

point of view

The Rogue Trustee: Can We Talk?

For decades community college presidents have been communicating through private and confidential networks with each other about one of the most daunting challenges they face — the “Rogue Trustee.”

Among community college leaders, there are whispered tales of the bizarre actions of an occasional trustee who creates havoc for the institution, the CEO and the other members of the board. This is a closeted issue in education that has not been thoroughly aired because of fears of retribution.

But a new study of the experiences of 59 presidents in 16 states opens the door and begs for light on an issue that simmers below the surface of our community colleges. It is time to talk about this issue openly; presidents and trustees who have to deal with a rogue trustee or who wish to prevent such a trustee from joining the board have a major stake in this conversation.

Let's be clear: The vast majority of community college trustees are exceptional community leaders, elected or appointed to champion the community college mission for the community and students they represent. These local trustees, serving as the guardians of their local community colleges, have helped create the most dynamic and innovative system of colleges in the world.

But occasionally, a trustee pursues a path other than serving for the greater good, and sometimes that trustee becomes a challenge, a rogue, who runs roughshod over the norms and standards expected of community leaders. These trustees create enormous problems for the institution, for other trustees, for the college CEO and for the community.

The following description of a rogue trustee was created for this study to help presidents and chancellors determine if they had worked with one:

Rogue trustees run roughshod over the norms and standards of behavior expected of public officials appointed or elected to office. They tend to trample over the ideas and cautions of the CEO, the trustee chair and member trustees. They place their own interests over the interests of the college. They violate written and unwritten codes of conduct. They often make inappropriate alliances with faculty, staff and other trustees. They recommend and support policies that are



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not in the best interests of the institution. They consume an inordinate amount of staff and meeting time. They know how to get attention, to appeal to the base elements in others to manipulate individuals and situations to their advantage. Most rogue trustees are quite bright and articulate; some are mentally unbalanced. They are sometimes loners, exiled from the herd, but they also create alliances with others to carry out their agenda. They are high maintenance. They tend to poison the culture of the college instead of helping to create a sense of community, collaboration, innovation and common values. They become the catalyst for increased defensiveness, paranoia, subterfuge and fear. In short, they cause enormous damage. The rogue trustee is the elephant in the room, creating an ever-widening circle of frustration and destruction for anything in its path.

While the college president is the most visible and easiest target for the mischief of the rogue trustee, it is the college itself that is most vulnerable to lasting damage.

Individuals can move on. Harassed presidents can resign and move to another institution — as can administrators, faculty and support staff leaders. Stressed board chairs and other trustees can resign or decide not to run for reelection or seek reappointment. Students swirl in and out of institutions often oblivious to the inner politics operating in their colleges.

The college, however, cannot leave town. It is rooted in its community as the founders wished it and designed it — vulnerable to the best and the worst its community has to offer. In the great majority of cases, the college is a great asset to the community, and community leaders and students point to it with considerable pride. In more cases than I first imagined, however, there are colleges that have lost their spirit and their footing and have become targets of ridicule and embarrassment because of the

actions of rogue trustees run amok. In these colleges, rogue trustees have intimidated their fellow trustees as well as college administrators and faculty, leaving the college to face a loss of confidence and reputation that can linger for many years.

The damage is often insidious, and generates responses that are very different from other crises. In the face of a natural disaster, random evil act, or major financial catastrophe at the college, the human spirit would have been evident on many fronts. Energy and compassion would have poured out in great abundance. Rallies would have been held; funds would have been collected; plans and projects would have been implemented. The governor might even have stepped in to help. And this spirit of response is reflected in some of the colleges in this study savaged by a rogue trustee. Strong leadership, team work, political savvy, sunshine laws and peer pressure have all been used to isolate and rout the rogue trustee and keep this destructive force from causing further damage.

But that response is not universal. Too many community colleges have been severely damaged by a rogue trustee, or two or more rogue trustees acting as a team. Too many community colleges are currently trying to operate with a rogue trustee, an elephant in the room that no one dares mention. These colleges and the leaders who still persist need help in dealing with the machinations of the rogue trustee.

I hope this study will cast some light on how difficult these challenges are and initiate conversations in state and national associations that serve presidents and trustees.

I also hope that some of the recommendations from the study regarding how to deal with a rogue trustee will be helpful to presidents, trustees, faculty, staff, and community leaders as they try to protect their colleges from the devastating effects of the rogue trustee.

Can we begin to talk about this issue? ▲

“The Rogue Trustee: The Elephant in the Room” by Terry O'Banion is available from the League for Innovation at www.league.org. O'Banion can be reached at obanion@league.org.

Biotech, from page 3, col. 4

Currently the state employs more than 30,000 biotech workers in the D.C. suburbs, the Baltimore area and the Frederick area. Federal and academic bioscience facilities employ about that many, according to DBED spokeswoman Karen Hood.

The average wage is \$75,000 each year for state biotech companies while Washington County's average wage is under \$36,000.

To educate future workers, Washington

County now offers a biomedical sciences academy and courses focused on science, mathematics, engineering and technology. At Hagerstown Community College, students can receive a degree in biotechnology and gain experience in the Technical Innovation Center for biotech startup companies.

The college will also build a science building with 14 laboratories and smart classrooms for future technicians and scientists in the next few years.

The county also needs to build an accelerator soon for growing businesses,

Altieri said. Similar to an incubator for startups, an accelerator offers financial help and larger labs for companies who've outgrown an incubator.

Finally, Altieri's report proposes a new zoning district designation for land developed to support both higher education and economic development initiatives.

Comprehensive rezoning in the Robinwood area, encompassing land occupied by the Washington County Health System and Hagerstown Community College, could create a bioscience corridor, the report stated. ▲

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End the University as We Know It

New York Times

By MARK C. TAYLOR

Published: April 26, 2009

GRADUATE education is the Detroit of higher learning. Most graduate programs in American universities produce a product for which there is no market (candidates for teaching positions that do not exist) and develop skills for which there is diminishing demand (research in subfields within subfields and publication in journals read by no one other than a few like-minded colleagues), all at a rapidly rising cost (sometimes well over \$100,000 in student loans).

Widespread hiring freezes and layoffs have brought these problems into sharp relief now. But our graduate system has been in crisis for decades, and the seeds of this crisis go as far back as the formation of modern universities. Kant, in his 1798 work “The Conflict of the Faculties,” wrote that universities should “handle the entire content of learning by mass production, so to speak, by a division of labor, so that for every branch of the sciences there would be a public teacher or professor appointed as its trustee.”

Unfortunately this mass-production university model has led to separation where there ought to be collaboration and to ever-increasing specialization. In my own religion department, for example, we have 10 faculty members, working in eight subfields, with little overlap. And as departments fragment, research and publication become more and more about less and less. Each academic becomes the trustee not of a branch of the sciences, but of limited knowledge that all too often is irrelevant for genuinely important problems. A colleague recently boasted to me that his best student was doing his dissertation on how the medieval theologian Duns Scotus used citations.

The emphasis on narrow scholarship also encourages an educational system that has become a process of cloning. Faculty members cultivate those students whose futures they envision as identical to their own pasts, even though their tenures will stand in the way of these students having futures as full professors.

The dirty secret of higher education is that without underpaid graduate students to help in laboratories and with teaching, universities couldn't conduct research or even instruct their growing undergraduate populations. That's one of the main reasons we still encourage people to

enroll in doctoral programs. It is simply cheaper to provide graduate students with modest stipends and adjuncts with as little as \$5,000 a course — with no benefits — than it is to hire full-time professors.

In other words, young people enroll in graduate programs, work hard for subsistence pay and assume huge debt burdens, all because of the illusory promise of faculty appointments. But their economical presence, coupled with the intransigence of tenure, ensures that there will always be too many candidates for too few openings.

The other obstacle to change is that colleges and universities are self-regulating or, in academic parlance, governed by peer review. While trustees and administrations theoretically have some oversight responsibility, in practice, departments operate independently. To complicate matters further, once a faculty member has been granted tenure he is functionally autonomous. Many academics who cry out for the regulation of financial markets vehemently oppose it in their own departments.

If American higher education is to thrive in the 21st century, colleges and universities, like Wall Street and Detroit, must be rigorously regulated and completely restructured. The long process to make higher learning more agile, adaptive and imaginative can begin with six major steps:

1. Restructure the curriculum, beginning with graduate programs and proceeding as quickly as possible to undergraduate programs. The division-of-labor model of separate departments is obsolete and must be replaced with a curriculum structured like a web or complex adaptive network. Responsible teaching and scholarship must become cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural.

Just a few weeks ago, I attended a meeting of political scientists who had gathered to discuss why international relations theory had never considered the role of religion in society. Given the state of the world today, this is a significant oversight. There can be no adequate understanding of the most important issues we face when disciplines are cloistered from one another and operate on their own premises.

It would be far more effective to bring together people working on questions of religion, politics, history, economics, anthropology, sociology, literature, art, religion and philosophy to engage in comparative analysis of common problems. As the curriculum is restructured, fields of inquiry and methods of investigation will be transformed.

2. Abolish permanent departments, even for undergraduate education, and create problem-focused programs. These constantly evolving programs would have sunset clauses, and every seven years each one should be evaluated and either abolished, continued or significantly changed. It is possible to imagine a broad range of topics around which such zones of inquiry could be organized: Mind, Body, Law, Information, Networks, Language, Space, Time, Media, Money, Life and Water.

Consider, for example, a Water program. In the coming decades, water will become a more pressing problem than oil, and the quantity, quality and distribution of water will pose significant scientific, technological and ecological difficulties as well as serious political and economic challenges. These vexing practical problems cannot be adequately addressed without also considering important philosophical, religious and ethical issues. After all, beliefs shape practices as much as practices shape beliefs.

A Water program would bring together people in the humanities, arts, social and natural sciences with representatives from professional schools like medicine, law, business, engineering, social work, theology and architecture. Through the intersection of multiple perspectives and approaches, new theoretical insights will develop and unexpected practical solutions will emerge.

3. Increase collaboration among institutions. All institutions do not need to do all things and technology makes it possible for schools to form partnerships to share students and faculty. Institutions will be able to expand while contracting. Let one college have a strong department in French, for example, and the other a strong department in German; through teleconferencing and the Internet both subjects can be taught at both places with half the staff. With these tools, I have already team-taught semester-long seminars in real time at the Universities of Helsinki and Melbourne.

4. Transform the traditional dissertation. In the arts and humanities, where looming cutbacks will be most devastating, there is no longer a market for books modeled on the medieval dissertation, with more footnotes than text. As financial pressures on university presses continue to mount, publication of dissertations, and with it scholarly certification, is almost impossible. (The average university press print run of a dissertation that has been converted into a book is less than 500, and sales are usually considerably lower.) For many years, I have taught undergraduate courses in which students do not write traditional papers but develop analytic treatments in formats from hypertext and Web sites to films and video games. Graduate students should likewise be encouraged to produce “theses” in alternative formats.

5. Expand the range of professional options for graduate students. Most graduate students will never hold the kind of job for which they are being trained. It is, therefore, necessary to help them prepare for work in fields other than higher education. The exposure to new approaches and different cultures and the consideration of real-life issues will prepare students for jobs at businesses and nonprofit organizations. Moreover, the knowledge and skills they will cultivate in the new universities will enable them to adapt to a constantly changing world.

6. Impose mandatory retirement and abolish tenure. Initially intended to protect academic freedom, tenure has resulted in institutions with little turnover and professors impervious to change. After all, once tenure has been granted, there is no leverage to encourage a professor to continue to develop professionally or to require him or her to assume responsibilities like administration and student advising. Tenure should be replaced with seven-year contracts, which, like the programs in which faculty teach, can be terminated or renewed. This policy would enable colleges and universities to reward researchers, scholars and teachers who continue to evolve and remain productive while also making room for young people with new ideas and skills.

For many years, I have told students, “Do not do what I do; rather, take whatever I have to offer and do with it what I could never imagine doing and then come back and tell me about it.” My hope is that colleges and universities will be shaken out of their complacency and will open academia to a future we cannot conceive.

Genius: The Modern View

The New York Times

By DAVID BROOKS

Published: April 30, 2009

Some people live in romantic ages. They tend to believe that genius is the product of a divine spark. They believe that there have been, throughout the ages, certain paragons of greatness — Dante, Mozart, Einstein — whose talents far exceeded normal comprehension, who had an otherworldly access to transcendent truth, and who are best approached with reverential awe.

We, of course, live in a scientific age, and modern research pierces hocus-pocus. In the view that is now dominant, even Mozart's early abilities were not the product of some innate spiritual gift. His early compositions were nothing special. They were pastiches of other people's work. Mozart was a good musician at an early age, but he would not stand out among today's top child-performers.

What Mozart had, we now believe, was the same thing Tiger Woods had — the ability to focus for long periods of time and a father intent on improving his skills. Mozart played a lot of piano at a very young age, so he got his 10,000 hours of practice in early and then he built from there.

The latest research suggests a more prosaic, democratic, even puritanical view of the world. The key factor separating geniuses from the merely accomplished is not a divine spark. It's not I.Q., a generally bad predictor of success, even in realms like chess. Instead, it's deliberate practice. Top performers spend more hours (many more hours) rigorously practicing their craft.

The recent research has been conducted by people like K. Anders Ericsson, the late Benjamin Bloom and others. It's been summarized in two enjoyable new books: "The Talent Code" by Daniel Coyle; and "Talent Is Overrated" by Geoff Colvin.

If you wanted to picture how a typical genius might develop, you'd take a girl who possessed a slightly above average verbal ability. It wouldn't have to be a big talent, just enough so that she might gain some sense of distinction. Then you would want her to meet, say, a novelist, who coincidentally shared some similar biographical traits. Maybe the writer was from the same town, had the same ethnic background, or, shared the same birthday — anything to create a sense of affinity.

This contact would give the girl a vision of her future self. It would, Coyle emphasizes, give her a glimpse of an enchanted circle she might someday join. It would also help if one of her parents

died when she was 12, infusing her with a profound sense of insecurity and fueling a desperate need for success.

Armed with this ambition, she would read novels and literary biographies without end. This would give her a core knowledge of her field. She'd be able to chunk Victorian novelists into one group, Magical Realists in another group and Renaissance poets into another. This ability to place information into patterns, or chunks, vastly improves memory skills. She'd be able to see new writing in deeper ways and quickly perceive its inner workings.

Then she would practice writing. Her practice would be slow, painstaking and error-focused. According to Colvin, Ben Franklin would take essays from *The Spectator* magazine and translate them into verse. Then he'd translate his verse back into prose and examine, sentence by sentence, where his essay was inferior to *The Spectator's* original.

Coyle describes a tennis academy in Russia where they enact rallies without a ball. The aim is to focus meticulously on technique. (Try to slow down your golf swing so it takes 90 seconds to finish. See how many errors you detect.)

By practicing in this way, performers delay the automatizing process. The mind wants to turn deliberate, newly learned skills into unconscious, automatically performed skills. But the mind is sloppy and will settle for good enough. By practicing slowly, by breaking skills down into tiny parts and repeating, the strenuous student forces the brain to internalize a better pattern of performance.

Then our young writer would find a mentor who would provide a constant stream of feedback, viewing her performance from the outside, correcting the smallest errors, pushing her to take on tougher challenges. By now she is redoing problems — how do I get characters into a room — dozens and dozens of times. She is ingraining habits of thought she can call upon in order to understand or solve future problems.

The primary trait she possesses is not some mysterious genius. It's the ability to develop a deliberate, strenuous and boring practice routine.

Coyle and Colvin describe dozens of experiments fleshing out this process. This research takes some of the magic out of great achievement. But it underlines a fact that is often neglected. Public discussion is smitten by genetics and what we're "hard-wired" to do. And it's true that genes place a leash on our capacities. But the brain is also phenomenally plastic. We construct ourselves through behavior. As Coyle observes, it's not who you are, it's what you do.

Zombie Hunting

InsideHigherEd.com

By Dean Dad May 3, 2009 8:55 pm

The popular press has been filled lately with references to zombie banks or zombie corporations, undead entities kept on life support for extra-economic reasons. Last week, IHE had a similar story about academic programs, and the difficulty in putting the final stake into zombie programs.

I took a first stab at this – no pun intended – several years ago (here). Several years later, in yet another funding crisis, it seems timely to revisit the question. What to do about zombie programs?

Killing them off is far harder, and often far less lucrative, than one might imagine. It isn't as simple as taking the overall instructional budget for the college, dividing it by the number of programs, and basing a kill quota on the current shortfall divided by the result. Even if you could get away with that internally – a belly-laugh counterfactual in its own right – it wouldn't work economically.

Most academic programs – especially at the two-year level – are comprised of courses from lots of different departments. Engineering majors take English 101, for example, and Art majors take math. To calculate the revenue impact of any given program, you have to account for that. (This also adds to the political difficulty, since even small programs have effective allies.) The converse is also true – most departments serve multiple programs. That's the bread and butter of Gen Ed departments like English and math, but it's also true in less obvious corners. In practice, that means that eliminating small programs might not involve any terminations, which means that any savings would be negligible.

There's also the matter of tenure. Depending on local conditions, tenure may be with a department or program, or it may be with the college. If it's with the college, then you're obligated to re-deploy any affected personnel to anything else they're qualified to do. (In some cases, you're even on the hook to pay to retrain them first.) In departments with multiple programs, someone whose pet program gets cut can usually find a full workload in another program. This usually eliminates any significant cost savings, making it cheaper just to tolerate the zombie.

Say that you're aware of those issues, but want to move forward anyway. You'll immediately hit the issues of criteria, process, and internal politics.

Simply put, there's no such thing as unobjectionable criteria. Some criteria strike me as more reasonable than others – enrollments, cost per student, placement or transfer rates, and graduation rates seem like decent first-round indicators – but as soon as you apply these to actual cases, the arguments for exceptions kick in. “The only reason this program is small is that it's underfunded – we need more money, not less!” “But this is the only program of its

kind in the [state/region/country]!” “But this is an inherent component of Excellence and Virtue and Truth and Beauty, you Philistine!” “But this industry is cyclical, and when it comes back, you won't be able to regroup in time!” The list goes on, but you get the idea.

Then the in-house lawyers – you know the kind – will nitpick you to death on method. These are the folks who live to point out what they call 'irregularities,' and who love to invoke 'neutrality' as if it existed. When called to give a single, solitary example, in my experience, they change the subject. Their preferred solution is typically to conjure up more money from the magic money tree they imagine exists somewhere in the government, to make all conflicts go away. Although it's impossible to take these folks seriously on their own merits, they must be taken seriously as political headaches.

But suppose that you're absolutely superhuman at building consensus around methods and process. What would happen then?

Quick quiz: what would you expect to happen when governance is shared, and the question at hand could result in some of the people with whom it's shared losing their jobs?

Exactly. The conflict of interest is staggering.

The tragic flaw in most shared governance arrangements is that they exist in a resource vacuum, but the most important decisions almost always involve resource allocation. (This is why I'm not a fan of Hannah Arendt. Her separation of 'the political' from 'the economic' strikes me as starving 'the political' of content.) In the abstract, almost all academic programs have at least some value. The question of comparative value in a context of limited resources is altogether different. But 'program reviews' don't address that, and program self-studies are almost never suicide notes.

Short of declaring fiscal exigency and basically starting a fire to clear out the underbrush, the only way I can see to cull a significant number of programs is to move the decision to an entirely separate process, consisting mostly of people from off-campus. On campus, the conflicts of interest are just too deep. And that's not a criticism of any single campus or person; the issue is structural. The solution needs to be structural, too.

Wise and worldly readers – have you seen a successful, relatively uncontroversial, sustainable model of making program-elimination decisions that actually eliminates programs? Is there actually a way to rid the world of zombies?

No Community College Left Behind

InsideHigherED.com

May 8, 2009

WASHINGTON – With President Obama talking a big game about boosting support for community colleges, some educators have released a specific plan to do so in an ambitious way.

Thursday, the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program released a report chock-full of recommendations for the federal government to bolster its commitment to the country’s community colleges and help transform them into “engines of opportunity and prosperity.”

At a panel discussion to coincide with the report’s release, Sara Goldrick-Rab, lead author of the report and professor of education policy studies and sociology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, argued that only by embracing community colleges could the Obama administration hope to accomplish its goal of the United States having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

Among the report’s key recommendations, it challenges the federal government to double its current direct level of support to America’s community colleges so that federal funds would account for more than 10 percent of their budgets. This, Goldrick-Rab said, would decrease community colleges’ dependence on local and state dollars – a dependence which, she argued, makes them more susceptible to economic downturns. She added that three-fourths of such funds should be ultimately be performance-based funding and that the remainder should be distributed based on enrollment figures.

In today’s budget figures, doubling this commitment would mean increasing the federal government’s direct support of community colleges from \$2 billion to \$4 billion. Considering that the government offers more than \$60 billion per year to K-12 education and around \$20 billion to public four-year institutions, Goldrick-Rab described her proposal as “modest.”

The report also calls for the government to guarantee that community colleges receive at least half of the \$2.5 billion “College Access and Completion Fund” – a debated section of the 2009-10 federal budget that would support state efforts to boost the college completion rates of low-income students. It has not yet been specified if these funds would be set aside by sector.

Goldrick-Rab argued that such a distribution requirement is essential to ensure that four-year institutions – likely better placed to lobby for funds and show proven metrics – do not receive the lion’s share of the federal money meant to stimulate innovation. She went on to say that she would prefer it if the government gave some preference to community colleges when distributing these funds.

Another key recommendation, the report lobbies the government to “support the improvement of student data systems.” Having such a fully functioning system to “measure and track student outcomes,” Goldrick-Rab argued, would make it easier for the government to appropriate funding and improve accountability.

A representative from the White House echoed its support for this proposal, noting that it wanted to find a way to fund community colleges that would not “tie the states’ hands.” Cecilia Rouse, member of the White House Council of Economic Advisors and an economics professor on leave from Princeton University, said that although the administration was very interested in “sub-baccalaureate degrees,” there was not a lot of intimate knowledge about them. Echoing the report’s call for better student data collection, she noted that research is especially lacking with regard to these degrees. She used the federal government’s usage of the term “some college” in data collection as an example of a shortcoming.

Thomas C. Dawson, senior policy advisor for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, said his philanthropic organization has welcomed the federal government’s interest in funding access and completion projects, particularly at community colleges. In the event that the “College Access and Completion Fund” is approved, he said Gates would continue to work more in terms of evaluation to partner with the government to pinpoint successful practices around the country.

Near the end of her presentation, Goldrick-Rab noted with some finality that “for far too long” the government and society has put “elite four-year institutions on pedestals” and set student ambition upon them. The time for community colleges, she seemed to imply, is now.

Most of the community college leaders and officials in attendance welcomed the report and Goldrick-Rab’s commentary with warm applause and excitement.

“I’m so pumped up by reading this,” said Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College, in New York City. “Do you realize what this could mean?”

Now, Goldrick-Rab, Mellow and others will have to wait and see if the federal government will listen.

— **David Moltz**

Raid seeks to prove City College misused funds

SFGate.com

Lance Williams, Chronicle Staff Writer

Thursday, May 7, 2009

A copy of a search warrant served on the college shows that investigators are scrutinizing the actions of former Chancellor Philip Day, who left the college last year to work for an education lobbying firm in Washington, D.C.

Investigators searched Day's former office, now occupied by Chancellor Don Griffin. The offices of Peter Goldstein, vice chancellor of finance, and Stephen Herman, dean of administrative services, also were searched, said an official who saw the searches under way.

Investigators were seeking documents concerning donations to the political campaigns of two city bond measures that benefited the college and two state initiatives that sought increased funding for community colleges, the search warrant says.

The Chronicle disclosed in 2007 that college officials had diverted \$10,000 in public money to political donations for a \$246.3 million college bond measure that San Francisco voters approved in 2005.

A county grand jury then began investigating Day and his aides on suspicion of violating state laws against misusing public funds and failing to make accurate reports of political donations, college documents show.

An internal probe ordered last year by City College's trustees found a continuing pattern of political fundraising abuses at the school. Some transactions appeared to violate state law, wrote lawyers for the firm of Renne, Sloan, Holtzman & Sakai, which conducted the investigation.

Day, now the head of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, could not be reached for comment Wednesday. In an interview last year, he denied that he had ever misused college funds or failed to report political donations accurately.

"That did not happen," he said at the time. "That is not true."

Martha Lucey, City College's dean of public information, said, "Any comment should come from the D.A."

Erica Derryck, spokeswoman for District Attorney Kamala Harris, declined to comment.

Matthew Siroka, an attorney for Goldstein, said the raid was needlessly disruptive.

"The college has bent over backwards to cooperate" with prosecutors, Siroka said. "Most of what was seized today were (copies of) documents that had already been turned over."

The search warrant indicates that investigators are focusing on these transactions:

-- A \$10,000 donation to the 2005 bond campaign, made by a motorcycle driving school that leases a parking lot at City College. The school's president told The Chronicle that the \$10,000 was a lease payment he owed to the college, but that Assistant Vice Chancellor James Blomquist told him to make it a donation to the bond campaign instead.

Blomquist later acknowledged steering the payment to the bond campaign, saying he hadn't realized he was doing anything wrong.

-- A \$20,000 donation to the 2005 bond campaign, made by a cafe owner who had just won a contract to operate a coffee bar at the college. The cafe owner owed the money to the college, but it was given to the bond campaign, records show. Before the election, the donation was refunded and the cafe owner paid the money to the college, Day said.

-- \$30,000 in donations to the same bond campaign, made by two women with ties to the operator of vending trucks that sold food on campus. The donations were made shortly after the vendor obtained a new five-year contract, records show. Day said the food vendor was simply a friend of the college.

-- More than \$28,000 in donations to two 2006 state education measures, made by the college's nonprofit foundation. Unlike the college, the foundation was legally permitted to make political donations.

According to the report by the college's internal investigators, the \$28,000 was owed to the college by PepsiCo on its contract to sell beverages on campus.

Day, through his aide Herman, instructed PepsiCo to make the payments to the foundation, which then donated the money to the political campaigns, the internal report said. At the time, Vice Chancellor Goldstein expressed discomfort with the PepsiCo transaction, apparently for legal reasons, the report said.

-- An additional \$10,000 in donations to the same state measures, also from the foundation. According to the internal investigation, Day used \$7,000 from the college bookstore and \$3,000 from the cafe owner who operated the coffee shop to finance this donation, but had it made in the foundation's name.

At Day's direction, the foundation repaid the \$10,000 to the college in 2007, after The Chronicle began reporting on political fundraising abuses at the college, the internal report said.

Dan Walters: Fiscal crunch provides opening to overhaul California school finance

By Dan Walters

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Few Californians have ever heard of the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, also called FCMAT, much less know what it does.

Based in Bakersfield, FCMAT monitors the financial health of California's roughly 1,000 school districts and intervenes when one of them gets into trouble. It's seeing more trouble these days, with about 10 percent of districts facing serious difficulty.

Declining enrollment, erratic and/or declining state aid, a deep economic recession and cash flow crunches are plaguing school systems. Joel Montero, who runs FCMAT, says he's seeing more districts flirting with fiscal failure, especially smaller ones.

"If you're tiny, you have no margin of error," Montero told a legislative committee last week during his annual briefing on school district finances.

King City Joint Union High School District, in a rural portion of Monterey County, is the latest district to seek state loans and probably face some sort of state intervention. Montero told the committee of several others on the brink.

There would be even more on the watch list, he said, had the governor and the Legislature not agreed in February to loosen strings on categorical aid – funds designated for specific purposes or groups. That gave districts more flexibility to move around cash and keep themselves afloat.

Montero expects the list of troubled districts to expand later this year as the Capitol copes with another budget deficit. Although the 2009-10 budget passed in February was supposedly balanced, it's beginning to bleed red ink even though it won't go into effect until July 1.

Legislative Analyst Mac Taylor says the deepening recession has put it \$8 billion out of balance, below-forecast revenues for the current year will add a couple billion dollars more to the deficit, and if Propositions 1C, 1D and 1E are rejected by voters on May 19 – all are trailing in the polls – it would punch another \$6 billion hole in the 2009-10 budget.

Recent economic forecasts have been gloomy, which will make the state's fiscal crunch even worse, and the state's prospects of borrowing as much as \$23 billion or more in July to keep its check-writing machines going are not bright. A major problem for local districts, especially the smaller ones, has been the state's practice of deferring its aid payments, which create cash crunches at the local level.

As gloomy as it may be, the schools' financial plight is also an opportunity for structural reform. It already has pushed the Legislature into doing what would have been unthinkable a few years ago – loosening the strings on categoricals.

It should push lawmakers into re-energizing a program that was launched in the 1960s only to falter later – encouraging the unification of small elementary and high school districts into larger, but not too large, K-12 districts that would have more economy of scale.

Oddly, the state's school aid system discourages such unification. Changing this should be on the table.

Who's Teaching at American Colleges? Increasingly, Instructors Off the Tenure Track

The Chronicle of Higher Education

May 12, 2009

By AUDREY WILLIAMS JUNE

At community colleges, four out of five instructors worked outside the tenure track in 2007. At public research institutions, graduate students made up 41 percent of the instructional staff that year. And at all institutions, the proportion of instructors working part time continued to grow.

Those statistics, from a new report from the American Federation of Teachers, underscore a fact by now well established, that tenured and tenure-track professors are an ever-shrinking slice of the professoriate at American colleges and universities.

The [report](#), "The State of the Higher Education Workforce, 1997-2007," scheduled for release today, shows that the proportion of instructional staff members not on the tenure track—including graduate students—increased from two-thirds to 73 percent over that period.

That trend, if unchecked, will eventually reduce the proportion of tenured and tenure-track professors to "a tiny speck," said Barbara Bowen, one of the federation's vice presidents and chair of its committee on academic staffing.

"Unless there's real intervention, this trend is just going to continue," said Ms. Bowen, an associate professor of English at the City University of New York's Queens College and president of the Professional Staff Congress, a union that represents faculty and staff members in the CUNY system.

The federation's report, which is based on data collected from colleges and universities by the federal government, highlights higher education's increasing reliance on those who work outside the tenure track. The plight of such full- and part-time instructors has been the subject of books, journal articles, and online debates. Scholarly associations, such as the American Association of University Professors and the Modern Language Association, have weighed in on the need to reverse the trend of not hiring tenured and tenure-track faculty members.

Faculty unions, including the federation, have also stepped up their efforts to reach out to adjuncts who are poorly paid, lack job security, and are unlikely to have benefits. Just last year, the federation released a report that revealed, among other things, that faculty members who work outside the tenure track teach [nearly half](#) of the undergraduate courses offered at public colleges.

"Higher-education institutions have turned to cheap labor to do their most important work, which is teaching," Ms. Bowen said.

At community colleges, long heavy users of adjuncts, 82 percent of the instructional staff was not on the tenure track in 2007, and most of those faculty members were part-timers, the report says. In 1997, the proportion of community-college faculty members working outside the tenure track was 79 percent.

At all public four-year colleges, part-time instructors and graduate students pushed the growth in the proportion of faculty members working off the tenure track.

At public comprehensive institutions—a category that includes both baccalaureate and master's institutions—full-time and part-time adjuncts and graduate-student employees made up 61 percent of the instructional staff in 2007, compared with 48 percent a decade earlier, the report says. Part-time instructors accounted for 44 percent of non-tenure-track faculty members in 2007, up from 34 percent in 1997. Part of that gain was attributable to reclassifications of community colleges that started offering four-year degrees during the period, the report says.

At public research institutions, graduate students made up 41 percent of the instructional staff in 2007, up four percentage points from 1997.

At private colleges, where the instructional staff grew faster than in all other sectors, a shift toward non-tenure-track labor was evident as well. The largest increase was among graduate-student employees, whose share of the work force rose to 22 percent, up from 18 percent a decade earlier, the report says.

At private comprehensive universities, the proportion of the faculty outside the tenure track rose to 71 percent, an increase of 10 percentage points since 1997.

The report also reveals some trends about the growth of noninstructional staff members at colleges and universities. One of the most striking gains was among full-time administrators, whose numbers grew at almost twice the rate of growth for full-time tenured or tenure-track professors over the decade.

Altogether, the report's data paint a picture of institutions that "are made up of managers, professional staff, and contingent faculty," Ms. Bowen said.

The federation says the report is the first in a series of studies it plans to issue on academic staffing.



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**Budget cuts to severely impact higher education in California and student success
for Latino students**

SACRAMENTO, CA – While aware of the difficult financial situation facing California today, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) expressed disappointment at the Governor’s proposed cuts to the higher education budget. Of particular concern to HACU are massive cuts to the higher education segments and the reduction and/or elimination of various Cal Grant Programs for financially needy students. Furthermore, if the ballot propositions fail to pass on May 19, the cuts to higher education become even more severe.

The Governor’s proposed reductions include significant cuts to the California Community Colleges, the California State University System and the University of California. The Governor proposes cutting an additional \$510 million each from UC and CSU (together they have already lost \$742 million). The Governor expects federal funds to be able to off-set these cuts, but the federal funds were not meant to supplant current education spending. The Governor also proposes additional cuts of \$242 million to the California Community Colleges. These cuts come just as demand surges for degree programs as unemployed workers seek additional skills that will put them back to work. Given the need for educated workers, cuts are counter-productive to the economic recovery of the state.

In addition, the Governor has proposed eliminating all new competitive Cal Grants during 2009-10, reducing Cal Grant awards for students at private institutions, and decoupling award levels from UC and CSU fee increases. Just as UC and CSU are forced to raise fees to cover reductions in state funding, the Governor’s proposal would eliminate a vital source of financial aid for California’s neediest students. Each year 22,500 students are awarded competitive Cal Grants; the loss of this source of funding would condemn many to defer or forgo college.

If the ballot propositions fail on May 19, the Governor proposes elimination of all UC and CSU outreach, vital to access for many low-income and first-generation college students; additional reductions of \$100 million for CSU and \$50 million for UC; and additional cuts of \$118.1 million for the Community Colleges in categorical programs and enrollment growth. These cuts pose barriers to access and success for Latino students who may lose a spot in courses needed for graduation (since course sections will be cut), or who may lose a spot to enter or transfer to a 4-year institution, or who may lose other services critical to their academic success.

“The best way to recover from a difficult financial year is to ensure that California has a well-educated, tax-paying workforce,” said Antonio Flores, President and CEO of HACU. “Forcing California’s two- and four-year institutions to make draconian financial cuts would reduce access to these institutions, and eliminating vital financial aid and outreach programs would further hurt working families. California should remain committed to ensuring that all students have access to a quality and affordable education. We look forward to working with the Legislature and the Governor towards achieving that goal,” added Flores.

HACU was established in 1986 with a founding membership of 18 institutions. Today, HACU represents approximately 400 colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Latin America, Portugal and Spain. Currently, HACU has 109 members in the state of California. HACU’s regional office in Sacramento represents its membership in the western region of the U.S. HACU is the only national educational association that represents Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs).

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Next Budget Victim? Joy

InsideHigerEd.com

May 14, 2009

Step away from that copy machine, and don't even think about serving lunch at that next faculty meeting. Oh, and that class you love with 20 students? Double it. On second thought, couldn't you just triple it?

Welcome to the world of higher education in the thick of an economic recession. While tenured faculty may feel more secure in their jobs than employees in more beleaguered industries, there's little question that the quality of life many professors have come to expect is deteriorating at many institutions. Workloads are increasing while pay is stagnant or falling, and the threat of layoffs has brought an edginess to the Ivory Tower that some professors say hasn't existed in decades.

"For some of us older folks, it's like 'Oh, another budget crisis; we'll bounce through this like we have in other years,'" says Richard Reis, a professor emeritus of mechanical engineering at Stanford University. "[But] the magnitude ... of the cuts this time around at other universities and our university is much greater than in the 30 or some years that I've experienced as a professor. That is different -- wholesale questions about departments in some cases."

The anxiety that's spreading across academe became readily apparent to Reis several weeks ago when he opened up a discussion recently on his blog, *Tomorrow's Professor*. One of Reis's readers, clearly stressed by budget cuts at his own college, thought it would be comforting just to hear how others are coping with the downturn.

"Please hear my cry for help! My department is facing an 18.4 percent cut, and I know we're not alone," the reader wrote to Reis. "I need some desk-top information and solace about what others are facing, and (even better) what they're doing about it. There's so much suffering out there right now. ..."

Dozens of responses flooded Reis's inbox, as a group of largely anonymous professors turned *Tomorrow's Professor* into a virtual confession booth. One wrote of using sick days to avoid the distractions of a bare bones department where staff are so depleted that students can't find answers to basic questions.

"I find I've started using more sick days. I need them and that's why they're there," the faculty member wrote. "I work at home whenever I can (A) so I'm not interrupted by students who can't find a staff member ... (B) so I don't have to pay for parking. Also, I've picked up more work on the side -- which interferes with career progress[,] but I need the cash."

Even faculty who consider their positions relatively stable are seeing the budget crisis chip away at the quality of their lives. Time that was once used for planning or research is devoted to tasks staff used to handle, like filling out expense reports or answering phones.

“I think there’s a feeling of death of a thousand cuts,” says Larry Rudiger, a lecturer in psychology at the University of Vermont. “There’s so many of these little things.”

At the same time, faculty are under increased pressure to demonstrate their worth. Program reviews have added intensity and frequency at some institutions where the search for some fat, any fat, has taken on a ravenous quality.

“It makes it a lot harder. If you have to justify what you’re doing, you’re not doing what you’re doing,” says Gregory Eells, director of counseling and psychological services at Cornell University’s Gannett Health Center. “They are no longer able to do what they love, because they have to justify it.”

Seeing longtime staff laid off or programs threatened takes its own toll, Eells adds.

“It’s really an issue of grief and loss,” says Eells, who is president of the Association for University & College Counseling Directors. “You’re used to having something in your life, and you have to let it go.”

Even so, Eells says he and his colleagues are trying to keep the budget crisis in perspective.

“It impacts morale in the downward direction, but I think most of our staff are grateful to have a job and have a sense that it could be a lot worse,” he says.

Stressed Out Students, Larger Classes

Despite the challenges, some faculty see silver linings. Tracy Robinson, a faculty member at Western Michigan University, says she’s found her colleagues are more open to new ideas in the current environment. Robinson says she’s noticed, for instance, that faculty members in training to incorporate more distance learning into their courses have become receptive to ideas they once resisted.

“We are able to just feel energized or feel more proactive about ways that we can take the best of what we have as a university and look for different markets [of students], rather than sitting back and letting things happen,” says Robinson, an adjunct instructor in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies.

That said, Robinson has seen some changes that discourage her. Her students, many of whom are paying their own way through college, are increasingly spread thin trying to make ends meet.

“Even in one year, I’ve seen a big difference in the quality of their work,” Robinson says. “I think it’s because they are far more stressed working far more jobs ... living at home when they haven’t before.”

Those pressures on students leave them less time to “learn for the sake of learning,” and they instead do just enough work to get the grade they want, Robinson adds. That sucks the joy out of education for students, and lessens the experience for faculty as well, she says.

“They’re going to go in the classroom [after graduation], and how are they going to teach for 30 years about loving learning when they never had time to do that themselves?” Robinson says.

In states like Florida, where budget cuts have been particularly deep, faculty are finding the quality of the classroom experience increasingly compromised. Kris De Welde, an assistant professor of sociology at Florida Gulf Coast University, has seen a class that had 35 students in 2007 scheduled for 50 seats in the coming fall.

“That really affects my pedagogy,” says De Welde, conceding that multiple choice exams will increasingly take the place of essays in her class.

If class sizes grow now, De Welde says she has little faith they’ll ever return to their previous levels. While that’s a hard pill to swallow, she says she’s just focused on staying employed in academe.

“There’s not going to be even a foot to stand on to say ‘I demand my classes go back to 35,’ “ she says. “But I’d much rather have larger classes than lose my job.”

— **Jack Stripling**

Dan Walters: Scare tactics or the day of reckoning?

SacBee.com

By Dan Walters

Published: Friday, May. 15, 2009

Has California's day of fiscal reckoning, postponed for years by political tricks and hide-the-pea financial schemes, finally arrived?

It might seem so, as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared Thursday that the recession has taken a huge bite out of the state budget, overwhelming the new taxes that he and the Legislature enacted just three months ago to close an already immense deficit.

There are a couple of ways of looking at Schwarzenegger's declaration that the 2009-10 deficit had jumped from supposedly zero just three months ago to as much as \$21.3 billion if voters don't suddenly change their minds and approve a package of ballot measures next week.

One is, as Schwarzenegger insisted, it's a realistic projection of the growing fiscal crisis that California must confront. "Californians have a right to know the truth about the size of the problem our state is facing and the steps we will take to solve our deficit," Schwarzenegger said in a statement.

Another is that it's a doomsday scenario aimed at scaring voters into approving the measures, three of which would tap now-restricted funds for about \$6 billion to ease the 2009-10 problem. That's what the measures' opponents on the right and left are saying.

Schwarzenegger's motives for the pre-election appraisal of the budget are probably both, plus creating political cover for the painful fiscal maneuvers that lie ahead, regardless of the election's outcome.

The \$6 billion at stake next week is only a small part of the problem. The much-bigger share is a deteriorating economy that has cut deeply into income and sales taxes – and that means the budget crisis, as bad as Schwarzenegger painted it, could grow even worse.

The state has a bad habit of underestimating the fiscal impacts of sharp changes in California's boom-and-bust economy. The state often finds itself with unanticipated windfalls of revenues during up-cycles and unexpected deficits in down-cycles. And irresponsible squandering of the former worsens the latter.

The new numbers assume that the state's economy will begin to improve by 2010. But if California's economy continues to slide next year, as some economists expect, the current revenue projections, as dismal as they may be, could be too high and we could see another \$5 billion to \$10 billion in revenue shortfalls in 2009-10.

Even were the economy to turn around in another year or two, the new taxes enacted in February would be expiring (unless Proposition 1A is approved next week), the state would be compelled to restore spending that has been deferred, but not permanently reduced, borrowed money would have to be repaid, and the one-time federal "stimulus" money would be history.

And were the economy not to recover? The true day of reckoning is the day governors and legislators stop using bookkeeping tricks, short-term loans and Enron-like gimmicks to "balance" the state budget.

That day hasn't arrived yet.

A Year of College for All: What the President's Plan Would Mean for the Country

The Chronicle of Higher Education

May 22, 2009

By KELLY FIELD

President Obama hasn't met Serena Baker, but she may be just who he had in mind when he challenged every American to commit to a "year or more" of higher education or training.

A 28-year-old mother of four, she had spent eight years as a part-time cashier at a grocery store in Baltimore when she decided, just over a year ago, "to begin a career." After scanning the local job listings, she chose medical assisting, one of the nation's fastest-growing fields, and enrolled in a 13-month certificate program at the Community College of Baltimore County.

This week she will trade in her cashier's apron for hospital scrubs and a job at Baltimore's Mercy Hospital. Her salary won't go up much initially, but she hopes to make \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year more once she is certified. She sits for the test in July.

The president wants more Americans to follow Ms. Baker's example. In a speech before Congress in February, he called the nation's steep high-school dropout rates and low college-completion rates a "prescription for economic decline," and he urged all Americans to commit to a year of college, technical training, or apprenticeship.

If the country complies, the economic returns could be extraordinary. Nationwide some 101.5 million adults over the age of 18 — a full 45 percent of Americans — have never attended college, according to the Census Bureau. If each of them took a year's worth of college courses, their earnings would grow by \$70-billion, according to estimates by the Center on Education and the Workforce, at Georgetown University.

The nation's employment picture would probably improve, too. Although the economic downturn has affected Americans at all education levels, it has hit the least educated hardest. In April people without a high-school diploma were twice as likely to be unemployed as those with "some college" or an associate degree, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But getting to the president's goal will not be easy, and skeptics say it is not even necessary. While a college degree may lead to higher earnings, it still is not a requirement for most jobs.

Indeed, nearly 35 percent of jobs in 2006 required less than a month of on-the-job experience and informal training, and another 18 percent required less than a year, according to the Department of Labor.

Critics of the president's plan say it would be a waste of time and money for all Americans to get a full year of postsecondary education.

"This is essentially a 'consume-more-education' policy," argued Neal McCluskey, associate director of the Center for Educational Freedom, at the libertarian Cato Institute, at a recent forum. "We're encouraging people to consume education that they're either not prepared for or aren't really interested in by subsidizing it and having our leaders tell us it's the ticket to the middle class and the American dream."

A More 'Modern' Approach

Mr. Obama is not the first president to aspire to universal higher education. In a 1996 commencement address at Princeton University, President Bill Clinton urged all Americans to get two years of college and proposed a tax credit to help them pay for it.

But while President Clinton set the standard at two years of college, the pragmatic Mr. Obama set it at one. And while Mr. Clinton imagined "college" for all, Mr. Obama envisions "community college or a four-year school, vocational training, or an apprenticeship."

Anthony P. Carnevale, director of Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce, says the president's proposal is "more modern" and more inclusive than his predecessor's.

"He's talking about the system in a much more comprehensive way," he says.

The president has not said why he picked one year over two, and White House officials would not comment on the record. But a White House press officer said the idea originated with the White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, a former Democratic congressman from Illinois. Last year Mr. Emanuel wrote an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* in which he argued that Americans should be required to have a year of training and education after high school.

"In an era in which you earn what you learn, Americans should no longer be allowed to drop out of school at age 16," he wrote.

While Mr. Obama's target is less ambitious than Mr. Clinton's, it may be more realistic. Many working adults don't have the time or money to attend college for two years. They want to earn the credential that will get them a job as quickly as possible, and at the lowest cost possible.

"They need a job and they need it quickly," says Jeannie Tighe, who got a surgical-technology certificate four years ago at age 44 and now teaches in the Community College of Baltimore County's surgical-technology program. "They don't have two years."

With the nation's unemployment rate at its highest point in 25 years, the president seems more concerned with quickly getting Americans bankable skills than in achieving an ideal. In a recent interview with *The New York Times Magazine*, he stressed that it is not just the credential that matters, but its marketability.

"If you're only going to go to school for two years ... then making sure that you're enrolled in a program where at the end of the journey you can see a job or a career or a field that is growing instead of contracting certainly can make some sense," he said.

That includes health-care jobs, which are expected to grow at twice the national average, according to the Labor Department. Demand for medical assistants like Ms. Baker, who help doctors with exams and perform administrative tasks, among other duties, is projected to grow by 35 percent between 2006 and 2016, making it the eighth fastest-growing occupation in the country.

Mr. Carnevale, who has served as a consultant to the Obama administration, says the president is "thinking as an economist" when it comes to college experience: "He's essentially looking at the earnings returns."

College's Labor-Market Value

There is considerable evidence that college pays. In 2007 workers with some college courses or associate degrees earned 12 percent more than high-school graduates, while workers with bachelor's degrees earned 63 percent more than those with some college or an associate degree, according to the Census Bureau.

The least educated are also the most vulnerable during economic downturns. In April the unemployment rate for Americans who didn't finish high school was 14.6 percent; among students with some college or an associate degree, it was 7.4 percent.

While there is relatively little national data on the labor-market value of "a year of higher education," or a yearlong certificate, several studies suggest that each year of college credit provides a roughly 5-percent increase in earnings. A certificate provides an additional 1-percent bump, according to an analysis of Census Bureau data by the Center on Education and the Workforce.

Some research suggests that a year of college plus a certificate may be the tipping point in terms of earnings. In 2005 researchers in Washington State found that students who took a year's worth of courses and got a credential earned considerably more than students who enrolled in shorter-term training or adult basic-skills education. While short-term and basic-skills training gave students the tools they needed to enter the work force, it generally did not help them advance beyond low-paying jobs.

Julian L. Alssid, executive director of the Workforce Strategy Center, a New York nonprofit group, says Mr. Obama's proposal "recognizes that college is the entry point to the middle class."

According to Labor Department projections to 2016, 15 of the 30 fastest growing occupations will require a bachelor's degree or higher, while seven will require a certificate or other vocational award or associate degree. Those occupations, which include home health aides, computer-software engineers, personal financial advisers, and makeup artists, are expected to add 2.3 million jobs over the 2006-16 period.

Still, about a third of all new jobs — more than 4.6 million — will require a month or less of on-the-job training, and 34 percent of all jobs in 2016 will require that amount.

Critics of the president's plan say those statistics show that it would be a waste of time, and of money, to push all Americans into yearlong programs.

"To suggest that every kid have a year of postsecondary education isn't realistic and it isn't necessary for all kids to get a job," says Dennis Redovich, executive director of the Center for the Study of Jobs and Education in Wisconsin and the United States. "The fact of the matter is that a majority of jobs require short-term, on-the-job training."

President Obama is already taking steps to achieve his goal. This month he announced that his administration would work with colleges and states to help unemployed workers receive Pell Grants and keep their jobless benefits when they enroll in college.

In many states, workers lose their unemployment benefits when they enroll in college. At the same time, their prior year's earnings may disqualify them for a Pell Grant. These factors can discourage unemployed workers from attending college.

Under the president's plan, the Labor Department will ask states to make exceptions during economic downturns, while the Education Department will encourage colleges to factor in the financial situation of unemployed applicants when awarding aid. Whether the plan succeeds will, of course, depend on the cooperation of colleges and states, and available resources.

Meanwhile, the president and Congress have poured billions into job-training programs and student aid, while providing states with billions more to ease budget cuts to colleges and schools. An economic-stimulus bill signed into law in February contained \$4-billion for job training, \$17-billion for Pell Grants, and \$200-million for Federal Work-Study, and increased a tax credit for tuition from \$1,800 to \$2,500.

But it will take more than just money to reach his goal of higher education for all, experts say. High schools will have to do a better job of preparing people for college, so they don't spend their "year of college" in remedial education, and colleges will have to do more to reach out to students who typically don't enroll.

"Higher education needs to do a better job of lifting aspirations and communicating that college is possible," says Brian K. Fitzgerald, executive director of the Business-Higher Education Forum.

At the same time, community colleges must continue to work with business leaders to ensure that they are preparing students for high-growth careers, says Arthur J. Rothkopf, senior vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Public perceptions about college will also need to change. While a majority of adult students enroll in community colleges, many Americans still think of college as a four-year bachelor's degree.

"We have to demystify attending college," says Bob Jones, president of Education Workforce Policy LLP, a public-policy consulting company.

Brian Foley, provost of the Medical Education Campus of Northern Virginia Community College, says the country must "elevate the status of technical jobs."

"These jobs keep our economy running," he says.

For Ms. Baker, a year of education has increased her status in the work force, and in her family. Her children, she says, "like to think I'm a doctor."

She thinks the president's goal for the country is realistic, at least for those who aspire to it.

"I never wanted to attend college for four years," she says. "But who can't give up a year of their life to get educated?"

Megan Eckstein contributed to this report

Community-College Board May Make It Easier to Lay Off Tenured Faculty Members

Community colleges in Washington State could soon be able to lay off tenured faculty members much faster than normal, according to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

At its regularly scheduled meeting next month, the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges will decide whether to declare a financial emergency — a move allowed by a state law passed in 1981 to deal with budget crunches. Such an emergency would speed up the process for laying off tenured faculty members in that they would get only 60 days' notice of layoffs and the grounds on which they could appeal the decision would be limited, the *Post-Intelligencer* reported.

Washington lawmakers have cut appropriations to the state's 34 community and technical colleges by 10.7 percent in the 2009-10 operating budget. And because of that, the statewide association of community-college presidents asked the board to invoke the law.

Sandra Schroeder, president of the American Federation of Teachers' union in Washington, told the *Post-Intelligencer* that most community-college presidents had let her know that they did not plan to use the law, but there is still the threat that they would have "additional leverage that they didn't already have" when it comes to laying off tenured faculty members. —*Audrey Williams June*

Community Colleges Need Improved Assessment Tools to Improve Basic-Skills Instruction, Report Says

By JOSH KELLER

May 13, 2009

To improve the success rates of students who are unprepared for college-level work, community colleges must develop richer forms of student-learning assessment, analyze the data to discover best teaching practices, and get faculty members more involved in the assessment process, according to a report released on Tuesday by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Traditional uses of institutional data, like grades and test scores, often fail to involve faculty members or do not encourage them to think about how they could improve their teaching, says the report, "Toward Informative Assessment and a Culture of Evidence." Those measures should be expanded to include more informative assessments such as value-added tests, common exams across course sections, and recordings of students reasoning their way through problem sets, the report says.

Colleges can find significant gains in the success rates of students who lack the basic skills necessary for college-level courses, it says, by using these data to identify best teaching practices and by ensuring that faculty members talk openly about their teaching strategies.

The report's conclusions are based on the experiences of a three-year project called Strengthening Pre-Collegiate Education in Community Colleges, in which the foundation worked closely with 11 two-year institutions in California to develop more effective methods of teaching basic skills. About four in five students enter California community colleges unprepared for college-level instruction in mathematics or English, and the generally low success rates of such students nationwide is seen as a leading barrier to raising college graduation rates.

Students who took courses sponsored by the Carnegie project had significantly higher course-completion and college-persistence rates on average than did control groups at the same institutions, according to the report. The improvements were especially prominent in basic math courses, where two institutions, Pasadena City College and College of the Sequoias, saw student success rates jump more than 25 percent, the report said.

Lloyd Bond, the report's author, said the most positive change at the 11 participating campuses was to get faculty members who teach basic skills to explicitly discuss instruction and learning with one another and with education researchers at their campuses. In addition, most campus research offices are too understaffed to analyze classroom data in a way that could inform instructional practice, he said.

"Data is something that typically instructors in classes cannot use—they don't know what to do with it," said Mr. Bond, a former senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation. "If you can get

people savvy in experimental design and survey research and statistical analysis, and ask them questions about where students are having problems, that's a huge leap forward."

Bringing the program's improvements to scale, he said, will require a reordering of priorities among college leaders to promote a culture of "faculty inquiry," in which instructors actively seek out ways to benefit from one another's' experiences.

"It requires a commitment and a sea change at the top," he said. "You've got to bring academics together for the explicit purpose of discussing instruction and learning, rather than just faculty schedules and vacation time."

Q&A: How Governing Boards Can Play a Bigger Role in Strategic Planning

From The Chronicle

By PAUL FAIN

Governing boards have the final say in decision making for colleges. As a result, much is expected of board members, even though they are unpaid volunteers.

Those responsibilities are only going to increase, says Richard D. Legon, president of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. Financial pressures and the watchful eyes of lawmakers and federal regulators will force governing boards to do more in coming years.

In a conversation with *The Chronicle*, Mr. Legon talked about the tasks boards face and how they can be more strategic in tackling them. Excerpts follow.

Q. What are the top challenges for governing boards?

A. Boards have got to come to grips with their financial model going forward. We've just come through perhaps the worst time that we ever could. Institutions are facing some real challenges to their own finances, their own budgets, both in terms of revenue and the ability to address the question of costs, or expenses, as we refer to it.

Q. Are boards asking fundamental questions about the missions of their colleges?

A. Historically, boards, when it comes to finances, have not necessarily been strategic. Our own work with the National Association of College and University Business Officers, a year and a half or so ago, demonstrated that boards don't get the kinds of comparative data, don't have the amount of time to really look at some of these challenges in a rigorous and strategic manner.

Q. Where can they do a better job?

A. They need to understand the questions that they need to ask. So when it comes to institutional strategic finance, the first thing they need to know is that when we talk about costs, we're not talking about price. We're talking about where our institutional revenues are allocated, and how are they allocated. They need to have a clear understanding of their institution's mission. And they need to have a clear understanding of where the institution's priorities are headed.

Q. How can board members learn about financial planning?

A. Board orientation needs to be inclusive of a conversation about institutional finances. And that conversation needs to take place not just in the numbers in an aggregate way, but in a narrative way, a strategic way.

Q. Will boards get more active in controlling mission creep?

A. They have to. They can't do it alone, but I think they do need to recognize that, as fiduciaries, they have an ultimate responsibility to help point the institution in the right way. That's not the same as managing the institution. They don't have the time. They don't have the expertise. But they can ask some questions that others within the institution perhaps cannot.

Q. What can board committees do better?

A. What boards need to be able to do is ensure that their committees are working off of agendas that themselves are strategic. We see way too many committee agendas that address mundane, tactical issues and — not deliberately, but by happenstance — avoid some of the strategic issues.

Q. Is now a time for boards to revisit their structure?

A. Absolutely. It's always a good time for boards to make sure that their committees are doing two things: One, that the committees they have are representative of the strategic direction of the board and the institution. And, two, the committees and the board need to be sure that they're focusing on the strategic issues facing the institutions, with — currently — strategic finance being central to much of their work.

<http://chronicle.com>

Section: Money & Management

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Peace in Accreditation Land

InsideHigherEd.com

May 20, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Two years ago, a federal negotiating process designed to recommend changes in regulations governing accreditation blew up amid intense acrimony between higher education and Bush administration officials. The issues that caused the greatest conflict: how colleges might (or should) measure the learning outcomes of their students, and institutions' stances on the transferability of students' academic credit.

Those issues were on the agenda again as another panel of negotiators completed several months of work on accreditation at an Education Department office building Tuesday, but with a dramatically different result (and dramatically less *drama*). The college administrators, higher education lobbyists, accreditors, state officials and others around the conference table -- including Education Department staff members -- reached "consensus" on a package of 16 regulatory proposals to carry out changes Congress made in legislation to renew the Higher Education Act last summer. (When such negotiating sessions end with "consensus" among the parties on a package of regulatory changes, a federal agency is bound to propose them as is; when no consensus is reached, the agency can essentially do whatever it wants.)

The deliberations were not without their discord; the overall agreement seemed on the verge of being derailed Tuesday morning by tension over echoes of the same student learning issue on which the 2007 negotiations ran aground. But for a combination of reasons, some structural and some atmospheric, the members of the panel worked through their differences and did what they are meant to do in such negotiations: compromise.

"This is the way negotiated rule making is supposed to work -- it's to everybody's benefit to get the whole thing done, even though nobody gets everything they want," said Terry W. Hartle, who was representing the American Council on Education, where he is senior vice president for government and public affairs, at the negotiating table. (In the case of the regulatory proposals embraced Tuesday, the Education Department gets colleges and accreditors agreeing to increased federal regulation of their relationships with each other, and higher education wins some limits on how much the government can regulate in certain areas, notably in dictating student learning outcomes.)

Federal agencies establish negotiated rule making committees so they can solicit the advice of affected parties to draft regulations to carry out federal laws. And that right there represents the first major difference between the accreditation panel the Education Department convened in 2007 and the current one: Congress had not made any changes in federal law governing accreditation leading up to the last negotiating session (it was still working on the Higher Education Act renewal at the time), prompting some higher education leaders to question whether the government had a legal basis for even considering new rules on the subject.

Because they suspected that department officials at the time had a political motivation for wanting to impose new rules -- to make changes in accreditation to help carry out the

accountability agenda of then-Education Secretary Margaret Spellings' Commission on the Future of Higher Education -- many higher education officials came into the 2007 deliberations deeply suspicious and geared up for a fight. And they generally got it, in the form of an aggressive stance on substantive issues on the part of the department's own negotiators and some hardball tactics that jacked the level of mutual mistrust up to Code Orange, if not Red.

The other environmental factor that influenced the 2007 negotiations was the fact that the Education Department's attempt to regulate on accreditation before passage of the Higher Education Act had angered leading members of Congress, who had quietly (and not so quietly) assured college leaders that they wouldn't let the department get too far before stepping in -- which they ultimately did, barring Spellings and her department from issuing rules until after the higher ed law was renewed. The knowledge that they had Congressional leaders in their corner clearly emboldened higher education lobbyists and leaders to stand up to Spellings and her team.

The picture this time around was different from the very start. First of all, the Education Department (starting late last year under President Bush and continuing in 2009 under President Obama) had a clear obligation to conduct negotiated rule making on various aspects of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, and it appointed five separate teams (two on loans, one on grants, and one "general" panel) to do so. The fact that "there was a clear legal basis for what the department was doing, and no hint that a political agenda was driving this," made for a very different (and more cooperative) tone from the start of this winter's accreditation rule making, said Hartle of the American Council on Education.

Once the negotiations began, the Education Department and its participants on the panel, led by Kay Gilcher, a senior policy analyst at the agency, were widely seen by the other committee members as negotiating in good faith and proposing language that was generally consistent with the changes mandated by the law. "I'm very impressed with the positive tone that you've taken in this negotiation," Belle S. Wheelan, who as head of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is not generally viewed as touchy-feely, told Gilcher on Tuesday. "I've been involved in other negotiated rule makings, and in this one, the rapport has been absolutely wonderful."

"It's been a pleasure working with all of you -- most of the time," Gilcher said with a smile after the negotiators unanimously endorsed the entire package of 16 proposals.

But while the negotiations had a productive and cooperative ending, there were several points along the way when they seemed ready to collapse. The most serious came late Monday into early Tuesday, when negotiators for private colleges complained that department officials seemed to be using a change requiring accreditors to consistently monitor and reevaluate colleges as a backdoor way to revisit the student success terrain that was so disputed in 2007, and so carefully negotiated in last year's Higher Education Act renewal.

The language pushed by the department appeared (to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities) to compel accreditors, between regular reviews, to periodically collect "key data and performance indicators" in several areas, including "student success," and also

appeared to open the door to letting accreditors decide what those indicators might be, rather than leaving that decision up to institutions as Congress mandated in the Higher Education Act.

Not all of the accreditors or college officials on the negotiating team shared NAICU's dim view of the department's approach, and department officials made clear that they were willing to go only so far in compromising. Working together, the "non-federal" negotiators -- all members of the panel except for those from the government -- crafted several attempts at alternative language through the evening Monday and the early part of Tuesday, ending with one that incorporated language from the Higher Education Act renewal that left it to individual colleges to develop their own standards to show their success in student achievement.

They presented their last attempt to Gilcher over lunch on Tuesday, and when the group reconvened after a break, Gilcher weighed in. "I want you to remember that we've come a long way on this particular provision," she said. "We are willing to accept this final change, but it's a very important issue to us, and it would be an important one in terms of achieving consensus," she added, leaving negotiators with the clear impression that the department had ceded some ground on this issue in the distinct hope that it would lead to consensus.

And two hours later, after a bit of jockeying on other proposals, it did, leading to hugs, shared congratulations and an ironic cry of "Praise the Lord" from Wheelan.

— **Doug Lederman**

California Calamity InsideHigherEd

May 21, 2009

For community colleges in the Golden State, things have gone from worse to worst.

The state's 110 two-year institutions will lose about \$825 million in funding over the next 13 months, said Scott Lay, president of the Community College League of California. He added that, of this large cut, \$200 million will be trimmed in the next 45 days. This drastic funding cut comes thanks to the defeat of a series of budget proposals, on the ballot of Tuesday's special election, which would have minimized cuts to public higher education and other state agencies.

"The last time community colleges saw funding like this was in 1982, before the Internet, the Americans With Disabilities Act and other costly measures," Lay said.

Per-student funding will be reduced by around 11 percent, he said, forcing colleges around the state to turn away nearly 250,000 students in the coming year. Lay also noted that a "large number" of full- and part-time faculty members will be laid off because of these state cuts. Though he did not make an estimate for full-time faculty, he said he anticipated nearly 6,000 part-time faculty members will lose their jobs.

In one community college district struggling to plan Wednesday, there is hope that faculty layoffs may be avoided. Still, there is every expectation that courses will be slashed and students turned away in large numbers.

Constance M. Carroll, chancellor of the San Diego Community College District, said her district's conservative budget approach has braced it for the worst of these state budget cuts and will protect current faculty. For instance, she noted that, unlike many other districts around the state, San Diego currently has no debt. Even still, her district will have to make some significant sacrifices in the coming year.

"One of our big-ticket reductions is being carried out through a hiring freeze," Carroll said. "Our philosophy has been to bring our payroll down by attrition rather than layoff. So, about 117 positions are being defunded, and we expect to do the same amount next year. The worst thing you can do in any organization, especially in higher education, is to lay off people. It takes a whole generation of faculty and staff to recover. We'd rather take the most draconian measures possible to avoid laying off permanent staff."

Most troubling of all for Carroll and other San Diego officials, these budget cuts will adversely affect the one constituency that they have been trying to shield throughout these tough economic times: students. Even before Tuesday's vote, Carroll said, the

district trimmed nearly 600 courses, despite a 10 percent jump in enrollment. As a result, about 8,000 students were left on waiting lists and did not get into any classes this year.

This summer, she continued, the district will cut about 200 courses; it will also have to cut somewhere between 400 and 600 more before the next academic year. As the state has capped the community college's enrollment growth to 2 percent a year, Carroll estimated that nearly 9,000 students in her district will be left without any classes to take in the fall. While there are plenty of colleges that boast about how many students they reject, these numbers horrify educators at this district, who view the community college's mission as providing access to a diverse and often needy population.

“This is a horrendous period for time for us and a massive public policy failure for community colleges,” said Carroll, who strongly advocates that California change the way in which it funds two-year institutions.

Currently, California Community Colleges are entirely funded by state appropriations and tuition, which they are prohibited from raising. In many other states, community colleges may levy or ask voters to levy local property taxes to fund their operations. For these institutions, this third revenue stream often proves more fruitful than state appropriations. The recent budget crisis in California has stirred Carroll and others to push for the ability to seek alternative funding beyond state appropriation.

“If the state is not ready to fund community colleges, then they should release them to take the steps they need to obtain funding and serve the public,” Carroll said.

While faceless discussion of policy changes and strategic budget planning dominates at the district and state level, the intensely personal impact of these cuts can be felt on the ground among officials who deal with students daily.

“We have done everything possible to keep these budget cuts as far away from the classroom as possible, but now we are out of options,” said Rita M. Cepeda, president of San Diego Mesa College. “By law, we are an open access institution. But students will come to our campus now and seek to be enrolled and there will be no courses for them to take.”

Courses once considered essential offerings, such as those in the core curriculum offered to students seeking transfer to four-year institutions, will be among those to have sections cut, Cepeda said. Additionally, she noted that some programs with a set of sequential courses will no longer offer certain courses every semester, as in years past. She said these scheduling changes will force many students to delay their progress toward graduation, potentially stranding many before they reach their goal.

“Whereas, at the policy level, the answers might be a little cleaner; at the college level, we cannot give up on trying to find more extraordinary ways to serve our students,”

Cepeda said. “Our faculty and staff are seeking ways to do more with less. We’re asking, ‘Can you teach Saturday morning?’ and ‘Can you teach more students?’ Even students themselves are offering more resources to one another. Many are now sharing books, for example.”

Many students have come to Cepeda’s office in recent weeks, she said, bemoaning that the college is not offering the “one course that they need” at a time when they can take it. Cepeda said she can only encourage the students to “not give up” and hold on to finish their degrees.

“Some of these students cry,” Cepeda said. “Sometimes I have to almost hold it in myself. But, not one of them leave irate. They all leave saying, ‘I understand.’ It’s a resiliency they have. They’re amazing. I tell them that the financial picture may be dark right now, but the future isn’t.”

California Community Colleges May Reduce Enrollment by 250,000 Students

Chronicle of Higher Ed

By JOSH KELLER

Latest Headlines

California Community Colleges May Reduce Enrollment by 250,000 Students

The reduction would occur if the Legislature adopts large cuts in state support proposed by the governor, system leaders said on Wednesday, following the defeat of five ballot measures to shrink the state's budget deficit.

California's community colleges will reduce their enrollment by 250,000 students in the coming academic year if large cuts in state support proposed by the governor are adopted, the system's leaders announced on Wednesday.

The announcement comes in response to a budget proposal from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, that would help close the state's estimated \$21-billion budget deficit by cutting support for community colleges by 11 percent, or \$825-million, over the next 13 months. On Tuesday, five state ballot measures designed to help reduce that gap were overwhelmingly defeated, and lawmakers will now have to decide whether to adopt the governor's plan.

If the budget cuts are enacted, the 110-campus system will be forced to reduce its enrollment by a minimum of 250,000 students because it will have to eliminate courses and fire thousands of faculty and staff members, community-college officials said. The California community-college system is the nation's largest, enrolling about 2.7 million full- and part-time students each year.

The system has never considered an enrollment cut of such magnitude in the modern era, officials said. A drop of 250,000 students would amount to cutting more than the entire enrollment of the University of California system.

Martha J. Kanter, chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District in California and President Obama's nominee for U.S. under secretary of education, said the budget cuts to the community colleges will be devastating.

"As the president said, we need to have the best education and the most competitive work force in the world," she said. "We won't."

Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed budget cuts are a clear demonstration that education is not among the state's highest priorities, Ms. Kanter said. "Californians are going to have to pay more for their highest priorities. If you don't pay more, this is what you get."

Reversing a Surge in Enrollment

The announcement represents a turning point for the community-college system, which had previously attempted to absorb budget cuts without shrinking the student population. The cuts would reverse a sharp surge in enrollment that many of the system's colleges have seen since the beginning of the economic downturn, which has prompted more people to seek job retraining.

Community-college leaders in Sacramento and Merced said on Wednesday that their enrollment levels for summer and fall courses were up by 30 percent to 50 percent over last year, but that the next round of state budget cuts would force many of the newest students out.

Constance M. Carroll, chancellor of the San Diego Community College District, said her district has already had to cut 600 courses, despite a 10-percent surge in enrollment.

"This has been a horrendous period of time for us and a massive failure of public policy for community colleges," Ms. Carroll said. The recession, she added, has brought on "an unprecedented collision between high demand and low support."

In most cases, Californians will not be prevented from enrolling at a community college, but they may find there are no courses left for them to take. Disabled and low-income students will be the most likely to be shut out of the system, said Scott Lay, president of the Community College League of California, a nonprofit organization that helps two-year colleges organize and lobby for money.

"It's survival of the fittest," Mr. Lay said. The neediest students, he said, are less likely to sign up early and attend each of the first few class meetings, which would help ensure them a spot.

All three of California's public systems of higher education are expecting to receive major budget cuts in the next few months, and leaders at California State University and the University of California have announced enrollment cuts on a smaller scale. But the university systems have more-diverse sources of financing and can rely, at least temporarily, on federal stimulus funds to help close the gap, while community colleges depend almost entirely on state support.

Cuts in Support for Students

Under Governor Schwarzenegger's proposal, community colleges would see \$825-million in budget cuts by the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year. Campus programs that provide support for disabled and low-income students would receive particularly severe cuts under the proposal, as would physical-education and recreational courses.

About \$125-million of the proposed cuts would take effect in the current fiscal year, which ends on June 30, if approved by lawmakers. College officials said those immediate cuts would exacerbate problems many of the state's community colleges are already having in keeping enough of a cash reserve to meet their day-to-day financial needs.

A slate of ballot measures would have prevented the need for the most severe of the proposed budget cuts, but voters overwhelmingly rejected five out of the six propositions on Tuesday. Mr. Lay said that Californians were right to distrust the state's notoriously dysfunctional budget process but that, for community colleges, the consequences of the voters' decision would quickly become clear.

"I appreciate the public's frustration: They believe it's the boy who cried wolf, and that's what happened yesterday," he said. "They don't trust anybody that devastating cuts are coming. Well, devastating cuts are coming now."

How Assessment Works at One Community College

The Chronicle of Higher Education

May 29, 2009

By EDUARDO J. PADRÓN

In 2007 the faculty at my institution, Miami Dade College, joined the student body in signing a covenant "to build a foundation for the success of future students." The event capped a two-year effort on the part of the faculty to articulate the foundations of a 21st-century college education and codify them into 10 clear statements.

However, creating a top-10 list of what we want our students to learn was only part of a larger mission — one we began in 2005, in response to a national dialogue on openness and accountability, fostered by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Since then, our journey has been navigated by various faculty committees that not only developed our list of goals, but are also working to develop assessment tools and curriculum-mapping processes.

The next logical step was to measure our success at teaching those essential skills. In a report released this month, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in fact called on community colleges to improve their assessment skills. While "outcomes assessment" is a hateful phrase to many, and while quantifying a college education in concrete terms may seem distasteful, outcome assessments can be accomplished while preserving professors' individuality and freedom in course design. Proving the attainment of set standards often evokes fears of "teaching to the test," but we see assessments as opportunities to design creative, thought-provoking challenges.

Since 2006 our semiannual, collegewide assessment process has been the primary means of proving how well our students measure up. As each fall and spring semester draws to a close, approximately 10 percent of the graduating class is selected from advanced courses (typically taken in a student's final semester). Faculty members who teach those courses are asked to volunteer one class period for the assessment, the subject of which is assigned randomly and not matched to the class topic. (Five of the 10 outcomes are assessed each semester, ensuring that they are all measured each year.) All students in each selected classroom are asked to participate, although some may choose to opt out.

Students who participate in the assessment sit down in front of a computer and have 50 minutes to respond to a challenging, multifaceted scenario. For example: "Imagine that you are part of a production team for a television series entitled *The Global Citizen*. From a list of possible global issues, what considerations and process would you use to identify the most pressing issue, and how would you convince your production team of the urgency of this issue?"

We call such questions "authentic tasks" because they deal with real-world situations and have no perfunctory answer. Other tasks may involve public speaking and are videotaped; some require deciphering graphs or responding to works of art. Our faculty members believe that such types of assessment, which measure several skills at once, reveal more information than

standardized or multiple-choice tests. (An exception is made for a computerized test to measure technological skills.)

Each student's performance is scored on a four-point scale as "emerging," "developing," "proficient," or "exemplary," but individual participants are not identified. The scores are then aggregated to provide a snapshot of the graduating class's level of achievement, which allows for comparisons from year to year. The results also provoke important cross-disciplinary dialogue about new means of achieving the 10 learning goals.

The results so far suggest that certain areas need greater emphasis in the curriculum. One such area is the cultural, historical, and global-perspectives goal. While a lack of global awareness seems to be a national phenomenon, the finding still surprised us since Miami Dade College has one of the most diverse student bodies in the nation.

The collegewide assessment also tells us that we need improvement in the areas of quantitative analytical skills, ethical thinking, and appreciation for aesthetics and creative activities. By recognizing those deficiencies, we can now identify the best ways to improve them, whether by reforming current courses and programs or adding new ones.

A concurrent and complementary reform process now under way is the mapping of the curriculum: the painstaking process of dissecting each course according to the 10 learning outcomes. Each course is charted based on how well it introduces, reinforces, or emphasizes the relevant goals. (The Excel spreadsheet that tracks that effort will eventually have 10 columns and over 2,000 rows, corresponding to the college's more than 2,000 courses.) Upon detecting weaknesses, faculty members review the curriculum and attend workshops to develop new assessments for their courses. Course-specific assessments help us meet the ultimate goal of assessing all students, in each outcome, using thought-provoking methods. For example, professors may ask students to create a marketing campaign for a local client, or to complete and review a volunteer project in the community. One English class conducts a mock trial for a character from a Herman Melville story.

The administration provides opportunities, such as chances to attend relevant conferences, to faculty members who must dissect their courses and develop new assessments, and it requires departments to offer professional-development support for those faculty members. The means of incorporating the learning goals into each class remain at the discretion of the instructor. At the institutional level, a few dozen professors voluntarily serve on planning committees, and a smaller crew is compensated for time spent educating other faculty members and for developing, administering, and scoring the collegewide assessments.

We are constantly refining our assessment process. Motivating students to perform their best work on the collegewide assessment, for which they are not assigned a grade, is a challenge that we acknowledge and are trying to meet by presenting the assessments as learning opportunities.

In our ideal curriculum, every course would consider all 10 learning outcomes and all students would excel. In the real world, however, professors and students struggle to expand their consciousness, bit by bit and year by year. Yet we are making progress. Through both collegewide and course-specific assessments, the processes of teaching and learning become more intentional and more open, and faculty members and students become more accountable — all in the name of doing our best to serve our students' needs.

Eduardo J. Padrón is president of Miami Dade College

News Analysis: Online Education Grows, but Painfully

By MARC PARRY

The Chronicle of Higher Education

May 22, 2009

Evolve or dissolve. That advice, from a recent report on virtual universities, played out in two news stories this past week. The University of Texas' online division is staring down a deep budget hole as it loses a longtime subsidy. And in Utah, budget cuts have killed a 10-campus online consortium.

Those and other predicaments reflect the growing pains of public online education. As programs mature, their business models have come under more scrutiny. The Texas and Utah cases speak to difficult questions facing states: What role should those programs play? How should states pay for them? Or should they?

Technology growth in the 1990s prompted a surge of online-learning collaborations. The groups prodded member colleges to put classes online, pooled courses into collaborative degrees, and supported online programs with promotions. Some became little more than state- or systemwide online catalogs.

Fast forward to 2009: With budgets strained, every state is looking at how it pays for online learning, which can be a big expense. "As these organizations have evolved over the last decade, how they were set up and funded is becoming more important," says Rhonda M. Epper, co-executive director of Colorado Community Colleges Online. If a virtual university was paid for with a grant or one-time financing, or relies on a big appropriation, "those are getting looked at more closely and maybe reconsidered," she says.

Such is the setup in Texas. The project, which does not grant degrees, won praise for brokering collaborative programs. But its success rests on an investment of some \$22-million from endowment earnings. The university system will phase out that subsidy by 2012.

The recession is driving other states to stretch, diversify, or cut those types of programs. That strikes some observers as shortsighted. Consortia proponents say the groups can both save money and pay dividends in ways not always evident on a balance sheet. Member colleges can avoid duplicating programs and services. And the flexibility of the programs can help retain working students who may be one flat tire away from dropping out, along with their tuition.

"The challenge is that, if you view these collaborations simply as a cost center, you are missing the return," says Myk Garn, director of educational technology at the Southern Regional Education Board.

How Much Has Changed

But analysts who praise consortia see a flip side: Colleges can be capable of running online learning themselves now; 10 years ago, they may have needed an impetus. Now they may end up absorbing the functions of some consortia.

Some have already retrenched or faded away, leaving behind old Web sites and the news releases that hyped them. More may be at risk.

“There are other models out there that aren’t bringing value to the system, quite frankly,” Ms. Epper says. “Like the online catalog, for instance: I don’t know that that’s necessarily needed anymore. Students can do their own Web searches pretty easily.”

The Utah eLearning Connection, which is to disband by June, gave students access to online courses offered by 10 public colleges through one application and one registration site. The idea was to help them “swirl,” or take classes from multiple institutions. But most seem to prefer their distance education straight. Just 200 were using the consortium.

“Most students were actually being very well served by the institutions themselves,” says Charles A. Wight, associate vice president for academic affairs at the University of Utah.

The question for Texas is how to avoid Utah’s fate. There is “no one best financial model,” argues a recent paper, “The Funding of Academic Collaborations,” by the technology cooperative WCET and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. There are “few and fewer funding choices.” And sometimes failure is “not about effective financial models but about fights for power, control, and money.”

“It doesn’t matter who is being served or how well,” says Russell C. Poulin, an author of the paper. “People look at that line item and have other things they want to do with that line item, because they weren’t the ones who created that organization.”

Some virtual universities have found financial footing through entrepreneurial savvy, per-course fees, revenue-sharing deals, and other income sources. Texas may join them. It is exploring a plan to build large bachelor’s-degree programs for adults who never finished college. With its experience, says the online-education analyst Richard Garrett, Texas has “a strong hand to play.”

When a Twittering College President Is Not Who He Seems

Chronicle of Higher Ed

By JEFFREY R. YOUNG

The Twitter account identified as belonging to Georgetown University's president, John J. DeGioia, features frank admissions about the mundane details of running a modern academic institution. Last week, for instance, the microblogger wrote that his face was tired from all the "fake-smiling" during graduation events. The PR office can't possibly approve, right?

Right. And neither does Mr. DeGioia. The Twitter account, which points to the president's real home page, is produced by a prankster.

Mr. DeGioia is not the only university leader who has inspired a false double on Twitter. The president of the University of Texas at Austin, William C. Powers Jr., has one, too.

Just this week, the fake Mr. Powers started joking with the fake Mr. DeGioia on Twitter about the hassles of commencement season. "Dreading going into work tomorrow, but those diplomas aren't going to sign themselves ...," quipped the Twittering Mr. Powers.

The real Mr. Powers contacted Twitter officials a couple of weeks ago to ask them to remove the account, said Robin Gerrow, assistant vice president for public affairs at Austin, "because it's not him." So far he has received no reply.

Georgetown leaders have likewise asked Twitter to remove the fake account for Mr. DeGioia. "We think it violates their terms of service," said Andy Pino, Georgetown's director of media relations. "We think the author has not made it explicitly clear that he is not Mr. DeGioia."

Officials for Twitter did not respond to requests for comment on Wednesday.

Inspired to Spoof

So who are these impostors?

At Georgetown, the culprit is known: Jack Stuef, an undergraduate who edits a student-run humor magazine called *The Georgetown Heckler*, publicly revealed his identity in student publications.

Mr. Stuef got the idea while writing an article for the online magazine's last issue of the academic year. "Making fun of your college president is kind of your bread and butter for your college humor magazine," he said.

No one from the university has contacted him to complain, he said. "I don't even know if they know what Twitter is," he said. (The Georgetown spokesman pointed out that the university does run an official Twitter account.)

As Mr. Stuef paints him, Georgetown's president is aloof and always jetting off to raise money for the institution. "He doesn't really seem connected to what's going on," the impersonator said of the real Mr. DeGioia. "He's always really slow to realize when there's a major controversy going on."

So a typical message by "Q: What's the deal with airplane food? A: I don't know, let's establish a working group to find out. OK, I'll put the laptop away."

Mr. DeGioia is in Rome on university business this week and could not be reached for comment.

The Chronicle could not determine the identity of the Austin campus's presidential Twitterer, and Ms. Gerrow, in the public-affairs office there, said the author remains a mystery to the university, too.

Both universities admitted that careful readers would probably realize that the comments are not authentic.

But Michael L. Wesch, an assistant professor of cultural anthropology at Kansas State University who studies Twitter and other social media, says he thinks the spoofs are revealing. "I actually like how 'authentic' they seem (and actually are in a funny way)—even though they are actually 'fake,'" he said by e-mail.

A couple of actual college presidents really do post to Twitter, though their updates are a bit more guarded. Among them are the president of Ohio State University, E. Gordon Gee, and the president of the Rhode Island School of Design, John Maeda.

Budget Cuts Cast Shadow Over Florida's Universities

The Chronicle of Higher Education

May 29, 2009

By PAUL FAIN

Bad budgets are old news in the Sunshine State. While colleges across the nation are coping with the recession, public universities in Florida, a state with finances that resemble a Ponzi scheme, have spent years doing without.

Ask Paul Outka, an assistant professor in Florida State University's highly regarded English department. But don't call him on his office phone this fall. He won't have one anymore — it's among the latest victims of cost-cutting.

He says he prefers forced frugality to its alternatives.

"You get rid of the phone lines and you save some of my comrades," says Mr. Outka, who has had a ringside seat at one of the worst financial catastrophes in higher education today.

The recession hit Florida early, and in a big way. Without an income tax, state government has long depended on property and sales taxes. As real estate and tourism have tanked, however, the state's annual revenue has shed more than \$12-billion from a 2006 peak of \$74-billion. But Florida's conservative politicians have remained steadfast in refusing new taxes. They also fought to keep the university system's tuition at rock-bottom levels.

The result for the state's 11 public universities has been cutbacks in state money, which have led to gutted programs, faculty departures, low salaries for professors, and the nation's highest student-to-faculty ratio. University leaders say this is by far the worst chapter in a long history of chronic underfinancing.

Mr. Outka got there just in time for this round. Described as a rising star by colleagues, his hiring was a coup for the university, which lured him away from the University of Virginia in 2007, as the cuts were beginning. In addition to having his phone line removed, Mr. Outka has had to ration his copier paper and sits in a non-air-conditioned office on weekends. He has too many students to meet with any of them individually until at least their junior year, and he never teaches classes smaller than 35 students.

"They wanted us to take out a bulb from our fluorescent lights," he says during an interview in his spartan office. He points to two reams of paper on a shelf and says, "There's my stash."

Yet the anxiety and annoyances have yet to defeat Mr. Outka, who says he can still do his job, and even enjoy it.

His resolve is evidence that while Florida's universities have been battered by the cuts, they have yet to fall apart. A common refrain emerges during visits to Florida State, the University of Florida, and the University of Central Florida: While it may be a miracle, academic quality and student access remain largely intact — so far.

After all, public universities are remarkably resilient.

"It takes a long time for a university to make or lose a national reputation," says Terry L. Hickey, provost of the University of Central Florida.

Florida's tuition rates, which are among the nation's cheapest, and generous, merit-based Bright Futures Scholarships have made public higher education an irresistible option for its high-school graduates. Over the past decade, enrollment in the system grew by 38 percent, now topping 300,000.

The crucial question is how much longer Florida's universities will have to run on fumes.

The budget passed by the Legislature this month was better than many had feared. Dropped were a proposed 25-percent reduction in the state's higher-education contribution and across-the-board salary cuts for university employees. The approved reduction of 10.5 percent, or \$207-million, will be partially offset by \$159-million in federal stimulus money. And lawmakers finally budged on allowing tuition increases, which will bring in new revenue.

But higher education in Florida is far from in the clear. The stimulus money is only a temporary fix, and economists say the state's finances remain fundamentally flawed. Barring a tax overhaul or a serious economic recovery, a few more lean years could mean a slide into mediocrity for the state's top universities.

"Now it's getting down to the bone," says Ryan J. O'Mara, a graduate assistant at the University of Florida.

Dateline: Tallahassee

In 2005 it looked like Florida's universities were poised to finally become worthy of the nation's fourth-most-populous state.

People were pouring into Florida, and the resulting real-estate boom led to a rapid increase in the state's budget. University leaders were dreaming big about how to use the new money. The public system's two flagship universities had become legitimate national players. The University of Florida had just topped \$500-million in annual research support, and Florida State had recruited many faculty stars, some in bunches for interdisciplinary programs.

At the same time, formerly sleepy commuter institutions, like the University of Central Florida, Florida International University, Florida Atlantic University, and the University of South Florida, had ridden a wave of student demand and become large, comprehensive universities. Central Florida, for example, with 50,000 students, is now one of the nation's largest universities.

But the swings of the pendulum in a boom-and-bust state can be cruel.

Florida "is where dreamers come to die," says Erin C. Belieu, an associate professor of English at Florida State.

Ms. Belieu, an accomplished poet, is one of 10 full-time faculty members in the creative-writing program. One night last month she joined other Florida State professors and graduate assistants at a restaurant here. Over drinks they commiserated about the swelling numbers of students in their classes, and how persistent money problems have cut into morale.

"You're constantly waiting," she says. "The storm is coming."

The English department is one of the university's proudest strengths, and an area administrators say they want to protect. For the most part, they have succeeded.

In addition to Mr. Outka, the department two years ago landed David H. Ikard, an assistant professor of English, who came from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

But with two steps forward came two steps back. The creative-writing program lost two professors whom their colleagues described as "extraordinary." Neither is being replaced. David Vann, a best-selling author, left for the University of San Francisco, and Mark G. Cooper went to the University of South Carolina.

The department's chairman, Ralph M. Berry, says the university has worked hard to head off attempts to hire away talent, sometimes through counteroffers or well-timed raises. But those two departures, he acknowledges, were a major hit. "We're just doing without," he says. "It's really nip and tuck."

Mr. Vann has nothing but praise for Florida State's English department and his colleagues there. But the low pay, rare raises, and looming threat of layoffs sent him out on the job market this year.

He will start this fall as an assistant professor at San Francisco. Reached by e-mail (he was hiking in Australia's outback), Mr. Vann says the new job will pay 50 percent more than he made at Florida State, and more than most full professors make there. (The average salary for Florida State's full professors is \$103,000, while assistant professors earn \$69,000, according to the American Association of University Professors.)

"It's amazing to see what FSU has done with so little funding," he says. "It's a great university, and it's terrible to see how quickly its achievements can be torn apart."

Part of the reason Florida State is able to hang on, Mr. Vann's former colleagues say, results from planning by its leaders. In fact, many professors there say they approve of how the administration is handling the crisis. That good will is rare for a university rocked by budget cuts, which generally increase tension between faculty members and administrators.

Lawrence G. Abele, provost since 1994, is a big source of the trust on the campus. An alumnus and oceanographer, he has spent four decades at the university. He is the sort of provost who feels that his job description around the campus includes picking up trash, running off scam artists who try to collect sensitive personal information from students, and steering lost visitors in the right direction.

His philosophy on budget cuts is, "We don't BS our colleagues. It's all out there."

The latest round of cuts began after he and T.K. Wetherell, Florida State's president, took a hard look at the state's budget outlook in 2006. Mr. Abele's response to the projections: "This is insane."

They moved quickly to save money, telling deans to trim their budgets by as much as 10 percent.

"We did it quietly," Mr. Abele says, adding that before the bottom fell out of the state's economy, "we had \$100-million stuffed everywhere."

At a campus meeting last month to discuss the gloomy budget, Mr. Wetherell talked about threatened programs and jobs.

While the worst-case scenario did not materialize, Florida State faces a sobering future. The state has trimmed \$82-million since 2007, with a \$44-million cut coming this year alone. Increased tuition revenue and \$22-million in federal stimulus money will help but won't come close to matching that amount. Faculty and staff jobs may be eliminated, and Mr. Abele says many departments and programs will have to pay for themselves by drawing more undergraduate tuition dollars.

The provost is confident that Florida State will preserve its core strengths, particularly at the graduate level. In the humanities, that includes philosophy, history, religion, and creative writing. Also in good shape are ventures related to the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory, which the university runs with the University of Florida and Los Alamos National Laboratory.

But other departments are on notice, including the one from Mr. Abele's own field — oceanography — which he told: "I don't think you're doing enough."

Florida State can probably weather the storm without enduring fundamental disruptions, he says, but not if the budget woes continue for another five years. "We're going to stall a little bit," says Mr. Abele. "The goal would be to hold our ground through this."

Dateline: Gainesville

Florida's public universities might be short of money, but they are never short of students. Particularly not the University of Florida, which is literally trampled each spring by hordes of touring applicants and their parents.

With a freshman class that sported a median SAT score of 1293 and a weighted high-school grade-point average of 4.18, Florida's most selective public university is creeping closer to the likes of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and the University of California at Berkeley.

This month a group of 160 aspiring Florida students and their parents file into a room in the campus welcome center. It's spring break for most Florida high schools, and the university has doubled its number of tours. All four are fully booked this day.

After the visitors watch a slick, university-produced film, a young woman who works for the admissions office delivers her spiel. It includes little of the usual bragging about facilities or student life, sticking almost entirely to how to beat the long odds of admission.

The high schoolers seem to appreciate the advice, listening raptly and taking notes on tips like which advanced-placement classes help most.

Florida is not the same university that many of the parents on the tour knew as students. In their day, the socially lively campus with a fear-inspiring football stadium was a safe bet for most applicants, even ones with mediocre grades or SAT scores. But the acceptance rate has dipped to 39 percent from about 65 percent as recently as a decade ago. Last year 28,000 students applied for 6,600 spots, as Florida continued its climb up the popular college rankings.

One thing hasn't changed: The University of Florida is still cheap. Floridians pay \$3,800 in tuition and fees, and 95 percent of incoming students qualify for the lottery-financed Bright Futures Scholarships, which cover 75 percent of tuition. (Tuition and fees at Florida and Florida State are the lowest among major research universities. Berkeley, by comparison, costs twice as much, while Michigan charges nearly three times as much.)

The university's enhanced academic reputation is a source of pride, but it also causes tension. Campus officials hear from angry alumni who don't understand why their progeny's applications were rejected.

J. Bernard Machen, the president, says Florida lawmakers take the flagship university's admissions process personally. On his trips to Tallahassee, they ask if he can help children of friends and relatives. "Every time I go there, I get a name or a list," he says.

That anxiety hits close to home for some professors. Ken P. Mercer, director of guidance at Gainesville High School, which is in the university's backyard, says faculty members' kids no longer can count on a sure thing when they apply to Florida.

"Students adjust and lower their goals," he says of the university's increasing selectivity. Parents, however, "are the bunch that really has a hard time adjusting."

Stiff admissions standards and growing research clout, with \$562-million in sponsored research last year, have led to grumbling around the state that the university does not serve Florida's most pressing needs.

That is a common challenge for public flagships. But the charge is a stretch here, where a whopping 94 percent of undergraduates are state residents.

A more relevant beef, university leaders acknowledge, is that Florida could do a better job serving the students it does admit. As the money woes mount, Mr. Machen says the university has become "supersized" with 35,000 undergraduates: "We're probably bigger than we ought to be."

Even before the latest budget trauma, including a \$42-million cut in the state's net contribution this year, Mr. Machen and the Board of Trustees had decided to emphasize and protect graduate programs and research. Theirs is the state's only public university to limit undergraduate enrollment in recent years, and is actually seeking a reduction of 1,000 students in each of the next four years.

The university may also look to cut back on undergraduate programs. This year the president questioned whether Florida should continue to offer a bachelor's degree in education, as do all of the state's other public universities and some community colleges. Instead, he suggested, the university could concentrate on its doctoral strength in training school psychologists and principals. But he backed off in the ensuing backlash.

It's tough to shift focus when a university's programs are well established, successful, and hard to cut.

The faculty and graduate unions have been scathing in their criticism of campus leaders. They do not believe that the money shortage is as dire as claimed, and argue that Mr. Machen is using the budget woes as an excuse to remake the university.

John Biro, a philosophy professor who is president of the campus chapter of the statewide faculty union, United Faculty of Florida, says last year's layoffs were tough to swallow while the university was still hiring and spending money on new projects, particularly in professional schools.

"We are lurching from one administrative whim to another," he says.

Ryan J. O'Mara disagrees. Mr. O'Mara, who is pursuing a Ph.D. in health and human performance, is one of the university's 15,000 graduate assistants. He thinks the budget crisis is real and says some restructuring might help in the long run.

"People can't see past their own backyards," Mr. O'Mara says in an interview in his office, which is in the basement of a gymnasium built in 1946. He was the 2002 valedictorian of Venice High School, on the state's Gulf Coast, and says he came to the university because of the Bright Futures Scholarships. The affordability of his alma mater limits what it can do, he argues. He says the university should raise tuition and "make the undergraduate education smaller, more special, and more focused."

But to do so, Mr. O'Mara says, Bright Futures must change. The state is too broke to have the program cover tuition increases. In May the Legislature voted to cap the scholarship amount,

separating it from tuition levels, which by law the state's public universities can now raise by up to 15 percent per year, until they reach the national average of \$6,585.

But even with that major concession by the state's policy makers, which seemed unlikely even two years ago, the universities have a long way to go on tuition. In several years, when they catch up to the current national average, it will have changed, and Florida will no doubt remain a bargain.

Dateline: Orlando

You can't lose what you never had. Or so goes the response at the University of Central Florida to the state's financial straits.

Officials here say they have long been forced to run lean, even more so than the better-established University of Florida and Florida State, which they say were lawmakers' golden children during flush times. So Central Florida has turned to private money to fuel its rapid growth. It made much of corporate partnerships and fund raising while seeking to align itself with the interests of metropolitan Orlando, which is referred to here as a "city state."

The result is a nimble, business-friendly university with little risky debt. And the entrepreneurial approach may be a glimpse of the future for the rest of Florida's public universities.

"We were able to treat this as a big business where we were protecting shareholders," says Richard J. Walsh, chairman of the Board of Trustees. "We're in really good shape."

The city-state strategy does not mean that the university avoids working lawmakers for money. They do, sometimes successfully. A "medical city" that the university is building has been partially paid for by the state, drawing grumbles from elsewhere in the system.

Furthermore, higher-education observers in Florida say, UCF and Florida State have avoided some of the acrimony that has stung the University of Florida, because, unlike the flagship, they have yet to start layoffs and program cuts.

But the university's fixation on Orlando rather than Tallahassee looks smart now, with the state budget in ruins.

Business in this city is more than the shell-shocked tourism and real-estate industries. High tech has long thrived here, and UCF was created to tap into that strength. It was built in 1968, at the end of a dirt road about 15 miles east of downtown Orlando, with a goal of splitting the distance between the Space Coast — anchored by NASA's Kennedy Space Center — and military compounds in Orlando.

These days academic researchers work closely with industry, government, and the military, and 115 companies pay for space on the university's 1,027-acre research park.

The partnership push accelerated in 1992, the beginning of the tenure of John C. Hitt as president. Mr. Hitt, who is among the nation's longest-serving public-university chiefs, announced that Central Florida was to become "America's leading partnership university."

To the surprise of many in the state and beyond, that is a claim UCF can now make seriously. For example, a consortium of the university and five community colleges, including Valencia Community College, has drawn national attention. At the university's Center for Emerging Media, in which the gaming giant Electronic Arts is a partner, students work on video games in a remodeled former showplace for livestock. Down the hall is a motion-capture room where Tiger Woods recently filmed a television commercial.

The university, however, has not escaped budget pain. Its margins are tight, and a \$38-million reduction in state support this year will probably lead to cuts. The tight times come as the university is beginning to slow its growth.

"This campus will only handle 50,000 students," Mr. Hitt says. "We will be built out within the next 10 years."

A next step for the university is to enhance its national profile.

"We're the biggest place that you never heard of," says Randall P. Shumaker, executive director of the university's Institute for Simulation and Training, a computer-modeling and virtual-reality center.

Being a lesser-known quantity has its advantages. Unlike its neighbor up the highway in Gainesville, UCF lacks long-held traditions that can make change difficult.

In fact, this is a campus that is still fiddling with its brand. While Central Florida plays with the big boys in Division I athletics, it settled on a name for its teams only two years ago, dropping "Golden" from "Golden Knights."

Its mascot, Knightro, might not be a household name. But Knightro is a decided improvement from a predecessor, the Citronaut, which featured an astronaut's head with an orange for a body.

The university has just built a full set of expensive sports facilities, including a 10,000-seat arena and 45,000-seat football stadium. The private sector covered the entire \$300-million price tag for that development, with retail deals, naming rights, and rental fees taking the place of state money and student fees.

Mr. Walsh, the board chairman, says the construction would have run longer and cost more with public financing, and might have left the university holding more debt.

The building at UCF continues, most notably on the medical campus near Orlando International Airport. As the centerpiece of a 7,000-acre development that features housing and schools, the campus will include a medical school, children's and veterans' hospitals, and research centers.

Critics have argued that the cash-strapped state can ill afford the money for new medical centers, including \$21-million allocated this year to Central Florida and a complex at Florida International University.

Charles B. Reed, chancellor of California State University, who led Florida's public-university system from 1985 to 1998, calls the Legislature's financing of those projects "insane." He says a stronger Board of Governors of the university system could prevent campuses from competing unwisely for state money.

"They don't govern anything out there," Mr. Reed says. "It is a politicized free-for-all among 11 institutions."

Central Florida officials defend the ambitious development, saying Orlando is the largest U.S. metropolitan area without a medical school.

During a tour of the site, where bulldozers work the sandy turf and former pastureland, Mr. Hickey, the provost, says the medical city has pulled in more than its share of private money, although giving has slowed.

In a rainstorm, Mr. Hickey points through a car window at a classic example of Florida development: palm trees trucked in fully grown and planted beside gleaming new buildings. He says most of the new programs and high-tech facilities pay for themselves. Given the state's budget mess, he predicts, all of Florida's universities will need to earn their own keep.

"There's got to be a good return on our investment," he says, because money from the state "just isn't going to return."

But Mr. Hickey believes that Florida will bounce back eventually, with real estate and a boost from high tech, and that the universities that tap into student demand and the needs of local businesses will make it through the dark days.

"We'll recover," he says. "Florida will go back to being a growth economy."

For the state's universities, any other outcome is unthinkable.

FYI from LA Times

Both ECC and Compton have been receiving calls confusing us with LACCD, fearful that we are cancelling a summer session.

Ann M. Garten
Director, Community Relations
310-660-3406 - ph
310-660-3946 - f
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The Los Angeles Community College District is canceling one of two summer sessions because of state budget cuts, officials said Wednesday.

The session set to begin in mid-June at the district's nine campuses will proceed as planned, but the second session, which had been scheduled to start the second week of July, will be eliminated, the district's Board of Trustees decided at their regular meeting. The session would have included core general education courses including English, math and science as well as vocational and not-for-credit classes, and would have enrolled roughly half the students seeking summer classes, Deputy Chancellor Adriana D. Barrera said. Last year's summer sessions drew 75,000 students.

West Los Angeles College, which had planned only the second session, will offer no summer classes, she added.

State budget cuts put Merced College in dire situation

MercedSun-Star.com

Money for Cal Grants might not be available to students.

By DANIELLE GAINES

Just last week long lines of students snaked around the Merced College campus, waiting to register for classes next fall.

College workers filled out aid forms and set up student schedules, but it was all done against a backdrop of worry.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's May 14 budget revision proposal creates a dire situation for the college: a continued hiring freeze, less travel and fewer course offerings.

The problem is exacerbated by a state funding structure that gives more money to schools with enrollment over 10,000 -- a milestone the college passed last fall.

If the lack of course offerings cause a drop in the number of students on campus, the school's funding would be cut even more.

This year at Merced College, half of the summer class sections will be cut, according to a press release from the campus.

The pain will continue for students next year: 200 fewer courses will be offered next fall, followed by 150 fewer in the spring of 2010.

"We are concerned," Merced College president Ben Duran said in an interview. "As a result, some students may not be ready to transfer or others may not be able to take a full-time load of classes."

Categoricals -- specific funds which can only be spent on the state or federal program it is designated for -- are among the hardest hit.

With six weeks left in the fiscal year, Merced College faces a budget reduction of 15 percent, or more than \$844,000, that it may have to return before the next fiscal year begins on July 1.

Those same programs are expected to be cut 58 percent next year.

"(These cuts) will devastate us," Duran said. "We are looking at disabled students and disadvantaged students not getting any services, literally."

No level of education is faring well.

The University of California system could see a total reduction of \$322 million in the 2009-2010 school year -- on top of the \$115 million cut from the system already this year.

The deep cuts prompted UC Merced student Nibal Halabi to team up with other students at state schools to publicize the lasting effects of one program on the chopping block: Cal Grants, which could be phased out by Fall 2009.

If the Cal Grants were to be 'terminated,' over 250,000 of those students will no longer be able to attend college," Halabi wrote in an e-mail. "It would affect a whole California generation, effectively cutting this generation from receiving higher education (unless they were to take out \$15,000-plus in loans every year)."

More than 8,000 Facebook users have joined the "Save Cal Grants" group. Some 70 percent of Cal Grants recipients attend community college, according to the California Community Colleges System.

The talk of cuts, and their effects, is the result of Schwarzenegger's budget revision proposal to close an ever-widening state deficit.

Now the state legislature is trying to resolve the governor's plan and its own to balance the budget before the 2009-2010 fiscal year starts on July 1.

On May 8, while announcing a new initiative to open the doors of community colleges to more students, President Barack Obama called community colleges one of "America's underappreciated assets."

"These schools offer practical education and technical training, and they're increasingly important centers of learning where Americans can prepare for the jobs of the future."

On May 20, Duran circulated a memo to Merced College employees.

He wrote: "It is ironic that at a time when California's community colleges are on the verge of suffering unprecedented reductions in funding due to the newly acknowledged \$21 billion-plus deficit, President Obama is touting the role that community colleges can serve in bringing America out of this recession."

It looks as if those lines of students will be signing up for fewer classes for quite awhile.

L.A. colleges cancel summer sessions

LA Times

7:17 AM | May 28, 2009

The Los Angeles Community College District is canceling one of two summer sessions because of state budget cuts, officials said Wednesday.

The session set to begin in mid-June at the district's nine campuses will proceed as planned, but the second session, which had been scheduled to start the second week of July, will be eliminated, the district's board of trustees decided at its regular meeting. The session would have included core general education courses including English, math and science as well as vocational and not-for-credit classes, and would have enrolled roughly half the students seeking summer classes, Deputy Chancellor Adriana D. Barrera said. Last year's summer sessions drew 75,000 students.

West Los Angeles College, which had planned only the second session, will offer no summer classes, she added.

-- Gale Holland

L.A. Unified School District cancels bulk of summer school programs

LA Times

The district's decision, part of a wave of state budget cutbacks, is expected to affect both course work and child care.

By Seema Mehta and Jason Song

May 29, 2009

The Los Angeles Unified School District announced Thursday it is canceling the bulk of its summer school programs, the latest in a statewide wave of cutbacks expected to leave hundreds of thousands of students struggling for classes.

The reductions, which will force many parents to scramble for child care, are the most tangible effect of the multibillion-dollar state financial cuts to education. Community colleges also have announced summer program cancellations.

"We have said these cuts will be real, they'll be seen, and they'll be felt," said state Supt. of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell. "For kids who want to take challenging courses, for kids who need basic courses in order to graduate, these choices will contribute toward the dropout rate and we will have a less competent workforce."

Officials from the Los Angeles school district, the state's largest, said that all summer school classes and most non-academic offerings such as playground and pool programs are being canceled at elementary and middle schools. About 225,000 students enroll in summer courses every year, according to the district.

This year, however, only credit-recovery courses in core requirements will be offered at high schools. Nearly 74,000 students are eligible to take those classes. The moves will save the district \$34 million, although officials must cut almost \$97 million more before July.

"We were hanging on to hope we could do summer school because it means a lot for all of us. It's pretty tragic that we can't," said Judy Elliott, the district's chief academic officer.

Many parents said they depend on summer offerings as both educational programs and child care. Besides making up required classes, some students take summer courses that didn't fit into their regular schedule. Others take classes to get ahead.

"We are in dire need of these programs," said Elizabeth Lugo, director of administration and development for Inner City Struggle, an East Los Angeles nonprofit that pushes for academic equality.

Lugo said she has been looking for L.A. Unified programs for her 5-year-old son and fears that there may not be any. "We don't have any family members that can take care of our kids for the whole day," she said.

When voters overwhelmingly rejected a package of state ballot measures last week, state legislators were left grappling with a \$21.3-billion deficit. They are considering Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposal to cut \$5.3 billion from public school districts and community colleges over the next 13 months. L.A. Unified will face up to a \$273-million deficit next year.

Dr. Mitchell Wong, the father of two children at Warner Avenue Elementary, said he recognizes the district must make substantial cuts but called summer school invaluable for raising struggling students' skills.

"Data shows that students lose a lot of ground in terms of learning during the summer months. When they're off, summer school really helps to bridge that gap," said Wong, president of Act4Education, a group of parents trying to improve school performance in West Los Angeles.

"A lot of schools have such a long way to come getting kids up to basic standards of proficiency in math and language arts," he said.

"For kids already behind, summer school is one means to get them up to speed. For schools trying to turn around, summer school is an important component."

John Rogers, director of the UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education and Access, said such cuts will widen the opportunity gap between the poor and the affluent.

"Districts that have more resources will be the ones that will be offering some summer school program . . . and high school students with family wealth will take online" and private classes, he said. "That gives them a step up in California to competitive college eligibility."

According to a recent survey by the California State PTA, nearly 41% of parent-teacher organizations in the state report summer-school cuts.

Petaluma City Schools in Sonoma County provided summer school for about 2,000 K-12 students. But the day after the governor proposed the \$5.3 billion in education cuts, the district eliminated it for all but special-education students and current seniors and juniors who are in jeopardy of not graduating. The move will save the district \$300,000, Supt. Greta Viguie said.

The Capistrano Unified School District in Orange County cut its summer school offerings by roughly three-quarters, saving about \$600,000. "In every area, we have waiting lists," said Ron Lebs, a deputy superintendent of the 51,000-student district. "The need is greater than the offering."

Community colleges are feeling the pinch as well, with the nine-campus Los Angeles Community College District eliminating its second summer session. At one campus in East L.A., 10,000 students had already enrolled.

Gavilan College in Gilroy and College of the Sequoias in Visalia, among others, are cutting back as well. The summer classes are popular both with college students and high schoolers looking to get ahead on their course work.

For Joseph Collazo, 53, the reduced course schedule probably means a six-month delay to re-entering the workforce.

Collazo previously installed software and maintained computers in classrooms throughout the state.

But after liver and kidney transplants, he has a suppressed immune system and cannot be around germ-carrying children. So he enrolled at Cerritos College in Norwalk to retrain as a machine-tool programmer, a relatively solitary profession that would allow him to earn a living without compromising his health.

But half the program's offerings were eliminated this summer, so the Bellflower resident can take only two of the five courses he had planned.

"It's time-consuming and frustrating," he said.