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FM3

*Public Opinion Research
& Strategy*

TO: Interested Parties

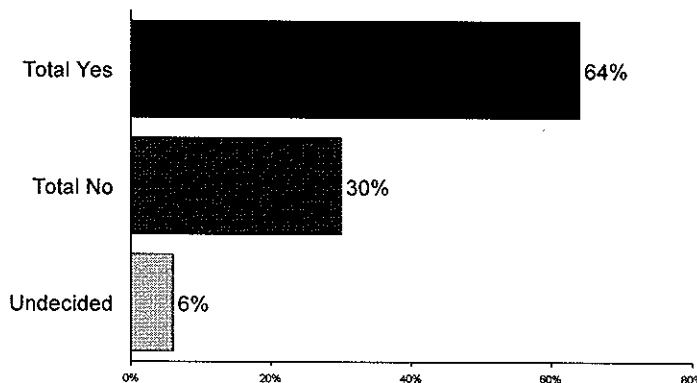
FROM: Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

RE: Summary of Voter Survey Results

DATE: December 5, 2011

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a telephone survey of Solano Community College District voters to assess public attitudes toward the college and support for additional investments in improving the College's infrastructure.¹ The survey results show that public perceptions of the College are highly favorable, and many believe it is in need of additional funding. **In fact, the results indicate that by a two-to-one margin, 64 percent of voters would support a bond measure to improve, repair and upgrade College facilities in order to increase the District's capacity to prepare students for high quality jobs and transfers to universities** (see Figure 1). This suggests that if an election were held today, the measure would surpass the 55 percent majority vote threshold required for passage.

FIGURE 1: Support for a Solano Community College Bond Measure



¹ **Methodology:** From November 9-13, 2011, FM3 completed a survey of 603 registered voters residing within the boundaries of the Solano Community College District who are likely to cast ballots in the November 2012 Presidential election. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/-4.0%. Margins of sampling error will be higher for subgroups within the sample. Some results do not total to 100% because of rounding.

In a climate of increasing higher education costs and a growing need to train and retrain workers, voters believe Solano Community College plays an important role in workforce development and providing students with an affordable local alternative to four-year universities. There is a high level of voter consensus that in the current economic climate, community colleges are needed to provide job training and education for people entering the workforce or training for new professions. In fact, the survey results show that 89 percent of Solano Community College District voters agree with this sentiment, including 64 percent who identify the concept as “very accurate.”

Voters also believe that Solano Community College is an important part of the community’s higher education system, particularly in light of the rising costs associated with obtaining a four-year college degree. The survey results show that more than 70 percent of voters (72%) express concerns about the cost of attending a UC or State University. At the same time, a comparable percentage (79%) identifies Solano College as an affordable, local alternative to four-year universities.

Voters believe their local community college is in need of additional funding. The survey results indicate that well over three-quarters of voters (79%) believe their local community college is in need of additional funding, including nearly half (46%) who see a great need for additional funding. This finding correlates with the fact that 78 percent identify state budget cuts that reduce the money available for education an “extremely” or “very serious” problem. In fact, concern over this issue is substantially broader than concern over the amount voters pay in local taxes (49% “extremely” or “very serious problem”).

Voter support for a potential Solano Community College Bond measure stems from the high priority they place on safety upgrades and enhancing the college’s ability to prepare students for jobs and transfers to universities. A majority of District voters (56%) believe that the College’s buildings are in need of repair. It is therefore not surprising that after being presented with a list of potential funding priorities, voters overwhelmingly rated projects related to safety repairs and modernizing facilities to increase the College’s capacity to prepare students for jobs and universities as top priorities including:

Safety/General Infrastructure Upgrades

- Ensuring facilities meet earthquake and fire safety codes (77% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Upgrading campus facilities to provide access for disabled students (71% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Upgrading technology (69% “extremely”/“very important”)

Job-Training

- Increasing collaborations and partnerships with private and public employers to fulfill local job training and placement needs (“77% extremely”/“very important”)
- Upgrading facilities to prepare Solano County students for jobs (75% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Providing career technical education in fields such as vocational engineering, cosmetology, welding and automotive technology (70% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Modernizing classrooms for job training in technology and engineering (68% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Modernizing nursing and firefighter job-training centers (68% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Modernizing bio-technology job training facilities (67% “extremely”/“very important”)

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University Preparation and Core Academic Programs

- Preparing Solano County students for universities (76% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Expanding opportunities for students to take university courses at local community college sites (70% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Increasing the capacity of Solano Community College to offer distance learning opportunities and on-line courses (66% “extremely”/“very important”)
- Replacing again science laboratories (64% “extremely”/“very important”)

Overall, the survey results show that voters believe that future investments in repairing and modernizing Solano Community College will help ensure that students continue to have access to affordable, high quality educational opportunities close to home, and that the community’s local workforce remains equipped to fill the demand for well-trained highly-skilled employees in an increasingly competitive economy.