Francisco State University, 2007
Professor of History and Honors Transfer Program Coordinator at Skyline College

John F. Christiansen
Modesto Junior College, 1981
BA, History and Cultural Anthropology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1984
MA, Public Administration, University of Southern California, 1989

Joel Metzger
Columbia College, 2006
BA, Political Science, Sonoma State University, 2008

Jessie Perez
Columbia College, 2015
Nursing Program, Modesto Junior College, 2017

Joseph Rodgers
Columbia College, 2013
BA, Politics and International Relations, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2015
MA Candidate, Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, 2018

Joshua Stafford
Columbia College, 2011
BA, History, California State University, Stanislaus, 2014

Ilse Maria Kerns
Columbia College, 2008-2016
AA, Merchandise Marketing, Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, 2011
BS, Business Management, Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, 2017

Joseph McDonald
Graduating Columbia College, Spring 2017
Transferring to Humboldt State University, Fall 2017

Ana Bobrycki
High School Student, Sonora High

Karl Riedel
Columbia College, 2016
BA, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2018

Lindsey Kearney
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2013
JD, Santa Clara University School of Law, 2016

Bryan Gnipp
Columbia College, 2009
BA, Interdisciplinary Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2011

Patrick Henderson
Columbia College, 2008
BA, Political Science, University of California, Davis, 2014

Patricia Horsthuis
Columbia College, 2008
BS, Biological Science, University of California, Davis, 2013

Nicol Gaffney
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2012

Tesia Bobrycki
Columbia College, 2012
BA, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2014

Ariella Megory
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 2013
MA, Anthropology and Sociology, Tel Aviv University, 2017

Laura DeMars
Columbia College, 2009
BA, Geology, University of California, Davis, 2011
CA Teaching Credential, California State University, Fresno, 2014
MA, Education, Teachers College of San Joaquin, 2017

Renee Willis
Columbia College, 2015
BA, Sociology, California State University, Chico, Current

Noah Schillo
Columbia College, 2003
BS, Environmental Science, Humboldt State University, 2006
BA, Geography, Humboldt State University, 2006
MA, Geography, Simon Fraser University, 2012
Adjunct Professor, Contra Costa College, 2015-Present

Julia Davids
Columbia College, 2014
BA, Sociology, San Francisco State University, 2017

Andrew Brown
Columbia College, 2012
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Dan MacLeod
Columbia College, 2002
BA, Psychology, University of California, Berkeley, 2004

Kristine Lawson
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 2013
MA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2015
PhD Candidate, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2018

Joshua DeSalles
Columbia College, 2015
BA, Philosophy, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2017

Blenna Kiros
Columbia College, 2015

John Cummins
Columbia College, 2006-2011
BA, Political Science-Public Service, University of California, Davis, 2017

Stephanie Eaton
Columbia College, 2013
BA, Sociology, University of California, Davis, 2015

Jesse Wasson
Columbia College, 2014
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Alex Jacobs
Columbia College, 2016
Patrick Shane Proctor

Columbia College, 2002-2016
BSN, School of Nursing, California State University, Sacramento, 2016

Odessa Aguirre
Columbia College, 2008 (Middle College Program)
Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School, NY, 2010
BA, Anthropology, Smith College, 2015

Stephanie Romero
Columbia College, 2012
BA, Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, 2015

Agnieszka "Sigil" Smelkowska
Columbia College, 2010
BA, History, University of California, Berkeley, 2012
MA, History, University of California, Berkeley, 2015
PhD Candidate, History, University of California, Berkeley, 2018 (projected)

Kristen Bryant
Columbia College, 2006
BA, Sociology, University of California Berkeley, 2009
MA, Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2015
PhD Candidate, Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara

Jeremy Wildoner
Columbia College, 2012
BSN, School of Nursing, Simpson University, 2015

Susan Gambaro
Parent to Current Students at Columbia College

Danielle Kenna
Columbia College, Current

I began taking classes at Columbia College in 2010. I had never planned to go to college, as it was never encouraged by my family or even the high school that I went to. I took Introduction to Sociology with Dr. Clarke experimentally because a friend who was attending Columbia College had recommended it. This first class changed my world and allowed me to take a huge leap in consciousness. I moved from Calaveras County in 2012 to complete necessary units to transfer at Sierra College in Grass Valley, CA. However, I was unsatisfied with the lack of critical engagement and the level of infantilization in these class rooms (several worksheets per class, power points, reading texts in class that has already been assigned to read as homework, the inability to ask questions in class) and moved back to Calaveras County in Spring of 2014 in order to continue my education with Dr. Clarke and Professor Hamilton.

The pedagogy that Dr. Clarke and Professor Hamilton have built is the most challenging—yet most rewarding experience I have ever had *in my life*. Upon returning I decided to pursue the AA-T degrees in Sociology and Political Science. That semester I was contacted two days before my classes had been cancelled, after having moved and uprooting my whole life. Since the Spring semester of 2014 I have had several more classes cancelled which has hindered my ability to graduate and transfer. Additionally, being an adult student I only have the ability to take up to two classes at a time in order to balance my work schedule of generally more than 40 hours a week. As a result, my goal of transferring and my schedule were built carefully around the course catalogue with foresight. However, due to the massive cancellations, that option does not exist for me at Columbia College.

To be very clear, I have made sacrifices for my education. I have moved, requested schedule changes from work, left jobs, worked as a tutor on campus, rode the transit, borrowed books, paid for classes and books with a credit cards—all in order to be able to attend Columbia College and achieve my academic goals. Class cancellations have major implications for students. Students depend on the stability that a Course Catalogue offers. For example, Fall 2016 I had enrolled in History and Philosophy of Science and Algebra 2 with a total of 8 units. As a student worker in the Academic Achievement Center we must be taking a minimum of 6 units. Yet, due to the cancellation of History and Philosophy of Science I was left with only 5 units. This compromised my position at the AAC and I would have either had to take a “filler” class which I do not have time or money for or I would no longer be working at the AAC. Not only that, but I tutor for most of the Social Science classes, so as classes in the Social Science department are cancelled my role becomes less relevant.

Joseph McDonald
Graduating Columbia College, Spring 2017
Transferring to Humboldt State University, Fall 2017

I have been a student at Columbia College for nearly three years now. Most of my experiences have been positive. I started as a computer science major, but decided to change to a biology major. However, after taking a class taught by Ted Hamilton and joining the debate team I then switched to a Political Science major. The catalog and my counselor both said that a political science AA-T would be achievable at Columbia College. I then tried to take Political Science twelve, but after I had paid for the class and received my books, nearly a week before the class started, it was canceled. I was then forced to take a good hard look at my future at Columbia College, and through much hard work with my counselor, including calling colleges and enrolling into three separate community colleges, I can actually achieve my academic goals. This class cancellation might have seemed like a minor inconvenience but it trends towards a much more worrying explanation. My experience is limited, but through my own time here at Columbia it is difficult to see if Columbia's motives rest with the furthering of quality education or monetary gain. Thank You.

Ana Bobrycki
High School Student, Sonora High School

I am graduating high school in five-and-a-half months, but it's not to worry because I have a plan. Attend Columbia College for two years, transfer to a four year, get a PhD in psychology, and eventually open my own private practice. This is not just a dream to me, but an attainable goal. I am 2nd in my class, and my SAT scores are solid. I could go straight to a four year, almost any four year, if I wanted to. But I don't. I want to go to Columbia.

Columbia is an amazing school for numerous reasons; it's affordable, it's nearby, and it has one of the most beautiful campuses I've ever seen. However, for me, it's biggest attraction is the fact that it's the college I grew up with. With four older siblings who've all taken classes there, two of whom went on to transfer to UCs, the stories I've heard about this school are never ending. At Columbia there are classes I've looked forward to taking, and teachers I've looked forward to meeting, for years. The idea that I may not be able to fulfill those aspirations is truly harrowing.

Going to Columbia College has been something I've looked forward to for a long time, but even so, I am unwilling to take a step back. If Columbia does not provide the classes that I need to carry out my plan and succeed in my goals, then I will not be able to attend. I am grateful for this school for providing my siblings with an amazing education, lifelong friends, and for truly enriching their lives. I would like to feel confident that Columbia will do the same for me.

Elyse Dooley Bailey
Columbia College, Current
Transferring to California State University, Monterey

Due to our communities' small geographic location, we have unique offerings: outdoor recreation and radiating stars, historic charm and family-owned boutiques, premier wine and spiced ciders. However, this county's sparkling glamour can at times mask the darkest challenges found within rural California: poverty, substance abuse, and dysfunctional families. I, along with many other students the YCCD district serves, are a product of this darkness.

When I first entered college, I was convinced my childhood trauma was a metastasized cancer that no form of treatment could heal. Fortunately, I found that Columbia College offers many different paths students can embark upon to transform. For me, it was through the refuge and healing power the social science courses and professors offered me

As I strive to make meaningful contributions on our campus, I frequently find myself reflecting on the dramatic impact Columbia College has had upon my education, the goals I envision within worldview, and my own sense of self-worth. Yet, amidst this gratefulness, I can't help but feel scared. I am scared for the many students whose stories are like mine, who may not have the same opportunities available to them to heal. In this regard, I ask the Board to please consider the necessary restorative power these small social science programs have in the lives of its students.

Ilse Maria Kerns
Columbia College 2008-Present

Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, San Francisco, AA Merchandise Marketing 2011
Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, San Francisco, BS Business Management 2017

Columbia College's in-person social science classes have been completely life changing and transformational for me. They have touched all parts of my life educationally, personally, and professionally. Prior to taking these courses, I found my college experience to be disappointing and lacking any real inspiration for the most part.

My courses have been dropped on multiple occasions, which has delayed my academic goals. In some instances, I received less than a week notice of the cancellation before the course was scheduled to start. Students who are already in fragile positions trying to balance work, school scheduling, transportation, and financing college are adversely affected by this carelessness. I've been very disheartened by the path that the Columbia College leaderships has chosen: the path of canceling courses, marginalizing the professors who bring the greatest value to the institution and students, and pushing students through online courses. Online courses are not a viable substitution for the in-person social science courses that have been cancelled. My personal experiences in online courses have been subpar and have offered relatively little benefit to my learning.

As individuals in a position to influence the institution's courses of direction, I respectfully urge you to look critically at this Columbia College's current practice of cancelling the courses that offer the highest educational value for students. Do these actions align with the college's core values? In my view there is a dramatic discrepancy between this institution's current actions and its core values, mission statement, and vision statement and this discrepancy demands immediate attention. We need to support in-person, transferable social science courses if this institution is reinstate its reputation as a high quality education provider that inspires personal growth and fosters critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, and student transformation.

Jeff Borden
Current Columbia College Student

I am a current student at Columbia College pursuing a major in the Social Sciences. Though I started as an English Major, I decided to change it after sitting in on and completing courses that completely changed my view on not only how a college course should be taught, but my overall worldview as well. Select professors have not only challenged me as a student, but also provided the tools and adequate support in order to help me succeed as a citizen of the 21st century. The pedagogy they facilitate is known as High Demand x High Support. This entails the usage of the Socratic Dialogue rather than lecture which requires students to be fully engaged. They also provide students with generous office hours, and are fully dedicated to student success.

The recent class cancellations in the Social Sciences and Humanities have had a negative impact on me personally. After taking several semesters off to pursue other interests, I was fully motivated to come back to Columbia College in order to complete my general education, as well as courses that I need in the Social Sciences in order to successfully transfer to a four year institution. These classes were cancelled a week before the semester began. This was devastating to me. I noticed my stress level rise immediately when trying to decide whether or not to persist and complete the three remaining general education classes that I needed for my degree. I became frustrated, discouraged, and disillusioned and opted to not return for the fall semester. In pondering the current administration's priorities, I began to realize that the current trajectory in education seems to be that of privatization. When economically disadvantaged, rural community college students are marginalized by policies that are more focused on making money, than the well being and vitality of the student body, it becomes apparent what is most important to the administration.

I do not claim to understand the regulations involved in class sizes and enrollment. But I do know the benefits of smaller class sizes and face-to-face instruction as opposed to online learning. There has been much research that supports my claim that smaller class sizes lead to more interaction between students and professors, and online courses simply do not provide adequate opportunities for student development. I also personally know several alumni of Columbia College who have flourished in their higher education and professional careers due to the environment that small class sizes helped to aid their development.

In reviewing Columbia College's Mission and Vision Statements, as well as the stated Core Values, I noticed a discrepancy between the statements, and my perception of the College's current practices. Within the Mission Statement, it states, "through a supportive and engaging learning environment, students master foundational skills, explore their passions, attain degrees and certificates, and pursue career and transfer pathways." In my experience, the instructors who provided the most engaging and supportive environments classes were canceled. I became quite passionate about actually doing something meaningful and significant with my life, whereas before I was apathetic and hopeless. I do not feel inclined to continue my education and attain a degree, or transfer if the administration continues to prioritize enrollment and profits over student success.

Karl Riedel
Columbia College, 2016
BA, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2018

I had several of my classes cancelled, three of which were cancelled just this summer alone (2016). In most cases classes were cancelled with roughly a week's notice, and there were no substitutes offered either in class or online.

I have taken a large, varying amount of classes and subjects since I began my journey at Columbia College. I can say without a doubt that the classes which helped me succeed the most were the various Social Science courses taught by Ted and Paula. Every one of their courses that I took has been instrumental to my recent success in my four-year institution. Additionally, the classes which I found to be the least helpful to me were the courses that were offered online. Online classes – while great in terms of economic efficiency – severely undermine students by imposing upon them an educational environment which restricts proper growth and psychological development. The absence of a face-to-face environment creates a disconnect between the student and the course. In addition, the format of many of these online courses offers students opportunities to cut corners and thus, receive an insufficient understanding of the subject. For this reason, it is blatantly detrimental to the Columbia College student body to restrict their course options, and instead offer the current watered-down, ineffective, and shamefully-inadequate online courses.

Donald Orr
Columbia College, 2006
BA, Geography, University of California, Berkeley, 2009
MA, Cities, University of London, 2012
PhD, Geography, University of London, 2017

I come from a single-parent household that relied on welfare, food stamps, federal housing assistance, and so on, to make ends meet. My family was in the bottom 5% of earners. I went to Columbia because it was free, and I didn't have the grades to get in anywhere else.

I attended Columbia from 2003 through 2006, earning an AA in Liberal Studies before transferring to San Francisco State and then UC Berkeley, where I graduated with a BA in Geography in 2009. I was then admitted to the University of London to sit for a Master's degree in Urban Studies, which I received in 2012, before continuing on there to earn a PhD in Geography which will be awarded July of this year.

I have come a long way from the welfare days, as I call them.

I am now employed by the County of San Mateo as a Management Analyst for Aging and Adult Services. We work to support and protect elderly people and disabled adults and children. As a Management Analyst, I work as part of the senior leadership team to solve problems and improve processes at a division level. To do this, I call upon communication, critical thinking and engaged learning skills that I acquired not at Berkeley nor the University of London, but at Columbia College, in a setting with small class sizes a high degree of student-professor interaction.

I have spent significant time at four different collegiate institutions; three years at Columbia, one year at San Francisco State, two years at UC Berkeley, and five years at the University of London. I am an experienced student, and if I convey no other message today, I want it to be this:

The best instruction I have ever received was at a community college, at Columbia College, and it was a result of small class sizes, taught in person by dedicated professors, working to help students realize their potential by challenging them in person. Without this environment, I don't think I would have been able to achieve what I have – I wouldn't have had the vision, let alone the skills. So I humbly ask the Board, in the name of future poor boys with no vision, little hope and poor chances... please do not discontinue the supportive and transformative environment of Yosemite Community College District. It would be a grave disservice to future generations.

Ian Bailey
Columbia College, 2002
BS, Environmental Science and Sociology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2005
PhD Candidate, Development Sociology, Cornell University

I attended Columbia College from 2001-2003. I transferred and graduated from UC Santa Cruz with a double major in Environmental Studies and Sociology. I am currently a PhD candidate in Sociology at Cornell University. I am here to express my concern about Columbia College's recent and continuing practice of cancelling courses. I came to Columbia College with a passion for environmental conservation. I moved there from the Bay Area to learn ecology, geology, and natural sciences with the hands-on opportunities afforded by the College's rural setting and its proximity to Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Now let me shift to the practical concerns of my decision to pursue a double major. In order to transfer to UC Santa Cruz and fulfill the requirements for Environmental Studies and Sociology, I needed to complete math courses up to calculus, I also needed statistics, the chemistry series, ecology, geology, and ALL the lower division sociology courses. This is in addition to English and other general course requirements. Managing this schedule was challenging, but I was able to achieve it in a timely fashion because these courses were regularly offered, and the small face-to-face classes were engaging and transformative. However, I've asked myself recently, what would have happened if some of these courses were canceled? In my case, I might have left Columbia College, as I had the means and mobility to seek out other colleges—not a desirable outcome, as it is not easy relocating and starting at a new college, and from the institution's perspective there'd be one less student enrolling in courses. But what about those who are less fortunate? Those who are tied to place because of work or family obligations, or simply do not have the means to relocate? What are the burdens of course cancellations for them? It could certainly extend their time to transfer or completion; it could make it difficult to plan for the future, to balance work, family, and school. I also wonder if course cancellations might have a more subtle and less observable effect. How might this practice affect the motivation and drive of students? What are the un-measurable effects of these institutional barriers? These are questions that Columbia College leadership would be wise to consider, and that many of us alerted them to in writing our letters to the College President over the past year. It may not show up in their balance book or the indicators they measure, but dreams deferred, life's plans put on hold, slowed momentum, diminished drive, dampened motivation, are real.

The institution most clearly linked to the promise and hope of educational achievement for all, for upward mobility, for new beginnings, for the American Dream, in short, should uphold this vision at all cost. Surely, the leadership can put their creative minds to solutions that do not impinge on student access to courses, no matter how trying the economics might be. You are all surely familiar with the term mission drift. Well, I wonder if the College has been too focused on fixing small leaks to notice that the ship is drifting out to sea. It is not too late to correct. It is my hope that District leadership might serve as the compass, the lighthouse, or even the tugboat if necessary, to redirect the ship.

Nalatie Alpers
Columbia College, 2005
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 2007

In 2002 I reluctantly became a student at Columbia College in an effort to save money. I was disappointed to be attending a community college: without any actual experience I had absorbed the somewhat common negative opinion of community colleges as being significantly less desirable than 4-year colleges and universities. I was worried that the educational opportunities would be uninspiring and the transfer options limited. Instead, Columbia was a transformational experience, especially my small social science classes, and in 2005 I transferred to UC Berkeley to study Anthropology. While at Columbia I benefitted from being able to take all the classes I needed to transfer in a timely manner; this is no longer the case for current students.

When enrolling at Columbia, current students are strongly encouraged to make an Educational Plan with their counselors, often with each semester carefully planned out according to the 2-Year Plan and the Schedule of Classes. However, on page 8 of the current College Catalog it reads, "The College reserves the right to make additions or deletions to the Schedule of Classes. Classes with insufficient enrollment may be cancelled by the College." This message is in stark contrast to what an Educational Plan is communicating and sends the message to current and potential students that Columbia College is not to be relied upon. When there are class cancellations it becomes difficult if not impossible to follow these Educational Plans, often leading to delayed graduation and transfer, or, ultimately, dropping out of Columbia College altogether.

Social science courses have been especially impacted by recent cancellations. Students trying to fulfill their transfer requirements for majors in the social sciences are consistently met with barriers related to cancelled classes or electives not being offered according to the 2-Year Plan. The College and the Board of Trustees should honor the promises made to students in the Schedule and Catalog instead of cancelling classes due to their small size.

Recently, the college, in conjunction with the CSU system, created the Associates Degree for Transfer to smooth and simplify transfer pathways for students wanting to go on to a CSU. Students pursuing AA-T's in Anthropology, Political Science, and Sociology have struggled to fulfill the requirements and electives needed for their AA-T degrees because of frequent class cancellations due to low enrollment. If the College is going to have these degrees in the Catalog then the necessary classes must be offered, otherwise they are an empty promise to the students who are pursuing them in good faith.

Please take action on the issue of class cancellations – it is so vital to the success of current and future Columbia College students to be able to reliably enroll and complete the courses they need. These rural students often have nowhere else to turn for inspiration and transformational opportunities but their small, local community college and I am asking that this Board ensures Columbia College stays a comprehensive institution and does not abandon it's mission.

Joseph Rodgers
Columbia College, 2013
BA, Politics and International Relations, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2015
MA Candidate, Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies, Middlebury Institute of International
Studies, 2018

I attended Columbia College from 2010 to 2013. After leaving Columbia, I transferred to UC Santa Cruz, where I earned my Bachelor's in Politics. I am currently a masters candidate at Middlebury Institute for International Studies in Monterey, where I study nonproliferation and terrorism.

Since graduating, I have given speeches at the United Nations, lobbied with senators and representatives in Washington DC, and published articles on enhancing nuclear security. I am currently a graduate research assistant at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies. I monitor and report on the development of weapons of mass destruction facilities around the world using geospatial open source information and other media in the public domain.

As one would expect, my educational experiences fundamentally changed me, and Columbia played a very large role in this process. It is no exaggeration to say that at Columbia I took courses with professors who changed the trajectory of my life.

After graduating from Sonora High School, I had no idea how to be a student. I was afraid to talk to professors, I hated the very idea of public speaking and, most importantly, I was lost. I had no motivation, goals or inspiration. None of my parents had even finished high school. Taking in-person classes with a select few incredible professors at Columbia College transformed me by building a cognitive foundation and revealing to me agency, motivation and opportunities. Had I taken online classes, I would not have developed student behaviors that are necessary for success at 4 year institutions and graduate schools - basic skills like note taking, asking questions in class, interpersonal communication with professors and mutually beneficial interactions with other students.

As an alum of Columbia, I am deeply disappointed with developments which seek to cut classes due to low enrollment and switch towards online course offerings. I have personally witnessed and suffered a great deal from class cancellations at Columbia. When I attended Columbia, the debate class was canceled. Debate was one of my passions, and one of the few classes at Columbia which transformed me. After unsuccessfully attempting to reinstate the debate class by letter writing and petitions, the debate team decided to create a debate club.

Fundraising and creating this club took a great deal of personal sacrifice. Yet this debate club from Columbia College went on to win a silver medal at Phi Rho Pi, the community college national speech and debate championships. Our victory was published in the Union Democrat. For whatever reason, the debate class was offered the very next semester.

This example demonstrates that low class enrollment is not a viable metric for canceling classes. Small classes can do great things. In fact, low student enrolment actually generates a more

positive learning environment. Canceling classes due to low enrolment is terrible for a plethora of reasons - and shifting to online education is not a solution.

Krista Sabados
Columbia College, 2003
BA, Sociology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2005
EdM., Human Development and Psychology, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2009

I am a former Columbia College student who graduated in 2003. My story is a testament to why course cancellations and online learning are not the answer to solving the college's fiscal problems. Consistent, reliable access to a variety of high quality, face-to-face, UC and CSU transferable courses are absolutely necessary for student success.

When I enrolled in Columbia in 2000, I was the first in my family to attend college, had little family support, and worked low-wage jobs. I had poor academic preparation and my postsecondary and career goals were ill-defined. Today I have a Master's Degree in Education from the Harvard Graduate School, a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Santa Cruz and an AA in Liberal Studies from Columbia College. I am currently a senior program manager at Jobs for the Future working to expand education and economic opportunity for low-income youth and adults across the country. My educational experiences at Columbia College were critical and foundational to this trajectory. Throughout my time at Columbia, I had opportunities to take quality in-person courses, learn critical "learning how to learn" skills, meet UC transfer requirements, while forming meaningful, lasting, and supportive relationships with my professors and peers. The skills, attitudes, and behaviors that helped me succeed did not develop overnight, nor did they advance under the model of educational efficiency which emphasizes online distance learning, high enrollment courses, and limited course options. I am certain that my professional and academic successes would not have been possible within Columbia College's current situation.

I urge the YCCD board and executive leadership to please reassess the current approach to ensuring the financial stability of the college. Exterminating opportunities that make Columbia College a viable gateway out of poverty is not the answer to solving the district's fiscal problems. In my personal experience as well as in my professional experience assisting low-income students, I have learned that although quality education costs more in the short-term, without these up front investments, the long-term consequences can be dire. One of the most significant of these consequences is students leaving college altogether or earning degrees that do not translate into authentic career and life readiness.

Nicol Gaffney
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2012

Before Columbia College, I had never attended a public school. In the third grade I was expelled from Sierra Waldorf in Jamestown. After that, I was homeschooled by my stepmom, who received support from Mountain Oaks in San Andreas. I didn't have access to highly trained teachers, broad subject matter, or classmates I could learn alongside.

That changed when I chose to attend Columbia College in 2005. I hadn't had trained teachers or classmates for almost ten years. Columbia felt like stepping into a whole new world of shared possibility and discovery. I LOVED it! My Biology Lab with Micha Miller was the first time I looked through a microscope, allowing me to appreciate not just what lives in our campus pond, but also the fact that there's an unseen world all around me. In Astronomy with Jeff Tolhurst my classmates and I tried to understand the scale of our solar system by turning the walking paths on campus into a map of our planets. In Psychology with Bill Wilson I got to hold a human brain and wonder how a 3 pound lump of flesh could give rise to civilization. In my combined Cultural Anthropology and Cultural Geography class with Paula Clarke and Ted Hamilton, I realized I have a culture like everyone else, and that I get to choose what I do with it.

There is a theme shared by the transformations of knowledge and perspective I experienced at Columbia. It's relationships. Consistent, Face-to-face, supportive long-term relationships. As a homeschooled student, I spent years in an education that was about learning subject matter on my own. And as important as that was, it wasn't until Columbia where the subject matter I was learning actually mattered in my life. The difference maker was my generous access to tenured professors, their consistent course offerings, and a diverse cohort of classmates who could pursue their academic goals. The opportunity to develop relationships like this made my education personal, and act as the foundation of my professional career.

Today I am a successful alum of Columbia College and UC Santa Cruz, graduating with honors. On these campuses I've worked as a tutor, library assistant, and an academic mentor. I served as a representative on student and professor-led committees at both of these campuses. And today I work as a mentor and coordinator for a national youth development non-profit that drastically increases the rate at which under-supported students attend, persist through, and successfully graduate from colleges all around the country.

I attribute the heart of my success to the relationships Columbia fostered while I was a student there. And while the details of my story are my own, the key piece is one I imagine we all share. None of us would be in this room if we didn't have several classmates or professors who had a profound influence on our education. These connections matter. Columbia's current crisis of course cancellations and increased reliance on online courses threaten the ability of our students to develop the relationships that will be essential to their success. These actions are in opposition to any thriving campus that is accessible and responsive to the communities it serves.

For me this assertion isn't hypothetical, but very close to home. My youngest brother transferred to Columbia this Fall from Las Positas Community College in Livermore. The course he was most looking forward to taking was canceled. Also, his desired trajectory as a transfer student in Computer Science has been tangibly stalled by the lack of quality courses and tenured professors offered in his desired major. He's yet to find others on campus who share his passion for computers. Understandably, this lack of cohort and course options has lessened his motivation to persist. In his own words, he doesn't feel like his needs are a priority or even attainable at Columbia College. He is angry that he will be unable to attain the lower division major requirements he needs to transfer to a 4-year university. This experience is shared by many in various departments across campus. To have to coach my brother on how to navigate an institution that is failing his needs and goals isn't what any college should have its alums doing, especially an alum who attributes Columbia and its dedicated staff and students with sparking the most significant transformation in his life. I share my story with you in the hope that it inspires and galvanizes administrators' resolve to fulfill its commitment to supporting the trajectories of ALL students. Thank you.

Tesia Bobrycki
Columbia College, 2012
BA, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2014

It is with no exaggeration when I say that the social science classes at Columbia College changed my life – in ways that are still impacting me today. To me, quality education is marked by two things: first, when it expands, deepens, and complicates an understanding of the world, and second, when it refines and stretches an individual's goals and provides a stepping-stone to them. The classes I took at Columbia provided both those things and I would not be who I am or where I am had I not taken them.

I graduated from Columbia College in 2012 with an associate's degree. On graduation night I found out I had been accepted to UC Berkeley's Political Science program. Two years later, I graduated from that program with highest honors. Shortly after that, I accepted my dream job of working with the international human rights non-profit, Survival International. I am now the director of the Bay Area branch and am focusing on strengthening and growing our impact throughout the United States.

My passion for human rights and my belief that I could make a difference was cultivated in PoliSci 10 at Columbia College. The extensive class discussions and office hours encouraged me to apply the lessons not only to current world events, but also to my everyday life. Every class was a practice in public speaking, debate, reasoning, and critical thinking. My social science courses were brilliant because I did so much more than learn the curriculum – I developed the skills needed to be a successful student and I developed the maturity and intelligence needed to be a successful adult in today's world. Neither of which would have been possible through a computer.

If I had not had in-person, transferable social science classes at Columbia, I would not have gone to UC Berkeley. I would not have majored in Political Science. I would not have graduated with honors. I would not be working at Survival International. I am here today because I believe that all students deserve the same quality education that I had – where every class holds rich and transformative discussions, and enables students to continue that learning and transformation at a four-year institution, and beyond.

Lindsey Kearney
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2013
JD, Santa Clara University School of Law, 2016

I do not have any personal experience with class cancellations, as I was fortunate enough to have graduated from Columbia before this situation unfolded. However as a Columbia College alumni who transferred to UC Berkeley as a Political Science major, I can say with confidence that by canceling major prerequisite courses, Columbia College is directly hindering transfer opportunities for its students. In order to declare the Political Science major at UC, for example, a student must have completed the equivalent of Poli Sci 10 (Intro), Poli Sci 12 (American Politics), and Poli Sci 14 (International Relations). If Columbia chooses to cancel any one of these courses (as I am aware it has done in the past), a student attempting to transfer to UC as a junior is likely to be rejected because she has not completed the prerequisites for the major. This problem is compounded by the fact that the UC is experiencing a glut of applicants; across the UC system, transfer applications rose 11.8% in the last admission cycle. This means that schools are forced to be more selective in accepting transfer students; ergo, if a transfer applicant has not completed all the prerequisite coursework needed to declare the major as a junior, that applicant is likely to be passed up in favor of a student who will be in and out of the UC with a degree in a more timely fashion. To put it simply, the cancellation of any course that is a prerequisite for transfer or declaration of major has a devastating effect on the opportunities of Columbia's students.

My family has lived in Tuolumne County since 1973, and my mom graduated from Columbia College with an A.A. in the mid-1970s. I am the first person in my family to obtain a Bachelor's degree, and I am also the first in my family to earn a Doctoral degree. Columbia College, specifically the unparalleled quality of instruction I received from Ted Hamilton and Paula Clarke, was the springboard from which I was able to make these achievements. I left Sonora High School disenchanted, disheartened, and tremendously bored. I learned how to be a student in Ted and Paula's courses, and there I began to care tremendously about my education, like a sponge that couldn't possibly absorb enough knowledge about the world we live in and why it is the way that it is. I am deeply troubled by the notion of rural kids like myself, many at the vulnerable and confusing age of 18-22, losing out on the same opportunities I had because of cancelled courses.

I respectfully urge the administration to explore alternative avenues when balancing its budget - avenues that do not result in closing doors of opportunity for the students at Columbia College.

Patrick Henderson
Columbia College, 2008
BA, Political Science, University of California, Davis, 2014

Cancelling classes at a rural community college simply because they may be sparsely attended is irresponsible, damaging to students and at odds with both the intent of the community college and with the reality of rural life.

Responsibility for administration of a rural community college means that you must be responsive to the unique challenges of rural society. To be blunt, the world is a hostile and alien place for much of young rural society. Opportunities for growth and success are few and far between in the hills and woods of the Sierra Nevada. The fact is that rural areas have low population density. Consequently, larger community college districts serve fewer students. Access to the institution is limited as travel time to and from the campus can be quite long. All of this increases the likelihood of smaller class in general terms. Canceling courses because the class size is too small makes good business sense in a more populous area; it is a fundamentally injurious and unjust decision in a rural area.

High school was completely inadequate as a foundation for adult competency. Upon graduation, I was left listless and floundering, without personal or professional direction. The services and opportunities that Columbia College provide are nowhere else to be found in the Central Sierra. The range of classes and subjects that were taught were completely new to me, allowing me to not only get a better understanding of the world around me, but of myself and what my interests were. My time at Columbia College under the patient guidance and instruction of Paula Clarke and Ted Hamilton was crucial to the development of adult competency. The environment that they specifically provided allowed me to acquire the skills and understanding to succeed academically; the principles and practices I learned remain at the core of my personal and professional life. Were those classes unavailable or difficult to access, I would quite simply not be the person that I am today, and I do not see any similar alternative path to success in the context of Calaveras and Tuolumne County. To deny rural students the opportunity to engage with this vital environment is to deny them a crucial and unique opportunity for success. Cancelling under-enrolled classes inflicts environmental and economic harm and injustice against individuals that have the least capacity to absorb it.

Cancelling classes due to under-enrollment does nothing but ensure that Columbia College's reputation is degraded. Fewer students will come and fewer people will enroll, and the institution will be perceived as ineffective. Ultimately, funds will be rerouted to more effective institutions, and the result will be an acceleration of the cycle. Now is the time to take a stand against efficiency standards and business practices imposed on Columbia by outside forces. Continuing down the current path will threaten the position of the decision-making staff at Columbia College and will drive students away. Stop cancelling crucial classes simply because they are under-enrolled.

Laura DeMars
Columbia College, 2009
BA, Geology, University of California, Davis, 2011
CA Teaching Credential, California State University, Fresno, 2014
MA, Education, Teachers College of San Joaquin, 2017

I attended Columbia College and probably would not have had the opportunity to attend a higher education institution if not for the time I spent there. During my time (2006-2009) many classes were canceled and it made it difficult to schedule my courses around these cancellations. I know that it has only gotten worse, and many of the courses that are being canceled are those that are rigorous and provide opportunities that offer growth and support. In order to attend college, I had to work two full-time jobs to cover costs of tuition. It was a balancing act to find courses that were appropriate for transfer, were scheduled at appropriate times, and often I found myself scrambling for courses because those that were most academically stimulating were canceled right before or during the first week of the term. It was frustrating as a working student, and even though I had a voice when I served on the student senate, I felt that our opinions fell on deaf ears. Additionally, the courses that were the most rigorous or thought-provoking were constantly threatened to close. Every single course that I took either with Dr. Clarke or Professor Hamilton, in particular, was threatened to close, and each time the entire class rallied to keep courses open. The level of anxiety that canceling valuable and transferrable courses induced on a regular basis is not in support of the college's mission statement, or in the best interests towards the viability of an academic institution designed to support higher learning.

I am appalled that the college continues to prioritize courses that are at the base level of requirements for being a college-level course. From my personal observations, I have witnessed support for courses that are not in line with the rigor and value that many of the cut courses have provided. I am appalled to say that when discussing the college in the educational realm of our county, the site is viewed more as a trade school than a rigorous academic institution. I am proud to say that I attended Columbia College; however, I am horrified about what is happening to our learning institution. I proudly have a Columbia College sticker on the wall of my classroom at Twain Harte School and I regularly share my story of overcoming adversity in the public education sector.

My successes are greatly impacted through the work I have done at Columbia College; however, I am not certain I would recommend the same path based on the current climate and decisions being made by the College.

Renee Willis
Columbia College, 2015
BA, Sociology, California State University, Chico, Current

As a Columbia College alumna, I am strongly disappointed in the inaccessibility of quality education in a timely manner that Columbia College is currently promoting. As community college students, we are faced with many financial, cultural, time, and opportunity challenges to achieving our goals in education - which often translates to goals for quality of life and ability to function as a valuable member of our communities. We rely on the institution to provide schedules that are reliable and classes that hold weight - not just in degree units, but also value in our educational careers.

There are several issues being addressed in this letter:

- 1) Classes are being cancelled with little notice to students: This is a major barrier to academic success and the ability to complete planned courses in the time expected by students.
- 2) Columbia College is not putting the needs of its students first: This sends a message to all about the true intentions of Columbia College and its endeavors to provide an educational opportunity to the already educationally challenged.

Julia Davids
Columbia College, 2014
BA, Sociology, San Francisco State University, 2017

When I entered Columbia College, I had no idea what I wanted to focus on academically. As a low-income, first-generation college student, I chose to start at a junior college because I was financially unable to afford a four-year college. As I worked to support myself, while taking the basic required courses, I was unsure if college was even the right choice for me. If I did not have access to the wide array of highly challenging and diverse courses offered at Columbia College, I'm sure that I would not be on my current academic path toward success. I am currently participating in my second study abroad experience, after being encouraged to expand my horizons toward a more international outlook. I'm taking part in a highly rigorous yearlong exchange program at the University of Amsterdam. Not only am I on course for graduation from San Francisco State University within the next year with a BA in Sociology, but I am now looking into applying for law school. This is a goal that I never would have imagined seriously pursuing without the inspiration and encouragement of a select few professors during my community college experience.

Dan MacLeod
Columbia College, 2002
BA, Psychology, University of California, Berkeley, 2004

As someone who attended Columbia College in the early 2000s and eventually transferred to UC Berkeley, I've always felt the anthropology and sociology units that Professor Clarke taught were the finest (and often most challenging) example of instruction that I experienced during my post-secondary career. Her teaching style – a mixture general study skills instruction and the Socratic Method in its most undiluted form – is one that I had never seen before attending her classes, nor have I experienced since, and while I think many educators would aspire to achieve Professor Clarke's classroom successes, few are willing to make the personal sacrifice of time and energy necessary to change students' lives the way she has.

It is for precisely this reason that I was not surprised to learn that the college was looking at other options when considering the future of its social sciences curriculum. Having worked in college administration myself, I can see why it would be difficult to justify continuing to offer classes that do not fill up completely from one semester to the next, and that may have higher attrition rates when students who are not expecting to be challenged seek easier options. Numbers on a page can make a very persuasive argument when trying to balance a budget.

But then I read the college's mission statement, which aspires toward “intellectual [and] cultural vitality” and inspiring students to become “inquisitive, creative, and thoughtful life-long learners,” I wonder if we have done everything we can preserve the quality of academic life and legitimacy that Columbia College so desperately needs. I reflect upon President Kennedy's words to students at Rice University in 1962: We do these things “...not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept...” And I pray that those upon whose shoulders rest the weight of responsibility choose to do what is hard, because it is right.

Kristine Lawson
Columbia College, 2010
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 2013
MA, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2015
PhD Candidate, Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2018

After spending one year completing prerequisite courses at Columbia College, I went on to complete a bachelor's degree (earning highest honours), a master's degree, and am nearly finished with a doctoral degree at two of the world's top research institutions. I have taught undergraduate students and worked with famous and genius scholars from around the world. And so, I have some authority to say that I have never had such on-point, effective instruction nor have I seen undergraduate students exit courses so well-prepared to engage in critical analysis and writing as in Professor Hamilton's and Doctor Clarke's classes. It was in Prof. Hamilton's and Dr. Clarke's classrooms that I truly learned how to be a student and learned of all the knowledges outside the classroom -- things like institutional savvy and how to navigate bewildering bureaucratic processes that block students from accessing education -- and have gone on to teach my own students these same sets of knowledge.

I am dismayed to hear that you, the YCCD Board of Trustees and the Columbia College Chancellor have decided to maintain and even increase the practice of course cancellations that effectively results in an inequitable academic environment that further marginalizes certain groups within the student community.

A recent article in the Huffington Post explained how American society needs anthropology now, more than ever, because of its ability to cultivate conscious world views during these times of global turmoil. And yet, it is the anthropology, and other invaluable social sciences classes, that continue to be on the top of the course cancellation lists. This model of "efficiency" is tragic when adapted into institutions of learning -- places where students should be free to decide their own intellectual paths. We must stop understanding education, especially public education, as a business enterprise that prioritizes profit over all else. And I refuse to continue to listen to chancellors, trustees, and other public education administrators complain that there is no more money and budgets must be cut. I refuse to accept this limited vision from public education's so-called leaders. It is the job of leaders to imagine better solutions for those whom they serve -- in this case, Columbia College students. If you do not have this vision, you must open your ears to the people around you, including many of the signatories on this document, who do. I trust that you will stop your practice of course cancellations which reflect, frankly, an old-fashioned reliance on austerity measures so that Columbia College can continue to be a gateway to higher learning for those deserving students in rural California. You have already lost two absolute gems in Prof. Hamilton and Dr. Clarke -- do not let this dangerous and inequitable trend continue.

Joshua DeSalles
Columbia College, 2015
BA, Philosophy, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2017

My experiences at Columbia College saved my life.

In short, I found myself dazed and confused shortly after high school. I had no ambitions and found little support with any endeavors other than finding a job to pay the bills. However, a team-taught course by Dr. Clarke and Professor Hamilton (U.S. History) was the life preserver that rescued me from those treacherous seas of apathy and distress. For more than three years, similar courses were my only support and safe haven in otherwise chaotic living situations.

The High Demand x High Support courses I was lucky enough to attend at Columbia College prepared me to be a successful transfer student at U.C. Santa Cruz. In fact, I have been on the dean's list every quarter since I transferred. I was also fortunate enough to have excellent counselors that were able to help me plan my courses out in a flexible/timely manner in accordance with the course catalogs. Consistency in course offerings was a significant part of my ultimately successful experience at Columbia.

I was baffled to hear of the recent behaviors involving course cancellations. The model of canceling courses with little to no notice while offering minimal alternatives is insulting and detrimental to student success. If a degree program is being offered, it is the responsibility of the institution to offer courses that satisfy the requirements. Online classes are not a valid alternative. It is fraudulent to claim that the same experience of face-to-face time and engaging group conversations can be matched in an online environment. It is difficult to watch from afar as friends and fellow students struggle to graduate and transfer within such sporadic framework for course offerings.

Now is the time for a realignment of the institutional practices and institutional goals described in the Vision Statement. Students are at the heart of the Vision Statement; it is time to start acting like it. Delay would be costly for those that depend on Columbia College to be the life-preservation mechanism it has the potential to be.

Blenna Kiros
Columbia College, 2015

During my last semester at Columbia College, in the spring of 2016, I enrolled in Sociology 28. I was excited to participate in this class because it was a unique course I was impassioned by. Unfortunately, this class was cancelled and I was left with no viable or equivalent class to replace it. As a result, my academic journey at Columbia College was cut a semester short which lead me to withdraw from Columbia College entirely.

I ask the Chancellor and all members of the Board and the community to support us in our quest to rebuild these programs so class cancellations will no longer be a hindrance to incoming students and faculty.

Susan Gambaro
Parent to Current Students at Columbia College

I wish to add my signature to the letters addressed to the Yosemite Community College Board, Chancellor Smith and President Angela Fairchild, regarding the Fall Semester, 2016, cancelled classes. My daughters, Ellie Kerns and Ilse Kerns, were privileged to have taken most of the courses taught by Ted Hamilton and Dr. Paula Clarke. As a 38-year California educator, I am appalled that my daughter and others were cheated out of taking Ted Hamilton's and Paula Clarke's classes. The decision to cancel classes by the Yosemite Community College Board, President Fairchild, and Chancellor Smith was irresponsible and detrimental to Columbia College students. Your actions make it clear that you do not value the high standard of teaching that Ted and Paula provide for their students. I request that you make it right. Reinstate all of cancelled classes for the Spring 2017. Make Columbia College students' educational opportunities your top priority.