

Contra Costa prosecutors overreaching with strike threat

Contra Costa Times

By Daniel Borenstein Staff columnist

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Contra Costa's prosecutors should step back from their blustery strike threat. Everyone recognizes they're overworked and badly understaffed.

Both sides -- county supervisors and negotiators for the deputy district attorneys -- also stipulate that their compensation places them at the bottom of the prosecutor pack in the region.

That's not the point. The issue is whether the county can afford to pay more and whether deputy DAs are being asked to absorb an unfair share of the pain.

The answer to both, according to an independent fact-finder, is no.

Mediator Barry Winograd concluded in June that the prosecutors should accept the county's offer -- that it was consistent with what was being offered to most other county workers.

Ironically, while the prosecutors' negotiators are hinting at a strike, a majority of their members had previously voted to accept the county's offer. But their internal rules require two-thirds approval to ratify the deal. In other words, a minority of members can block any deal. That's what happened in March.

The prosecutors' association next demanded the fact-finding process under a new state law that the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown approved last year after intense lobbying by labor groups. The idea was to slow down a local government's ability to unilaterally impose one-year contracts when bargaining failed.

But after demanding such an inquiry, the prosecutors didn't like the outcome and chose to ignore it. So, county supervisors Tuesday voted 4-1 to impose a contract. Candace Andersen, whom prosecutors backed in her recent election, dissented. It was the first contract imposition in union-friendly Contra Costa in about three decades.

On average, the county pays about \$215,000 a year in salary and benefits to employ a prosecutor. Under the deal a minority of prosecutors blocked in March, the county would have trimmed its costs by about 4.4 percent. That's comparable to the cuts most other county bargaining groups have agreed to.

The contract imposed Tuesday has slightly greater county savings. That's because the county cannot unilaterally impose reduced pension benefits for new hires that was part of

the original deal. So it withheld a longevity pay sweetener that was also in the earlier deal.

In other words, the deputies would have been better off under the deal they were offered than under the imposed contract. The March offer is still an option.

Bargaining has become more complicated since then because the county reached a slightly less-stringent deal with probation officers and gave nurses at county hospital a new contract with salary increases.

County officials justify the deal with probation officers by saying they are paid less so they shouldn't absorb as large a percentage of cuts. The argument doesn't make a lot of sense when one looks at the high cost of their pension benefits, but we'll save that discussion for another day.

As for the nurses, the county found itself in a horrible bargaining position. If the nurses were to strike, the county would have had to bring in costly replacement workers to keep county hospital open.

The county was also installing a new computer system, and nurses were threatening to walk out just as the training was to start. A delay there would have endangered funding for the system.

Finally, the county must compete with neighboring private hospitals for nurses. It's a more competitive labor market than the one for prosecutors. It's unfortunate for the county, but it's the reality.

Striking bad deals with probation officers and nurses does not justify doing the same with the prosecutors. The fact remains that most county workers have accepted cuts of roughly the same percentage the deputy district attorneys were asked to take.

It's unfortunate the county cannot afford to pay them more. Some prosecutors will leave for better compensation elsewhere. Everyone agrees that they work very hard and that they make a critical contribution.

But county supervisors must live within a budget. Indeed, if there were more money, it would be better spent hiring more prosecutors than paying the current ones more.

These are tough times. The decisions are not easy. But county supervisors made the right call.

Yesterday's News

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By Kaustuv Basu

A group of foundations that support journalism education issued a letter Friday saying that top professionals in the field, not career academics, need to be doing much more of the teaching of journalism students.

As digital media have evolved, so have journalism programs. But the open letter criticized them for not changing quickly enough.

“We believe journalism and communications schools must be willing to recreate themselves if they are able to succeed in playing their vital roles as news creators and innovators. Some leading schools are doing this but most are not,” said the letter addressed to university presidents, and signed by senior officials of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation, the Scripps Howard Foundation, the Brett Family Foundation and the Wyncote Foundation.

The letter said that the “teaching hospital” model – where programs not only teach journalism students, but serve their local communities by producing news – has enormous potential. One example of this model is Arizona State University, which houses News 21, an initiative by the Knight Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York to train a new generation of journalists. The initiative began in 2005 with five programs in the country.

But programs taking part in such initiatives may be the exception.

Eric Newton, senior adviser at the Knight Foundation, said that many journalism schools still teach analog broadcasts and treat newspaper, magazine, radio and television as separate components of a program.

“Students cannot be taught in silos such as print, radio, TV or magazine. There are still journalism programs where there is no experiential or service learning involved,” Newton said. As for journalism faculty members from the “pre-web” days, they need to constantly update their skills, maybe even indulge in “reverse mentoring” and learn about digital media from their students, Newton said.

“If you are in a recession, and you decide to cut the school’s website instead of the newspaper, then that is a problem. The schools should be willing to give up the things that should be given up,” Newton said. “We know that most jobs in journalism now involve digital media. These programs should change like society has changed. If you continue to teach things from the 1980s, you are going to become irrelevant.”

He said the main purpose of the letter was to call attention to these problems and to point out that there is a tremendous opportunity for those programs that want to make the transition. Those that don't, Newton said, will find that their graduates are unemployable in the mass communications industry.

According to Newton, four broad areas in journalism education need change: curricular innovation with programs better-connected with the rest of the university, technological innovations with programs serving as incubators, the teaching of an open collaborative model where schools can share resources with outside organizations, and providing content to the community while engaging in a two-way conversation with its members.

There are some journalism schools that are committed to these areas, where students learn by "doing," Newton said.

Some examples: The City University of New York has an entrepreneurial journalism program that encourages student innovation by partnering with start-ups or traditional media companies, while Mercer University in Macon, Ga., has teamed up with the The Telegraph, a daily newspaper, and Georgia Public Broadcasting for a collaborative journalism center. Columbia University's journalism school started a digital project called The New York World last year to provide accountability journalism about state and local government, while journalism students at three public universities in Ohio – University of Akron, Youngstown State University, and Kent State University – have been producing news for regional and statewide media through a partnership called The News Outlet.

Administrators at journalism and mass communication schools said they understand the frustrations of the foundations, but they also said programs are trying hard to keep up with changes in digital technology.

Beth Barnes, director of the school of journalism and telecommunications at the University of Kentucky and president of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication, said that programs can't always change quickly. "We have to weigh in the cost factor, and the challenge for faculty to keep up with these changes," she said.

Regional accrediting bodies have certain expectations about academic faculty, and their rules don't make it easy to hire faculty members from professional institutions, she said. "Sometimes we have to make the case to administrators to hire someone who doesn't have a terminal degree, but has current professional experience," she said.

The letter urged programs to challenge such roadblocks from regional accreditors and suggested that "competence as the primary concern" for faculty in these programs. If they don't, they would have a hard time raising money from the foundations, the letter said.

Barnes said most j-schools are trying to change. "The changes may not happen quickly, but they [the foundations] should keep pushing us," she said. "It keeps us honest and gives us some leverage we can use on our own campuses."

She said that the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, which is currently reviewing changes to accreditation standards, is likely to add more specific requirements, such as multimedia storytelling. "These changes are going to make us more innovative," Barnes said.

While the letter from the foundations said it supported efforts by the ACEJMC, which accredits 109 journalism and mass communication schools in the United States, to modernize standards, it also suggested that the organization develop standards that highlight the importance of technology and innovation.

Susanne Shaw, ACEJMC's executive director and a professor of journalism at the University of Kansas, said that one proposed change in standards relates to the number of credit hours a journalism and communications major is required to have outside the major. The previous requirement was 80 credit hours with 65 of those hours coming from the liberal arts and sciences. The proposed new standard would enable 72 credit hours outside the major, but not restricted to the liberal arts and sciences, thus encouraging more collaboration and innovation. "So, for example, those who want to take a business class ... we will be able to accommodate those folks," Shaw said.

Another proposed change in the accrediting standards will let schools offer six hours of credit instead of three for unpaid internships. "Accreditation can only help some of the problems. I also want to help students and faculty get better," Shaw said. "We are making the changes that the majority of our schools want."

These proposed changes will be discussed at an ACEJMC meeting later this month, said Shaw, who said the council's members are open to discussing new ideas. Shaw said that the process of revising the standards had been ongoing for a year and a half, while the letter was less than a week old. "The council may want to talk about it. Some people might feel we already address these issues in our standards," Shaw said, referring to standards for keeping the curriculum "current" and a separate one for equipment and facilities.

She said that the accreditation standards would have to be changed every month if the council were to respond to new technology. "Nothing is perfect. Of course, we are trying to address changes," Shaw said. Shaw said that the standards already ask for a "current" and "demanding" curriculum and there is a separate standard for resources and equipment.

Susan King, dean of the school of journalism and mass communication at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, can understand the arguments from both sides. King previously was the vice president for external affairs at the Carnegie Corporation of New York and is well-acquainted with the world of funders.

“I agree that it is imperative to prepare the next generation of journalists, and to prepare them [students] for jobs that do not yet exist,” King said. “We have to prepare them for a digital future that might change twice before the end of the decade.”

King said programs have to constantly sharpen their focus and do so without losing their core values, but added that theoretical research is as important as applied research.

“Universities have a greater chance to experiment. Businesses cannot experiment as much,” she said.

She said that she expected someone like Eric Newton to be provocative. “There is this myth that journalism professors spend their time telling stories about what they did,” King said, but her experience had been different. “There is a lot of worthwhile innovation going on. The challenge is to attract more schools to do the same. But I don’t think we are your daddy’s journalism school any more,” King said.

College Costs Too Much Because Faculty Lack Power

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The Chronicle of Higher Education

By Robert E. Martin

Surveys reveal that the public believes a college education is essential but too expensive. People feel squeezed between the cost and the necessity. At the same time, public colleges complain that they are being squeezed by declining state support and increasing pressure to educate larger numbers of less-prepared students.

Yet society has provided higher education with a river of new real revenues over the past several decades. Since nonprofit institutions of higher education follow a balanced-budget model, expenditures are capped by revenues. Therefore the real cost per student cannot increase without a corresponding increase in real revenues. So the problem has not been too little revenue.

Nevertheless, college affordability has declined. So the crucial question is: Where was all that new money spent?

A common theme among higher education's critics is that shared governance is to blame for colleges' profligate ways, because faculty have too much influence over how money is spent. And the critics are right: Shared governance does play a role. But it is not the "shared" part of "shared governance" that has failed; quite the opposite. The fault lies in the withering away of the shared part. Reason and data alike suggest that the largest part of the problem is that it is administrators and members of governing boards who have too much influence over how resources are used.

The pursuit of self-interest by both faculty and administrators is at work here. Higher education is, of course, a labor-intensive service industry. An institution's labor cost per student is the sum of wages and benefits divided by the number of students. The cost per student goes up as wages and benefits go up, or as the ratio of staff to students rises. When that ratio goes down, productivity increases, and the cost can go down, even if wages and benefits go up. Staff-to-student ratios, then, are the key to understanding higher-education costs.

A study of those ratios from 1987 to 2008 for research universities, colleges, and public master's-level institutions reveals that the number of faculty and administrators per student actually grew over those years. But we can't lump faculty ratios and administrative ratios together, because they are significantly different. On the academic side, the tenure-track ratio increased modestly at public research universities and to a greater extent at private research universities and colleges. But in both cases, the institutions significantly increased their use of non-tenure-track full-time and part-time

faculty. So although faculty-to-student ratios went up, most of the increase was based on the use of contract and part-time faculty.

On the administrative side, the ratios of executives to student and professional staff to student increased—the latter by 50 percent. In 1987, except at private research universities, where administrators outnumbered tenure-track faculty, colleges had approximately as many tenure-track faculty as full-time administrators. By 2008 there were more than twice as many administrators as tenure-track faculty at all types of institutions.

So, during the years studied, costs grew further out of control as administrators and governing boards consolidated their control over institutional priorities—hardly a healthy trend for genuinely shared governance.

Indeed, if it were true that faculty members have too much influence, then all full-time-faculty increases would have been in tenure-track positions, and academic costs would have risen faster than overhead costs. In fact, overhead costs grew faster than academic costs, and institutions economized on the use of tenure-track faculty and spent heavily on overhead staffing. Now, as then, faculty members are part of the cost problem; however, the most significant problem stems from administrators and governing boards, who hold authority over resource allocation. Tenure-track faculty members' influence on campus priorities has declined steadily, while the number of nonacademic professional staff has proliferated.

In a larger context, this is called bureaucratic entropy. For example, in urban studies one finds that the number of municipal workers tends to grow faster than a city's population. So the ratio of municipal workers to population increases, raising the cost of city services even if wages and benefits are constant (which they are not).

In academe, shared governance is the only natural constraint on the pursuit of self-interest. It is past time for a new campus contract among faculty, administrators, and governing boards to affirm that fact. Communication among those three groups must be open and outside the control of any one of them. Faculty members should independently choose their own representatives, through whom they can speak to the administration or the board.

If the administration controls that communication, or if the board considers it a violation of the chain of command, then the new contract will not work—and the pursuit of self-interest by administrators and boards will lead to the same destructive effects on cost and quality we have observed over the past three decades.

Despite tough times for education, construction and renovation projects continue

Contra Costa Times

Beau Yarbrough, Staff Writer

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POMONA - Even as public school districts find their budgets shrinking, necessitating painful cuts to programs and staff, construction is under way at many school sites.

"We've lost about 20 percent (of revenue), like most districts," said Leslie Barnes, assistant superintendent of business services for Pomona Unified School District.

For Pomona Unified, it was a double-whammy of the state's financial crisis and declining enrollment: Nearly all of a public school district's revenue comes in money from the state, based on how many students attend class on an average day.

As a result, the district gave pink slips to 90 teachers this spring and 125 non-teacher staffers later in the year, although some of those employees ended up not losing their jobs, thanks to other employees retiring and other ways of saving money.

But work continues at more than 10 renovation and new construction projects around the district, thanks to a \$235 million bond, Measure PS, that voters approved in 2008, before the extent of California's looming economic crisis became clear. Unfortunately, the district is restricted in what it can use the bond money for - school districts deal with a wide variety of "categorical funds" that can only be spent on specific expenses decided upon by officials in Sacramento and Washington.

Community members don't always seem to get that the money being used to refurbish a gymnasium or build a new school cannot be put in the "general fund" pool of money that districts use to pay for employee salaries and benefits. In most districts, salaries and benefits - most of them those of their teachers - make up the lion's share of what unrestricted funds are spent on, meaning that when the pot of money shrinks, there are few other places they can cut.

"We did (get complaints) in the beginning," Barnes said. "We've been very transparent that this money can't be spent on teachers."

"What the public doesn't understand is the different pots of money," said June Lindsey, a facilities consultant for the Banning Unified School District.

Banning Unified has laid off employees this year, after last year opening a new athletic center at Banning High School.

"Every district is facing those issues right now," Lindsey said.

There's also a lag between the time a construction project is started and the sometimes different state of affairs when it finally opens.

On Monday, Colton Joint Unified School District dedicated the new Joe Baca Middle School and on Wednesday, the San Bernardino City Unified School District opened the new Indian Springs High School.

"In the growth years up to '07-'08, everybody was growing," said George Velarde, assistant superintendent of business services for Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District. "You're in the growth mode, busting at the seams, so you send in the application to the state allocation for funding. ... On the sixth or seventh year, you're breaking ground, but by then, the enrollment profile has changed. And now, you have no choice, because the train has left the station, so now you're opening the doors at the time that enrollment is declining and you're laying people off."

It takes up to seven years for a school to go from the application process to opening day, Velarde said.

Construction crews have been hard at work at Pomona's Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design all summer, continuing a multi-year conversion of an aging middle school into a seventh-through-12th grade academy focusing on science, technology, math and engineering. This summer, the work included converting a classroom-turned-counseling-office into a lab, building a new library, putting down new sidewalks and more. All of the non-portable classrooms received new floors, ceilings, a fresh coat of paint, new whiteboards and resurfaced chalkboards. Classrooms will be open and ready for students by the time school starts Aug. 14, and all the work on the campus is scheduled to be done by January.

"This has been something we've been doing for a long time," principal Elizabeth Harper said. "People knew this was coming."

The down economy has had one benefit: California's building industry is eager for the work.

"The bid market's really good," Barnes said. "They came in under bid (at Fremont), happily, so we've been able to stretch those dollars."

At nearby Garey High School, the 50-year-old campus received new marquees, landscaping and walkways. The school's gymnasium received new scoreboards, flooring and paint. Last year, a long-unusable stage at the gym was repaired.

"For years, this was in such poor condition," Barnes said, touching the wooden floor of the stage, "they kept it boarded up."

It's not the same as getting more revenue that they could use to pay teacher and staff salaries - and save programs that are nice to have, but too expensive for the current

economic climate - but district officials hope that the ongoing construction and renovations will still benefit students.

"You want to be in an environment where you can learn," Pomona Superintendent Richard Martinez said, "so we believe this will impact academics."

Community colleges across California face accreditation sanctions

By Laurel Rosenhall
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Community colleges throughout California are facing sanctions from the agency that accredits colleges in the West, largely a result of the state cutting funding for several years as the federal government has stepped up performance standards.

The most severe cases are at the community colleges in San Francisco, San Luis Obispo and Eureka, where officials have issued sanctions one stop short of yanking accreditation – and have ordered the colleges to make plans to shut down.

Several others are facing milder sanctions from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, a division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. This year the commission has put 10 campuses, including those in Modesto, Redding and San Jose, on the midlevel "probation" status. It has placed another 14 campuses – including those in Berkeley, Oakland, Merced and Fresno – on the low-level "warning" status.

"The problems colleges have run into with accreditation are abnormally acute at this point in time in California," said David Baime, a senior vice president with the American Association of Community Colleges.

"The colleges in California have been subject to such savage budget reductions that it has placed institutions under a great deal of financial and administrative strain. I think that's a big part of the issue for the colleges."

Money problems are at the core of the accreditation crisis at City College of San Francisco. Accreditors dinged the school for three years of deficit spending, putting 92 percent of its budget toward salaries and benefits, and not reining in its mission even as funding dwindled. The college serves 90,000 students at more than 100 locations and offers scores of free non-credit classes.

"We have no choice but to fix these problems," said college spokesman Larry Kamer. "Loss of accreditation would be catastrophic, and we're just not going to let that happen."

Colleges need accreditation to accept federal financial aid, offer courses with transferable credit, participate in league sports and award diplomas. Without accreditation, many schools would shut down for lack of students.

Compounding the problem for California colleges are increased academic expectations set by the federal government, which tells accrediting commissions what to look for when

they judge schools. The sticking point for some is a federal requirement that accredited schools demonstrate "learning outcomes."

In other words: It's not enough for a college to show what it teaches. It must also show what students learn.

The tougher academic standards were put in place just before the recession prompted California to start cutting funding to its community colleges. State funding has dropped 12 percent over the last three years, said Jack Scott, chancellor of California's community college system. It will fall another 7 percent, he said, if voters reject the tax hikes in Proposition 30 on the November ballot.

Together, the academic and financial pressures have created a one-two punch for California schools trying to renew their accreditation.

"When you're attempting to meet the accrediting standards it tends to require some research and faculty release time, which is not without cost," Scott said. "It is an additional expense in most cases."

The three colleges facing the most severe sanctions – City College of San Francisco, College of the Redwoods and Cuesta College – are considered fully accredited while they go through a one- to two-year process to correct their problems. They are required to make plans to shut down in case the problems are not fixed.

Accreditors detailed the following concerns for each school:

- San Francisco City College – Deficit spending; too much of budget goes to salaries and benefits; too few administrators for size of school; failure to conduct financial audits.

"The Commission is concerned about the institution's ability to successfully adapt to the changing resource environment facing public community colleges," says its letter to the school.

- College of the Redwoods (Eureka) – Student records not securely stored; deficient professional development and employee evaluation systems; lack of documentation about student learning outcomes in course syllabi and other publications.

The school "has not demonstrated consistent and reliable compliance with Accreditation Standards," the commission wrote.

- Cuesta College (San Luis Obispo) – Lack of planning and evaluation in technology infrastructure and student learning.

"The Commission is concerned as well about Cuesta College's financial stability," it wrote.

Cuesta College President Gil Stork said he welcomes the chance to improve his school, but that the sanctions are disruptive and have caused him to lose some students.

"There's a lot of panic that sets in," he said. "The staff panics. Students are not sure if they should start at the college, or continue."

Kathy Lehner, president of College of the Redwoods, said professors are on board to address the accreditors' concerns but that the college has lost about 10 percent of employees because of budget cuts.

"All the things they tell us to do would be much easier if we had all the staff we used to have," she said.

Real-Time Jobs Data Show Community Colleges What Employers Need Now

The Chronicle of Higher Education

August 13, 2012

By Jennifer González

When Kate F. Kitchener set out to design a green-jobs training program at LaGuardia Community College, she began by taking the pulse of local industry, but not in the usual way.

Rather than poring over labor-market reports—the most recent of which are months old—and cold-calling local employers, Ms. Kitchener used software that gathers up-to-date information on hiring trends and job requirements. In just a few minutes, she says, she was able to "see the skill set that thousands of employers were looking for."

With that in mind, she chose concentrations for the program and tailored the curriculum for each one. That alignment, she says, will improve graduates' chances of finding work.

Community colleges are under pressure these days to produce graduates who can land jobs. But identifying which occupations and skills are in demand is often easier said than done. LaGuardia, a City University of New York campus in Long Island City, is one of 10 community colleges across six states experimenting with software that collects real-time labor-market data, part of a project led by Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based nonprofit group that studies education and work-force issues.

The software scours job ads from thousands of online sources, such as job boards, employers' Web sites, newspapers, and government agencies. The tool then aggregates and analyzes the information to produce a database of current job opportunities, including which companies have the most openings and what exactly job announcements say.

The technology is relatively new, but an increasing number of state governments, local work-force boards, and economic-development agencies are already using it to try to improve the economy. Higher education has less experience collecting real-time labor-market data, so how far the information could go toward developing and tweaking occupational training programs is still unknown.

One goal of the Jobs for the Future project, which began last year, is to evaluate how colleges are using the software, how the data gathered differ from traditional labor-market information, and how the two can complement each other.

"So much of the labor-market information out there typically looks backwards," says Nick Kremer, a former dean at Cerritos College, in Norwalk, Calif., which is part of the project. But the new software can keep up with rapid economic shifts toward new industries and skills, he says: "This has much more immediacy."

The state of the economy has made community colleges' pivotal role in training America's work force more important than ever. Nearly 13 million Americans are unemployed, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, while many companies have open positions they say they can't find workers qualified to fill. Almost half of employers report having a hard time hiring, citing applicants' lack of talent and training, a survey in May by the ManpowerGroup showed.

Real-time labor-market data might not be the solution, but the software has the potential to help fix the apparent mismatch between colleges' training and employers' needs, proponents say. The new technology may help make training programs more efficient, says Maria K. Flynn, a vice president at Jobs for the Future. "We don't see this as a silver bullet," she says, "but a strong tool for colleges to have in their toolbox."

Charting the Data

A core function of community colleges is to understand the business needs of their regions. Traditionally, administrators consult government databases on the skills needed to perform thousands of jobs, and advisory boards of local business leaders provide valuable guidance. Colleges also regularly turn to government statistics on employment conditions, as well as long-term occupational projections.

Those methods have proved challenging, however, for colleges trying to stay current. "It's been risky to use data that old," says Kenneth L. Ender, president of Harper College, in Palatine, Ill. "But it's all we've had up to now."

Relying on outdated information could lead a college, for example, to offer a program its region no longer needs. A decision like that can have lasting negative effects on students, who may not be able to find employment after they graduate.

At Harper, the real-time-data project was a fortuitous turn for a new partnership. About a year ago, a group of companies had gone to the college for help with what they described as a crisis in advanced manufacturing, says Mr. Ender. They were concerned over the lack of qualified candidates for open jobs in the field, which uses cutting-edge technology to improve manufacturing processes.

Administrators used the software to verify the number of unfilled job openings in advanced manufacturing across Illinois: at last count, 8,142. The Illinois Manufacturers' Association estimates that, as workers retire, an additional 75,000 jobs will open in the next five years.

So starting this fall, Harper plans to offer an advanced-manufacturing program in partnership with more than 50 local businesses. Students will be able to complete a paid internship and earn a certificate in manufacturing production in less than a year. They can also pursue specialized certification in areas such as metal fabrication and precision machining.

"If not for the data," Mr. Ender says, "we would not have started the program."

The colleges participating in Jobs for the Future's pilot project, financed by the Joyce Foundation and the Lumina Foundation for Education, are not paying for the software right now. Its cost can range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for a one-year license, according to a report by Jobs for the Future. Burning Glass Technologies, the vendor for the pilot project and one of a few in the market, declined to disclose its rates. Given that higher-education budgets have been slashed in recent years, paying for the software may be challenging for community colleges.

But its information is valuable. At LaGuardia, it swayed Ms. Kitchener, sustainability coordinator at NY Designs, a campus business incubator that houses the green-jobs training program. The program, a partnership with Queens Botanical Garden, offers three concentrations: green cleaning and housekeeping, waste management, and sustainable landscape design and maintenance.

Ms. Kitchener initially planned to include 10 hours of occupational-safety training as part of the sustainable-landscaping curriculum, but after reviewing job posts collected by the software, she decided against it. "What I found was that a lot of the companies wanted people who had sales and customer-service training," she says. So she swapped in two days of that training and eliminated the safety instruction.

The green-jobs program is aimed at helping the unemployed get back to work as quickly as possible. Each track lasts two weeks, with time divided between classes at LaGuardia and a practicum at the botanical garden. There, students get a chance to try out techniques they've learned about, such as buffing floors with nontoxic cleaners, composting food scraps, and landscaping with native plants.

Aisha L. Smith graduated from the training program in February and has worked at Tri-State Biodiesel since then. "Everything I learned in class about the environment, like the impact of air pollution and the need to cut down on carbon-dioxide emissions," she says, "I am applying here."

Drawbacks and Benefits

Real-time labor-market data may be a game-changer in the development of training programs, but the collection method does have its limitations. Not all job openings are listed online. Those that are sometimes provide incomplete information about the qualifications required. And when the software scrapes sites, it may pick up duplicate job ads. Such glitches can skew the employment picture.

That was of concern for a project led by the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development. Using data from EmployOn, a subsidiary of Burning Glass, the consortium was designing customized training programs to prepare unemployed workers for new jobs, as bank tellers, for example, and electromechanical-engineering technicians.

As many as two-thirds of the job listings the consortium was relying on were duplicates, says Robert Rosa, its chief operating officer. Officials discovered the discrepancy through conversations with employers and have since stopped using the tool.

But the consortium is still committed to creating training programs in fields with real demand, says Jacob C. Farbman, director of communications for the New Jersey Council of County Colleges. Working directly with employers to figure out what positions they need to fill, he says, "has been even more effective than just relying on the data alone."

Other colleges, convinced that real-time information is useful, have deployed it in creative ways. At Harper, officials perused the data, then invited employers with job openings to a career fair this past spring. More than 90 employers attended, an increase of 26 percent over last year, according to the college.

Southern Maine Community College turned to real-time-data software when officials there decided to apply on behalf of its system for a federal grant. The grant, for more than \$13-million, would be used to create and expand training programs in advanced manufacturing, information technology, and energy-efficient construction.

In its application, Southern Maine used labor-market data to bolster its report of job openings in the state: more than 1,000 in both information technology and advanced manufacturing, and nearly 400 in building technology. "It's so critical when you write these proposals that you show the need," says Diane M. Vickrey, the college's dean of students and planning.

The decision on the grant is pending, but Ms. Vickrey is hopeful. If awarded the money, she says, the college could develop more certificate and degree programs to prepare students for the state's burgeoning energy-efficient-construction industry—in part by using real-time labor-market data. In fact, Southern Maine has already used such data to design a new associate-degree program in computer science, which will begin this fall.

"We keep hearing over and over again that companies say, 'We can't fill jobs,'" says Ms. Vickrey. The college wants to get students ready, she says, "for the jobs that are out there."

Dan Walters Can Jerry Brown scare up a victory?

By Dan Walters
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Gov. Jerry Brown spent much of last week trying to scare California voters into voting for higher taxes.

Brown, speaking to community college students in San Diego, promised "real suffering by you and really our whole future" if voters reject his sales and income tax measure, Proposition 30.

It's a somewhat disingenuous argument, albeit a clever one, rooted in the poll-tested assumption that education is the single most popular state program.

While Proposition 30's proceeds would be technically routed into K-12 schools and community they would largely pay for a long-standing constitutional commitment, while freeing up billions to spend on other, less popular services.

Conversely, however, if Proposition 30 fails, Brown and the Legislature have decreed that education funds would be whacked, thereby creating a doomsday scenario in hopes that voters will respond by passing the measure.

Is it working? It's too early to say for certain, but a comprehensive new poll finds that while most voters appear inclined to vote for Proposition 30, the margin of approval is very thin, and arguments against it resonate strongly.

The poll, conducted for Policy Analysis for California Education, an education think tank, and the University Rossier School of Education, echoed other recent polls showing that Proposition 30's support is a few points over a majority.

Ominously, however, just 35.1 percent of voters agreed with a summary of Brown's argument about taxing the wealthy more for schools and public safety.

Meanwhile, nearly 49 percent agreed with the opponents' argument against the measure, that the state wastes money on a bullet train and a legislative staff salary increase, while millions of dollars in hidden funds were found in a department's accounts.

"Californians are willing to spend money in order to protect their schools from spending cuts," poll director Dan Schnur said in an analysis of the results. "But they also believe that state government is spending too much money on things that aren't necessary and want to see that spending reined in before supporting the governor's initiative."

It boils down, Schnur says, to a question of whether "state government can be trusted with their tax"

The good news for Brown is that he has millions of dollars to make his pitch, while opponents have scant funds. But looming in the background is Molly Munger, a wealthy attorney who's spending even more millions on her rival tax measure for schools, Proposition 38, and has been taking potshots at Brown's plan.

Will she spend big bucks on anti-Proposition 30 ads?

The PACE/USC poll indicates that a well-financed opposition campaign would doom the measure, which is why top Democratic politicians are publicly begging her not to do it.

MSJC faculty wants compromise in contract negotiation

ccnewsnow.com

Friday, August 24, 2012

Source: nctimes.com

RIVERSIDE, CA—Faculty members at Mt. San Jacinto College have told the school's board of trustees that while they understand the current budget crisis, they would prefer to sign a new contract only if they can reach a compromise in salary cuts.

Several speakers at the board meeting Thursday explained how much work they put into their jobs and how the college district's demand for furloughs and other salary-cutting measures are making their lives more difficult.

The district has asked the faculty to accept 12 unpaid furlough days for the current academic year to be taken at the winter and spring breaks. It would result in a 4.6 percent cut in salary, saving the college district an estimated \$1.2 million.

The contract has been in negotiation since April, according Karen Cranney, president of the Mt. San Jacinto College Faculty Association. And while the teachers presented their own proposal Aug. 8, the district seems to be standing firm on the reduced work time and 4.6 percent reduction, which already has been accepted by supervisory and classified staff.

"We understand they don't have a lot of money but we would like to negotiate some kind of compromise," Cranney said. "We work better when we work together."

And that was the mantra for a handful of speakers to the trustees Thursday.

Denise Dalaimo, chairwoman of the sociology department, said she works far beyond what's expected on behalf of her students and the college. In addition to her teaching duties, she serves on many committees, is a published author, and runs training sessions for college and high school faculties.

"I don't get paid for any of the extra work I do on behalf of the college," Dalaimo said. "Like my colleagues, I am not asking for extra money or even recognition for my efforts; for me, it is an ethical decision. (Extra work) is simply what we do as a faculty."

The faculty's Aug. 8 proposal includes a 2 percent salary decrease upon ratification of the agreement. The decrease will grow to 4.6 percent if Gov. Jerry Brown's Proposition 30 tax initiative fails in November. His plan would bolster revenues to community colleges across the state.

Faculty members also want several changes in the wording of the contract, which they say allows for changes to be made without any bargaining.

Since the contract is still in negotiation, trustees did not speak directly to the proposals. However, some comments were sympathetic to the teachers.

“I’m aware of what it takes to do your jobs beyond the hours you normally work,” said Gwendolyn Schlange, who is a retired educator. “We will have to work together in the next three years to get through this.”

The district passed a \$51.9 million budget in June that survived a \$7 million cut in state funding. Last week, a budget officer at the college said the district’s reserve funds are now at about \$3 million.

Since the budget crisis began in 2008, the district has frozen step increases in salaries and reduced travel, overtime, hiring and supplies. Summer school has essentially been canceled the last two years and the college has shortened its work week to 4.5 days.

However, a new \$9.5 million social sciences and humanities building opened this week, paid for by a separate capital outlay fund approved by the state.

While enrollment has dropped, the college maintains that students are still getting the basic education necessary to transfer to four-year colleges.

Survey offers dire picture of California's two-year colleges

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

August 28, 2012, 10:39 p.m.

As demand increases but funding is cut, 470,000 students find themselves on waiting lists for needed classes. Things will get worse if further cuts become necessary.

More than 470,000 community college students are beginning the fall semester on waiting lists, unable to get into the courses they need, according to a survey of California's two-year colleges that captures a system struggling amid severe budget cuts.

The survey, to be released Wednesday, quantified the myriad problems affecting the system, many of which have been anecdotally reported by students on many campuses. The colleges expect steep declines in enrollment and class offerings compared with last fall.

California's community college system, the nation's largest, has suffered about \$809 million in state funding cuts since 2008. It faces another \$338-million hit midyear if voters reject a tax measure on the November ballot supported by Gov. Jerry Brown.

The system has a dual role: It educates students who intend to transfer to four-year schools and it offers job training for others. College officials have been grappling with how to best continue its mission with lower funding but increased demand.

Although they hope for the best, many campuses are planning for the worst. They are taking steps, for example, to negotiate union contracts that include reductions in compensation and employee working hours pending further spending cuts.

"There is no question that the system is shrinking in terms of the number of students we're serving but not shrinking in terms of demand," Chancellor Jack Scott said in an interview Tuesday. "The real problem is we don't have the financial resources to offer the courses that we could fill. In the long run, it's going to be hurtful to the economy. These are the individuals who are going to make up the future workforce of California."

These students also tend to be among the neediest: They typically require remedial classes, financial aid, tutoring and counseling. And many are juggling school with jobs.

Yet 70% of colleges in the survey report having reduced hours for such support services, and 87% have reduced staff. In addition, 82% said they planned to offer no winter session this year.

Of California's 112 two-year colleges, 78 responded to the survey from the chancellor's office. The colleges represent a cross section of the system, including Yuba College in Marysville, San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton and Santa Monica College.

The colleges predicted a grim year if further cuts are required in January. Administrators said they would need to further reduce class offerings, lay off full-time faculty, postpone building and classroom maintenance, and borrow to manage cash-flow needs.

Already, budget cuts have had a deep effect. Overall enrollment dropped about 17%, from about 2.9 million in the 2008-09 academic year to 2.4 million in 2011-12, and officials have estimated a further decline this year. The number of class sections decreased 24% from 522,727 in 2008-09 to 399,540 in 2011-12.

The colleges say they are being forced to cut into vital services that for many students can mean the difference between success and failure. Nearly 67% of colleges reported that students have had to wait longer for financial aid, counseling and other appointments since 2009-10, with an average wait time of 12 days. West Los Angeles College reported that it had eliminated tutoring and field trips to four-year universities and stopped publishing a student handbook.

El Camino College in Torrance is offering about 1,922 class sections this fall, down from 2,027 last year. Nearly every class has a waiting list, said spokeswoman Ann Garten.

"We have all of these students who want to take courses — high school graduates, then a whole group who had planned to go to the University of California or Cal State but can't afford to, and with the economy, all of these people coming back to college because they need skills," Garten said. But, she said, "we're all being forced by the state to offer fewer courses for students."

Nearly 85% of the colleges reported having waiting lists for classes this fall. In all, about 55,000 classes have such lists, the schools reported. The number of students on those rosters averaged 7,157 per campus.

Pasadena City College will offer about 500 fewer sections this fall compared with last year after taking a \$6.7-million funding cut, said President Mark Rocha. The campus has been forced to prioritize registration so that students close to graduating or to transferring can get the classes they need. Local high school graduates who are full-time students also have priority.

"It's the most difficult funding situation I have ever seen for community colleges," Rocha said. But he said students should not give up hope.

"I see the lines of students, but it's not impossible," Rocha said. "No student is being turned away. Can you come and take any course you want any time you want the way you used to? No. But I try to tell students not to be discouraged."

It's a tough message to spread. With community colleges having started Monday, students across the system are reporting feeling frustrated and discouraged.

Rogelio Cervantes Jr., for example, said he arrived for a math class this week at East Los Angeles College and found more than 40 students lined up trying to add the already full class.

"You walk through the hallways and it takes five minutes to get from point to point because there are so many students trying to get classes; it's chaotic," said Cervantes, 20. He couldn't get the class times he wanted and was forced to put together a schedule that runs from 8:20 a.m. to 10 p.m. He plans to remain on campus and nap in his car so he doesn't lose his parking space.

"I'm shooting to graduate next summer," Cervantes said. "But that's if I'm able to get all the classes in time."

College dedicates webpage to topic of accreditation

THE COMPTON BULLETIN—August 29, 2012

COMPTON—The El Camino College Compton Center website has added a new page dedicated solely to communication regarding the accreditation process, which is underway and is expected to take several more years.

The accreditation webpage may be accessed at www.compton.edu/campusinformation/accreditation.

“The new page is dedicated to communicating the process of accreditation for the Compton Center,” said interim CEO Dr. Keith Curry. “It is intended to provide the public with comprehensive communication about the accreditation process. To keep the community informed about progress toward independent accreditation, this webpage conveys the actions and communications of both the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), the organization authorized by the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate potential colleges on the criteria required to achieve accreditation, and the work of the ECC Compton Center Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC).”

Under the leadership of co-chairs, Compton Community College District CEO; El Camino College Vice President, Compton Center; and Compton Center’s Faculty Council president, the Accreditation Steering Committee includes students, faculty, classified staff and administrators. The ASC includes five subcommittees that will assess and respond to the ACCJC’s 21 eligibility criteria for accreditation.

Each ASC subcommittee is responsible for addressing one of the following areas: organization, instruction/faculty, student services/public information, financial integrity, and planning and evaluation. ASC subcommittee members have begun the work of gathering relevant evidence demonstrating that the Compton Center meets the eligibility criteria before El Camino College applies for eligibility of its Compton Center.

The ASC is also responsible for updating the webpage on a regular basis to include its schedule of meetings, agendas and minutes, as well as other important documents related to the accreditation process.

Additional information currently posted on the accreditation webpage includes “Process to Accreditation,” first published in October 2010. “This document provides an overview of the actions required by the ACCJC for El Camino College Compton Center to progress toward accreditation eligibility, followed by candidacy and eventual accreditation,” said Curry. “The document is intended to serve as a guide, briefly summarizing the overall accreditation process, as well as anticipated timelines. During the entire process, the direction, guidelines and timelines, from eligibility and candidacy through full accreditation, are determined by the ACCJC and not El Camino College, ECC Compton Center, the Compton Community College District, nor any other entity.”

This is an important point because many in the community believe that the CCCD can speed up the process if it chooses to. Curry has been conducting an active and intense

information campaign to explain the accreditation process, appearing at City Council meetings in each of the cities served by the college and meetings of community groups.

“Brick by Brick: The Road to Accreditation,” was first published on Dec. 1, 2010, by the Compton Community College District and has been widely distributed to community members and leaders served by the Compton District as part of a larger communication plan. It outlines the process to achieve accreditation for El Camino College Compton Center.

The Process to Accreditation Communications Plan provides a framework for communication through many avenues from newsletters and direct mail to the dedicated webpage and speaking engagements at key organizations throughout the community.

“We invite members of the community to regularly visit the accreditation webpage to stay informed,” Curry said. “If you have any questions about the road to accreditation, you may submit your e-mail address and comments or questions at:

www.compton.edu/campusinformation/accreditation.”

Compton Community College had its accreditation revoked by the ACCJC in 2006, after the district informed the state chancellor’s office that it was \$200,000 in arrears and was unable to meet its payroll obligations.

The school is being operated as a remote learning center of El Camino Community College, an arrangement made possible by the passage of AB 318, which created a partnership between the two districts and has kept the college open.

“This is the first time this has ever been done,” said Special Trustee Thomas Henry. “No community college in the country has ever lost its accreditation and entered into a partnership agreement with another community college district. For that reason, there has been a lot of misunderstanding within the community about accreditation. At first, our main concern was keeping the college open. Now we can see that we need to communicate more information about the accreditation process and where we are in that effort.”

The most common misconceptions have been concern that El Camino would permanently absorb the Compton Center; that accreditation can be attained in a much shorter timeframe; that the Compton Center will not offer the curriculum expected by the community; and that financial history of Compton College is making it more difficult to earn accreditation.

“Actually, none of that is true,” said Henry. “El Camino has no intention of taking over the college and is doing everything in its power to spearhead a successful accreditation process. The timeframe for accreditation is lengthy, but it is no different with Compton Center. All colleges seeking accreditation must go through the same steps. And we have improved upon our curriculum with new classes that are intended to prepare students for well-paying jobs in many industries.”