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For Immediate Release

## **New UCLA report shows extent of budget cuts on California high schools**

*State Supt. Tom Torlakson joins March 21 teleconference to share impact on poor students, reform efforts, college access*

LOS ANGELES — Budget cuts have left California high school students with fewer critical learning opportunities and have intensified the inequality between schools serving low- and high-income communities, according to a new UCLA report to be released during a teleconference at 11 a.m. on Monday, March 21.

"Free Fall: Educational Opportunities in 2011" is the latest report on conditions and outcomes in California public schools by UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA). The report highlights the struggles of high school principals to cope with decreased education spending and the increased demands of families struggling through the economic crisis.

The March 21 teleconference will include findings and comments by UCLA IDEA director John Rogers, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson and high school principals.

IDEA researchers surveyed almost a quarter of the state's 1,200 public high school principals. The schools these principals lead represent a diverse cross-section of the state — urban and rural, small and large, charters and traditional schools, in wealthy and poor communities. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with 78 principals to further explore the consequences these deteriorating school conditions had on students.

"The principals we spoke with are struggling to do the best they can with the limited resources they have," said Rogers, who also plans to brief state legislators and staff in Sacramento next week. "In many places, for many students, that's simply not enough."

Principals reported that their schools had decreased instructional time — from shorter school years to less after-school instruction and summer school. A high proportion of principals reported layoffs and noted that these cuts have negatively impacted the amount of personal attention students receive from teachers and counselors and have made schools less safe. A majority of principals also noted that the amount of instructional materials has been slashed.

Rogers, an associate professor at the UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, said that these types of cuts impact student achievement and students' ability to graduate from high school and move on to a four-year college or university.

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Though budget cuts have affected all California schools, those serving largely low-income communities have felt the pinch even more than their counterparts in wealthier neighborhoods. The latter have been able to shield vital services through financial donations from the community or by requiring families to cover the costs for field trips, athletics, arts electives and even books.

Principals also reported growing needs among their students as incidences of homelessness and food insecurity rise. Also, the vast majority of principals noted that family financial pressures have prevented a growing number of graduates from enrolling in four-year colleges or universities.

Over the last decade, high school reform has emerged as a central issue for state and federal policy, and a great deal of attention has centered on high school improvement. However, almost all the principals surveyed said the cuts have halted their reform and improvement efforts, as cuts have led to fewer opportunities for teacher development.

### **Teleconference information:**

**When:** Monday, March 21

**Time:** 11 a.m.

**Speakers:** Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson; UCLA IDEA director John Rogers; Todd Ullah, principal of Washington Preparatory High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District; and Paula Hanzel, principal of Sacramento New Technology High School in the Sacramento City Unified School District.

**Dial-in number:** Call in at 888-754-4430 and access online materials at [www.readytalk.com](http://www.readytalk.com), using the access code 2674408.

**Report:** Embargoed copies of the report will be available Thursday, March 17, upon request.

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