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"U-CAN profiles also include information identified by policymakers as important for accountability," the independent college group writes on its Web site. "Congress and the U.S. Department of Education have called for more consumer information to help the public evaluate and choose colleges -- a goal that NAICU strongly supports."

"The College Portrait is a source of basic, comparable information about public colleges and institutions presented in a common, user-friendly format,... designed to provide greater accountability through accessible, transparent, and comparable information," the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities say in describing their accountability system.

Nice rhetoric -- but the groups' accountability systems/networks don't live up to it, researchers from Education Sector and the American Enterprise Institute say in a report released today.

"[A] close examination of these two prominent efforts reveals serious flaws that undermine their utility as engines of accountability," Chad Aldeman of Education Sector and Andrew Kelly of AEI write in "False Fronts? Behind Higher Education’s Voluntary Accountability Systems." "For these efforts and others like them to improve consumer choice and exert meaningful pressure on schools to improve, they need to be more complete, comparison-friendly, and designed to highlight institutional differences.

"If existing flaws are not resolved, the nation runs the risk of ending up in the worst of all worlds: the appearance of higher education accountability without the reality. As such, policymakers and consumers should not be persuaded that these systems satisfy the need for increased transparency and accountability in higher education until their flaws are addressed."

The authors are particularly dismissive of the independent college group's U-CAN effort, which it says "provides almost no new information about costs, student experiences, or learning outcomes to parents and prospective students." While the site allows students and others to compare multiple colleges based on certain student and institutional characteristics (including college prices), "it does not obligate institutions to gather or reveal any data that are not already available elsewhere."
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NAICU officials, not surprisingly, took umbrage at the groups' conclusions, noting that U-CAN has grown from 440 college and university profiles in 2007 to 708 now.

"The study criticizes the U-CAN's repackaging of existing data, without acknowledging that consumers historically do not know where to find this information in a consumer-friendly format," said David L. Warren, the group's president. "This is what U-CAN aims and succeeds in delivering. The report also fails to note that U-CAN provides original data on institutional net tuition -- information that was a precursor to the new federal requirement." U-CAN emerged in response to pleas from key members of Congress "for a simpler, less confusing way to get the vast reservoir of existing information on cost out to families in an institutionally comparable format," not in response to Spellings' call for learning outcomes data, Warren said.

"The wide diversity of private higher education's institutional missions makes a standard measure, or set of measures, of outcomes impossible. For this reason, U-CAN does not -- and will not -- prescribe one-size-fits-all learning measures for participating colleges," he said.

The authors spend a vast majority of the report detailing imperfections of the College Portraits Web site -- which is in many ways a tribute to the two public college associations that put together the Voluntary System of Accountability. "There's a whole lot more to the VSA than there is to U-CAN, and given some of the issues they tackle, we applaud them for it," Kelly said in an interview. "But while we applaud them for what they've done so far, that doesn't mean we should be satisfied with it."

The report critiques a range of structural and other limitations in the system's approach that impair its usefulness for consumers and policy makers alike. Most fundamentally, College Portraits does not allow users to compare institutions to one another based on a set of characteristics of their choosing, "nor can they easily rank schools on any of the criteria that they might want to."

Although the report notes that data from each institution's College Portrait page resides on the college's own Web site -- which was true when the project began -- that is no longer the case, said Christine Keller, executive director of VSA. The data is now collected on a centralized Web site and the groups could present it in a way that allows users to compare institutions (as the report's authors suggest) if there was demand for it, Keller said, but "there hasn't been a great outcry from our users that it's something they would really need and want."

Kelly and Aldeman praise the public colleges' voluntary system for doing something others have criticized it for: requiring all participating institutions to use one of a handful of measures of student learning outcomes. "Colleges and universities are generally loath to submit to to this kind of standardized testing for fear of how their results might compare to those of their peers," the authors write. They also praise VSA for collecting and publishing data on "student engagement" that many institutions use but many fewer publish.
But they point out that the way that the accountability system uses data from the National Survey of Student Engagement results in relatively little variation among institutions, and note that institutions use drastically different "cost calculators" that make any attempt to compare price information difficult.

The fact that some of the most selective and highly visible public universities in the country (University of California campuses at Berkeley, Los Angeles and San Diego, the University of Michigan, and Georgia Institute of Technology, to name several) and numerous colleges with low graduation rates have opted out of the VSA lead the authors to suggest that such accountability systems should be mandatory instead of voluntary.

They argue less for a federal mandate (though "it's not as if the government mandating that schools report data is a new concept," said AEI's Kelly) than for states to ensure (as North Carolina does) that all of their public institutions submit their information. "If the higher education market is to exert pressure on poor-performing institutions, consumers must have the necessary information to make informed choices and 'vote with their feet,'" the authors write. "Though social and political pressure to join voluntary systems might succeed in the long run, statutory or regulatory pressure from state legislatures to increase transparency could pay more certain and immediate dividends."

Keller of the VSA said officials at the two public college groups were fairly heartened by the think tanks' report, which she said recognized "that the VSA is a pioneering higher education accountability project."

She said the authors made some valid and helpful points about how the College Portraits site might be improved, but dismissed the need for more mandates to participate -- "which is exactly what we were trying to avoid by developing the voluntary system" -- and urging patience instead.

"With two-thirds of our membership participating, and upwards potential, I think we're doing pretty good job representing the public colleges and universities to the public," she said. "We need to continue to work on this, but we've got a good faith effort going."

Aldeman acknowledged that the existing systems were works in progress, and noted that he and Kelly had weighed in not only to critique the existing accountability projects but to shape those still in the works -- to be put forward (at some point, presumably) by groups of research universities and community colleges.

— Doug Lederman
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Inside Higher Ed

March 2, 2010

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Given the strict criteria on when an institution can declare exigency, and the obviously unwelcome scrutiny such a declaration would bring about, institutions have hesitated to invoke that status. As a result, while institutions eliminate adjunct positions all the time, the tenured faculty member has been protected.

But maybe not so much anymore. In a series of recent actions, colleges appear to be ignoring the exigency requirement either when eliminating tenured jobs or considering the possibility of doing so. Administrators defend their moves as necessary to manage institutions in tight financial times, but faculty leaders see an erosion of a key right.

Consider these developments:

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- Clark Atlanta University eliminated 20 tenured faculty members' jobs last year (along with more layoffs of non-tenured faculty members) without declaring financial exigency.
- The Idaho Board of Education last month changed the rules on the budget cuts that public college and university presidents can impose without declaring financial exigency. The impact of the language that was approved is in dispute. Everyone agrees that campus presidents can now impose furloughs without declarations of financial exigency. Faculty members believe the language could be used to impose layoffs -- including of tenure faculty members -- without a declaration of exigency.
- The University of System of Georgia on Monday released lists of program and position cuts its campuses would make -- including the elimination of tenured faculty positions -- if additional steep cuts are ordered by the state. The lists were compiled at the request of legislative committees and nobody in higher education is pushing the planned cuts. But while faculty groups are insisting that these cuts could be imposed only under a state of exigency, the system has resisted linking an exigency declaration to the potential cuts.

Why does a declaration of exigency matter so much? "It really guts tenure when you have layoffs" without financial exigency, said Jack Fiorito, a professor of management and president of the faculty union at Florida State University. Right now, he said, Florida State is hiring in some programs, even as tenured faculty members must search for work elsewhere while waiting
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So if declaring financial exigency would give colleges more flexibility to impose layoffs, why don't they want to do so?

Officials cite a variety of reasons, including concerns that bond-rating agencies or accreditors may immediately impose extra reviews, and that students and donors might be scared off. They argue that the current economic downturn is so severe that colleges need more flexibility even if their financial survival isn't threatened. Indeed, given the general unwillingness of states to close public colleges and universities, but great willingness to impose deep cuts, some state higher education leaders say that they need more budget-balancing options to be available quickly -- even if they can't claim that their campuses are about to collapse.

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A related issue, said John Millsaps, associate vice chancellor of the University System of Georgia, is that higher education systems are being forced to plan for budgets that they hope to avoid. In the last year, the university system has seen state support fall from $2.3 billion to $2.1 billion, and the governor's proposals for next year would bring state funds down to $1.9 billion. The new list of program cuts is in response to state legislative committees that, noting a massive additional shortfall in the state budget, asked the university to come up with plans to cut an additional $300 million in state funds.

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Some of the institutional cut plans submitted specifically state that tenured jobs would not be at risk, although these plans typically have exceptionally high projected layoffs for those off the tenure track. The University of Georgia, for example, says that it could absorb its share of the cut in part by eliminating 543 filled instructor positions held by those off the tenure track, but that it could avoid tenured or tenure-track cuts.

But the plan for Georgia Southern University calls for eliminating 33 tenured faculty positions and the plan for the University of West Georgia would eliminate 17 tenured faculty jobs. Many of the plans call for eliminating entire departments and their associated faculty -- and while they don't specify that tenured faculty would be included, they suggest that would be the case (at least in any programs with tenured faculty members).

The reports are detailed on the negative impact that all of the cuts would have on students, with enrollment limits, fewer options for majors and so forth. And university leaders say that detailing all of these impacts doesn't mean that they want layoffs, but is part of a strategy to avoid or minimize them.

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That's for several reasons. One is that AAUP guidelines do not allow program elimination (as is central in all of the plans) to be a substitute for declaring financial exigency when it comes to eliminating tenured jobs. The AAUP rules give colleges the right to eliminate academic programs for educational reasons decided by the faculty -- and in those cases, tenured lines may be eliminated, although the colleges are supposed to make every effort to find other appropriate positions for those who'd lose their jobs. But that's supposed to be an educational decision-making process, not a budget-cutting process. That's also an issue at Florida State, where administrators have justified the layoffs by saying those losing their jobs are in areas from which the university has decided to withdraw.

Hudson said he is receiving calls from around the state with reports that the campuses have been told that they can go ahead and eliminate programs (if the additional cuts are ordered) without financial exigency and with tenured faculty members losing jobs. The campuses "are being told to just figure it out," he said.
Idaho may provide an illustration of why faculty members care so much about the process of declaring financial exigency. In 1981, the state board declared financial exigency and layoffs followed, including some of tenured faculty members. Some of those faculty members sued, and won a court battle over the appropriateness of the declaration of financial exigency and the way layoffs were determined. The AAUP censured the University of Idaho over the issue in 1983, lifting the censure in 1989. A key part of the lifting of the censure was an agreement about declaring financial exigency, with stipulations about the conditions that would be required for such a declaration.

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Rhoades also said that the protection provided by financial exigency rules -- namely that in many rounds of cuts, tenured faculty jobs can't be included -- is appropriate. "What has been happening nationally is that we have been moving money away from the students and educational activities, moving money away from hiring tenure-track faculty," he said. A strong tenured and tenure-track faculty, he said, is directly related to student learning in that these professors develop the curriculum and build relations with students. "The very first thing we should be protecting are the people and activities that serve the students," he said, and financial exigency rules do that.

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The fact that some of the most selective and highly visible public universities in the country (University of California campuses at Berkeley, Los Angeles and San Diego, the University of Michigan, and Georgia Institute of Technology, to name several) and numerous colleges with low graduation rates have opted out of the VSA lead the authors to suggest that such accountability systems should be mandatory instead of voluntary.

They argue less for a federal mandate (though "it's not as if the government mandating that schools report data is a new concept," said AEI's Kelly) than for states to ensure (as North Carolina does) that all of their public institutions submit their information. "If the higher education market is to exert pressure on poor-performing institutions, consumers must have the necessary information to make informed choices and 'vote with their feet,' " the authors write. "Though social and political pressure to join voluntary systems might succeed in the long run, statutory or regulatory pressure from state legislatures to increase transparency could pay more certain and immediate dividends."

Keller of the VSA said officials at the two public college groups were fairly heartened by the think tanks' report, which she said recognized "that the VSA is a pioneering higher education accountability project."

She said the authors made some valid and helpful points about how the College Portraits site might be improved, but dismissed the need for more mandates to participate -- "which is exactly what we were trying to avoid by developing the voluntary system" -- and urging patience instead.

"With two-thirds of our membership participating, and upwards potential, I think we're doing pretty good job representing the public colleges and universities to the public," she said. "We need to continue to work on this, but we've got a good faith effort going."

Aldeman acknowledged that the existing systems were works in progress, and noted that he and Kelly had weighed in not only to critique the existing accountability projects but to shape those still in the works -- to be put forward (at some point, presumably) by groups of research universities and community colleges.

— Doug Lederman
Eamonn Daniel Higgins never graduated from college, but he took lots of tests, immigration officials said Monday.

The 46-year-old Laguna Niguel resident didn't take the tests for himself, but posed as a foreign student taking tests on behalf of others who wanted to stay in the country on a student visa better known as an F-1 visa, prosecutors said. In exchange, foreigners paid him at least $1,000 per exam, prosecutors allege in court documents.

On Monday morning, Higgins made his first appearance before a federal magistrate at the Santa Ana Federal Courthouse. About the same time, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents fanned out across Los Angeles and Orange County counties, arresting 16 students he is suspected of providing services for.

Of those, six were taken into custody on suspicion of committing visa fraud. The remaining 10 individuals were arrested on suspicion of administrative immigration violations and will be placed in removal proceedings, immigration officials said.

Higgins is suspected of providing services for at least 119 students – all from Middle Eastern countries.

Higgins, a man with salt-and-pepper hair and wearing black Converse-like shoes and a dark jacket, declined to comment. His public defender, Elizabeth Macias, also declined to comment. The magistrate entered a not guilty plea for Higgins, which is common procedure in federal court.

Higgins could face a maximum of five years in prison if convicted. His trial is scheduled to take place May 4.

Immigration officials said it was the most unusual case they've seen involving a suspected visa fraud scheme. They said the sting also highlights the vulnerability in the college and university testing process.

"The whole thing was very gutsy. This is the first I've seen of this," said Debra Parker, acting deputy special agent in charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement investigations in Los Angeles. "This was a pretty sophisticated scheme ... I've never seen a visa fraud scheme involving a professional test taker."

According to prosecutors, the scheme began in January 2002 and ended in December when agents served a search warrant to Higgins' home. Agents said they seized 60 California driver's licenses featuring the names of foreign students and photographs of Higgins or his associates who prosecutors said were hired to take the exams.
The complaint document also states that agents discovered college exams and spiral notebooks with university course notes taken by Higgins among other items.

Immigration officials said Higgins was a legitimate tutor at one point. They say what likely motivated him to get in the visa fraud business was money.

"Apparently his services were pretty well-known in these student circles," Parker said. "They would contact him ... I think it's very ironic. I really do. It's an awful waste of his talent."

On Monday, agents arrested the following men on suspicion of obtaining a visa through knowingly fraudulent means:

• Mohamed Khalfan Hazeem Taresh Almehairi of the United Arab Emirates
• Khalid Butti Khalifa Mohamed Almehairbi of the United Arab Emirates
• Ibrahim Salem Khalfan Almansoori, of the United Arab Emirates
• Abdullah Mohammed Alhogail of Saudi Arabia
• Mohammed Ali Alnuaim of Saudi Arabia
• Saeed Mohamed Hilal Zayed Alfalahi of the United Arab Emirates

All were enrolled at Irvine Valley College, according to a federal complaint filed in federal court against the suspects.

HOW IT WORKED

Immigration officials said the defendant and others he recruited posed as foreign students, gaining access to testing centers at colleges and universities throughout Southern California such as Irvine Valley and Saddleback colleges, prosecutors alleged in court documents.

They gained access with fraudulent California driver's licenses, officials said. In return, Higgins charged at least $1,000 each for English placement exams, math and English tests. The price went up if he or the others attended classes on behalf of a student.

Prosecutors state that he provided services to at least 119 students – all men from Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Kuwait, Turkey, and Qatar.

For the last eight years, prosecutors said Higgins aided students by taking or directing his associates to take math and English proficiency exams to sociology and marketing classes.

About half of the students are believed to have returned to their home countries, immigration officials said.

In Orange County, prosecutors said Higgins took a sociology class at Irvine Valley College on behalf of a United Arab Emirates national who had entered the country on a student visa.

In another case, Parker said, Higgins hired a blond woman who they said posed as a Middle Eastern man to take an exam.

Higgins' suspected associates had not been arrested as of Monday afternoon.
Parker said that other than getting to stay in the country, it's unclear whether the students had more nefarious reasons.

"That's one thing we're drilling on now." Parker said. "It's too premature to know what their motives were other than just wanting to stay here."

She said agents planned to interview the students after Monday's arrests.

A foreign student temporarily granted admission to the U.S. on a student F-1 visa is allowed to stay in the country as long as he or she is enrolled as a full-time student in an educational program, attending classes at least 18 hours a week. Any failure to comply could lead the student to lose his visa, according to immigration law.

**TIES THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA**

Court documents state that agents were tipped off to the suspected scheme after Daly City Police Department officials retrieved a blue wallet dropped in their city.

The wallet contained fraudulent California driver's licenses and the name of Higgins' nephew, court documents filed by the prosecution state. Each of the licenses had a photograph of Higgins' nephew with seven different names.

Officials stated they later discovered that each of the names on the licenses belonged to foreign nationals who had entered the United States on a student visa and were studying at different schools in the area.

Prosecutors stated that the students attended the following colleges and universities:

Irvine Valley College, Saddleback College, Coastline Community College, Golden West College, Orange Coast College, El Camino College, Santa Monica College; California State University in Los Angeles, California State University in Long Beach, and California State University in Dominguez Hills.

Immigration officials plan to educate college and university officials, making them better aware of visa fraud schemes, Parker said.

"So they can guard themselves and protect themselves of such abuses in the future," she added.
March 9 — El Camino College will present its 10th Annual cherry blossom festival from 1 to 2 p.m. Tuesday, March 9 on campus, next to the planetarium at the adjacent cherry tree grove.

Now known as the Dr. Nadine Ishitani Hata Memorial Cherry Blossom Festival, the event is named after the college’s former vice president of Academic Affairs, who served El Camino College for 34 years as history professor, dean, and vice president. Hata was a fourth-generation Japanese American whose teaching and scholarship promoted awareness of issues related to Asian Americans.

The winner of the 2010 Dr. Nadine Ishitani Hata Memorial Scholarship will be announced at the event. Renowned koto player and composer, Yukiko Matsuyama, will perform several works on the 13-string harp-like instrument, the national instrument of Japan. Student presentations will also be featured, and light refreshments will be served.

Much of Hata’s career as an internationally known historian focused on improving American history education to include the contributions of both genders and all races and ethnic groups. Hata was a fellow of the Historical Society of Southern California and a distinguished humanities educator of the Community College Humanities Association. A recipient of the California Community College Chancellor’s John W. Rice Award for Promoting Equity and Diversity, Hata co-published with her husband, Dr. Donald Hata, a supplement to elementary school history textbooks that documented the plight of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Hata was instrumental in working with American Honda Motor Corporation to bring several dozen Japanese cherry trees to El Camino College 10 years ago. Under her leadership, the cherry blossom festival has become a college tradition celebrating friendship and the beginning of spring.
Business funding advice

Monday. The Small Business Development Center is offering free, by appointment, advice for small business owners who want funding for their businesses, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at El Camino College Business Training Center, 13430 Hawthorne Blvd., Hawthorne. Call 310-973-3177 for an appointment.
College 2.0: More Professors Could Share Lectures Online. But Should They?

Chronicle of Higher Education

March 7, 2010

There are good reasons to press the 'record' button, but uploading to the Internet might desecrate the classroom

By Jeffrey R. Young

Charlottesville, Va.

"Camera shy" is not the first phrase that comes to my mind for Siva Vaidhyanathan. The University of Virginia faculty member commands healthy fees for his lively presentations on media studies and law at conferences, and he has even appeared on The Daily Show With Jon Stewart. But he's not sure if he should record his lectures—or if he does, whether he should share them freely online.

An associate professor who focuses on digital media, Mr. Vaidhyanathan regularly teaches and writes enthusiastically about movements to make music, movies, and other creative works free online. I thought he'd be one of the first people to advocate open access to lectures.

But no. "I find myself playing devil's advocate all the time" in class, he said. "I don't want to be on the record saying something I don't even believe" if the lectures go out on the Web. He considers the classroom a "sacred space" that may need to stay private to preserve academic freedom.

Professors across the country are now wrestling with this issue. More and more colleges have installed microphones or cameras in lecture halls and bought easy-to-use software to get lecture recordings online. The latest Campus Computing Survey, which gathers data on classroom technology nationwide, found that 28 percent of colleges have a strategic plan to provide coursecasting equipment, and 35 percent more are working on a plan now.

Those plans raise a lot of issues. Some professors are camera shy—at least when it comes to their teaching. Others say they discuss ideas with their students that are not yet ready for prime
time. And some administrators are nervous about giving away too much of their educational content as the cost of college continues to rise.

So far, most lectures seem to be locked up. A vast majority of the classes recorded on college campuses are available only to registered students in those courses as a study aid, say experts who track the trend. At Purdue University, for instance, just 24 of the 92 courses now recorded are open to the public through the university's ambitious coursecasting program.

Though several colleges run such open-courseware projects, in which they make syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, and other materials free, most of those efforts are still small, and only a few of the open courses include full lecture videos.

And though hundreds of colleges have set up channels on YouTube or reserved sections of Apple's iTunes Store devoted to material from colleges, the majority of the public content on those sites consists of marketing material or sports highlights rather than course lectures.

It's worth noting that the famous aphorism "Information wants to be free" is part of a longer quote from Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Catalog editor who is also a computer pioneer. The other part of what he said, at a conference in 1984, was "Information wants to be expensive because it's so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life."

The next few years could be crucial for determining how this balance tips for lecture videos, which can be produced for next to nothing but remain highly valuable in the eyes of professors and administrators.

**Barriers and Fears**

Mark A. Thoma, an associate professor of economics at the University of Oregon, was one of the first professors to make his every lecture free to the world. He started all of four years ago.

Like many professors I've talked to who have tried doing that, he says he's gained more viewers and attention than he ever imagined. Fans of his econometrics lectures are so loyal that some even sent him money to buy a new camera to improve the image quality.

Mr. Thoma said he hasn't felt inhibited in his lectures by the flashing red camera light, though at first he thought he might. But he knows colleagues who say they're not willing to join him.
"People are way more self-conscious about their teaching than you would think," he told me. "They're afraid people are going to grab some little clip and make fun of you."

Because so many students carry cellphone cameras that can shoot video, though, any professor could already become a laughing stock on YouTube. At least with his lecture recordings, Mr. Thoma has the ability to edit out any potentially embarrassing spots before he uploads.

For him the biggest obstacle has been finding the time to manage the recording process. He still does it the old-fashioned way—he hires a student to operate a camera during class, and he uploads the video footage to his personal YouTube account.

Mr. Vaidhyanathan struggles with the hassle factor. (He says he does hope to find a way to record and make available at least parts of his lectures, in part because he finds other professors' videos so useful.) The University of Virginia has a system set up in some classrooms that is designed to make recording a class as easy as clicking a few icons. But on a recent afternoon when he tried it, the system prompted him for a password and then didn't accept his. In the past, he said, he was able to log in and record his lecture, but then he had no idea how to find the file or post it online for his students.

John Alexander, a manager of instructional technology at the university, said that officials are working on bringing in a new system that will work better and be easier to use than what the institution has now. Other colleges are improving their technology as well, and the process seems to be getting easier on many campuses.

And while many professors feared that students would skip class if they could watch it in reruns, many professors I've talked to said they were easily able to short-circuit that practice by offering quizzes in class or taking attendance and making showing up part of the grade.

Copyright can be trickier. The law allows an exception for classroom use of clips of creative materials, but that doesn't extend to the public Web. So a professor can show a slide with a table from a textbook in physical class settings, but showing that same slide on an open Web site as part of a lecture video can potentially lead to legal trouble. Early this year, the University of California at Los Angeles temporarily forced professors to stop posting copyrighted videos to course Web sites after a trade group complained that the professors were violating copyright law by doing so. Last week the university decided to resume the practice, though, after its lawyers reviewed the issue.
For some guidance, professors can check out the "Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for OpenCourseWare," offered (free, naturally) by American University's Center for Social Media. Compliance can be difficult though, which is why open-courseware efforts end up spending time and money on securing permissions.

**What If?**

So what if all the professors now recording lectures for their students opened the videos to the world?

Not the discussion portion of class—let's skirt the issue of student privacy by excluding that. Imagine that all of those lectures, in which the camera is pointed squarely at a professor, were suddenly freely available.

Crazier things have happened: Google is digitizing the full text of millions of books in major university libraries as you read this (though the company faces court challenges over whether it is violating copyright in the process). What if, alongside a library of all the world's books, there was a library of tens of thousands of lecture videos?

Some scholars' ideas would be stolen. Some professors would face mockery. Some students would try the equivalent of home schooling at the college level, saving money by skipping the campus and watching at home instead.

Ideas would flow, though. Some students would get an earlier and better sense of what they want to major in by virtually sitting in on courses they may never have been exposed to before. Some professors would watch each other and improve their techniques by seeing what works for others.

And lectures might just fall out of popular use in physical classrooms, because professors could just point to their past recordings or those of others and assign viewings for homework. To keep students interested in the classroom, some professors would focus more on discussion or group projects and things that can't be easily captured on video.

Such radical openness is unlikely, and maybe not even desirable. After all, it will probably remain up to each professor to decide whether or not to press the record button. And it might work for some disciplines better than others. (Medical and highly technical ones have been the quickest to adopt the practice so far, I'm told.)
Mr. Vaidhyanathan's lectures are certainly worth catching. The day I visited his class, he gave the 200 students a clear outline of the differences between analog and digital media, and explained why using ones and zeros changes everything. He showed a couple of YouTube videos, flashed some homemade diagrams, and got a couple of students to express their thoughts, all the while pacing the floor at the front of the classroom, gesturing to emphasize his points.

It's not the kind of presentation he would do at a conference. It's more detailed and less crowd-pleasing.

But if you're a student or professor of media studies, it'd be worth a download—if he ever decides to put it online.
L.A. college board to name inspector general

latimes.com

The decision is reached after the disclosure of misspending on the district's $5.7-billion bond construction program. A whistle-blower complaint program also will be established.

By Gale Holland and Michael Finnegan

9:52 PM PST, March 10, 2010

Trustees of the Los Angeles Community College District voted Wednesday to name an inspector general to guard against waste and corruption in its $5.7-billion bond construction program.

The vote came after the district's bond counsel, Lisalee Anne Wells, told the board that large sums of bond money had been spent on matters not directly related to campus construction, such as travel and public relations. The state Constitution does not allow such spending of voter-approved bond money, she told the board. Wells said she did not know how much bond money had been misspent.

Board President Mona Field said the trustees had no experience running a large bond program when it began rebuilding its nine campuses in 2001. She described the program as a success, but added: "We missed a few details, clearly."

The seven-member board voted unanimously to establish the position of inspector general.

"Bond counsel has made it clear there are many unauthorized expenditures being made every day," said trustee Georgia Mercer. "We've got to stop that as soon as we can."

Before voting for the measure, trustee Sylvia Scott Hayes voiced reluctance to support it, saying the district did not need another "layer of bureaucracy."

The board also voted to establish a whistle-blower complaint program to collect reports of "potential illegal activity, fraud, waste or corruption" in the bond program. The reports would be investigated by the inspector general.


The district's colleges are City, East Los Angeles, Harbor, Mission, Pierce, Southwest, Trade Technical, Valley and West Los Angeles.
The Shrunken Student Aid Bill
Inside Higher Ed

March 15, 2010
WASHINGTON -- As Congressional Democrats and the White House begin a last-ditch push to pass legislation to overhaul health care this week, it remains far from certain that a plan to revamp the student loan programs will be merged into the health legislation. While the odds of that happening are better than not, it is still possible that Democrat leaders will decide to ditch or postpone action on the student aid measure if they conclude that it could discourage even a few key lawmakers from supporting the health care bill.

But after several intense days of behind-the-scenes negotiations, a few things have become clear(er) about the stripped-down student aid bill that Congress may consider in the coming days:

- The measure will fall well short of the Obama administration's original proposal to transform the student aid programs, giving President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan few of the policy changes and accountability tools they'd hoped for.
- Pell Grants would remain the legislation's top priority, although because of the program's rapidly escalating costs, the value of the maximum grant would rise less than originally planned.
- Community colleges will get little or none of nearly $10 billion they'd been slated to receive.
- Historically black, Hispanic and other colleges could benefit because Democratic leaders are afraid of angering small but powerful blocs of minority members of Congress.
- Some of the savings from the loan overhaul may be used to help pay for health care reform.

As of late Sunday, the situation surrounding the health/financial aid legislation remained very fluid. Congressional Democrats and the White House were still scrambling to find ways to make the student aid legislation work financially, and higher education lobbyists whose priorities appeared to be losing out were urging their advocates to make last-minute pleas.

Here's what has happened in the last few days, since we reported last week that the White House and Democratic Congressional leaders were leaning toward linking the student loan overhaul with the health care bill in a process, known as budget reconciliation, that would allow them to pass the legislation with only a majority of lawmakers instead of the 60 votes required under regular Senate rules (presented with the caveat that all of this is subject to change in the coming hours and days):
The most significant development was the decision by Sen. Kent Conrad, the North Dakota Democrat who heads the Senate Budget committee, to use the more recent and lower estimate provided by the Congressional Budget Office of the savings that would be generated by the student loan overhaul. The White House and Congressional Democrats had counted on producing $87 billion in revenue over 10 years by ending the lender-based Federal Family Education Loan Program and initiating all federal student loans out of the competing Direct Loan Program.

The administration had won support for (or at least minimized opposition to) that move from the two-thirds of colleges that participate in the lender-based loan program by planning to spread that $87 billion to a wide range of popular priorities: a huge boost and a permanent, steady stream of funds for the Pell Grant Program, a massive new grant program (combined with high-profile visibility) for two-year colleges, an expansion and remaking of the Perkins Loan Program, and a new $3 billion "Access and Completion Fund" designed to reward states and institutions that found ways to increase degree production.

But in the months since the House of Representatives approved the Obama student loan plan as the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act last fall, increases in the number of colleges switching to the direct loan program (because of the pending legislation) had the effect of reducing the estimate of savings that would be produced by the full-blown abandonment of the lender-based program, to $67 billion over 11 years ($61 billion over 10 years), instead of the original $87 billion.

At the same time, the huge numbers of students flooding into higher education because of the economic downturn -- and the fact that so many Americans find themselves in worse financial shape -- have sent sky-high the projected costs of the administration's plan to increase the maximum Pell Grant and tie future increases in it to changes in the Consumer Price Index plus 1 percentage point. Those developments have also created a massive shortfall in the Pell program for the current 2010 fiscal year and next year -- money (roughly $19 billion) that Congress must find a way to cover at some point, if not through this measure.

Those economic assumptions have wreaked havoc on the legislation's bottom line (budget reconciliation bills must be cost-neutral to the government, meaning they must produce enough in savings to offset their costs). So what should have been good news for the measure and its supporters -- the decision to release it from its months-long purgatory by conjoining it with the health reform legislation in the process known as budget reconciliation -- has had negative implications as well.

Given that health reform is the Obama administration's absolute No. 1 domestic priority, many Democratic lawmakers have been wary of linking the student loan legislation to the health care bill, for fear that opposition to the loan provisions could discourage even a handful of lawmakers from supporting the overall twinned measure (and potentially sinking health reform). Some have also been swayed, or at least made cautious, by loan industry and Republican assertions that the
Obama plan would kill thousands of jobs or put colleges that can't make the switch to direct lending in time (and their students) in harm's way.

But the bill's most visible Senate supporter, Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa (who with Rep. George Miller of California has argued passionately for the legislation), reportedly helped persuade his colleagues to link the two measures with a heartfelt speech at a Democratic caucus lunch on Thursday warning that without passing the legislation, Congress could find itself in the uncomfortable position of actually having to cut the size of Pell Grants for existing students by about half. That's because the maximum grant for the last two years has been raised (and arguably inflated) by funds from a 2007 budget reconciliation legislation and last year's economic stimulus package; without that money, which the current SAFRA bill would essentially replace and supplement, the maximum grant would tumble.

That fact aside, part of what led Democratic leaders (at least to this point in time) to combine the two bills is the reality that the health care legislation, standing on its own, cannot produce enough budgetary savings to meet a requirement in last spring's budget resolution that it reduce the deficit.

So a major element of what made it attractive for Democrats to incorporate the student loan provisions into the health legislation -- the fact that they could use some of the billions generated by the loan changes to meet deficit reduction requirements -- is likely to result in even less money being available for students and colleges if the legislation ultimately passes.

**What's In the Bill (as of Now)**

Democrats have had to get their knives out to get the student loan measure's costs under the $61-billion-over-10-years ceiling. Some of the casualties -- like $8 billion for early childhood education, and $4 billion for school modernization -- didn't trouble college leaders a bit, as they quietly opposed using savings from the student loan programs for those non-college purposes all along.

But some of the other cuts would prove enormously painful. Foremost among them is the apparent excision of the entire American Graduation Initiative, which would pour as much as $12 billion over 10 years into grants and construction funds for community colleges. President Obama has put two-year institutions at the center of his higher education agenda, a major change from previous administrations, and the American Graduation Initiative was designed not just to provide more money to the colleges, but to link the money to a set of quality indicators aimed at increasing accountability demands on them.

The American Association of Community Colleges sent out an "urgent alert" to its members via e-mail on Friday, warning of the initiative's possible demise and asking them to call their Congressional representatives.
David S. Baime, the association's vice president for government relations, expressed dismay over the program's seeming fate, noting that two-year colleges "have been planning around this program" and that the institutions "were openly embracing a program that required a new kind of accountability toward the federal government" (a stance that troubled representatives of other sectors of higher education, especially those at independent institutions, who feared that the approach of tying federal money to a set of indicators determined by the government could become a staple of other federal aid programs).

Also missing from the final legislation, as of now, is the administration's plan to revamp the Perkins Loan Program, through which it hoped to institute accountability provisions that would reward colleges that enrolled and graduated significant numbers of low-income students.

In setting their priorities for what to do with the $61 billion available through SAFRA, Democrats have put the Pell Grant atop the list, and about $50 billion of the bill's spending would go to the program, including paying off some but not all of the program's shortfall for 2010. But because of the grants' exploding price tag, even that vast infusion of money won't go nearly as far as the Obama administration had originally hoped. The legislation that is likely to start moving its way through Congress today would, as planned, link increases in the maximum Pell Grant to the Consumer Price Increase.

But Democrats have dropped the idea of adding 1 percentage point to that increase annually, amid other changes that would leave the maximum grant at no more than $6,400 by 2019, rather than the $6,800 originally envisioned.

Besides the Pell Grant funds, the rest of the $61 billion would go toward providing grant funds for historically black and Hispanic-serving colleges (roughly $2 billion to $3 billion), extending a program created in 2007 that gives grants to colleges and others for improving students' access to college (the administration would be forced to abandon its plans for revamping that program into a bigger and broader one that would hold grant recipients accountable for innovations that help students graduate from college), and giving students more options for repaying their loans, including tying the size of their payments to their income.

In addition, as much as $5 billion would be set aside to meet the deficit reduction requirements for both the education and health care portions of the budget reconciliation legislation.

The next steps for the legislation this week: The Congressional Budget Office will release a revised accounting (or "score") of the budget bill late today or tomorrow, which will make clear the exact cost and savings of the legislation and determine once and for all whether the numbers add up -- and what's in or out.

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Given that health reform is the Obama administration's absolute No. 1 domestic priority, many Democratic lawmakers have been wary of linking the student loan legislation to the health care bill, for fear that opposition to the loan provisions could discourage even a handful of lawmakers from supporting the overall twinned measure (and potentially sinking health reform). Some have also been swayed, or at least made cautious, by loan industry and Republican assertions that the
Obama plan would kill thousands of jobs or put colleges that can't make the switch to direct lending in time (and their students) in harm's way.

But the bill's most visible Senate supporter, Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa (who with Rep. George Miller of California has argued passionately for the legislation), reportedly helped persuade his colleagues to link the two measures with a heartfelt speech at a Democratic caucus lunch on Thursday warning that without passing the legislation, Congress could find itself in the uncomfortable position of actually having to cut the size of Pell Grants for existing students by about half. That's because the maximum grant for the last two years has been raised (and arguably inflated) by funds from a 2007 budget reconciliation legislation and last year's economic stimulus package; without that money, which the current SAFRA bill would essentially replace and supplement, the maximum grant would tumble.

That fact aside, part of what led Democratic leaders (at least to this point in time) to combine the two bills is the reality that the health care legislation, standing on its own, cannot produce enough budgetary savings to meet a requirement in last spring's budget resolution that it reduce the deficit.

So a major element of what made it attractive for Democrats to incorporate the student loan provisions into the health legislation -- the fact that they could use some of the billions generated by the loan changes to meet deficit reduction requirements -- is likely to result in even less money being available for students and colleges if the legislation ultimately passes.

**What's In the Bill (as of Now)**

Democrats have had to get their knives out to get the student loan measure's costs under the $61-billion-over-10-years ceiling. Some of the casualties -- like $8 billion for early childhood education, and $4 billion for school modernization -- didn't trouble college leaders a bit, as they quietly opposed using savings from the student loan programs for those non-college purposes all along.

But some of the other cuts would prove enormously painful. Foremost among them is the apparent excision of the entire American Graduation Initiative, which would pour as much as $12 billion over 10 years into grants and construction funds for community colleges. President Obama has put two-year institutions at the center of his higher education agenda, a major change from previous administrations, and the American Graduation Initiative was designed not just to provide more money to the colleges, but to link the money to a set of quality indicators aimed at increasing accountability demands on them.

The American Association of Community Colleges sent out an "urgent alert" to its members via e-mail on Friday, warning of the initiative's possible demise and asking them to call their Congressional representatives.
David S. Baime, the association's vice president for government relations, expressed dismay over the program's seeming fate, noting that two-year colleges "have been planning around this program" and that the institutions "were openly embracing a program that required a new kind of accountability toward the federal government" (a stance that troubled representatives of other sectors of higher education, especially those at independent institutions, who feared that the approach of tying federal money to a set of indicators determined by the government could become a staple of other federal aid programs).

Also missing from the final legislation, as of now, is the administration's plan to revamp the Perkins Loan Program, through which it hoped to institute accountability provisions that would reward colleges that enrolled and graduated significant numbers of low-income students.

In setting their priorities for what to do with the $61 billion available through SAFRA, Democrats have put the Pell Grant atop the list, and about $50 billion of the bill's spending would go to the program, including paying off some but not all of the program's shortfall for 2010. But because of the grants' exploding price tag, even that vast infusion of money won't go nearly as far as the Obama administration had originally hoped. The legislation that is likely to start moving its way through Congress today would, as planned, link increases in the maximum Pell Grant to the Consumer Price Increase.

But Democrats have dropped the idea of adding 1 percentage point to that increase annually, amid other changes that would leave the maximum grant at no more than $6,400 by 2019, rather than the $6,800 originally envisioned.

Besides the Pell Grant funds, the rest of the $61 billion would go toward providing grant funds for historically black and Hispanic-serving colleges (roughly $2 billion to $3 billion), extending a program created in 2007 that gives grants to colleges and others for improving students' access to college (the administration would be forced to abandon its plans for revamping that program into a bigger and broader one that would hold grant recipients accountable for innovations that help students graduate from college), and giving students more options for repaying their loans, including tying the size of their payments to their income.

In addition, as much as $5 billion would be set aside to meet the deficit reduction requirements for both the education and health care portions of the budget reconciliation legislation.

The next steps for the legislation this week: The Congressional Budget Office will release a revised accounting (or "score") of the budget bill late today or tomorrow, which will make clear the exact cost and savings of the legislation and determine once and for all whether the numbers add up -- and what's in or out.

— Doug Lederman
These are not the choices college leaders signed up for: immigrants or retirees? Poor or rich? English classes or courses in car repair?

A series of tough years has forced California colleges and universities to slash budgets, in part by cutting back on the number of classes they offer. Nearly every campus has trimmed courses, and more cuts are planned for the summer and fall.

The lack of money puts administrators in a particularly difficult position, forcing them to decide which students get pushed off campus.

With unemployment and the number of high school graduates both hitting record levels, demand for higher education is at an all-time high. But California's two public university systems have cut enrollment, and community colleges expect a decline this year because students are unable to get the classes they need.

Unemployed workers "are trying to come back to school, and they know this is the place to do it," said McKinley Williams, president of Contra Costa College in San Pablo. "But we're having to turn them away."

The quandary comes down to priorities. Each school decides which programs are essential — and which ones must now be considered luxuries.

At most campuses, that strategy has eliminated classes with fewer than 20 students and electives that do not help students achieve degrees or certificates, such as courses on sports-related films, one such class proposed for elimination at Chico State.

"I don't think any (department) can get out unscathed," said James Houpis, who this month became provost at Cal State East Bay. "But there's still a wide breadth of courses available."

UC Berkeley leaders said budget cuts have had a minimal effect on courses there, but the Cal State and community college systems have been less fortunate. Neither system could provide statistics on how many classes have been cut, but anecdotal evidence shows students have had serious problems getting the courses they need.

Standing room only
Nearly every class at Bay Area community colleges has been full this year, and most of those courses also have long waiting lists of students hoping to get in.

Students at Laney College "were standing up in classes; they were going to other classrooms to get desks," said Leonard Hutton, a student at the Oakland college. "This semester, we had people scrambling just to find add cards (to get into classes) because the school ran out."

The effects have been most noticeable at the state's 110 community colleges, which routinely are flooded by new students during tough economic times.

The state chancellor's office directed colleges to protect core classes — remedial, vocational and transfer-oriented courses — and to consider cutting recreational courses instead.

Those three core areas "need to take precedence over aqua aerobics or a cooking class," said Erik Skinner, the state's vice chancellor for fiscal policy. "We said, 'This is the right thing to do.' We think districts are taking heed."

Colleges generally give registration preference to continuing students, which means that incoming freshmen have more trouble finding classes when course sections get cut. Several school leaders said new students are having problems getting into science and math classes in particular.

The problems can be significantly more frustrating for students whose parents did not attend college or for those without a firm grasp of English, said Norma Valdez-Jimenez, a Contra Costa College counselor.

"The students who really suffer the most are the ones who are less savvy about maneuvering the system," she said.

"That's the majority of our students."

Three areas hit hardest

In many cases, the commitment to core classes has come at the expense of three areas: summer courses, "community education" programs and athletics.

Most colleges are cutting back dramatically on summer school. City College of San Francisco has canceled most summer classes, and other campuses are trimming their summer schedules by 20 to 50 percent.

"I think people are really going to feel it this summer," said Jim Wright, vice president for academic affairs at Fremont's Ohlone College, which will offer 142 fewer summer classes this year, and only at the school's Newark campus.

"For us, the fall and the spring semesters are really higher priorities than the summer."
Colleges also increasingly are deciding students should pay closer to the full costs of recreational courses, such as aerobics and swimming, and other electives seen more as luxuries than necessities. State subsidies keep the price of a three-unit course at $78 for most community college students, but more nonrequired classes than ever cost closer to $200.

And budget cuts have led many schools to reduce athletic funding. Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill announced this month it was suspending track, cross country and tennis, and Contra Costa College is requiring its teams to raise half of their funding.

Next year’s budget could be worse for some colleges, which would lead to even fewer classes in the fall. Administrators and counselors worry the cutbacks will have lasting damage, particularly in low-income areas.

"If you're looking in our community, coming to college is life-changing," said Valdez-Jimenez, the Contra Costa College counselor. "If they show up and don't have access, that has ripple effects in the community."
Hope Amid Disappointment
March 16, 2010

After a year of high hopes, the apparent shedding of the American Graduation Initiative from combined health care/student aid legislation has left many community college officials deeply disappointed.

But, whether because they are accustomed to being disappointed by Washington politicians, or because they remain hopeful that the initiative and its financial windfall may re-emerge down the road, many community college leaders looked at the bright side in interviews on Monday. Some said their sector had benefited immensely from having been a focus of the Obama administration's education and jobs agenda for so long, and are optimistic about federal support for their institutions in the future.

The AGI, originally a part of the larger Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009, would invest more than $12 billion in the nation’s community colleges during the next 10 years, and calls for 5 million more two-year graduates by 2020. But as Democratic lawmakers continued to work Monday to craft a combined health care and student aid measure that would meet budget targets and reduce the deficit enough to meet a Congressional mandate, the initiative was among the many priorities that the administration and its Congressional allies appeared to sacrifice.

“Even though we understand the mechanics involved don’t necessarily reflect a lessening of support or appreciation of community colleges, it’s still disappointing,” said Scott Ralls, president of the North Carolina Community College System, who like many of his peers avoided any hint of anger or serious frustration. “It did take the air out of our sails,” added John J. Sbrega, president of Bristol Community College, in Massachusetts.

Ralls and others seemed inclined to focus on the positives, like the national attention the initiative brought to community colleges. “I’m someone who believes that community colleges have been an unrecognized player in the U.S. education fabric, and I think recognition, even without resources, has been important for us,” he said.

Other presidents said they had been using the AGI and President Obama’s goal as leveraging tools with state and local politicians to argue the importance of their institutions in a financial recovery.

“When President Obama announced the AGI, that was perhaps the first time in decades that community colleges had been put on what I would describe as the national agenda,” said Wright Lassiter Jr., president of the Dallas County Community College District, in Texas. “For him to use the phrase ‘community college’ in his State of the Union address was significant. We’ve been using the thrust of AGI as one of the focal points in expressing our views to the Texas legislature and to other stakeholders as to how we can help respond to economic and work force development needs. The AGI has done a lot to raise awareness.”
Community college lobbying during the AGI debate has even spurred some local initiatives that remain, despite the potential loss of federal funding.

Sbrega noted that the president's "wonderful" focus on two-year institutions "mirrors what [Massachusetts] Gov. Deval Patrick is doing. He’s been emphasizing the importance of community colleges and has been arguing for them to be free for all who seek access."

Also, in Philadelphia, Mayor Michael Nutter recently set the goal of doubling the number of percentage of city residents who attend and complete college in the next 10 years. Currently, only 21 percent of Philadelphians hold baccalaureate degrees.

“Local officials have done a good job of articulating some of President Obama’s goals for education,” said Stephen M. Curtis, president of Community College of Philadelphia. “Still, I do hope Congress returns to this at some point. I think we have to make education, education reform and educational attainment every bit as important as health care or whatever other priorities we think are essential to provide.”

Some two-year-college officials say that preparing themselves to meet the high standards that would have been in place when they applied for grants under the graduation initiative had helped improve their methods of assessing themselves.

“We recognize that the goals of the AGI are our goals as well: increasing college completion rates, closing achievement gaps, melding education and workforce development efforts in way that benefit people today and tomorrow,” Randy Schmailzl, president of Metropolitan Community College, in Nebraska, said via e-mail. “In that respect, the AGI and its outcome benchmarks have served as a catalyst for continuous improvements at MCC that will continue with or without this new funding resource. That said, we are living in a time of dwindling resources. If Congress fails to ensure some funding for these types of improvements, along with the facilities support that is so critical to their success, state and local resources may not be able to make up the difference.”

Lassiter echoed that sentiment, noting that AGI’s benchmarks will live on in Dallas.

“It’ll cause us to take a closer look at how well we’re doing our jobs,” Lassiter said. “For me, this is very, very important, because if there was to be funding because of AGI, it would be based upon if we were being good stewards of that money. We’re still working hard on all measures of student success and how we’re doing in terms of retention and transfer and emerging workforce needs.”

Even if AGI were to pass, funding would not be a guarantee, as its grants were to be selected via a competitive process. Still, many community colleges had planned to seek grants to help with essential facilities projects.
“We were hopeful for construction funds,” said Vicki P. Hawsey, president of Wallace State Community College, in Alabama. “We have a health sciences and life sciences building that we were nearing the stage to breaking ground on, but this’ll slow down attainment of that goal. We’re already admitting less than half the nursing students we could because we’re already at capacity in our existing building. To move forward with construction, like all things in higher education, money will likely come through assessing students a fee to pay for part of the cost.”

Other leaders say they will look to local businesses and other community members to help fund the projects they had hoped to receive AGI funds to start or complete.

“We just announced the closure of four of our campus centers,” said Marsi Liddell, president of Aims Community College, in Colorado. “Any space we leased will be gone…. Whether it comes from the corporate world or what have you, you’re going to see more dollars coming from that sphere here at Aims. Major research universities have endowments and alumni, but community colleges are going to have to look more to the community.”

Despite the disappointment at the seeming loss of AGI, at least one community college president noted that the legislative priority towering over all other higher education priorities -- retaining Pell Grant increases for low-income students -- was enormously important to two-year institutions.

“I will say something which may not go over well with my colleagues,” Sbrega said. “But, to take from the medical field, my first take on this is to 'do no harm' to Pell Grants. It’s important that that is still there. Community colleges are helped by those funds, too.”

Sbrega and other community college leaders expressed frustration that AGI may become the victim of a highly partisan fight over the details of the student bill and health care reform. Still, many said they are optimistic about future federal support for their institutions.

“This is a difficult political environment we find ourselves in,” said Lassiter. “It’s unfortunate AGI got stuck with something else. Though it’s clear to me nothing is going to happen for AGI for at least a year or so, we won’t stop our efforts advocating for it.”

— David Moltz
Mass. aims to tie goals of colleges to economy

boston.com

By Tracy Jan
Globe Staff / March 17, 2010

BROCKTON — State education officials plan to overhaul the way Massachusetts colleges and universities measure and report student achievement, in an effort to make the public system more relevant to the state economy and to ensure that students of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds are being served.

The ambitious plan, discussed at yesterday’s meeting of the Board of Higher Education at Massasoit Community College, is expected to be approved this spring. The plan reflects a national push toward more accountability in higher education amid concern that the United States is losing ground competitively.

Colleges already compile reams of data each year about graduation rates, enrollment, and pass rates on licensure exams for teaching and nursing, but this will be the first time those indicators, as well as others that have yet to be developed, are tied to the needs of the Massachusetts economy, education officials said. Massachusetts is among the first states in the nation to develop such a comprehensive accountability system.

Under the proposed plan, called the Vision Project, public colleges and universities would report data each year that measures, for example, what types of degrees are being conferred to make sure that enough nurses, teachers, scientists, and engineers are being trained and how different groups of students perform on graduate school entrance examinations and professional licensure tests.

Once collected, the data would be used to highlight colleges that are doing a particularly good job in a key area of concern — graduating minority students, for instance — so their peers could try to replicate their success.

The annual report on student achievement, which would be submitted to the board and available to the public, would also include where Massachusetts ranks among the 50 states on each measure when comparable data exists and shed light on how well the state’s minority and low-income students are being educated, with the goal of leading the nation.

As the number of minority college-age students rises rapidly in Massachusetts, the new accountability system will highlight disparities in achievement between students from different demographic groups, a persistent problem made evident at the elementary and secondary school level by the 2001 federal No Child Left Behind mandate.
“You begin to realize that on one level, we may look fine, but on another level, we’re far from fine,’’ Richard Freeland, state commissioner of higher education, said in a recent interview. “We can’t afford a public higher education system that is anything less than excellent. If we’re not doing well by them, our state’s not going to have a future.”

By agreeing to hold all community and state colleges, as well as universities, accountable for progress toward a set of common goals, state officials said they also hope to generate more financial support for public higher education. Taxpayers want to see a return on their investment, making sure that students are majoring in fields that fit the future of the state’s workforce needs, said Admiral Richard Gurnon, president of Massachusetts Maritime Academy and chairman of the State College Council of Presidents.

“Massachusetts was once a big industrial state, a big sea-faring state,’’ Gurnon said. “But now we don’t make dresses. We don’t make shoes. We don’t make ships anymore. We make minds. And if we don’t invest in that process, everyone else in the world is going to beat us.’’

For too long, public higher education in Massachusetts has labored in the shadow of the region’s private colleges and universities, education officials said. But public campuses enroll about half of Massachusetts high school graduates attending college.

Recognizing that the entire higher education system — five UMass campuses, nine state colleges, and 15 community colleges — needs to move in the same direction, chancellors and presidents representing the three types of campuses have signaled their support for the plan as a way to advance the state’s economic interest.

Each kind of school currently reports its own set of data, but there is little coordination among UMass, state, and community colleges.

“You don’t want to have a telephone book of data at the end of this thing,’’ Jack Wilson, president of the University of Massachusetts, said in a phone interview. “You want a few indicators that we consider high priority. Data is terrific, but the next question is, what does that data tell you and what policies does it inform?’’

The challenge now, officials say, is to determine what type of data can be collected and should be used to measure progress toward the goals of the Vision Project. How does one assess student learning without an MCAS-like standardized test, which would be sure to alienate faculty and students and which education officials assure would not happen?

A few college systems in other states have moved toward testing to measure students’ grasp of writing and quantitative skills, said Lane Glenn, vice president of academic affairs at Northern Essex Community College, who belongs to a Massachusetts group charged with developing a way to measure student learning.
Education officials say they are considering alternatives that will measure the quality of higher education in Massachusetts and allow comparison with other states.

“The fear is, of course, that we’ll be asked to do what our K-12 colleagues have been asked to do, come up with seven to eight important things and then teach to the test,” Glenn said. “We’re not interested in that.”
Import/export workshop

Wednesday. The Small Business Development Center is offering a free workshop, "How to Import/Export Your Product or Service," from 1 to 4 p.m. at El Camino College Business Training Center, 13430 Hawthorne Blvd., Hawthorne. Call 310-973-3177 to register.
What if a college education just isn't for everyone?
USA Today

March 17, 2010

By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY
WATERLOO, Wis. — Debbie Crave once assumed that all of her children would go to college. Then she had kids.

Son Patrick is a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Debbie's alma mater, and plans to one day help manage the family's 1,700-acre, 1,000-cow dairy farm here.

Brian, 17, would rather sit atop a tractor than behind a desk. "He's been afraid we might push him" to go to college, his mother says. But her eyes have been opened: "Kids learn differently, and some just aren't college material."

Long before President Obama vowed last year that America will "have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world" by 2020, the premium placed on going to college was firmly embedded in the American psyche.

The case is compelling: As good jobs increasingly require more education, college is widely seen as the ticket to personal economic security and to global competitiveness. And the message has gotten through: The percentage of students who went on to college or trade school within a year of high school climbed from 47% in 1973 to 67% in 2007, Census data show.

And yet, there's an undercurrent of concern about a group of students — sometimes called "the forgotten half," a phrase coined 22 years ago by social scientists studying at-risk young people — who, for whatever reason, do not think college is for them. It's expressed by soul-searching parents such as Crave, whose son doesn't thrive in the classroom. It's also expressed increasingly by educators, economists and policy analysts, who question whether it's realistic and responsible to push students into college even if the odds of academic success seem low.

They're swimming against a powerful tide. A small but growing number of states now require all high-schoolers to take a college entrance exam. Philadelphia's mayor opened an office in City Hall last month to help residents get information about how to attain a college degree. Bill Gates, perhaps the world's most famous college dropout, has poured more than $2 billion into programs and scholarships to help more students complete college.

Some concerns about the focus on a college education are being acknowledged.

Obama includes readiness for both college and careers in his discussions of education reform — most recently last weekend, when he announced an overhaul of the No Child Left Behind law. And although the term "college" has long referred to four-year bachelor's degrees, policymakers are broadening the definition to include two-year community college degrees and other credentials earned after high school.
But what's still getting lost, some argue, is that too many students are going to college not because they want to, but because they think they have to.

"We're force-feeding them" the idea that "you must go to college or you'll be a second-class citizen," says Marty Nemko, a California career counselor.

**Economic benefits, and more**

The debate over college is not new, but today's economic climate has raised the stakes.

Since 2000, the percentage of Americans who believe college is essential to success in today's world has gone from 31% to 55% — "a remarkable change in a fairly short period," according to Public Agenda, which has conducted multiple surveys on the topic.

"There's beginning to be a lot of concern among the American public that ... if you don't get into that upper tier, you're going to struggle your whole life," says Public Agenda's Jean Johnson.

A four-year degree is no guarantee of wealth, of course. About 25% of those with bachelor's degrees earn less than those with two-year degrees, studies by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce have found. But research consistently has shown that, on average, those at the top of higher education's pecking order reap the most benefits, both economically and beyond.

"This is a market for social position, which is why we spend so much on going to Harvard (and) one of the reasons it's hard to get a student excited" about community college, says Anthony Carnevale, director of the center.

"Class is real, and it has consequences. The position you hold, where you work, really determines your empowerment."

**Falling through the cracks**

Economists continue to debate the nuances of trend data for jobs and wages. But some argue that college dropout rates alone suggest many students are wasting their time — and money.

Federal data show that fewer than 60% of new students graduate from four-year colleges in six years, and just one in three community college students earn a degree. More than 350,000 students who borrowed for college in 1995 had no degree six years later, according to a 2005 study for the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

"It's fine for most kids to go to college, of course, (but) it is not obvious to me that that is the best option for the majority," says Mike Gould, founder of New Futures, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that provides scholarships for low-income students pursuing anything from a four-year degree to a massage-therapy certification. "Some education may be a good thing or it may just be a lot of debt."
The problem, Gould and others say, is that many high schools focus so much on college that low-achieving students fall through the cracks. A Public Agenda report this month raises similar concerns about high school guidance counseling. It follows up on a December survey that concluded most young workers who don't have a college degree "are in their jobs by chance, not by choice," and that guidance toward a career path "is hardly clear and purposeful."

That resonates with Erica McCard of Washington, D.C.

A 2006 high school graduate, McCard held a series of low-skill jobs while dropping in and out of community colleges for two years. Then she found Year Up, a program for recent high school graduates. The program helped her develop professional skills and land an internship on the help desk of a corporate information technology department.

In February, the company hired her full time, and she has been accepted to Trinity University in Washington, where she plans to study business this fall.

"In high school I didn't really apply myself," says McCard, 21, who was brought up by her grandmother before moving into a foster home. No one offered much help for life after high school, either, she says. "I had to find out on my own."

The apprentice model

Debbie Crave and her husband, George, feel lucky in that regard.

They enrolled Brian in Wisconsin's Youth Apprenticeship Program, established in 1991 to help high school students explore career options. Brian started by tending newborn calves under the mentorship of his uncle Mark at Crave Brothers Farm and is now also preparing equipment in the farm shop for spring planting.

Over the next year, Brian will take on more responsibilities as he works his way through a checklist of industry skills developed by state agricultural leaders. When he graduates from high school, he'll also receive a certificate confirming he has met those standards.

Brian, who must maintain his grades in other high school classes to stay in the program, says he likes the arrangement because he can "get out of school and still get credit for it."

Steve Leistico, Brian's agriculture sciences teacher at Waterloo High School, says the apprenticeship model "is going to give some direction to Brian."

Apprenticeships have long been popular in Europe, but workforce-oriented high school training is not nearly as common in U.S. schools. One reason is that such programs sound dangerously similar to tracking — sorting students by ability level, a practice repeatedly rejected in U.S. culture, in which the dominant philosophy is that all students should have opportunity to meet their full potential.
If high schools were to advise students that some education beyond high school is not necessary for everyone, "there's a little bit of a concern that ... we're saying a lesser goal is OK for the populations of students who have been historically least well-served by higher education," says Jane Wellman, executive director of Delta Project, which studies higher education spending.

In recent years, male college-going and completion rates have raised concerns. But those least well-served historically are low-income and underrepresented minority students, who are less likely than their peers to pursue two- and four-year degrees, and most at risk of not completing college if they do enroll.

Some evidence suggests, though, that students already are being held to different standards. A recent national survey of high school teachers by ACT Inc., the educational testing company, found 71% agreed "completely" or "a great deal" that high school graduates need the same set of skills and knowledge whether they plan to go to college or enter the workforce, yet 42% said teachers reduce academic expectations for students they perceive as not being college-bound.

Studies released in November by Deloitte, an international consulting firm, suggest another disconnect: A survey of 400 low-income parents found that 89% say it's "extremely" or "very important" that their child goes to college, but just 9% of high school teachers viewed preparing students for college as their most important mission.

Deloitte CEO Barry Salzberg, chairman of the College Summit, which seeks to increase college enrollment rates, says that's misguided. "I think we should measure high schools on their college entrance rate and figure out a way to track performance of high school graduates in college and see how many go beyond one full year of college."

But others say the zeal to increase college-going rates ignores the reality that many students will be in over their heads once they start college.

"College preparation for everyone is a very nice ideal, but we have a very high failure rate," says Northwestern University professor James Rosenbaum, author of Beyond College for All: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half.

"If we don't start letting counselors be candid, we're not going to fix this system."
Community college students protest at Capitol

Nanette Asimov, Chronicle Staff Writer

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

They converged on Sacramento on Monday from community colleges across California.

Among them were Iraq war veterans, people with disabilities, ex-prostitutes, students who are the first in their family to attend college and thousands more who believe their future depends on a public education system that is crumbling beneath them for lack of funding.

"We fought for our country, but when we get back here, we have to continue fighting," said Jordan Towers, 26, one of at least 26,000 returning veterans who are depending on California's two-year colleges to retrain them for the workforce.

A Marine veteran and student at City College of San Francisco, Towers feels the impact of deep budget cuts personally. Reduced staffing at the college means it takes months for GI benefits to reach him - so long that he had to sell his television set and computer keyboard last semester to pay his rent.

Courses, counseling, library hours, book assistance, summer school - all have been cut at community colleges statewide.

"Veterans have done all that's been asked of them, and now they're suffering as schools across California face cuts," Towers said.

Civil but pointed

On Monday morning, he joined a vast crowd at Raley Field in West Sacramento as they marched a couple miles past a gauntlet of mounted police to the Capitol. Carrying signs and banners, the protesters chanted, "No cuts! No fees! Education should be free!"

It's a familiar refrain. Students from public colleges and universities have been protesting since last fall, when courses were cut way back even as fees soared by 32 percent in response to the state's latest budget deficit, now at $20 billion.

To bridge that deficit, lawmakers will spend the next several months debating what state programs to cut and whether education will again be among them.

Seeking practical solutions

Unlike previous protests, which were organized largely by University of California students and often resulted in arrests for civil disobedience, Monday's rally on the Capitol steps was noisy but
civil, the effort of generally older community college students standing side by side with administrators and lawmakers.

They emphasized practical solutions to the education funding dilemma: bypassing the gridlocked Legislature to place a measure on the statewide ballot for higher education funding; supporting Assembly Bill 656, an oil tax that would send proceeds to public colleges and universities; getting signatures for a ballot initiative to reduce to a simple majority the votes needed for the state to pass a budget or raise taxes.

Most of all, the students vowed, they would use their numbers to vote out politicians who fail to support their cause.

"This year at the ballot box, we are going to hit them hard, and hit them fast," said Jesse Cheng, an incoming student representative to UC's Board of Regents. "In November, like they made us pay, we will make them pay."

The crowd roared.

Not enough classes

Jack Scott, chancellor of the 3 million-student community college system, said that some 200,000 students will be unable to enroll next year because there aren't enough classes for them.

"The state doesn't give us enough money," said Scott. "We're not going to go away silently."

After the rally, some students coursed through the halls of the Legislature to tell their stories to any lawmaker who would listen.

Six yellow-shirted classmates from Mount San Antonio College in Walnut (Los Angeles County) knocked on the door of their assemblyman, Charles Calderon, D-Whittier (Los Angeles County).

He wasn't there, but the students told his aide, Vanessa Lugo, that without college, recovered addicts, prostitutes and hustlers would still be on the street.

That described some of them, they acknowledged.

"I know what it feels like to hustle on the street," said student Evelyn Vargas, tears welling in her eyes. "It's only because someone at school said I could do it that I'm succeeding."

Lugo nodded and promised to inform Calderon about the tutoring, book scholarships and low-income student grants at their school.

All had been cut.
Designer's Barbie dolls reflect black culture

By Robert Doss
Posted: 03/20/2010 10:50:04 PM PDT

Behind the So In Style line of African-American Barbies, released in 2009, there is a mother who was motivated to create a doll in the image of her daughter.

Stacey McBride-Irby, a project designer for Mattel Inc. in El Segundo, has been a fan of Barbie since she was a child.

In fact, the doll and her fondness for fashion influenced the Gardena resident and mother of two to become the person she is today.

"Barbie was my favorite doll," said McBride-Irby. "I loved mixing and matching her clothes, and styling her hair. She gave me the inspiration to become a designer."

Not long after McBride-Irby stopped playing with Barbie dolls at age 13, she decided to follow her dream of going into fashion.

"I enjoyed sketching the latest hairstyles and fashions of the girls," she said.

But it was years later, watching her then 4-year-old daughter, Sierra, interact with the dolls, when the African-American designer was inspired to develop a figure that would mirror the world she knows.

"I've always wanted to create a line of Barbie that represents me and other women in my community," McBride-Irby said. "Seeing my daughter and other girls and women of color motivated me to create such a line, that offered more options for authentic fashion dolls."

McBride-Irby created the original concept behind So In Style while on vacation in 2007.

"I started writing stories for the So In Style characters," she said. "The stories mainly focused around three friends from high school who all had dreams and aspirations for themselves."

In an ever-changing society, McBride-Irby said, she felt now was the opportune time to develop a Barbie line that was indicative of the culture.

"Times are changing and girls are growing up fast," she said. "I wanted our girls to have a Barbie with features similar to what they see in themselves, in their families, and in the friends around them. Girls are looking for images they can relate to."
The So In Style Barbie collection consists of dolls that come in a variety of skin hues with a fuller nose and lips, distinctive cheekbones and different hair colors and textures.

In addition, the dolls come in a variety of poses and with accessories that are reflective of current styles and trends.

McBride-Irby also developed a "little sister" companion doll that accompanies each So In Style Barbie.

"I not only wanted these dolls to be fun and relatable, I wanted them to teach young ladies to be role models themselves, because younger girls are watching and wanting to be like them," she said.

The So In Style characters and their companions include Grace and her little sister Courtney, who are part of the drill team and science set; Trichelle and her little sister Janessa, who love art and journalism; Kara and her little sister Kianna, who love math and music; and the newest characters, Chandra and Zhara, who love modern dance and directing school plays.

The message of mentoring and empowering the next generation of successful women is near and dear to McBride-Irby's heart.

"Stacey, herself, embodies the message of mentoring, and often speaks to young girls at schools," said Peter Helenek, director of product design at Mattel. "In addition, she speaks at events within the African-American community nationwide."

February marked the 30th anniversary of the first line of black Barbies. One of them was the Shani line Mattel created in the early 1990s. Like the So In Style dolls, Shani reflected the times.

"My So In Style line is actually a modern take on the Shani line that was created by Kitty Black Perkins, the longtime African-American designer who gave me my opportunity," McBride-Irby said.

It was while McBride-Irby was taking a fashion computer course at El Camino College that she came across an article that featured Perkins, a Mattel designer. With the encouragement of her father and her instructor, McBride-Irby called Perkins.

"Two months after I called and there was no response, I called back, she answered and said she was looking for an assistant," McBride-Irby said. "In addition to showing my portfolio and resume during the interview, I had to design a Barbie fashion. It was approved and I was hired."

McBride-Irby has been with Mattel for 13 years, and has been instrumental in designing several groundbreaking Barbies.

Among those are the recent So In Style addition Darren, who wears Rocawear, and his little brother Julian; and sorority Barbie, celebrating the centennial year of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first African-American Greek sorority, founded in 1908 at Howard University in Washington D.C.
McBride-Irby also has designed some of the 2010 Barbie career dolls, including Pet Vet Barbie, Rock Star Barbie and Bride Barbie.

"My motto is, 'A happy, inspired childhood creates happy, inspired and powerful women,'" McBride-Irby said. "I wanted to design something that will give our young girls a fun and wholesome edge."

Robert Doss is a freelance writer based in Gardena.
The countries that have left the United States behind in math and science education have one thing in common: They offer the same high education standards — often the same curriculum — from one end of the nation to the other. The United States relies on a generally mediocre patchwork of standards that vary, not just from state to state, but often from district to district. A child’s education depends primarily on ZIP code.

That could eventually change if the states adopt the new rigorous standards proposed last week by the National Governors Association and a group representing state school superintendents. The proposal lays out clear, ambitious goals for what children should learn year to year and could change curriculums, tests and teacher training.

The standards, based on intensive research, reflect what students must know to succeed at college and to find good jobs in the 21st century. They are internationally benchmarked, which means that they emulate the expectations of high-performing school systems abroad.

This is not a call for a national curriculum. Rather, the proposed standards set out the skills that children should learn from kindergarten through high school. The proposals are writing-intensive and vertically aligned, building in complexity each year. The goal is to develop strong reasoning skills earlier than is now customary.

By fifth grade, for example, students would be required to write essays in which they introduce, support and defend opinions, using specific facts and details. And by 12th grade, students would be expected to solve problems or answer questions by conducting focused research projects — and display skills generally associated today with the first year of college.

The quest for stronger, more coherent standards dates back to the iconic “Nation at Risk” report of 1983, which warned that “a rising tide of mediocrity” was jeopardizing the country’s future. The problem of weak standards became vividly apparent after Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, which required the states to document student progress with annual tests in exchange for federal aid.
Most states that reported stronger performance on their own weak tests did far worse on the more rigorous federal test. This showed that American children were performing far more poorly in reading and math than state education officials wanted the public to know.

As recently as the early 1990s, national standards were viewed with suspicion in much of the country. Attitudes began to change as governors saw that poor schooling had crippled a significant part of the work force, turned state colleges into remedial institutions and disadvantaged the states in the global market.

The proposed standards were developed in a collaboration among 48 states and the District of Columbia, suggesting that national opinion, once bitterly divided on this question, has begun to coalesce.

But it will take more than new standards to rebuild the schools. The same states and organizations that cooperated on the standards need to cooperate on a new and innovative curriculum. The notoriously troubled colleges of education need to prepare teachers who can teach the skills students will need. And sophisticated tests must be created so that we can measure results.

The new standards provide an excellent starting point for the task of remaking public schooling in the United States.
EL CAMINO COLLEGE

Center for International Trade offers export guidance: The El Camino College Center for International Trade Development will offer a "green" export program for area businesses.

The program aims to help interested California suppliers take advantage of China's increased demand for clean energy, sustainable building and environmental technology.

The program is funded by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges.

For more information, call 310-973-3173 or visit greenexport.org/. 
College to hold DUI Awareness Fair: El Camino College will sponsor its 10th annual South Bay DUI Awareness Fair, featuring displays, workshops, and interactive demonstrations, which show the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The event will run from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday near the campus MCS loading dock, 16007 Crenshaw Blvd., near Torrance. For more information, call the El Camino College Police Department at 310-660-3100
Event
LA Weekly

Maddy LeMal, Ann Page, Pierre Picot, Fred Rose and Jamie Sweetman

Every week Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday from Mon., March 29 until Fri., April 30
El Camino College Art Gallery
16007 Crenshaw Blvd.; Torrance CA
More Students, Less Money

Inside Higher Ed

March 30, 2010

Community colleges are used to "doing more with less" -- but if they weren't accustomed to it before the economic downturn, they are growing more so with each passing day, as a survey to be released today shows.

The survey of 128 community college district chancellors and campus presidents, conducted for the second year by the League for Innovation in the Community College and the Campus Computing Project, finds two-year institutions to be caught in a vise of growing student demands for enrollment and continuing financial strain due to diminished state funds. The survey is to be released at the league's Innovations 2010 meeting in Baltimore today.

Ninety-four percent of the 128 institutions reported enrollment increases in the winter 2010 term, about the same as for the comparable period in 2009. But the new survey suggests a rise in the size of the increases. Nearly a third of the 2010 respondents reported that their enrollments swelled by at least 15 percent and another third said their student bodies grew by 10 to 15 percent; in 2009, by contrast, 28 percent of respondents reported increases of at least 10 percent.

A slightly smaller proportion of two-year institutions (52 percent) reported facing reductions in state funding in 2010 than was the case in 2009 (57 percent). But the number of chancellors and presidents that said they suffered cutbacks of at least 10 percent more than doubled, to 18 percent from 7 percent.

Fewer colleges also reported encountering midyear rescissions in their state funds (54 percent in 2010 vs. 61 percent in 2009). But for those that did face such cuts, the average size of the reduction grew, to 7 percent in 2010 from 5 percent the year before.

The combination of student body growth and budget cuts led to an almost inevitable outcome: enrollment caps. Thirteen of two-year institutions reported putting limits on their enrollments this winter, up from 9 percent in winter 2009. Several types of institutions -- metropolitan campuses (19 percent), and institutions enrolling 5,000-10,000 students (21 percent) and more than 10,000 students (26 percent) -- were significantly likelier than other two-year colleges to have imposed such caps.

“The 2010 survey reveals that the community colleges remain on the receiving end of the ‘do more with less and do it better’ mantra that typically accompanies budget cuts and economic upheaval,” Kenneth C. Green, founding director of the Campus Computing Project, said in a news release about the survey. "Community colleges are doing and serving a lot more, and are doing it with much less. This has significant consequences for instruction resources, instructional support, and for student support services.”

— Doug Lederman
Regents apologize for racist incidents at UC San Diego
LA Times
By Larry Gordon
March 25, 2010

They propose changes in admissions policies that would boost enrollment of minorities across the system and promise to help create campus environments in which minority students feel more comfortable.

Reporting from San Francisco - University of California leaders Wednesday apologized to black UC San Diego students for recent racial incidents at the campus and proposed changes in admissions policies aimed at boosting enrollment of minorities across the system.

UC President Mark G. Yudof and other UC regents acknowledged that the UC San Diego episodes, including an off-campus student party that mocked Black History Month, has brought attention to the low enrollment of African American students on the campus. About 1.6% of UC San Diego undergraduates are black, among the lowest such figures for any UC campus. The UC leaders promised to help create campus environments in which minority students feel more comfortable.

Speaking during a regents meeting at UC San Francisco, Yudof said he wanted all UC campuses to adopt an admissions process known as "holistic" review, in which applicants' test scores and high school grades are considered in the context of their life experiences and personal accomplishments.

"I want a system that is less mechanical and takes a serious look at a range of talents and skills and history, and takes into account poverty," Yudof said.

Holistic review is permitted at the university, but Yudof said he would like it to be required at all nine UC undergraduate campuses. UCLA and UC Berkeley now use the approach most extensively, while others, including UC San Diego, rely on a more rigid formula that allows less consideration of personal accomplishments and, Yudof said, may unfairly reject otherwise academically eligible low-income and minority students.

Such a change would need approval by the systemwide faculty senate, something that will be under discussion within a few months, officials said.

Last year, UC regents adopted sweeping changes in undergraduate admissions policies that were designed partly to boost the number of low-income and minority students without violating the state's ban on racial affirmative action. Starting with freshmen entering in fall 2012, applicants will no longer need to take two SAT subject exams, although the main SAT test would still be required. The change also will widen the pool of students eligible to be considered for admission based on high school grades.

Seeking to show their concern about the racial incidents, regents Wednesday spent nearly two hours discussing the UC San Diego situation, which included the use of a derogatory term for
blacks on a student television show, and other episodes elsewhere. At UC Davis, swastikas were spray-painted at several locations on the campus last month and one was carved on a Jewish student's dorm door there; an anti-gay slogan was sprayed on a UC Davis gay and lesbian student center.

Regent Eddie Island extended an apology to all students who felt under attack. "We failed to provide a nurturing environment," Island said.

But he also blamed UC's admissions policies for artificially limiting the rolls of minority students. "It is the absence of inclusion that frees hatred, that frees bigotry, that allows it to go unchallenged. That's our biggest problem," he said.

Black student leaders from UC San Diego addressed the regents and said that the controversial party, a so-called Compton Cookout at which guests were invited to dress like ghetto residents, was just the tipping point after decades of blacks feeling marginalized on campus. David Ritcherson, a fourth-year international economics major who is co-chairman of the UC San Diego Black Student Union, said the regents probably wouldn't be seeking to make amends now if "they didn't get all this media attention, if the image wasn't tainted."

Ritcherson, however, said he welcomed the regents' comments and the efforts they promised to combat bigotry. "It's a good start," he said.

In other business, the regents Wednesday took steps to protect the university from court challenges to student fee increases. A regents committee approved a statement that UC has a right to change its fees at any time and that the publication of fee levels does not constitute a contract or promise.

A Superior Court judge in San Francisco this month ordered UC to refund a total of $38 million to 2,900 professional degree students who enrolled in 2003 and were charged increases after being told their fees would not rise. UC probably will appeal that decision, a UC spokesman said. In 2007, UC lost a similar case involving $40 million that UC has since repaid.
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Saw That One Coming
Inside Higher Ed

By Dean Dad March 31, 2010 4:27 am

According to this story in IHE, Bristol Community College in Massachusetts is partnering with a for-profit provider (The Princeton Review) to create what amount to express lanes in its Nursing program. The idea is that students who currently get waitlisted for the Nursing program at Bristol will have the option of paying more to get seats in the Princeton Review's program. It's a chance for students to substitute cash on the barrel for the opportunity cost of waiting.

Although the story drew a fair share of negative comments, I'm less offended than resigned. This is the wave of the future, and it's not necessarily entirely bad.

There's nothing new about students who can't get into a program at one college trying their luck at another. That happens routinely. And there's nothing new about private, and even for-profit, higher education competing with public higher education in vocational programs. That has happened for decades. As near as I can tell, what's new here is the intentional link. Put differently, what's new here is the relative convenience. I expect to see much more of this in the coming years.

For reasons well-known by now to regular readers, growth is a cost for public higher ed, but a profit center for proprietary higher ed. To see the publics outsource growth to the proprietaries makes sense for both sides, given their incentives. If you want to change the behavior, you have to change the incentives. Moralistic huffing and puffing won't cut it.

One way to change the incentives would be to tie public funding to enrollment levels in a serious way. Right now many states claim to do that, but they actually just tie shares of public funding to enrollment. That is not the same thing. A worthwhile approach would be "we will pay you x dollars per student/credit/graduate." If the 'x' is high enough, then the college could combine it with tuition/fees and more than cover the costs of growth; it would have every reason to grow to meet demand. (Ideally, 'x' would be indexed to some relevant measure, so its value wouldn't get inflated away over time.) Instead, what usually happens is that states take enrollment figures at the various colleges throughout the state, and uses them to determine the proportional share of that year's pot that goes to each campus. When the pot doesn't grow as quickly as overall enrollments and inflation -- it hasn't in my adult lifetime - then the funding for growth falls short of the cost. So you get waitlists, or larger classes, or heavier adjunct percentages as ways to paper over the gap.

Theoretically, you could make up the difference with enormous tuition or fee increases. But the political obstacles to that are staggering. When you start with a very low base, even small absolute increases register as huge percentage increases -- California is living this
particular version of hell right now. Since cc's are priced far lower than their true cost, getting anywhere close to breaking even would require percentage increases that are simply beyond political imagination.

But the same public that gets righteously angry at a public college increasing tuition by $100 a year merely shrugs as a private college raising it by $1,000. The label makes the difference.

In the case of Bristol, they've offloaded part of a high cost program onto a separate label, one that has implied political permission to charge whatever it needs to. And the off-label part can grow as much as the market will bear, without political interference.

If we want to stop this sort of thing, obviously, we'd have to give public colleges either much higher subsidies or the same permission to charge whatever the market will bear. (Over the long term, we need much more fundamental restructuring on a systemic level, but that won't solve the immediate problem.) If you hamstring resources long enough, sooner or later deeper pockets will come along. The only difference here is that the deeper pockets are cooperating, rather than simply supplanting. In a world of limited options, this is not entirely bad.
El Camino College to hold Space Science Day

By Jennifer Hagihara Staff Writer
Posted: 04/01/2010 07:52:39 PM PDT

More than 1,000 students, parents and adults are expected to attend the 12th annual Space Science Day at El Camino College on Saturday to explore the realms of space science.

The event was inspired by the death of astronaut Ellison S. Onizuka, who was killed in the 1986 explosion of the Challenger space shuttle. After the incident, a group of admirers formed the Astronaut Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Committee to commemorate him and to advocate and teach astronomy, chemistry, physics and robotics to young scientists-in-training students.

In 1999, the committee asked El Camino to act as a host for their cause.

"The primary focus is on fifth- to 12th-graders," said El Camino spokeswoman Ann Garten. "The goal is to get them excited about science."

The most popular event is the egg-drop contest. Participants design a container, place an egg inside and drop it from the top of the three-story math building. The boxes land in a concrete patio area.

"It takes place during lunch so everyone can enjoy it," said Jean Shankweiler, dean of natural science. "Plus everyone wants to see if their apparatus works."

A new event this year is American Honda Motor Co.'s demonstration of its futuristic robot. Dubbed ASIMO for Advanced Step in Innovative Mobility, the robot has the ability to move in human ways.

"It's the same (ASIMO) from Disneyland," Shankweiler said. "Honda supplies volunteers but they're taking on a bigger part by bringing him in this year."

NASA astronaut Daniel M. Tani will also speak to students about his experience in space and working with NASA.

"He can tell (students) about his mission," Shankweiler said. "He can tell them how he prepared for space and what made him choose to be an astronaut."

Parents, adults and siblings are allowed to attend but might be asked to wait outside if there is limited space in the classroom for students.

The event is free and runs from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. The first 850 students will receive a free lunch ticket. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 310-660-3487 or by e-mail at SpaceDay@elcamino.edu.
Fashion Brings Happiness, Not Affliction To Seal Beach-Based Designer

Gazettes.com

By Darcy Leigh Richardson
Editor
Published: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 4:53 PM PDT

As a child, Danh Tran’s mother scolded him whenever he “played” with her sewing machine at his parent’s tailor shop in Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam. There was no money in fashion, his mother said.

So Tran started sewing clothes at the age of 12 for himself when his mother wasn’t home.

He said he never would have believed then that 23 years later, he would be the men’s head designer of a growing fashion label based in Seal Beach called Affliction Black Premium — with his mother being his strongest supporter.

Now Tran says, “I do what I love,” and designs men’s blazers, motorcycle jackets and polo shirts with catalog names like “Vengeance,” “High Voltage” and even a “Personal Jesus Suit.”

Tran, who recently visited his relatives in Vietnam, said they told him “he was the most successful (financially) in the family.” And it’s a large family.

In 1994, Tran’s parents immigrated to Torrance. Tran’s uncle, who owned a clothing manufacturing and production company, sponsored the family. Because Tran wished to please his mother, he took English courses at an adult school for a year and enrolled in El Camino College to study accounting. But he said he knew fashion design was his passion. At night, Tran said he would sew and make clothing samples at his uncle’s warehouse.

“My inspirations were Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger,” Tran said. “There were no major design houses when we lived in Vietnam. But now you can go to Ho Chi Min and see D & G (Dolce & Gabbana) and Louis Vuitton.”

In 1995, Tran moved to Bixby Knolls, where he still lives today. He remembered the nerve-wracking day when he told his parents that he needed to drop out of accounting school and enroll at Los Angeles Trade Tech, specializing in fashion design, but he said they gave in.

Tran calls each phase of his education and career “a better opportunity.” When he was completing school at Trade Tech, Mattel hired him as a sample maker to cut and sew designs for Barbie dolls.

“It was really intimidating making clothes that were so small,” Tran said. “But I did my best.”
From sample maker, Tran moved up the design ladder at Mattel to become a pattern maker (in which the garment is conceptualized in pieces) and eventually was an associate designer, when he sketched designs for dolls. His favorite design was the dress for the “101 Dalmations” villain, Cruella de Vil.

However, Tran wanted to move from smaller to larger outfits — literally. He applied at the prestigious Otis Art Institute and was accepted in the fashion program. Some of Tran’s mentors included representatives from John Varvados, Nicole Miller, Calvin Klein and Huntington Beach-based men’s brand Howe.

While a student at Otis, Tran said people would ask him where he bought his clothes. His response, from the time he was 12 years old, remained the same.

“I made them.”

Following his graduation from Otis with a bachelor’s degree in fashion design, Tran said he worked for denim brand 7 For All Mankind designing men’s sportswear. Then Jade Howe, the owner of Howe, called Tran and offered him a job as a head designer. Tran designed his first clothing collection.

“The best part was seeing my sketches transform from 2-D on paper into real life,” Tran said. “It always gets me really excited.”

Tran joined fledgling brand Affliction as the Black Premium Label men’s head sportswear designer in 2008. His first collection, released in 2009, included jackets with razor pleat detail lining, button-down shirts with tone on tone black prints and buttons with Affliction’s stylized cross logo.

Affliction, which sponsors Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighters and is sported by young celebrities, looks very “edgy, punk and rock ‘n’ roll” while still maintaining a “professional and stylish, high-end” look, according to the brand’s Web site.

“Fashion design is me,” Tran said. “The job I do, I love to do. If I was an accountant, I would probably be sleeping in and calling into work sick as many times as I could.”

For more information about Affliction, visit www.afflictionclothingstore.com.
LONG BEACH - Luukia Smith says that she could help to reduce labor tensions at Long Beach City College if voters elect her to the college's board of trustees April 13.

Smith, 47, and Timothy W. Tucker are challenging incumbent Jeff Kellogg for the LBCC Board of Trustees in Area 1, representing North Long Beach.

Smith works as an accounting technician at El Camino College, where she is also president of El Camino Classified Employees, a union representing support staff workers.

She said she heard from union leaders of an equivalent union at LBCC - the Long Beach Council of Classified Employees - that employees feel they are not being listened to by the administration.

"I've heard for nine years how they don't have a voice," she said.
As a board member, she would use her union experience to help foster a better relationship between the LBCC administration and union, she said.

At El Camino College, "we don't have that same kind of adversarial atmosphere between us and our administrators and our board of trustees," Smith said. "And that's what I hope to bring with me, is to try to get it so we don't have an adversarial relationship."

Smith wants to make the college more transparent, citing the board agendas on the LBCC website. Those agendas are vague and lack details, she added.

Born in Inglewood, Smith grew up in Gardena, graduating from Gardena High School. Her family is from Hawaii.

After high school graduation, she attended El Camino briefly, but left. She started working part-time at El Camino in 1985 before joining the staff full-time two years later.

She later went back to El Camino to obtain general education courses before transferring to Cal State Dominguez Hills, where she received a degree in 2006.

The college has hired too many administrators in recent years, she said.

The administration "keeps telling the faculty that you have to do more with less," she said. "Well, that's also true of the administrators. Every position needs to be looked at to determine what is important, why is it important, where are our priorities."

She would establish a spending strategy to provide guidance on where to cut. The college has been going after large pools of savings from actions like scaling back summer school, she said.

"That's an easy way of bringing in a chunk of money," she said. "That's fine if that's where you have to be, but they haven't slowed down and looked at where all the other pots of money are" that would have less impact on students.

Smith said given that the bulk of the budget is in salaries and benefits, reductions in those areas may have to be considered in light of state funding cuts.

"Ultimately, that may be what we have to do, but that's not what we have to do first," she said.