Dean Gene has asked me to frame some of the needs of the journalism program before a meeting between the college president and himself, Wednesday April 9.

As I have said to Dean Groppetti in the past few weeks: The bigger, more important question begs the future of mass communications at Chabot College and the commitment the college is willing to make to radio-television, journalism, mass com classes and the communication revolution now underway because of the impact of Web-based information.

Some context about the need to ask this larger question reveals:

• The withering of broadcast journalism education in the past five years at Chabot, as indicated by the decision not to replace the radio station manager Rick Strauss, when he left the college several years ago. Until this year a basic transfer class, newswriting in the broadcast sector, has failed to meet a basic enrollment minimum and thereby not been offered.

• The de facto status of the lead full-time broadcast instructor, who has in effect been a part-timer for the past five years due to his commitment to Faculty Senate leadership and accreditation organization duties.

• The elimination of Measure B Bond plans to build a new studio complex adjacent to the Performing Arts Center.

• The lack of financial support for the publication of the weekly campus Spectator, which has declined from $19,500 in 1995 to as little as $3,200. This was the smallest allocation given by the Associated Students of Chabot College in the early 2000s. The allocation mechanism for journalism had shifted from bookstore profits distributed to student activity needs to a portion of the collected student activity fees. Only in the past three years, has a Spectator printing budget been built in as sustained program funds (now stable at $10,500 per year). This amount now is some $2,000 less than the Las Positas Express receives for its annual printing budget. (That newspaper, not consistently published weekly, also employs three faculty and staff to support the students’ efforts in serving that campus. One of these three positions is a staff part-timer who devotes 10 hours per week to soliciting ads.

• The annual allocation of $10,500 has been adequate until 2007-2008 to publish some 28 editions of the Chabot Spectator, due to the enterprise of several advertising managers, who have more than matched the program allocation. This academic year, however, advertising support has been about one-quarter of previous years. Despite efforts to solicit business students from the student employment office, business instructors and with general advertising, no reliable or successful advertising manager has been found to support the Spectator.

• Three years ago, the state of the Spectator’s computers and software was so deteriorated that the journalism program was awarded an emergency grant of $1,500 for equipment by the California Newspaper Publishers Association.
• The lack of funds for printing costs has meant that Chabot can be estimated to be in the minority 15 percent of community college newspapers that does not publish color issues on a regular basis. (An eight-page color issue (four pages of color) costs about $750, vs. an eight-page black-and-white issue, which costs about $450.)

Finally, the mass communications classes at Chabot are in desperate need of revitalization, due to the convergence of technologies in Internet communication. Why, for example, does the college not offer digital photography, multi-media, cross platform story-telling? And why is Introduction to Broadcast (not a transfer requirement), still offered at Chabot, for example, when broadcast journalism at the college is so under-utilized?

In addition, there are some discouraging factors about process at Chabot, which cumulative, call in to question the college's overall commitment to academic programs. Here are three examples:

• In 2007 it took five weeks for a membership fee to the state journalism association to be paid, from requisition to final delivery. For the past three years, I have had to send in a good-faith marker, a personal check, to guarantee membership in JACC.

• In late summer 2007, I was informed that my feature writing class, Mass Com 3, would be cancelled due to low enrollment. There was no discussion with me around this administrative decision, no reference to a unit plan, program review or consequence to the journalism program. Here's the irony: Later on last fall I received notice that the ASCC had granted me $2,000 to produce a magazine, the content of which would have come from the Mass Com 3 class.

• In September of 2007, the Spectator took delivery of 11 new distribution boxes, funded by last year's ASCC. I asked Maintenance and Operations to paint “Spectator” on the boxes to deter theft. I talked with the district's painter and another M&O person for six months about doing this job. Dean Groppetti himself tried to encourage M&O to fulfill my request. Finally three weeks ago, without my knowledge, the boxes were randomly distributed around campus, with no painted lettering having been done. This for many of us instructors typifies “The Chabot Way.”

In the past calendar year, these have been my efforts to research the future of journalism and journalism education:

• Taking at Stanford University's Continuing Studies program a course in sports photography.

• Participation in the four-day National Writers Workshop, June 2007, in Portland, Oregon, sponsored by the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida.

• A summer semester course in digital photography and PhotoShop at Foothill College.

• Attendance at a statewide all-day conference Nov. 9, 2007 at San Francisco State about the future of journalism education, attended by both community college and CSU faculty.

• Another Stanford Continuing Studies course in multi-media story-telling, using the Internet.

• Participation for nine days, during Spring Break, with journalism majors from San Jose State University in cross-platform journalism in Mexico City, DF, Mexico.
• Participation in the annual three-day conference of the Journalism Association of Community Colleges in Los Angeles, with special attention to videography and multi-media story-telling for the Web.

But I have to ask whether Chabot is willing to commit resources and support to the new direction of journalism in the 21st century.

Several Spectator staff members and I have prepared a detailed budget for needed equipment and program funding for the coming academic year. Rather than submit it here, I wait for some confirmation that the college indeed desires a comprehensive mass com, broadcast and journalism program.

[Signature]

[Name]