

# Opinion: California students have a point with their protests

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

The thousands of college students who marched on the Capitol on Monday to protest rising fees and decreasing state support had a point: Higher education has taken a disproportionately heavy drubbing in recent years as politicians attempted – and largely failed – to balance the state budget.

The Legislature's budget analyst has calculated that under Gov. Jerry Brown's 2012-13 budget, state general fund spending on the University of California, the state university system and community colleges will have dropped 21 percent in five years, while fee and tuition revenue will have increased by 64 percent.

Several of those politicians uttered sympathetic words as they addressed protesters. But they sidestepped the political trade-offs that cut college funds and avoided any mention of the Brown tax plan they have endorsed.

"We can't do it alone. We need your help," Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez told the students. "You have the right to be mad," Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg declared, adding that state needs "a revenue measure to put more money into higher education."

But as Steinberg decried "Republican obstructionism," he didn't mention that he opposes the so-called "millionaires' tax" measure for education that most of the protesters prefer, and has endorsed Brown's alternative income and sales tax measure that would not increase college support.

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