

College, too easy for its own good

LA Times

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By Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa

Colleges have abandoned responsibility for shaping students' academic development and instead have come to embrace a service model that caters to satisfying students' expressed desires.

As this year's crop of college graduates leaves school, burdened with high levels of debt and entering a severely depressed job market, they may be asking themselves a fundamental question: Was college worth it?

And it's no wonder they're asking. Large numbers of the new graduates will face sustained periods of underemployment and low wages for years. Worse still, many of them were poorly prepared for the future, having spent four (or more) years of college with only modest academic demands that produced only limited improvement in the skills necessary to be successful in today's knowledge-based economy.

We recently tracked several thousand students as they moved through and graduated from a diverse set of more than two dozen colleges and universities, and we found consistent evidence that many students were not being appropriately challenged. In a typical semester, 50% of students did not take a single course requiring more than 20 pages of writing, 32% did not have any classes that required reading more than 40 pages per week, and 36% reported studying alone five or fewer hours per week.

Not surprisingly, given such a widespread lack of academic rigor, about a third of students failed to demonstrate significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning and writing ability (as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment) during their four years of college.

The students themselves must bear some of the blame for this, of course. Improvement in thinking and writing skills requires academic engagement; simply hanging out on a college campus for multiple years isn't enough. Yet at many institutions, that seems to be sufficient to earn a degree. At many schools, students can choose from a menu of easy programs and classes that allow them to graduate without having received a rigorous college education. Colleges are complicit, in that they reward students with high grades for little effort. Indeed, the students in our study who reported studying alone five or fewer hours per week nevertheless had an average cumulative GPA of 3.16.

To be sure, there were many exceptions to this dismal portrait of the state of undergraduate learning. Some academic programs and colleges are quite rigorous, and some students we followed pushed themselves and excelled. In general, traditional arts and science fields (math, science, humanities and the social sciences) tended to be more demanding, and students who majored in those subjects studied more and showed higher gains. So too did students attending more selective colleges. In addition, at every college and university examined, we found some students who were applying themselves and learning at impressive levels.

These real accomplishments do not, however, exonerate the colleges and universities that are

happy to collect annual tuition dollars but then fail to provide many students with a high-quality education.

In much of higher education, the problem is in part that undergraduate education is no longer a top priority. Instead of focusing on undergraduates and what they are learning, schools have come to care more about such things as admission yields, graduation rates, faculty research productivity, pharmaceutical patents, deluxe dormitory rooms, elaborate student centers and state-of-the-art athletic facilities complete with luxury boxes. Many institutions favor priorities that can be boasted about in alumni magazines and admission brochures or that can help boost their scores in college rankings. Colleges have abandoned responsibility for shaping students' academic development and instead have come to embrace a service model that caters to satisfying students' expressed desires.

These trends have all added up to less rigor. California labor economists Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks, for example, have documented that full-time college students' time spent studying dropped in half between 1960 and today. Moreover, from 1970 to 2000, as colleges increasingly hired additional staff to attend to student social and personal needs, the percentage of professional employees in higher education who were faculty decreased from about two-thirds to around one-half. At the same time, through their professional advancement and tenure policies, schools encouraged faculty to focus more on research rather than teaching. When teaching was considered as part of the equation, student course assessments tended to be the method used to evaluate teaching, which tends to incentivize lenient grading and entertaining forms of instruction.

So how should this academic drift of our colleges and universities be addressed? Some have proposed introducing a federal accountability system. We are against such a move, as federal regulation would probably be counterproductive and include a large set of detrimental, unintended consequences.

Accountability in higher education rightly resides at lower levels of the system. College trustees have at the institutional level the fiduciary responsibility to begin holding administrators accountable by asking: How are student learning outcomes and program quality being measured, and what is being done to address areas of concern that have been identified? Faculty must also take responsibility individually and collectively to define and ensure program quality and academic standards. Finally, student undergraduate cultures will have to change, with students themselves recognizing that they need more from college than a paper diploma and an expanded roster of Facebook friends.

Low-Cost Instructional Changes Can Cut Achievement Gap in Intro Biology, Scholars Say

The Chronicle of Higher Education

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By David Glenn

When instructors at the University of Washington redesigned their introductory-biology course in a "highly structured" style, with active-learning exercises, daily quizzes, and weekly online essay assignments, all students' performance improved, but especially the performance of students whose high-school preparation was weak. The achievement gap between students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds closed by nearly half.

And all of that, the instructors believe, can be accomplished at any college without increasing instructional costs. In fact, they achieved their gains during a period when budget pressures at Washington forced a doubling of the course's maximum size, from 345 to 700.

The scholars report their findings in the June 3 issue of *Science*. (The paper is accessible only to subscribers.)

"Simple changes in teaching style can dramatically improve students' performance across the board," said David C. Haak, one of the paper's four authors, in an interview on Wednesday. Mr. Haak earned a doctorate in biology at Washington in 2010 and is now a postdoctoral researcher at Indiana University at Bloomington.

The course's redesign was led by Scott Freeman, a lecturer in biology at Washington who is also among the paper's authors. According to Mr. Haak, the Washington team borrowed liberally from pedagogical reforms in physics. In a related paper published this year in *CBE Life Sciences Education*, Mr. Freeman and two colleagues describe the basic elements of the redesigned course:

- Instead of simply lecturing, the instructors frequently call on students to answer questions. After the class size increased to 700, Mr. Freeman developed a method of randomly calling on a certain number of students each day.
- During class time, the students are asked to do short ungraded assignments. Those include "minute papers" (papers that summarize the day's main idea, are expected to be written in 60 seconds, and must conclude with a question about something that puzzles the student) and case studies reviewed in small groups.
- Each week outside of class, students are required to answer five short-answer questions. The answers are then randomly and anonymously given to other students in the class for grading. Students are also required to answer multiple-choice questions about the reading for the next week's lecture.

In the *Science* paper, Mr. Freeman and his colleagues compare students' performance in two highly structured sections of the course with other students' performance in 27 less-structured sections in recent years. In the highly structured sections, the instructors write, the raw achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers was 0.44 grade points—much better than the 0.8-point gap in the other sections.

The Washington instructors did make a sacrifice, however. When the class size ballooned, they reduced the number of weekly laboratory hours from three to two. Mr. Haak says that was a painful choice, but it was the only way to preserve teaching assistants' time for grading essays. The instructors did not want to turn to a multiple-choice test format because they were committed to helping students learn high-level problem-solving and analysis, not simple memorization of facts.

"It was tough," Mr. Haak says. "The real crux was finding a way to maintain the number of essay questions, without having the TA's go stir-crazy trying to grade them all." (One answer was to have more-frequent but smaller tests.)

Mr. Freeman and Mr. Haak were joined in writing the paper for *Science* by Janneke Hille Ris Lambers, an assistant professor of biology at Washington, and Emile Pitre, associate vice president for minority affairs at the university.

Mr. Haak and his colleagues are now applying for grants to support training programs that might spread the model to other campuses. They also plan to analyze further data from the Washington campus, including statistics about how well students perform in subsequent biology classes after taking the redesigned introductory course.

Sacramento State Deploys Support for Veterans Across the Campus

The Chronicle of Higher Education

May 29, 2011

Sara Lipka

Sacramento

Veterans with questions about courses at California State University at Sacramento used to have to stand and wait. Long lines led to the registrar's service counter, which an adviser would then leave to consult a veterans-benefits coordinator, in a cubicle behind two doors. Forget it, some students would say on their way to class or work or home to their kids.

Then, in 2006, California founded the program Troops to College to make the state's public institutions "more veteran-friendly," and the Cal State system's chancellor leaned on its 23 campuses. Sacramento State took note of its neighbors: two Air Force bases and the California Department of Veterans Affairs. And university officials made veterans a top priority, backed by the president, Alexander Gonzalez, a Vietnam vet from East Los Angeles who had gone to Pomona College on the GI Bill.

In five years, Sacramento State has progressed from a hidden cubicle to the Student Veteran Success Program. From its growing headquarters, two staff members and several student workers now promote services across the campus for a population of veterans and dependents that has nearly doubled, to 1,250, about 5 percent of the total enrollment. Collaborators come from academic departments, student groups, the career center, and the development office.

"Everybody knows about the veterans program," Mr. Gonzalez says. "It's not just an add-on."

Sacramento State is responding to a widely acknowledged but often neglected need. More than half of colleges provide some services to veterans, typically related to education benefits, but less than a quarter help them transition to campus, according to a report in 2009 by several higher-education groups. On average, student veterans perceive lower levels of support than their classmates do, the National Survey of Student Engagement found last year.

Colleges' efforts are expanding, but many still fall short, says Meg Krause, associate director for military programs at the American Council on Education's Center for Lifelong Learning. "You can't just slap on a sticker and say, 'This is a veteran-friendly program.'" Private and federal grants, including from the council and the Walmart Foundation, are trying to identify the best strategies for serving student veterans.

A long view is vital for traditional colleges at a time when for-profit institutions, with generally lower retention rates, are aggressively recruiting veterans, says Ed Mills, Sacramento State's associate vice president for student affairs, enrollment, and student support. He is motivated not by competition but by a sense of obligation. "We've built a really comprehensive experience that's focused on graduation," he says. "I definitely want a student veteran to be at Sac State."

Janelle Adams, an Army veteran, first enrolled here in 2006. She struggled to make friends and withdrew from campus life, she says: "I felt like I didn't belong." Before the end of the semester, she was recalled and deployed to Iraq.

When she came back, in 2008, she found a Veteran Success Center, adorned with pennants and posters, including the U.S. Soldiers Creed ("I will always place the mission first," it says, among

other things. "I will never accept defeat."). It was crowded with classmates who studied and swapped war stories and slung banter like old buddies.

"Feeling comfortable here first," Ms. Adams says, "allowed me to feel comfortable in the rest of the university."

Matthew Ceccato, a former Army paratrooper, camped out in the center after transferring from Sacramento City College in 2009. "I was in here all the time, asking questions," he says.

Of course some students still hang back, but a veterans lounge opening on campus in the fall—couches, TV, computers—may draw them in, he says. "We'll get more people who fall through the cracks."

Building Up and Out

If Sacramento State is on a mission, Jeff Weston is in command.

After four years in the Air Force, Mr. Weston came home and enrolled at the university in 2003, working part time for the veterans-benefits coordinator. Two years later he graduated, she left the job, and he replaced her.

Tucked away in the cubicle, Mr. Weston processed benefits for about 600 veterans and dependents. They submitted their paperwork at the counter until he changed the procedure: Students would drop it off to him. "That at least gives you 30 seconds to get a face to a name," he says.

He hired a couple of work-study students, held afternoon round tables, and found a small group to start a student-veterans organization. "We knew they had the leadership capacity," he says. "We just needed to harness that."

Then Mr. Mills joined the administration and heard about the lines. He moved Mr. Weston, who was earning a master's degree in educational leadership, out of the registrar's office. Senior administrators, committed to a more comprehensive program, promoted him to director of veterans services.

The University Foundation, which raises funds for Sacramento State, invited Mr. Weston and a student, Austin K. Sihoe, to share their ideas with its board of directors; the chairman, George Crandell, immediately pledged a gift.

"I looked at Jeff and I was like, 'That's a pretty handsome donation, \$2,500,'" recalls Mr. Sihoe, a Navy veteran and physical-therapy major. An e-mail afterward confirmed that the amount was \$25,000, and that the foundation had started a campaign to raise \$100,000.

The momentum brought recognition—and visitors, like Chrystal C. Ramirez Barranti, an associate professor of social work and a behavioral-health volunteer with the National Guard. "I just went over and introduced myself," she says. "From then on I was like, 'Jeff, we've got to do this, we've got to do that.'" With her help, the fledgling program won a \$100,000 grant from the American Council on Education and the Walmart Foundation.

That paid for Ms. Barranti to design and teach a veterans-studies course, then experimental, now permanent. And Mr. Weston brought on a temporary benefits coordinator, Lindsey Wathen, whom the student-affairs division later hired, freeing Mr. Weston to expand the program.

Six-foot-six but unimposing, he is well known around the campus. The former logistics officer has enlisted partners in admissions, financial aid, and counseling. "I went to the Pride Center, the Women's Resource Center, and said, 'You know, can we collaborate?'"

Last September the Veteran Success and Pride Centers sponsored a panel discussion, "Don't Ask, Don't Care," with gay military veterans. In November the student-veterans organization and two other groups held a diversity conference with sessions on military women and dependent life. That week the campus newspaper ran a series of profiles of student veterans.

They look out for one another, organizing "vet cafés" with representatives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, for example, and the Wounded Warrior Project. For classmates with families or night shifts, they recap evening meetings the next day at lunch.

The veterans program has grown at Sacramento State by focusing not on students' risks but on their potential, says Mr. Weston. He surrounds himself with students for their ideas, he says. Each semester he hires two work-study students and six more through the Department of Veterans Affairs, which lets recipients of educational benefits perform related work.

To find the next classes of students and leaders, Mr. Weston goes out recruiting. He regularly visits a half-dozen local community colleges, as well as churches and VFW and American Legion meetings. He wants to talk with veterans who may not be thinking about college, he says, grinning. "Yet."

Outside Funds

Of course, growth costs money. Unfortunately, that's in short supply these days, especially in California.

Still, the university has committed to maintain two positions for the veterans program, its "rising star," says Lori E. Varlotta, vice president for student affairs. Beyond staff, expenses are uncertain. This year the program gave out \$80,000 in scholarships to student veterans, and Mr. Weston and Ms. Wathen hope to sustain, if not increase, those awards.

They also plan to expand a five-week Veterans Success Academy from 10 participants in its first cycle, last summer, to 50 this year. "Outside funding is going to be critical," Ms. Varlotta says.

Glossy materials are at the ready, and administrators can boast success. On average over the past four years, 93 percent of student veterans have returned for their second year of college. Last spring veterans' grade-point average was 3.11, compared with 2.94 for the general student population.

In December, Wells Fargo pledged \$100,000 to the program; the University Foundation has raised about \$150,000 from individual donors. Mr. Gonzalez, the president, wants to set up a special endowment for private funds, which lack the restrictions of state appropriations.

As fund raising has become a bigger part of Mr. Weston's job, he's found that he likes discussing plans: to provide dedicated services to female veterans, for example, and to military spouses and dependents. To start mentorships between student veterans and Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets. To extend professional preparation beyond career fairs by tapping a new alumni-veteran chapter.

One project is veteran-friendly zones, an idea Mr. Weston adapted from the Pride Center's safe zones for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students and staff: sensitivity signaled by stickers on office doors. (Veterans on the campus may not feel unsafe, he says, but stigmatized.)

He and Ms. Barranti are developing a 90-minute training session on issues common among veterans.

Another front is academic credit, which veterans often earn in the military and want to count toward their degrees. Mr. Mills has set his sights on an agreement to accept transfer credit from the University of Maryland University College, whose online courses consistently appear on veterans' transcripts, he says.

The next few years will be hard, Mr. Weston says, but he's confident. "We're going to flourish," he says, "despite the budget problems."

Meanwhile he looks for any services he can provide without more money or staff. In the student union, the engineering dean shouts a friendly greeting; Mr. Weston later explains that he is referring a student to the dean. He senses when student veterans are somber, he says; sometimes all they need is a pep talk. He connects new and seasoned students who share the same majors.

"What can we do with what we have?" he asks. "We can always do more."

Jim Newton: Tackling the truth in Compton

LA Times

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Before their community college can be fixed, residents need to acknowledge that it's broken.

It is a source of fierce shame and more than a little defensiveness in Compton that the area's lone bastion of higher education, Compton Community College, lost its accreditation in 2005 after officials absconded with public money and the district came up short on its payroll. Six years later, however, there are signs of hope at the college, where a battle-scarred crop of leaders is fighting through threats of violence and howls of community protest but is at last confronting the truth.

After the school's troubles surfaced in the mid-1990s, a series of special trustees struggled to find a way forward while trying to appease a community that in some ways seemed more upset with the state for intervening than with the school management that had created the crisis. Then, last December, the community college chancellor appointed Genethia Hudley-Hayes, former president of the Los Angeles Unified School District board, to become the new trustee. Hudley-Hayes sized up the situation and found it bleak. And rather than appease the college's supporters, Hudley-Hayes publicly acknowledged that the school's financial problems remained acute and that accreditation was still likely to be years away.

Trying to get a hold on spending, she revoked credit cards issued to the staff. Officials notified her that they suspected a colleague of stealing copper wiring, and rather than hush it up, she called the police. He was arrested and is facing criminal charges. She demanded that the district aggressively address its financial troubles, and authorized layoffs. Danny Villanueva, the district's new business manager (it went through nine in five years), says colleagues stop talking when he passes them in the halls, but the district will end this fiscal year with positive cash flow.

Many Compton residents haven't wanted to hear Hudley-Hayes' message. When Hudley-Hayes addressed a community meeting in April and warned that the community college still faced a long road back to accreditation, the local Chamber of Commerce president described her as insulting. And when she acknowledged the crucial role played by El Camino College, which effectively took over Compton so that students could receive accredited degrees, that rankled too. Some Compton residents remain bitter that what they see as a "white" school now presides over a "black" one.

"I don't understand some things about Compton," Hudley-Hayes told me as we walked the well-tended grounds of the 88-acre campus. "I don't understand not being interested in factual information."

What has angered the community most was her decision to toss out the college's chief executive officer, a popular leader who ingratiated himself to the community in part by promising that accreditation was around the corner. Hudley-Hayes showed him the door, and Compton's seething anger boiled over.

"They fell off the turnip truck when I bought out this man's contract," Hudley-Hayes said. "I was accused of trying to change the climate and culture. People said: 'You're not from here. You don't know what you're talking about.'"

It got ugly. She was threatened leaving her office one evening by a man who accused her of causing trouble and warned her to "be careful." Her home was ransacked. Her office has been broken into repeatedly; someone took her journal and a flash drive; her email was hacked into. Today, she is accompanied everywhere she goes by a California Highway Patrol officer.

Even the more civilized response was rough. A group known as the Committee to Save Compton Community College District called for her ouster. Hudley-Hayes, the group's leader charged in a letter to the governor and chancellor, "is dictatorial, presumptuous, demeaning, condescending, disrespectful, dismissive of the input of others and mean-spirited in manner and deed." As if that weren't enough, the letter also faulted her diction: "Please inform Ms. Hudley-Hayes that the word is 'accreditation' and not 'accredi-DA-tion.'" The letter identified Hudley-Hayes, Villanueva and Keith Curry, the acting chief executive brought in by Hudley-Hayes, as the "triumvirate of inexperience."

Hudley-Hayes does not seem terribly bothered by all this — she happily gave me the letter calling for her removal — and is characteristically plain-spoken about what she blames for the resistance. Compton, she said, is protective of its black leadership, and the man she removed is black, though the school district and city are mostly, and increasingly, Latino. "We have African Americans not willing to cede power," she said, "They're saying to Latinos: 'We're not going to allow you the opportunities we had.'"

It bears noting that Hudley-Hayes is African American, as is Curry. He admits the community hasn't reacted well to his appointment, but he's not fazed either. He grew up in Compton. Compton Community College was the first college campus he ever visited. Today, Curry can walk from his office to his mother's house in four minutes.

As we sat in his meeting room, a poster of President Obama with the word "Destiny" on the wall, Curry and Villanueva and Hudley-Hayes laughed off some of the protests and kidded each other — Villanueva pointed out that he's both younger and better looking than Curry, which Curry accepted with a roll of his eyes. As for the reaction, the calls for his removal, the threats against his colleague, Curry said: "I don't let that bother me. My thing is all about students and student success."

El Camino director will address graduates

The Daily Breeze

From staff reports
Posted: 06/06/2011

Torrance. For its commencement address on Friday, El Camino College has found a keynote speaker who is so familiar with the campus that the staff has dubbed him "Mr. ECC."

Harold Tyler, an El Camino graduate, retired in December after working on the college's staff for 35 years, most recently as the community college's longtime director of student development.

Tyler, who has known all five of the college's presidents, will address the Class of 2011 at the 64th annual commencement ceremony, scheduled for 4 p.m. Friday in Murdock Stadium.

Tyler started his higher-education journey when he earned an associate degree at El Camino in 1975. He continued his education at California State University, Dominguez Hills, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in business.

As a youth, he played on the Compton High School basketball team, and later, at ECC, served as a volunteer assistant coach for the college's basketball team from 1973-75. For the past three years, Tyler has been the announcer at Warriors basketball games.

Still an avid basketball player, coach and fan, Tyler coaches his grandson, in addition to spending time with his four grown children and grandchildren.

- Rob Kuznia

California Community-College Student Questions Legality of E-Textbook Fees

June 6, 2011, 7:13 pm

By [Ben Wieder](#)

A community-college student in California says that a course fee levied by the institution for access to an e-textbook and related online materials is unfair—and may violate state law.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported last week that Fred Rassai, a student at Foothill College, filed a grievance with the college arguing that a \$78 fee he had to pay in addition to the \$85 registration fee amounted to a “double charge.”

That additional fee gave him access to a Web site created by the publisher Pearson Education, with quizzes, homework questions, and other material in addition to the e-textbook.

College officials defend the practice saying it adheres to [state guidelines](#) about appropriate fees.

At issue is a provision in those guidelines that additional fees cover only instructional material from which students get “tangible personal property.”

“If you take an anatomy course, you don’t get charged for the cadavers, but you would get charged for the tools if you can use them after,” says Kimberlee Messina, vice president for instruction and institutional research at Foothill.

The e-textbook included on the Pearson-created site expires 12 to 18 months after a student signs up, according to the publisher, a condition that might be considered a violation of the provision.

But Ms. Messina argues that because students can print out that text at any time during the course, the fee at Foothill remains on the right side of the law.

In an e-mail to *The Chronicle* on Monday, Paige Marlatt-Dorr, director of communications for California’s community-college system, said the chancellor’s office is still determining the validity of the fees.

“If the fees are not valid, the chancellor’s office will direct the college(s) to cease and desist the practice and provide direction on how to proceed,” she said.

Ms. Messina says that students can choose not to pay the fee and arrange with the instructor to complete online quizzes and other graded work in person. But she says that she is not aware of any student who has taken that option.

Redefining Community College Success

June 6, 2011

WASHINGTON — An Education Department committee last week further honed its recommendations for how to overhaul the way the government measures the success of community colleges.

Though there was general agreement among the panel's members on crafting completion measures that, for example, count successful transfers to four-year institutions as well as those who earn associate degrees, there was strong disagreement about whether the government should require community colleges to report their students' employment outcomes.

This discussion was influenced heavily by the Education Department's recently released "gainful employment" regulations, which will hold many programs at for-profit colleges and certificate and vocational programs at nonprofit institutions to a new federal standard on student debt and employability.

The Committee on Measures of Student Success, a 15-member group consisting of college officials and policy experts, is charged with helping two-year colleges comply with a new federal requirement that degree-granting institutions report on their completion or graduation rates. The reporting requirement was included in the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act, which also called for the creation of this advisory committee.

Many educators and policy makers acknowledge that traditional measures of completion and graduation do not accurately reflect the work done by many community colleges, given the constant flow of students into and out of them. The committee was also charged with recommending "additional or alternative measures of student success that are comparable alternatives to the completion or graduation rates of entering degree-seeking full-time undergraduate students," such as measures of student learning and employment.

The committee met for the first time last October and then again in February. Thursday and Friday marked its third meeting. To work toward its initial charge, the committee considered Thursday a set of rough recommendations for how to create a "more ideal reporting framework" for determining "progression and completion measures" at community colleges.

The subcommittee that produced these rough recommendations — led by Patrick Perry, vice chancellor of the California Community Colleges system — suggested using the existing graduation rate survey of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System as "a vehicle for expanded and reframed outcomes reporting."

For example, the subcommittee suggests that the existing survey include part-time, degree-seeking cohorts of students who attempted six or more credits in their first fall term. It also recommended delineating a new tracking period for this part-time cohort. Currently, 200 percent of normal time (for instance, four years for a two-year degree, eight years for a four-year degree) is used for full-time students. The panel suggested 200 percent normal time be recalculated for

someone earning just six credits a semester, which would equate to completion of 20 terms, or 10 years. There was much debate as to whether this time period was too lengthy for consideration.

Perry's subcommittee also suggested strengthening "the reporting of transfer-out students for institutions that have transfer as part of their mission" by, among other ideas, creating standard definitions of what is considered "substantial preparation" for transfer to another institution and "of what constitutes a transfer student for reporting purposes."

Ultimately, the subcommittee suggested creating "independent and discrete reporting of outcomes for awards and transfers." The current method of government reporting favors degree outcome over transfer outcome. To many community colleges, however, the two are of equal value. By having these outcomes reported separately, the subcommittee argued, "true graduation and transfer rates can be created and disclosed."

In addition to the separate reporting measures for graduation and transfer outcome — which, if combined, may include some outcomes duplication for those who both graduate and transfer — the subcommittee suggested creating a "single count/rate of students that earn any of the high-order outcomes of degree/certificate/transfer-prepared/transfer to a four-year institution within or in the first term immediately following the tracking period." The suggested name for this new outcomes measure is "student progress and achievement rate." This would be seen as the ultimate measure of community college success.

Alternative Measures

On Friday, the committee worked toward its secondary charge and considered a broad set of recommendations on "alternative measures" of success at community colleges. The suggestions put forth by one subcommittee — led by Kevin Carey, policy director at Education Sector — proved more contentious among the group as a whole than did those of the other subcommittee.

For instance, the subcommittee suggested that the federal government call "for institutions to disclose or report results of student learning measures publicly" but that it "should not prescribe a one-size-fits-all measure of student learning." Still, institutions would be primarily responsible "for determining their programs' learning outcomes and the appropriate measures of student learning for their students based on their missions." So, in practice, institutions might submit their Community College Learning Assessment data, for example, to the government to meet such a request and, in essence, the government would "encourage institutions to voluntarily collect, disclose and report through existing or new data collection vehicles results of measures of student learning."

Committee members had varying responses to this possible mandate. Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, deputy director of MDRC, said she worried there were just not enough common or comparable methods of measuring student learning outcomes to warrant a requirement for submission of such data. Wayne Burton, president of North Shore Community College, concurred, arguing that it should fall to other entities — such as states and accreditors — to collect the outcomes data.

By contrast, Thomas Bailey, chair of the committee and professor of economics and education at Columbia University, argued that his committee needs to “respond to the national discussion of student learning outcomes” and that it “shouldn’t shy away from it because it’s controversial.”

The other contentious suggestion of Carey’s subcommittee was that community colleges demonstrate how well they prepare their “students for employment after completion of their programs for consumer information and accountability purposes.” Committee members, however, admitted that “valid, reliable and comparable data related to students’ employment outcomes are difficult” to collect. Some of the possible metrics proposed included “the number of students who earned career/technical education degrees and certificates and were subsequently employed,” “wage growth of graduates” and “licensure exam pass rates.” (The committee heard a presentation Thursday from an Education Department official who noted that the agency would be producing average-salary data for for-profit and vocational certificate programs in forthcoming years as part of the new gainful employment regulations; some panel members seemed to view as a possible template.)

There was a stark divide among committee members as to whether the government should merely suggest or require community colleges to provide these types of reporting metrics. Harold Levy, former New York City Schools chancellor, expressed the view that “the more data the better” and that if these reporting requirements are too burdensome, “so be it” — the data would be important for consumer protection.

Burton spoke out vehemently against such a requirement, arguing that community colleges should not be held accountable for what their students don’t do in the employment world after graduation. Linda Thor, chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, was more compromising, saying she would be fine with reporting employment data that were already available from other sources, including pass rate statistics from exams like those for nursing licensure.

Most of Thursday and Friday’s discussion of these issues represented a push and pull between policy researchers, who want more complete data on community colleges, and institutional officials, who worry that any new government mandate of them, reporting-wise, would be too burdensome. Still, Perry summed up the opinions of many on the committee by saying that if community colleges are displeased with the current method the government uses to judge their success, they should expect to encounter “more burdensome” requirements to “tell their story properly.”

Education Department officials noted that the committee had, by discussing and revising these two subcommittee reports, essentially produced a preliminary set of recommendations at last week’s meeting. A formal draft of these recommendations is to be written over the summer, and department officials say the committee may vote on a final draft at its September meeting, if there are no further objections or revisions to be made. Still, the committee has until April 2012 to deliver its final report to Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

— **David Moltz**

Blocked Transfer Inside Higher Ed June 14, 2011

The University of California and California State University systems have suffered severe budget cuts in recent years. Due to enrollment constraints, some community college students have had to wait years to get into a UC or CSU campus. Sensing opportunity, many private and out-of-state public institutions have stepped up their recruitment of California community college students.

But transfer relationships between the state's community colleges and the UC and CSU systems are traditionally strong, and observers have been left to speculate whether any relative outsiders have been successful in luring students from the traditional transfer path. Now, research from the second-largest community college district in California suggests that private and out-of-state public institutions may be out-recruiting the UC and CSU systems in their own backyards.

Earlier this month, the Los Rios Community College District — which has four colleges in the Sacramento area — released a study of its transfer students. It found that “many more Los Rios students are transferring to in-state private and out-of-state public and private colleges and universities than to UC and CSU campuses.” In 2009-10, Los Rios transferred 2,222 students to UC and CSU campuses and 3,213 students to “in-state private and out-of-state public and private colleges and universities.” (Los Rios researchers did not count transfers to for-profit institutions; doing so likely would have made the state universities' share of transfers even smaller.)

The most popular transfer destinations were in-state private institutions — Chapman University enrolled 151 students, the University of the Pacific enrolled 120, the University of San Francisco enrolled 106, and the University of Southern California enrolled 98. Some of the most popular out-of-state public transfer destinations were located in neighboring states — the University of Nevada at Reno enrolled 55 students, the University of Oregon enrolled 44, Arizona State University enrolled 34, and Oregon State University enrolled 31.

Transfers from Los Rios Community College District

| | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| In-State Private or Out-Of-State Institution | 2,564 | 2,647 | 3,213 |
| California State University | 2,277 | 2,266 | 1,652 |
| University of California | 622 | 594 | 570 |

[\[Click to view full table\]](#)

All years prior to 2009-10, Los Rios transferred more students to UC and CSU campuses than to private or out-of-state institutions. And though Los Rios officials admit that they are not surprised by the new figures, they say that the statistics offer “critical insights” into the current

state of higher education in California, and that they hope the information helps “inform state policy.”

“It shows what a bright bunch of students we have,” said Brice Harris, the Los Rios chancellor. “But it also shows the increasingly failed promise of the California Master Plan [for Higher Education]. This is not the way it’s supposed to work. And it’s not really the fault of the universities or even the state. It’s just a bad set of circumstances that’s led the state to not fulfill its commitment. Now, there are an awful lot of higher education institutions around the country that are beginning to take advantage of California’s fiscal circumstances and attract, recruit and retain our students.”

While Harris sees those students who leave California as contributing to a potential “brain drain,” he also worries about those who stay behind. The study also revealed that in 2009-10, another 5,012 Los Rios students became “transfer ready” — completing the required 60 units of transfer coursework -- but had yet to transfer. Harris said he fears that most of these students are “place-bound individuals” who are waiting to get into a nearby public university campus to continue their education.

“I saw a student on campus a few days ago who I knew had reached the transfer threshold, and I asked her if she was through at [Sacramento State University] yet,” Harris said. “She said she was still on a waiting list there but said she was going to stay at [Sacramento City College] to take another nine units. Now, I don’t want to discourage her from doing that, but that’s a perfect example of what’s going on in our system. She’s taking courses that probably some other student needs because she can’t get into the receiving institution.”

Sacramento State University is still the top CSU transfer destination for Los Rios students, but annual transfers to it dropped 30.2 percent — from 1,910 students to 1,334 — over the five-year period from 2005-06 to 2009-10. Over that same time period, annual transfers to UC Davis, the top UC destination for Los Rios students, remained relatively static, dropping by only 2 percent, from 346 to 339. And Davis officials note that that figure has improved in the past two years; they cite a 39.7 percent enrollment increase in transfers from Los Rios from fall 2009 to fall 2010.

Still, Sacramento State officials say they are continuing to work with Los Rios officials to strengthen their “coordinated advising effort.” And though Sacramento State officials say they are working on “improved communication to students,” they are dubious of Los Rios’s figures about students who are transfer-ready but have decided not to move on.

“We have space for transfer students and we have been able to provide them with course loads at virtually the same rate as has been the case for the past many years,” wrote Joseph Sheley, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Sacramento State, in an e-mail to *Inside Higher Ed*. “In addition, we have been working hard on our graduation initiative ... to streamline students’ progress to the degree. Thus, it is not fully clear why students who are transfer-ready are remaining, apparently for up to three years, at Los Rios campuses instead of transferring.”

Sheley also cautioned that there are not enough data to characterize what happened in 2010 at Los Rios as a “trend.”

“Private and some out-of-state public four-year universities have increased their recruiting efforts in California, offering both financial aid and pledges of quicker progress to degree,” Sheley wrote. “Students have been listening to these messages and, in some cases, have found them more appealing than in the past.”

Los Rios May Be Outlier

The study released by Los Rios earlier this month — and subsequent [media coverage](#) of it — is generating buzz and starting many conversations about transfer in California, just as Harris hoped it would.

Since Los Rios researchers used data from the National Student Clearinghouse — which cost money — in addition to institutional records, they admit that many community college districts in California may be unable to replicate the kind of comprehensive review they conducted. And many districts contacted by *Inside Higher Ed* noted that they did not have the capacity for such research.

Still, the San Diego Community College District, the third-largest in the state, was able to share such information, and its data tell a much different story than those of Los Rios. In 2009-10, San Diego transferred 1,841 students to UC and CSU, whereas it transferred only 1,084 students to in-state private or out-of-state institutions. Officials note that, looking back five years, the district has consistently transferred the majority of its students to UC and CSU. Given that UC and CSU have a significant price advantage over most private and out-of-state institutions, this should come as no surprise.

UC system officials also dismissed the notion that their institutions are losing their appeal among California community college students.

“During these difficult budgetary times, UC has continued its ongoing efforts to increase enrollment of community college transfers,” Ricardo Vásquez, spokesman for the UC Office of the President, wrote in an e-mail to *Inside Higher Ed*. “Despite the need to curtail new student enrollment at the freshman level, UC has increased transfer enrollment targets by 1,000 students over the past two years — targets which we have exceeded.”

Transfers from California Community Colleges

| | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| California State University | 54,971 | 49,770 | 37,647 | 39,410 |
| University of California | 11,914 | 12,377 | 13,717 | 15,572 |

[\[Click to view full table\]](#)

Claudia Keith, a CSU spokeswoman, said she believed that the data presented by Los Rios were "probably abnormal" among the 72 community college districts in the state. Still, she acknowledged that total transfers into CSU have fallen in recent years and took a particularly steep dive in 2010, when the system closed spring enrollment altogether for community college transfers. Demand for CSU among transfers, however, has continued to increase, growing from 89,200 applicants in 2007 to 108,912 applicants in 2010.

And though Keith touted a recently signed bill in California — which creates transfer-specific associate degrees at community colleges that, once completed, guarantee students entrance to CSU as juniors — as a potential solution to these difficulties, she admitted that CSU will have to close spring admissions once again if the state follows through on current plans to cut another \$500 million from its budget.

For many private and out-of-state institutions recruiting California community college students, though, the blood is already in the water.

“Some [private] institutions have begun to recognize that community college students are really good students,” said Jonathan Brown, president of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities. “One of the good things about [the economic troubles in California] is that community college students, who were farmed to one system or the other, now have a lot more choices. I think that competition is a good thing for California.”

— **David Moltz**

Juana Sandoval Selected as Compton College 2011 Commencement Speaker

By: Ann Marie Garten 12 June 2011

On Thursday, June 9, Juana Sandoval will deliver the student address to graduates at El Camino College Compton Center's 2011 Commencement. The ceremony will begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Tartar Quad. Sandoval's speech will highlight her incredible journey from immigrant to El Camino College Compton Center graduate.

Sandoval is a native of Zacatecas, Mexico. In 1999, she came to the United States with her parents and siblings, settled in Compton (Calif.) and quickly found work as a machine operator in a factory. At the factory, Sandoval endured undesirable working conditions and it did not take her long to realize that an education was her ticket to a better life. However, as an immigrant unsure of her English language and writing skills, a college degree seemed unobtainable.

Determined to take on the challenge, Sandoval first enrolled at an adult education center. She gained the writing and speaking skills necessary to obtain her GED and ultimately enrolled at El Camino College Compton Center in 2006.

Sandoval's story as a student at ECC Compton Center is not only one of success, but also of perseverance. Despite several setbacks and family circumstances that could have derailed her education, Sandoval has achieved a great deal. She is graduating with an associate degree and a 3.87 GPA and plans to transfer to California State University, Dominguez Hills, where she will major in business administration.

Her father's words, "Education is one of the most important values that a person can possess," are what she credits for motivating her to study harder during challenging times. As a mother of two, she hopes to pass these words down to her children in hopes that they too will pursue a higher education.

About El Camino College Compton Center

El Camino College Compton Center is the community's education solution offering a full complement of transfer and degree courses, as well as career and technical education. Students may earn an associate degree or certificate, transfer to a four-year university or train for a career. Many classes are available and offered at an affordable price—fees are only \$26 per unit. The catalog and class schedule for day, evening, weekend and online courses is available on the website at www.compton.edu or may be picked up at ECC Compton Center located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA. For more information, call 310-900-1600.

Teacher Implores Union to Renegotiate

Voice of San Diego

Posted: Tuesday, June 14, 2011 4:15 pm | *Updated: 5:36 pm, Wed Jun 15, 2011.*

by **Emily Alpert**

The big battle in San Diego Unified right now is whether to tear up pink slips for teachers and other school workers. The school board has pressed its unions to take more unpaid leave and put off promised raises, saying it could then afford to spare some jobs in the long-term.

The teachers union turned down that proposal last week, arguing it was an unnecessary concession that tried to pit teachers against one another. Almost all teachers that I've heard from loathe the idea, saying that San Diego Unified can just cancel the layoffs now that state financial projections have improved.

So I was intrigued to get this email from Sarah Mathy, a pink-slipped teacher who says the union is protecting senior members at the expense of junior ones. It's a letter that she sent earlier this month to Bill Freeman, the president of the San Diego Education Association. (That's abbreviated in the letter as SDEA.)

We often hear this debate between politicians. But how does this debate play out between teachers? I've asked Freeman to write back and he said he planned to do so. I'll post his letter when we get it.

Dear Mr. Freeman -

In early March, I emailed you to discuss my feelings about how the union could best act during this layoff process. You generously came to my school to meet with many of us on the day we received our first layoff notice. I appreciate your time and interest in our school and in us.

In March, I was asking you to negotiate with SDUSD so that many (all?) of the layoffs could be avoided. I called for things such as extra furlough days and opening the health benefits package negotiation. I wanted our union to get creative about the endless possibilities for solving this problem so that jobs are saved and kids are served.

But so far, all I have received are layoff notices #1 and #2 from SDUSD, and emails from SDEA

calling me to more action and more rallies.

This is not what I want.

And the unspoken but clear message being sent to me from SDEA is that you are a union that wants to prioritize the interests of the senior, not junior, members. That when SDEA is not "winning" the battles with SDUSD, it will put the junior members out in the name of protecting the senior.

All along, it has seemed like a very logical fix to me to negotiate with SDUSD so that the weight of this budget crises is distributed on the shoulders of all SDEA teachers, not just on a few hundred. That is solidarity. That is "together we are stronger." I feel instead like SDEA's hostage and not SDUSD's (as you mentioned in a recent SDEA email blast).

So the questions become: "WHO is SDEA working for?" and "WHAT is SDEA working for?" Unfortunately for my situation, the WHO seems to be the senior members, and the WHAT is status quo for salary and benefits for those who will remain.

That will not work in this current fiscal crisis. You need to negotiate with SDUSD and launch a campaign to convince SDEA members that this is the best option.

I don't think you will have as much opposition to a contract re-negotiation as you may think. Many of my SDEA colleagues unaffected by layoff notices believe in some form of contract modifications so that we all can have our jobs. It will then be your work to collaborate with SDUSD and SDEA teachers to find a compromise that works for everyone. It is not black and white. There are gray areas of the contract where you can slide the scale and still have people satisfied with their level of pay and benefits, and pleased with their lowered class sizes and staff stability at work, and, as taxpayers, happy that the students are getting what they deserve.

We work in a dynamic profession with multi-faceted students, and I want my union to mirror that. With some salary or benefits alterations, we can all keep the jobs we love to do, live comfortably and take care of our families, and make sure that students get the most of

everything. This has to be an AND situation, not EITHER/OR.

So I trust that with the same confidence and care with which you engaged my concerns in March, that you move SDEA into a new chapter where we can feel more like brothers and sisters, instead of the haves and have-nots.

Thank you for your continued work.

Sincerely,

SARAH MATHY

Teacher for 6 years at Central Elementary

Teachers, what do you think? Do you agree with Mathy?

Amid budget cutbacks, California colleges reduce or eliminate summer school

Students face long commutes, higher fees and delayed graduations because of severe summer school cutbacks at California colleges.

By Carla Rivera

June 20, 2011

It is a summer of discontent on many California college campuses.

Some, including West Los Angeles College and the three campuses in the San Diego Community College District, have canceled the regular summer session because of budget cutbacks, only offering some non-credit classes and a few specialized courses.

Others have severely curtailed course offerings, frustrating students like William Diaz, who found that the few chemistry classes being offered in the nine-campus Los Angeles Community College District were all full by the time he was scheduled to register.

And at some California State University campuses, including Cal Poly Pomona, students will pay hundreds of dollars more in the summer than they would for an equivalent course load during the academic year.

Summer school has customarily been a time for thousands of students to gain ground on degrees or, if hampered by work and family duties, stay on track. But state funding cuts have forced many public colleges into a difficult balancing act, and many have chosen to slash summer classes to preserve more fall and spring programs.

As a result, despite high demand, enrollment has plummeted, students are packed ever more tightly into classrooms and the summer of 2011 is emerging as one of the toughest anyone can remember.

It is a trend that has been building. In the 23-campus Cal State system, estimated summer enrollment fell to 12,000 in 2010 from 92,000 in 2008. Course offerings dropped from about 8,100 to 5,800 during the same period. Figures for 2011 are not yet available but are expected to mirror those from last year or to have fallen further.

Adding to the pressure is the fact that most Cal State campuses this year require students to foot the entire bill for classes, rather than using state funds to subsidize a portion of the costs as they do during the academic year. At Cal State San Bernardino, for example, a summer student taking a full load of 12 units will pay basic tuition of \$1,480 plus an extra \$60 per unit, or an additional \$720.

Community colleges, meanwhile, are experiencing unprecedented reductions. Nearly two-thirds of community college districts responding to a survey conducted by the chancellor's office reported plans to cut offerings for this summer by 50% or more.

"This will be the most severe summer we've faced in terms of course offerings," said California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott. "We have many four-year

students who come back home and want to pick up a course or two in the summer and they can't. There are a lot of individuals out of work who would like to have some training in the summer and can't. We have great demand but inadequate supply."

Mt. San Jacinto College in Riverside County is offering only eight for-credit classes this summer, down from 97 such classes in 2010 — with enrollment in those classes decreasing from 2,269 to 137. The campus also has several non-credit workshops funded by a federal grant.

"It's a great tragedy in California that we are delaying education for students because they can't get the classes they need," Scott said.

The University of California has generally been less affected because the nine-campus system in recent years has used additional state funds to increase summer enrollment, officials said. About 73,469 students enrolled in summer programs in 2009 and about 76,575 did so last year.

On some campuses, such as UC Berkeley, the per-unit fees cover the cost of instruction. But funding cuts have forced some campuses to discontinue incentives such as fee caps, and budget pressures may stall further growth, according to a January report to the Legislature.

Meanwhile, students at many community colleges and Cal State campuses are being shut out now.

Diaz, a chemistry major at West Los Angeles community college, fears it will take him an extra year to earn the credits he needs to transfer to Cal State Northridge if he can't get into a prerequisite chemistry class this summer.

Even though the seven-hour class with a lab session at East Los Angeles City College is full and makes for a difficult commute from his home in South Los Angeles, he plan to show up on July 5, the first day.

"I know there's got to be some students who will drop, so I've come up with a whole plan to bring my own seat, like a beach chair, and just sit there and talk to the teacher. It's an important class, and I feel like I'm fighting against the clock," said Diaz, 22, who has a 3-year-old son and works as a teaching assistant at the Edward R. Roybal Learning Center, a high school in downtown Los Angeles.

Students in a summer history class at Cal State Dominguez Hills said they too had a hard time finding and paying for summer courses.

Dominguez Hills student Teresa Payne, 18, had wanted to take summer classes at Mesa College, a community college near her home in San Diego that canceled most of its summer program, only offering courses in a few specialized areas and for summer graduates. So instead, she is staying in student housing at Dominguez Hills and paying the higher Cal State tuition.

Professor Kate Fawver, chair of the history department and instructor for the class, said summer courses are crowded with students who fear there will be further tuition hikes and hope to complete as much coursework as possible. Some students in her class are there because they couldn't get other courses they wanted, she said.

Trafton Seratt, a junior social work major at Cal State San Bernardino, who just completed spring exams, is preparing to take a full load of 17 units in summer classes that start on Monday. With the summer surcharges, he'll pay about \$2,500 — about \$800 more than he paid during the academic quarter.

Still, some classes he wants are not being offered, he said.

"I think summer is looked on as something of a privilege, but as a student trying to graduate more or less on time, it really does have an impact," Seratt said. "It makes it hard when we have obstacles that hinder you from finishing on time. You want to get back into the economy as a graduated professional. That's the goal we want for everybody."

Ask the Administrator: Chairing at the Hotel California Inside Higher Ed

By Dean Dad June 23, 2011 3:33 am EDT

A long-suffering correspondent writes

I am long serving chair at a CC, and no one in my division wants to run for the position. In fact, it is a widespread problem at my college. With a few overloads, faculty can actually make more money teaching than they can as a chair, but our complaints to the administration fall on deaf ears. When an impasse is reached, the administration threatens to appoint someone from outside the division, so I get stuck with another term, taking on more responsibility without any additional compensation or release time. BTW, I am not really that great of an administrator. I am just the least incompetent person available. Any advice?

Like the song says, you can check out anytime you like, but you can never leave.

Actually, though, you can.

Lower-level administrative positions, like department chairmanships or associate deanships, can really suck. You get saddled with all kinds of work, and the pay bump, relative to teaching, is usually either negligible or negative. This can make recruitment a real problem.

Since the obvious answer -- increase the pay bump until the position becomes attractive enough -- isn't culturally acceptable, especially at the cc level, people tend to take the jobs for other reasons. Some actually enjoy the work, or take it as a needed break from teaching. Some are control freaks. Some see it as testing the administrative waters. Some do it out of fear of the catastrophes that would ensue if someone else did it -- these are the good soldiers whose work either mitigates or enables an unsustainable structure.

Having been the administrator with deaf ears before, I can attest that sometimes none of the available options is very good. Okay, you step down; now what? Assuming that the resources aren't there to hire a new full-timer from the outside as a chair -- and if you reward dysfunction with resources, you will open the floodgates of dysfunction -- then you either have to accept a substandard chair or face a department without a chair. (The issue with that is that the work doesn't go away just because the worker does.) Sometimes a chairless department can be put under the protective custody of a nearby department, though that often brings resentment if it's for more than a year. I've even seen deans attempt to run departments themselves, though I've never resorted to that personally and don't recommend it.

In the best case, a not-too-abrupt resignation sets in motion a series of candid conversations about the state of the department. Does the department actually need to be freestanding? If it does, then what does it tend to do to own its status? If it's unwilling to do that work, then what, exactly, does it propose? It could go to a "co-chair" model, which can work if there's a clear and logical way to split the duties -- say, one handles the adjuncts and the other handles the labs. It could go to a rotation system, in which everybody takes a turn for a pre-set number

of years. Or it could decide that chairing just isn't worth the trouble, and propose a merger with another department with relatively solid leadership.

The nightmare scenario is that you resign abruptly, and someone power-hungry but incompetent steps in and does untold damage. Assuming that's not the case, though, I'd suggest telegraphing your resignation early to give the department and the administration a year to come up with a new plan. If you say now that you'll step down next June, then you've given ample opportunity to everyone involved to come up with something without a gun to their heads. You'll have to put up with one more year, but it sounds like you'd need to do that anyway, and you'll have the consolation of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. If all goes well, people can have a badly-needed discussion before it's a crisis.

Good luck! I'd love to hear how it goes.

Wise and worldly readers, is there a better way?

Rising demand, fewer classes cause El Camino summer session crowding

The Daily Breeze

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

Posted: 06/27/2011

Summer school is normally a low-key affair, but the first day of classes this week at El Camino College near Torrance was like a footrace, with many students losing out.

On Monday and Tuesday, they crammed into classrooms, standing for lack of seats in the hopes of taking the spot of a no-show.

In Peter Marcoux's English class, there were 20 overflow students. He admitted two, and that's only because Marcoux generously agreed to take two more students beyond the 35-student maximum.

"The first two days were kind of crazy around here," he said Thursday, while distributing a test to the students who were lucky enough to get into the class. "This summer is pretty bad."

With the state budget in shambles, summer school is fast becoming a luxury at California's community colleges.

Grappling with a \$400 million budget cut - 7 percent of the entire system's coffers - as well as the grim possibility of having to double that amount, more and more community colleges are doing away with summer school altogether.

This year, three of the nine campuses in the Los Angeles Community College District - Harbor, Mission and West Los Angeles - have taken this extraordinary measure.

Meanwhile, a strong majority of California's 112 community colleges - including El Camino, which is not part of the Los Angeles district - has cut deeply into its summer-school classes. At El Camino, the number of course offerings for the summer has fallen 35 percent in two years.

In a cruel twist, as supply dwindles, demand at El Camino and beyond seems to be on the rise. The end result calls to mind an old adage: "The early bird gets the worm."

"Students have to be better prepared," said Francisco Arce, vice president of academic affairs at El Camino. "They can't wait until the last minute to register and enroll."

Historically, he said, at least 40 percent of the students have put off signing up for classes until inside of three weeks before the first day of class. Nowadays, such students lose out.

The ginned-up demand is partly attributable to a change on the horizon regarding student fees.

Beginning this fall, the \$26-a-unit fee at the nation's most affordable community college system bumps up to \$36, meaning this summer session is the final opportunity to take advantage of the lower rates.

English major Morgan Andersen decided to stretch her dollar by taking two summer school courses this year, thereby saving \$70. (Community college courses typically comprise three or four units.)

"That money will go toward the book fund," said the 2009 graduate of Redondo Union High School.

Getting into the desired classes is toughest for fresh high school graduates.

That's because continuing students - meaning students who have already taken El Camino classes - are given first dibs. This summer, a full 80 percent of the enrollment at El Camino is composed of continuing students.

Another disadvantage for recent high school grads is they must jump through a series of hoops before enrolling. These include assessments, orientation and educational planning with a counselor.

To get in by this fall, Arce said, "they need to get moving."

Statewide, classroom seats are evaporating in the face of record demand.

Attendance at California's community colleges hit 2.9 million in 2008-09, an all-time high.

Officials had expected enrollment to rise again the following year, but budget cuts caused it to shrink instead, by 145,000 students. Further retrenchments for the 2011-12 school year will mean the loss of an additional 140,000 students, officials say.

As for the fee increases, they will offset the \$400 million in cuts to the tune of \$110 million.

However, college officials insist that if Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal to extend temporary tax increases does not come to fruition, the system could endure an additional \$400 million in cuts.

In November, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office surveyed its campuses on summer school. At that point, 63 percent had cut summer session by at least 50 percent, said Paige Marlatt Dorr, the agency's director of communications. Four percent had done away with summer school altogether. But Dorr suspects those numbers increased after Brown released his proposed budget in January, which called for deep cuts to community colleges.

In any case, students are beginning to feel the results.

Andersen, the English major, couldn't help but notice the crush of students on that first day.

In one of her classes, about 45 students had crammed into the room, even though it contained just 20 seats, she said.

"I worry about getting classes and being able to get all my stuff done on time to be able to transfer (to a university) on schedule," she said. "And that's just here. Then it's even worse at Cal State."

Colleges Get Advice on Crafting Weapons Policies That Will Hold Up in Court

The Chronicle of Higher Education

June 26, 2011

By Josh Keller

San Francisco

When seeking to restrict people from carrying guns on campus, colleges should carefully explain their motivations and should avoid absolute bans that could face trouble in court, a panel of experts advised on Sunday during a gathering of university lawyers here.

Two recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions expanding the reach of the Second Amendment and a flurry of activity by state lawmakers seeking to limit anti-gun policies at colleges have left campus gun bans largely intact. But the panelists said the activity illustrates the need for carefully tailored policies that will hold up in court in the future.

They spoke at the second day of the annual meeting of the National Association of College and University Attorneys.

The Supreme Court decisions, which invalidated some municipal gun restrictions, leave open a critical exception for restrictions that apply to "sensitive places such as schools and government buildings." George Mason University successfully argued in front of the Virginia Supreme Court that its gun ban was legal because its campus qualifies as a sensitive place.

Patrick O'Rourke, a senior managing counsel at the University of Colorado, implored colleges to carefully write gun restrictions to improve the chances that judges will consider the uniqueness of a college environment. When he recently defended his institution's gun ban in front of the Colorado Supreme Court, Mr. O'Rourke said, one scowling judge asked a pertinent question: "Well, what makes you so special?"

"That's really the first thing I think you need to think about when you're talking about a weapons policy, which is, Why are you going to have one? Why is this environment that you have unique?" Mr. O'Rourke said.

In particular, he said, colleges could explain that their campuses have heated discussions as a natural part of teaching, or that they house 18- to 24-year-olds who are prone to make poor choices with alcohol. He pointed to potential resources provided by the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators and the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

Panelists also warned that campus gun bans that lack some exceptions could be riskier. The George Mason policy, for instance, was upheld in part because it applied only in places where people congregate and are the most vulnerable, they said.

"The loser cases all tend to follow a pattern, which is an absolute ban," said Leonard M. Niehoff, a law professor at the University of Michigan. "Even within those special environments, like

schools, if you can have a more moderated policy, one that is not an absolute ban, it increases the likelihood of winning."

In comments after the panel, Mr. O'Rourke said there still has not been a decision that colleges can look to as a benchmark for their policies. "But one of these is going to trickle up to the Supreme Court," he said.

Man, Woman Shot in Alleged Robbery Attempt

NBC L.A.

One person is killed and another wounded in a shooting at a liquor store.

Friday, Jun 24, 2011

A shooting outside an Inglewood liquor store early Friday left a 22-year-old man dead and a woman hospitalized with several gunshot wounds.

The shooting at Gins Liquor Store near 110th Street and Crenshaw Boulevard was reported at 12:28 a.m., Inglewood police Sgt. James Kirk said.

Shawn Bryant of Hawthorne, his girlfriend and several family members went to the liquor store for meter change. They were going to the beach to celebrate a birthday when two men robbed the group, witnesses said.

"We parked in the back because someone had to use the restroom at the liquor store and my nephew parked on the side and they robbed us," said the victim's aunt, Trezil Houston.

"Two of them came with gunpoint and robbed us, told us to give them everything, to lay down on the ground and then five seconds later we gave them everything, cooperated and they took our car keys and threw them and said 'In two minutes come and get your keys,'" Houston said. "As soon as they ran, five seconds later, we heard gunshots and that's when they killed my nephew."

Bryant was shot on the side street and then ran inside the liquor store.

He was pronounced dead at the scene by paramedics, police said.

The investigation was ongoing and it was unclear what the motive was behind the shooting, Kirk said.

The woman, whose name was not released, was rushed to a hospital with several gunshot wounds, Kirk said. She was expected to recover from her injuries.

Bryant's mother, Cunnetta Sims, received the call that her son had died.

"(The call) was from my older son, he called me, he said 'Mom' and then he started crying and I knew that it had to be his brother because I got two older sons and have one younger ... and he said, 'Mama, he's dead.'"

Bryant, who was a student at El Camino College, wanted to go into business management and his girlfriend wanted to become a nurse.

"They got together (and) said they had goals," Sims said. "She wanted to go into nursing and be an RN and he wanted to be in business management. They got together and they both did it. They got jobs, they worked, they got their place. Even when they got their place the managers tried to give them a messed up apartment, they went back, they fought, they cleaned the apartment, man, he was struggling."

The suspects were described as two black men last seen running away from the location, Kirk said.

Houston said that the men were in their mid to late 20s, about 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighing about 180 pounds. She described one as having a light complexion and another with a dark complexion.

"I'd say they're cowards, cowards. They walked up to my son and shot him in the chest, then shot him in the back and we don't even know why," Sims said.

"You took an innocent life, a 22-year-old young man and man, no mother who goes through this thinks it could ever happen to you. You hear about it but you never think it could happen to you," said Sims.

Around 6:30 a.m., authorities removed Bryant's body from the store. Family members and friends were crying and screaming in the street.

COMPTON HIKES FARES ON LOCAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Wave

By LEILONI DE GRUY, Staff Writer

Story Created: Jun 29, 2011

COMPTON — Without discussion, the Compton City Council voted Tuesday night to increase the basic fare of its local bus system.

The Compton Renaissance Transit provides local bus service in the city, with all five routes connecting with the L.A. Metro Blue Line.

Operating since the 1990s, the fixed route paratransit service operates hourly Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and on Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Recognizing the bus service is vital and assists residents by transporting them to jobs, retail establishments, schools and other local points of interest, city officials said they were obliged to increase the fare because the revenue it generates falls well short of covering the costs of operation.

Currently, the city receives approximately \$120,000 in annual revenue from the transit system, however operating costs total roughly \$1.1 million per year, said city officials. The sharp contrast means the service has to be subsidized by \$980,000.

“The revenue netted by this rate does not begin to approach mitigating the cost of the service,” said the staff report.

Additionally, city officials said in a recent public hearing that the fare increase proposed was reasonable, in that the fare — 50 cents — has been unchanged for decades.

Beginning Aug. 1, fare on the transit system will be increased to \$1.25.

“I think it is a drastic change from 50 cents to \$1.25, that is \$.75 more,” said Jose Jimenez, who added that “the currently operating hours of the Compton Renaissance Transit are not convenient to many of the residents.”

Also, service will be reduced from five to four routes. Route 5, which caters to the three different points in the city — El Camino College Compton Center, CSU Dominguez Hills and MLK Hospital — will be discontinued.

Resources from Route 5 will be shifted to provide all day service on the remaining four routes.

The route will be discontinued, according to Public Works Director and City Engineer Wendell Johnson, because it duplicates several routes already provided by Metro.

Following the changes, the city expects to receive approximately \$120,000 to \$600,000 in fare-box revenue.

Kiwanis Awards High School Graduates

The Hermosa Beach Kiwanis Club gives more than \$12,000 in scholarships to 26 students graduating from Mira Costa and Redondo Union high schools.

By Jacqueline Howard |

June 29, 2011

Some local high school graduates are heading to universities and colleges this fall with support from the Hermosa Beach Kiwanis Club.

The group has presented more than \$12,000 in scholarships to 26 students graduating from Mira Costa and Redondo Union high schools this year, and \$4,000 was awarded to graduates of El Camino College.

"Giving scholarships to these kids is in keeping with our Kiwanis mission as a service organization dedicated to help change the world one child and one community at a time," said Hermosa Kiwanis Club President Adrienne Slaughter in a statement Tuesday.

She presented some of the scholarship awards to the Mira Costa High School students during a senior recognition ceremony June 20. Another ceremony was held at Redondo Union High School.

Students were selected based on their academic achievements, financial needs and community service work, the statement said. Hermosa Beach School Board President Cathy McCurdy helped choose some of the scholarship recipients. She has previously served as president of the Hermosa Kiwanis Club.

"This is the highlight of my year's work as a Kiwanian, to be a part of the selection," McCurdy said. "It's always fun to see the students who have gone through Hermosa schools grow up and move on to college."

Brown's Countdown, Day 172: California teachers win big in state budget deal

Sacramento Bee

By Kevin Yamamura and Diana Lambert

Published: Thursday, Jun. 30,

Teachers win layoff protection while school finance officials see their powers curtailed in the state budget package Gov. Jerry Brown is expected to sign today.

The last-minute school legislation, Assembly Bill 114, emerged publicly less than an hour before lawmakers approved it in a late-evening Tuesday session. It reflects the negotiating muscle of teachers as Democratic lawmakers crafted their majority-vote budget with a governor of their own party.

"This provides stability for students and teachers," said Dean E. Vogel, the new president of the California Teachers Association. He said the bill stems the tide of an estimated 30,000 job losses that teachers have faced since the recession began.

Lawmakers blocked K-12 districts from laying off teachers for the upcoming fiscal year. Teachers also won provisions requiring districts to ignore – for now – the prospect of a \$1.75 billion "trigger" cut that could hit K-12 districts if optimistic revenue projections fall short.

Instead, the state is requiring districts to assume they will receive the same amount of money as this past fiscal year "and maintain staffing and program levels commensurate with this funding level," according to an Assembly analysis.

Brown's Department of Finance said the latter provision could even cause some districts to rescind pink slips handed out earlier this year. CTA estimates that 20,850 of its members received layoff notices earlier this year, while districts have pulled back 8,524 of those.

Elk Grove Education Association President Maggie Ellis said Wednesday she was still unclear on portions of the bill, but was happy it retains teachers' jobs.

"We support anything that will bring stability to our kids, and not laying off teachers is a key part of that and not increasing class sizes is a key part of that," Ellis said.

School officials said they aren't eager to implement layoffs, but they contend the measure will make it difficult to manage their finances and negotiate with teachers.

"Districts will be under tremendous pressure to bring people back from layoffs and, if there is a midyear cut, there is no way to lay people off," said David Gordon, Sacramento County superintendent of schools. "How then do you handle a midyear cut?"

Others said it was the first time they could recall the state mandating that districts assume a certain level of funds, a function each district usually exercises.

"Obviously, legislators went out of their way to protect teachers from layoffs, notwithstanding the level of funding they're providing for schools," said Rick Pratt, assistant executive director with the California School Boards Association.

Because the budget sent to Brown relies on an optimistic revenue projections, it contains "trigger" cuts that would take effect if tax dollars fall short. One of the most significant is a reduction in the school year by an additional seven days.

However, AB 114 reiterates that districts must negotiate any such cut with teachers and staff. With layoffs off the table, teachers may have more leverage in those discussions to block school-year reductions.

The California Teachers Association has long wielded tremendous clout in state budget negotiations. It is a multimillion-dollar player in state political campaigns – and is widely expected to help fund Democratic efforts to raise taxes on the November 2012 ballot.

Another provision in the bill would make the state liable for roughly \$2.1 billion in retroactive school funding if voters reject or never get the chance to vote on such a measure.

Vogel said teachers simply have become "very, very discouraged" after rounds of layoffs. "They don't think too much about, 'Is this going to give us a better opportunity at the bargaining table?'" he said.

School finance officials were frustrated at another part of the bill that suspends three-year oversight of district budgets by counties.

That process typically forces districts to balance their budgets beyond one year, at risk of state and county intervention if finances fall short. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson announced this month that 143 school districts statewide were in financial jeopardy.

Natomas Unified interim Superintendent Walt Hanline called the measure "the most irresponsible piece of legislation I've seen in my 35 years in education."

The district, which has been unable to balance its budgets for two years, has had its finances watched over by the Sacramento County Office of Education since last September.

Removing the oversight won't change the district's financial situation, Hanline said, but will take away the pressure on unions to negotiate.

"It makes it difficult to look them in the face and say we have a problem," he said. "It defers the money problem and makes it worse."