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Institute Courses Meeting the Needs of County Officials

"If you build it, they will come."

That was the motivation behind our creation of the CSAC Institute for Excellence in County Government. We were confident that if we developed a professional, continuing education program comprised of strong, topical and timely courses, county supervisors and senior executives would make a commitment to attend. And so they have.

Since the program was launched one year ago, more than 350 county supervisors and executive staff have taken Institute courses. Four county leaders completed the credential program in the first year by completing 60 hours of classroom instruction; another group of county officials will "graduate" at our upcoming Legislative Conference. With each course, we are seeing increased interest and participation.

The most recent example of the growing popularity of the Institute was our course on water held last Thursday in Sacramento. Titled, "*Water in California: The Politics, Distribution and the Future*," this course provided an overview and history of California's water issues and put it in the context of the current water solutions signed by the Governor last November. The course was designed to break down some of these more complicated issues, including California's water rights framework and environmental protections, and provide participants with a foundation of understanding.

Nearly 60 county officials (including 22 county supervisors) from 26 counties participated in the water course and found it to be a very valuable use of time. Just a few weeks prior, an Institute course focusing on "*Creating Budget Solutions and Innovative Service Design*" drew nearly 40 county officials.

It is critical that the Institute courses are viewed by county officials as a valuable investment especially in these difficult fiscal times; the Institute staff and Governing Board are constantly looking for ways to make more convenient and worthwhile for county supervisors and senior staff to attend. For example, we will be offering a timely series on key health issues, including a two-day course on realignment held in conjunction with the CSAC Legislative Conference in early June. The Institute is also offering three courses this winter and spring in Alameda County to make it easier for Bay Area county elected officials and staff to attend.

Overall, the winter/spring schedule includes 16 courses focusing on issues ranging from fiduciary responsibility and labor relations to coalition building

and partnering with CBOs. County officials can attend specific courses or a multitude of courses and work toward a supervisor or executive credential.

We've built it and they are coming. We know that if you and your colleagues do the same, you will find that these courses will assist you in your critical role as county leaders. To learn more about the Institute and its course offerings, visit the Institute's Web site at www.csacinstitute.org. We are confident you will find a course that meets your needs.

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