Cutting funding hurts everyone

This past week, Cal State Long Beach awarded more than 8,500 university degrees. But it's not just the students and their families who should be celebrating. Every Californian should take note of the occasion. This year, the 23 California State University campuses are graduating more than 90,000 students. They join more than 2.6 million other alumni who have graduated from the CSU in its 50-year history - more than 250,000 of them from CSULB.

CSU alumni are the engineers, geologists, geographers, small business owners, nurses and hundreds of other professionals that make up an essential part of the economic vitality of our state. They are part of the promise of our future.

Unfortunately, the Legislature has already approved a $500 million cut to the CSU. That will inevitably mean fewer students, fewer graduates and fewer qualified candidates for employers. That's troublesome enough, but I'm told the options were few in light of the economy. What's worse is the so-called "all-cuts" budget, meaning what happens if the governor's proposal to extend certain taxes does not get approved. Under this scenario, the cut to the CSU would double to $1 billion. This would mean 20,000 fewer students admitted during the upcoming academic year.

For California to prosper, we have to provide our businesses and employers with world-class college graduates. And if businesses can't find enough qualified workers here, they will most certainly look elsewhere and the tax dollars and economic development will go along with them to someplace else. Texas anyone?

What kind of future do we want for California? My preference would be to put the tax extensions up for a vote, as the governor has proposed. Let the people decide if we want to continue funding our future or if we are willing to let our educational, cultural and social institutions slide into mediocrity and ask the next generation to worry about it.

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