

Multiple Factors Fuel Growth in Transfers to 2-Year Colleges

<http://chronicle.com/>

March 1, 2012

By Jennifer Gonzalez

One in three students transfers at least once, a study reported this week, and half of those who leave four-year institutions end up at community colleges. Across the country, personal, economic, and academic factors are multiplying the phenomenon of "reverse transfer."

Garett S. Wolfe is one of those statistics. After graduating from high school, he enrolled at the University of Montana on a rodeo scholarship in 2005. In the two years that followed, he pursued two different majors—welding and health and human performance—but neither felt right. "I wasn't sure what I wanted to do," he says.

Friends of his were graduating with bachelor's degrees and not finding work. He didn't want the same thing to happen to him. So in 2007, he left the university.

A bull-riding enthusiast, he spent the next three years on the rodeo circuit. With a clearer vision of his future, he transferred to Walla Walla Community College, in Washington State, in 2010. He began studying civil-engineering technology, knowing that graduates of that program could work as design technicians, inspectors, and project engineers.

"Technical trades are just in more demand right now," says Mr. Wolfe, who plans to graduate in June.

Transfer students from four-year universities are increasingly common, says Deb Shephard, president of Lake Area Technical Institute, in South Dakota. Almost a third of the students there came from another institution, with most transferring from a four-year university, often South Dakota State University, she says.

Some students head off to a university because that is what is expected of them, she says, but they soon realize that it's not a good fit—that, for example, it doesn't align with their career goals. "If a student decides that their passion is being a diesel technician," she says, "they need to come to our institution instead."

Over all, students show a growing recognition of the financial sense in seeking out less costly two-year programs tied to in-demand fields, she says. As tuition continues to rise at public four-year universities, students don't want to gamble on a bachelor's degree that may leave them in debt, with no job.

Lake Area officials keep track of job openings in various industries to ensure they are not over-enrolling students in certain programs. "The worst thing we can do is graduate a student who can't find a job," she says.

Of course, some students end up transferring from universities to community colleges because they were weak students to begin with, says Clifford Adelman, a senior associate at the Institute for Higher Education Policy who researches transfer patterns nationally. Maybe they had low grades in high school and should have started at a two-year college. Other students transfer for more personal reasons, like following a significant other. "It happens more than you think," Mr. Adelman says.

Significant numbers of students at four-year universities also just "dip in" to two-year colleges, taking a course or two there while continuing to work toward a bachelor's degree. And other students are in a perpetual "swirl," taking courses at both two- and four-year institutions.

An agreement between the University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College, for example, allows students to do that—and keep their financial aid—as long as they remain enrolled full time. Swirling is a growing trend, says Donna Ekal, associate provost for undergraduate studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. It is the responsibility of institutions to figure out how to respond to it, she says.

Regardless of the direction of transfer, modern students are just more mobile, Mr. Adelman says. "The attachment that students used to have with their institution," he says, "is weaker today than ever before."

Cuts Ahead

Inside Higher Ed

March 6, 2012 - 3:00am

By

Kaustuv Basu

Faculty members have passed a no-confidence motion against the president and the provost. Students are protesting this week inside an administrative building. And faculty fears are rampant that entire departments might be shut.

The University of Northern Iowa is in turmoil, even as administrators prepare to meet this week with the Faculty Senate and the UNI-United Faculty, the faculty union, to discuss what faculty members are calling possible “massive academic program closures.” Union officials said they have been told that the university plans to stop awarding degrees in disciplines including religion, physics and philosophy and wants to eliminate about 30 faculty positions. Last week, the university announced that Malcolm Price Laboratory School, a K-12 school that gives UNI education students an immersive experience, would also close.

Officials did not discuss details Monday and said that plans were still evolving. Provost Gloria Gibson is expected to make a recommendation to President Benjamin Allen by the end of the week, but the plan for faculty reduction moved a step forward Monday when Iowa’s Board of Regents, a statewide panel, approved a buyout plan that would give tenured professors who leave UNI because of the pending changes a year’s salary and some additional benefits.

“Some majors might be closed. There might be some restructuring,” said Virginia Arthur, the associate provost for faculty affairs at UNI. Arthur said the university was taking the measures to strengthen itself, and pointed to an increase in costs in the coming year, including a 3.5 percent proposed salary increase for all faculty members. Northern Iowa currently has the full-time equivalent of 710 professors, and the salary increase would cost the university an extra \$4 million. “This is a difficult period but this is not an emergency. We will emerge from this stronger,” Arthur said.

She pointed out that 92 percent of UNI’s students are from within the state, while institutions such as the University of Iowa and Iowa State University draw about half their students from elsewhere, giving those institutions more revenue from higher out-of-state tuition.

Faculty members at the university passed a vote of no confidence against Allen and Gibson at a specially called faculty meeting Friday. Officials said tensions between administrators and faculty have been brewing for the last two years, including an impasse

over the demand for a 3.5 percent salary hike for faculty, which was ultimately resolved when an outside arbitrator sided with the union in 2011.

“There is a lot of top-down decision making at this university,” said Catherine DeSoto, president of UNI-United Faculty and a professor of psychology. “This is going to affect the academic integrity of the university.” Union members are meeting with administrators today to discuss how tenure rights and seniority might be preserved in case of layoffs, a possibility if not enough professors opt for the buyout.

"It is inconceivable that they would cut programs and take away opportunities from students," said Howard Bunsis, chairman of the American Association of University Professors-Collective Bargaining Congress. The AAUP, which is affiliated with the UNI union, also sent a letter to university officials last week, protesting the lack of 'meaningful' faculty involvement in the forthcoming cuts.

News of the developments has shaken faculty members and students alike, with a group of students starting a “study-in” protest at an administration building Monday. Kelley Rouchka, a graduate student in history, said she helped organize the students because the proposed cuts and changes contradict the university’s mission. “We have been reaching out through e-mail and Facebook and our goal is to reach out to more students and hand them fliers, asking them to contact lawmakers and university officials,” said Rouchka. She said about 200 students had responded through Facebook and that the protests will continue through Friday.

John Deisz, an associate professor in the physics department, said he was stunned by the news that his department might be targeted for cuts. He said the physics department had hired a new faculty member just six months ago and secured about \$160,000 in new equipment funding. “That is not consistent with the department being eliminated six months later,” he said.

It is not clear how students who are already in the physics program or any of the other disciplines that may be cut will be affected, though Arthur, the associate provost, mentioned that officials were working on a plan to let students complete their courses of study. “They have been claiming all students will be able to finish. We don’t know what the reality will be. We are not at a stage where we know,” Deisz said.

The American Physical Society, an organization representing physicists, sent a letter to UNI's president and provost last week, expressing its concern about the impending cuts.

The tensions at the university over the last month, Deisz said, are starting to affect prospective students who were planning to enroll at the university. Darian Everding, a senior at Waterloo West High School, in Iowa, said she was extremely concerned about the developments. “It is very unsettling that one of the programs that I am interested in could be eliminated,” said Everding, who wants to major in physics and mathematics. “I

could consider going to another school but it would not be ideal. It would likely put me in debt," she said.

California Community Colleges chancellor stepping down

LA Times

Jack Scott, 78, will retire as of Sept. 1. 'I figure 58 years of work is enough,' he says. The search for a successor will begin immediately.

By Larry Gordon, Los Angeles Times

March 7, 2012

Jack Scott, a veteran and popular educator who has headed the state's community college system during a period of brutal budget cuts and was often a voice decrying the impact on students, announced Tuesday that he will retire as chancellor overseeing the 112 campuses.

Scott, 78, became chancellor of the nation's largest community college system in January 2009 after a long career as a state legislator and college campus leader, giving him rare insights into both politics and academia. A Democrat, he served in the Legislature for 12 years until 2000, as an assemblyman and senator from the Pasadena area, and previously was president of Pasadena City College and Cypress College.

In an interview Tuesday, Scott said the last few years of budget battles in Sacramento had not been easy but he emphasized that he was not retiring because of discouragement with the funding of higher education in California.

"I figure 58 years of work is enough," he said. "I'd prefer a less demanding life."

After he steps down Sept. 1, he said, he will write, do some part-time education consulting and cope with another challenge: rebuilding his Altadena home, which was destroyed in a Christmas Day electrical fire.

A grandfatherly figure who charms audiences with witticisms, Scott has been an important advocate in the recent effort to make it easier for students to transfer from the two-year schools to four-year universities. Parts of this and other reforms are awaiting review by the Legislature and face some opposition because they would ration classes and give priority to students who have such concrete goals as a degree, vocational certificate or transfer.

"Aerobics classes have a good purpose, but I don't think they are quite as urgent as educating the high school student who wants to transfer to a four-year university or the vocational student who wants to train for a career in nursing or auto repair," said Scott, a historian with a doctorate from Claremont Graduate University.

During his three years at the community college headquarters, state revenue for the system dropped about 13%, course offerings declined about 10% and overall enrollment fell from 2.8 million to 2.6 million, Scott said. Meanwhile student fees rose from \$26 to \$36 per unit and will go to \$46 in the summer.

Scott, whose annual salary is \$198,500, frequently has denounced what he described as the "disinvestment" in public colleges and universities.

"I hope in the future that California realizes how important higher education is to the economy of the state and the well-being of the state," he said.

In the Legislature, Scott was the author of numerous laws that benefited community colleges.

Scott Himmelstein, president of the community colleges Board of Governors, praised the chancellor and said his leadership "will be evident in the success of our colleges for generations to come." Officials said the search for a successor to Scott will start right away in hopes of naming one in the summer.

Carl Friedlander, a statewide leader of the California Federation of Teachers' community college union, said Scott provided stature and principles during a difficult period.

"He's not a miracle worker, but he's been effective in his advocacy," Friedlander said. "He brought such knowledge of the community college budgets and the whole state budget to the position."

Scott used the budget crisis to his advantage in pushing for the recent reforms, according to Nancy Shulock, executive director of the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy at Cal State Sacramento. "If there was one silver lining to the cuts, it's that he got some things done that might not have gotten done when times were not tough," she said.

Scott convinced people "that things have to change," she said.

Editorial: Blind justice - LAUSD protects abusers better than students

Daily Breeze

Posted: 03/06/2012 06:20:39 PM PST

Updated: 03/06/2012 09:16:15 PM PST

NO more pin the tail on the donkey. No more pi atas. No more blindman's bluff. Those children's games have been outlawed in Los Angeles Unified schools.

In fact, any classroom activity that involves a blindfold - including those that are part of the academic curriculum - has been prohibited by an obviously overreacting Los Angeles Unified school official.

Deputy Superintendent Jaime Aquino sent a memo to school principals last week saying that blindfolds might be "negatively perceived" after Miramonte Elementary School teacher Mark Berndt allegedly used them as part of the more revolting crimes of which he is accused.

Aquino demonized the wholesome activity of butter-making too, banned after a North Hollywood class made some and students ate it on crackers. Too reminiscent, it seems, to some of the tales that have been told on Berndt. He was arrested in January and charged with 23 counts of lewd acts with a child. Some of those alleged acts included blindfolding students, feeding them his semen on top of cookies, and then taking photos of them.

Yes, it's horrible stuff - something no one wants to be reminded of in the classroom or anywhere else. But don't blame the blindfold or the butter churn. Aquino himself, as a district leader, has more culpability than those innocent tools. No point protecting students from the tools of madmen if you can't protect them from the madmen themselves.

Indeed, the district has done a better job of protecting the abusers than the students. Perhaps Aquino's next post-Miramonte memo might ban administrators who failed to act on complaints against Berndt going back more than 20 years. That would be a memo to celebrate.

Rather than an aberration, Berndt's case appears to be standard procedure when it comes to problem teachers. The Miramonte case opened the doors to a flood of complaints and claims of abuse throughout the district, complaints that were either ignored or dismissed.

As today's story about another LAUSD teacher, Paul Chapel III, arrested on suspicion of several counts of sex abuse, illustrates, even a trial and a court settlement wasn't enough to keep a predator away from students. Chapel, a teacher at a Pacoima school, is facing charges of abusing four children. He was teaching there despite having gone through a

trial for molesting a child (it resulted in a hung jury) and a settlement of a lawsuit based on several complaints of sexual misconduct while he was teaching at a West Hills private high school.

This man should never have been in a classroom.

The blindfold ban is a classic case of an organization responding to a horrific event with inane and pointless rules but failing to fix the real problem. Fortunately, there is real movement at the local and state level to change the system to keep the abusers out.

Superintendent John Deasy, who inherited this mess when he took over last year, has done well so far by addressing the scandal head on. When it seemed there might be endemic problems at Miramonte, he moved quickly to reassign the entire staff of the school. That action drew a lot of complaints, but it was a bold act not commonly seen from California bureaucrats. Deasy also started a review of all personnel records and complaints of misconduct. He'll need to follow up with some substantial changes, but it's a good, strong start.

Also, Assemblyman Ricardo Lara, representing southeast Los Angeles, has requested a state audit of how the Los Angeles Unified School District handles employee sexual misconduct to identify procedures in need of strengthening or revision. Hopefully, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee will move it out of committee.

The charges against Berndt are monstrous, and if found guilty he should rot in jail for a very long time. But no one should blame the innocent blindfold or butter churn. The only tools at fault in this unfolding sex abuse scandal are the administrators who allowed it to happen.

Dan Walters: This year's California state budget could be bizarre exercise

By Dan Walters

Published: Wednesday, Mar. 7, 2012

Political machinations over the state budget dominate every legislative session, but this year's version of the annual budget game may be particularly bizarre due to a confluence of unusual factors, to wit:

- Not only is it an election year, but incumbents and aspirants will be running in districts that have been altered, sometimes hugely, by the state's new redistricting commission.
- This is also the first year for a new election system in which the top two finishers in the June primary, regardless of party, will face each other in November.
- Legislators briefly lost their salaries last year when they failed to produce a balanced budget by the June 15 constitutional deadline, thanks to a 2010 ballot measure that also gave Democrats hegemony over the budget by eliminating the two-thirds budget vote requirement.
- The 2011-12 budget that Democrats eventually enacted was based on the miraculous assumption of an extra \$4 billion in revenue. But most of the miracle money hasn't shown up, and spending is running billions of dollars over expectations, so the budget is already way out of balance.
- Gov. Jerry Brown and the Legislature's budget analyst are billions of dollars apart on revenue estimates for the rest of the 2011-12 fiscal year and all of 2012-13.
- Democrats are unwilling to deal with the deficit now, due both to election year jitters over overspending cuts that would affect major constituent groups, and to the revenue uncertainty.
- Brown has proposed major policy changes in his new budget, including landmark overhauls of school finance, child care and welfare, that have generated angst among constituent groups.
- Brown bases his 2012-13 budget on voter approval of increases in sales and income taxes in November, but proposes spending cut "triggers," mostly on schools, to be pulled should the taxes be rejected.

Majority Democrats should be acting now to narrow the looming deficit, but will delay big decisions at least until late May, when spending and revenue estimates will be revised. And they'll probably wait until after the June 5 primary, so as to shield incumbents from casting budget votes that could backfire among primary voters.

The primary, however, is just 10 days before the June 15 constitutional deadline for a budget, and if the Democrats generate another pie-in-the-sky budget that doesn't pass the smell test, as they did last year, they could again run afoul of the constitutional restriction on their salaries.

Controller John Chiang dropped the salary hammer on lawmakers after Brown vetoed the Legislature's first budget as being imbalanced.

Legislative leaders are now suing Chiang, contending that he lacks the power to cut off salaries and that only the Legislature itself can determine whether it has met the deadline.

Read more here: http://www.sacbee.com/2012/03/07/4317239/dan-walters-this-years-california.html#mi_rss=Dan%20Walters#storylink=cpy

Educators Fear Losing More Community College Sports

More Than 40 Teams Have Been Lost In Funding Crisis

POSTED: 11:49 pm PST March 10, 2012

UPDATED: 12:17 am PST March 11, 2012

SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- Community college athletic officials are becoming increasingly concerned about the loss of athletic programs because of the state's education funding crisis.

That concern was in the background this weekend as Cosumnes River College played host to the state community college basketball finals.

Saturday night, Yuba College beat Antelope Valley College, 79 to 69, to advance to the men's championship Sunday afternoon against Fresno City College.

Earlier this week, Solano Community College lost its football, swimming and water polo teams because of funding shortages.

"I am most concerned for the students because many of the students we get – it's their opportunity to get into higher education and moved on to perhaps get a BA degree," said Carlyle Carter, executive director of the California Community College Athletic Association.

Carter said that since 2008, at least 40 community college sports teams have been suspended because of lack of funding.

CRC student athlete Tony Gill said he's counting on athletics for his future. "I think basketball will take me – hopefully pay for my education at the next level," Gill said.

"There is fear because other colleges could lose their programs," said Liz Belyea, Dean of Athletics at CRC. "But, I feel lucky to be in a district (Los Rios Community College District) that's handled the finances well."

Belyea said there are disadvantaged students across California who use their athletic ability to stay in school. She said with proper educational support, students can turn their lives around and achieve more in life.

Carter said 27,000 students a year are involved in team sports in California's 103 community colleges.

He mentioned Super Bowl MVP Aaron Rogers and baseball immortal Jackie Robinson as examples of athletes who became American sports heroes with skills developed at junior colleges.

Both Carter and Belyea said funding stability from the State of California is needed to assist student athletes.

SMC Students Outraged by Funding Plan

Malibu Patch

Board would restore classes by creating a foundation that would charge more per unit than community college students now pay but less than those at CSUs and UCs. Despite protests, trustees start the ball rolling.

- By [Jenna Chandler](#)

[◀ Back to Article](#)



Santa Monica College President Chui L. Tsang walks away Tuesday night from students opposed to a new funding plan. Credit [Jenna Chandler](#)

[Upload Photos and Videos](#)

Tensions surfaced between students and [Santa Monica College](#) officials Tuesday night as the [Board of Trustees](#) of the college district, which includes Malibu, put into motion a plan to restore classes slashed under crippling budgets.

The proposal—still in the earliest of stages—calls for the creation of an education foundation that would restore about 100 courses eliminated in the wake of reduced state funding.

The cost to enroll in the classes would likely be significantly higher than the fees that California students pay—[\\$36 per unit now; nonresidents pay \\$275](#)—but less than at California state universities and University of California, as well as for-profit colleges such as the University of Phoenix.

"[We're] looking to figure out how you can have classes here that will cost you less if you happen to be locked out of what the state will fund," Trustee [Louise Jaffe](#) told the students who oppose the proposal. "I don't know what else we can do."

She and the rest of board voted to continue developing details of the plan, but postponed its decision about whether to actually approve it.

Since 2008, Santa Monica College has cut its course offerings 15.4 percent, and officials warned Tuesday that the number could hit 23 percent if a [November ballot initiative to raise taxes](#) fails.

"It is impossible to provide a specific count of the number of students SMC has turned away during this period, or to quantify the financial and personal costs to the many students who have been involuntarily under-enrolled or unable to enroll in the classes they need to make degree progress," College President Chui L. Tsang wrote in a memo to the board.

There are system-wide estimates, Tsang wrote, that indicate that hundreds of thousands of students have been turned away from California community colleges since 2008-09.

"We can starve all of the programs until it gets to the point where no one can stand it anymore and the state is forced to react—or we do something now," he said.

But the solution to offer "contract classes" is unpopular among members of the student government at Santa Monica College.

They said college should be looking at ways to return complete state funding to community colleges—the most affordable higher-education system in California.

"This is the absolute wrong direction," Harrison Wills, president of the Associated Student Body, told Patch after the meeting.

It would create a divide among those students who could afford the contract classes and those who couldn't, students argued.

"Having some [organization] come here and charge me \$200 a unit? I can't afford that ... what about my education? What about my success? As a student I vote 'no,' " said one student.

About 100 students, many of them energized by their participation in the [March in March in Sacramento](#), packed the meeting to protest. They said trustees should join them in organizing rallies to pass taxes on the wealthy. Some said they would prefer to go so far as shutting down of the school in protest.

"The jail unions are getting more money than us," said Wills. "We need to address the real problem for what it is."

After voting to postpone approval of the plan, students began chanting demands about their desire for affordable and equal access to education, prompting the board to take a recess. Outside board chambers, dozens cornered Tsang, seeking answers to questions about his salary and the college's reserve funds. Some said the top administrators should take pay cuts, and others suggested that now is the time to tap into the savings.

Tsang responded to some of their questions before walking away in a huff.

Trustee [David Finkel](#) called the students' ideas for action brilliant but impractical.

Shutting down the school, he said, would only further hinder students' access to education. The "enemy" is anyone who opposes raising taxes to pay for "important" social welfare and education programs, he told the students.

"If we can be a people's college and use the tool of contract education in a constructive way, I don't think we should be afraid of it," he said.

Trustees promised that if they do ultimately approve the contract-class system, they will ensure that there are scholarships and financial aid available to California resident students who can't afford the courses.

Teacher Survey Shows Morale Is at a Low Point

NY Times

By FERNANDA SANTOS

Published: March 7, 2012

The slump in the economy, coupled with the acrimonious discourse over how much weight test results and seniority should be given in determining a teacher's worth, have conspired to bring morale among the nation's teachers to its lowest point in more than 20 years, according to a survey of teachers, parents and students released on Wednesday.

More than half of teachers expressed at least some reservation about their jobs, their highest level of dissatisfaction since 1989, the survey found. Also, roughly one in three said they were likely to leave the profession in the next five years, citing concerns over job security, as well as the effects of increased class size and deep cuts to services and programs. Just three years ago, the rate was one in four.

The results, released in the annual MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, expose some of the insecurities fostered by the high-stakes pressure to evaluate teachers at a time of shrinking resources. About 40 percent of the teachers and parents surveyed said they were pessimistic that levels of student achievement would increase in the coming years, despite the focus on test scores as a primary measure of quality of a teacher's work.

Sandi Jacobs, vice president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, a nonpartisan advocacy group in Washington, said the push for evaluations, punctuated by a national movement to curb the power of unions, had fostered an unsettling cultural shift.

"It's easy to see why teachers feel put upon, when you consider the rhetoric around the need to measure their effectiveness — just as it's easy to see why they would internalize it as a perception that teachers are generally ineffective, even if it's not what the debate is about at all," Ms. Jacobs said.

More than 75 percent of the teachers surveyed said the schools where they teach had undergone budget cuts last year, and about as many of them said the cuts included layoffs — of teachers and others, like school aides and counselors. Roughly one in three teachers said their schools lost arts, music and foreign language programs. A similar proportion noted that technology and materials used in the schools had not been kept up to date to meet students' needs.

"The fixation on testing has been a negative turn of events when the things that engage kids in schools are all being cut," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

The survey, in its 28th year, showed similar attitudes among teachers working in poor and stable neighborhoods; in schools serving large numbers of immigrant students who are not proficient in English, as well as native speakers from middle-class backgrounds. The race and ethnicity of the students, and length of a teacher's experience, had little bearing on the results.

Nonetheless, teachers in urban schools and in schools with a large proportion of minority students tended to be less satisfied about their jobs.

Teachers with high job satisfaction were more likely to feel secure in their jobs, and to have more opportunities for professional development, more time to prepare their lessons and greater parental involvement in their schools, the survey found.

Parental engagement has increased over the past 25 years, according to the survey, but remains a challenge: parent participation declines during the high school years.

Dan Walters: Two tales of pension accounting

By Dan Walters
dwalters@sacbee.com

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Major corporations that still maintain traditional defined-benefit pension plans are asking Congress to lower their pension trust fund contributions because, they say, extraordinarily low interest rates force them to sock away too much.

Therein lie two tales.

Corporations are required by law to periodically adjust their "discount rates" – in effect, their assumptions of future pension fund earnings – by tying them to corporate bond interest.

Discount rates vary a bit, but currently are in the 4 percent to 5 percent range and have been dropping because the Federal Reserve System has kept interest rates low as an economic stimulus.

When discount rates decline, the assumed values of pension funds also drop, thus requiring companies to put in more cash to maintain their capacity to pay future pensions.

General Electric, the Wall Street Journal reported, had to pump \$7.4 billion more into its pension fund when its discount rate dropped from 5.3 percent in 2010 to 4.2 percent in 2011.

Corporations want to change the formula, thus allowing them to contribute less to pensions, but it's uncertain whether they will succeed, in part because unions whose members depend on corporate pensions are skeptical.

Shift 2,377 miles westward from the U.S. Capitol to the California Capitol and it's a much different story.

California's big public pension funds also use discount rates, but they are in the 7.5 percent to 8 percent range. Unlike their corporate cousins, the public funds are not required by law to adjust them. Pension boards and public employee unions, not surprisingly, trumpet the fiction that high discount rates are realistic – exactly the opposite of the positions taken by private company unions in Washington, D.C.

The California Public Employees' Retirement System earned just 1.1 percent on investments in 2011, and its board has balked at suggestions from its own staff that it lower its discount rate by a quarter-point to 7.5 percent.

Studies by a Stanford University group concluded that were CalPERS and other public pension funds to use discount rates like those of corporate plans, it would increase their unfunded liabilities by hundreds of billions of dollars.

That would upset politicians, who would then feel compelled to increase pension fund contributions by many billions of dollars or enact reforms that would either reduce benefits or require employees to pay more. The unions labor mightily to kill even the mild reforms offered by the man they helped elect governor, Jerry Brown.

Underlying that posture is this simple, if disturbing, fact: Public pension systems can maintain artificially high discount rates only because they know that should real earnings fall short, taxpayers will be on the hook for the difference, without any recourse.

That's a big hammer.

Dan Walters: Cloudiness over California school funding increases

Sac Bee

By Dan Walters

Published: Wednesday, Mar. 14, 2012 - 12:00 am | Page 3A

Educating 6 million kids is not only the largest single piece of the state budget, but its most popular one – which explains why it always drives the Capitol's annual budget ritual.

The school finance picture is even cloudier than usual this year. It's the focal point of a contentious debate over raising taxes, and the Legislature is struggling with Gov. Jerry Brown's proposals to overhaul how school money is distributed.

The Education Coalition, an amalgam of school unions, school boards, school administrators and parental groups, is at the center of the turbulence.

The coalition has fragmented on the three major tax measures, all of which purport to bolster school finances.

The California Teachers Association is backing Brown's sales and income tax hike, but the California Federation of Teachers is supporting a "millionaires' tax." The state PTA is backing attorney Molly Munger's broad income tax hike for schools.

But the coalition reassembled this week to demand "some form of revenue enhancement" for schools.

It's opposing Brown's plans to make multibillion-dollar cuts in schools should his tax measure be rejected, and to reconfigure distribution of school funds by reducing "categorical aids" and giving more money to low-performing schools.

Until the state repays \$10 billion-plus already owed to schools and they have more liquidity, the Education Coalition told legislators they should not reduce aid to some schools to increase it for others.

To add more uncertainty to the picture, Brown and the Legislature's budget analyst are billions of dollars apart on how much money the state's current tax system will produce, and how much the governor's plan would generate if approved by voters.

The bottom line is that school officials have absolutely no idea how much money they will be getting from the state over the next 16 months as they begin writing their own 2012-13 budgets. Most school districts appear to be taking a worst-case-scenario approach and in that vein are sending preliminary layoff notices to untold thousands of teachers and other employees this week.

They have until late May to either enforce or rescind those notices, but are unlikely to have any firmer grip on the school finance situation by then because it's highly unlikely that the Legislature will produce a budget until after the June 5 primary election.

Even then, legislators will be guessing on whether voters will approve new taxes for schools in November. Brown wants "trigger" cuts should voters reject his taxes, including a \$4 billion-plus hit on schools. But the Education Coalition and other school groups oppose such targeting.

It's a fine mess, and stands as another example of how dysfunctional the Capitol has become.

Santa Monica College to offer two-tier course pricing

LA Times

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

March 14, 2012

The school's governing board has approved a plan to offer certain high-demand classes for a higher price when the regular classes have filled up. It's believed to be the first such scheme in the nation.

Faced with deep funding cuts and strong student demand, Santa Monica College is pursuing a plan to offer a selection of higher-cost classes to students who need them, provoking protests from some who question the fairness of such a two-tiered education system.

Under the plan, approved by the governing board and believed to be the first of its kind in the nation, the two-year college would create a nonprofit foundation to offer such in-demand classes as English and math at a cost of about \$200 per unit. Currently, fees are \$36 per unit, set by the Legislature for California community college students. That fee will rise to \$46 this summer.

The classes would be offered as soon as the upcoming summer and winter sessions; and, if successful, the program could expand to the entire academic year. The mechanics of the program are still being worked out, but generally the higher-cost classes would become available after state-funded classes fill up. The winter session may offer only the higher-cost classes, officials said.

Students who qualify would be able to use financial aid such as Cal Grants for the classes, college officials said, but they are also seeking private funds to establish scholarships for needy students.

The 34,000-student Santa Monica campus has one of the highest transfer rates to four-year universities in the state and a reputation for innovative programs that are a model for other community colleges. But some say higher-priced classes are tantamount to privatizing the public institution.

Administrators say the plan is a reaction to drastic state funding cuts, which have forced the campus to pare more than 1,000 class sections since 2008. In the current year, funding was reduced by \$11 million. The campus could lose an additional \$5 million in the 2012-13 budget year if a tax initiative on the November ballot fails.

And with the budget crisis threatening more class cuts, they argue that this plan provides an interim solution to maintain access for students who need classes to transfer.

The courses, which would be taught by campus faculty, would supplement rather than supplant regular course offerings and increase access for students who otherwise would be turned away, said Santa Monica College President Chui L. Tsang.

"Our classes are inundated with students begging to be enrolled after they're full," Tsang said. "We've had people from the community asking us if we can open up more courses. The alternative is that students can wait and try their luck next semester or go outside to a more expensive private or for-profit college."

Such a dual program appears to be a first for a public institution, experts said.

"It shows some attempt to be innovative," said Dan Hurley, director of state relations and policy analysis at the American Assn. of State Colleges and Universities. "At a four-year school it might turn some heads, but it makes sense at a community college level, where the tuition is low and the capacity issue is especially acute."

But other academic experts have questioned the legality, equity and practicality of the plan.

Paul Feist, a spokesman for California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott, said the plan does not appear to comply with state education codes, which have been interpreted to permit employers to offer contract courses to fill specific needs. Moreover, state law does not appear to allow students to be charged differential fees for the types of courses Santa Monica envisions offering, Feist said.

No decision has been made on whether the chancellor will intervene, he said.

A bill, supported by Santa Monica College, that would have allowed all community colleges in California to maintain extension programs offering credit courses — for higher fees — failed to advance in the state Senate last year.

Tsang cited the example of some K-12 school districts such as Santa Monica-Malibu Unified, which offers fee-based summer school "get-ahead" classes, as a precedent.

Trustee Nancy Greenstein said the college believes it is on solid legal ground but acknowledged risks regarding the plan's success.

Many students said they view the board's action as a move toward privatizing programs while relieving the state of its responsibility to adequately fund public higher education.

"It's creating a two-tiered system of wealthier students who can afford classes and struggling working-class and low-income students competing for the scraps of what's left; it's definitely a move in the wrong direction," said student government President Harrison

Wills.

Wills was among dozens of students who urged the seven-member Board of Trustees last week to reject the plan. Only board Chairwoman Margaret Quinones-Perez and student trustee Joshua Scuteri, whose vote is advisory, opposed it.

Trustee Louise Jaffe dismissed fears that the plan would shut out low-income students, arguing that they already are being driven to expensive for-profit institutions where they are amassing huge debt.

Fees for the new program will still be well below those of private and for-profit colleges as well as Cal State University and the University of California, she said.

"We think we can serve those students at a much better price and a much better value and not let them sit out there," Jaffe said.

Faculty members have concerns about the plan, especially regarding curriculum, but they are working with administrators to ensure that the high-cost courses meet standards, said Janet Harclerode, president of the Academic Senate.

"We already have students in classes who have fee waivers or are international or out-of-state students paying different amounts," Harclerode said. "Equity is very important for us, but it's really painful to turn students away."

Administrators at every level of higher education, from community colleges to the Cal State and UC systems, have been left with no good options as the state has slashed funding by billions of dollars in recent years, said Patrick Callan, president of the San Jose-based Higher Education Policy Institute.

But the Santa Monica plan represents a fundamental shift in policy that needs more scrutiny, he said.

"It's disheartening that the discussion for many colleges is what's the best way to ration education," Callan said. "No rationing of education is good, but it seems to me that rationing on the basis of financial means is an issue that has to do with what the mission of a community college really is. Whether or not it can be finessed legally, it ought to be debated as a major policy issue."

My Ignorance and Me, in Front of a Classroom

The Chronicle of Higher Education

March 11, 2012

By Kase Johnstun

I'm a transplant to Tacoma, Wash., like many. Before packing up the truck, loading up the dogs, and leaving behind a stiff mortgage in Salt Lake City, I heard the warnings and rumors about T-Town. "It stinks." "Tacoma Aroma." "Full of crack whores, bums, and gangs." But when the yellow truck dropped down from Snoqualmie Pass, as we traveled along the Green River, and when we pulled into our apartment complex that sat on the edge of rippling waters of Commencement Bay, I knew the complainers, the voices that dominated chat rooms and review boards, had it wrong. Or maybe they just hadn't seen Tacoma through the eyes of a transplant and his ignorance.

I'd left Salt Lake City to follow my childhood dream of working for a professional baseball team. I'd given up a steady paycheck and a managing-editor position to see if I could make it in the big leagues—or, as was actually the case, the front office of a minor-league team. But I quickly found that I'd much rather be in the stands with my wife and a cold beer than in the press box writing marketing materials. My contract with the Tacoma Rainiers ended and I needed a job, which is how I found myself, one day, entering a classroom at Tacoma Community College to teach English 101.

Unfortunately, my ignorance walked in with me.

That's the thing about my ignorance—it follows me around and pokes fun at what I think I know. That semester it pushed its way into my classroom, pulled up a chair, and took over.

The first few classes went smoothly. I had researched the Tacoma Community College student body and found it to be diverse, full of students of all ethnicities and varying ages, some with English as their second language. Wow, I thought, this would be a great opportunity to discuss issues of diversity and race—an opportunity I'd never had at Kansas State University or Salt Lake Community College. Lessons on basic grammar and punctuation filled the first week, and get-to-know-you exercises got students talking.

Then, in the second week, I assigned two readings from my trusty college reader about racial profiling in airports. I had outlined arguments on both sides of the issue, intending to engage students in a debate about the necessity, or sham, of targeting ethnic minority groups supposedly to protect our national security. I had highlighted examples of word choice, connotations, and authorial voice to enrich the discussion. I showed how the Canadian writer created a tone of sarcasm and anger by telling the story of how he had begun to yell that he was Pakistani when Americans looked at him with suspicion. I felt for the man's plight, and I figured my students would too. The pages in my reader had

nearly separated from the spine due to my over preparation for my big moment of classroom brilliance. Damn it, I was going to teach these students about racial profiling through the gift of the prose essay. Then I handed the reins to my students.

Things started off well. One bright student gave an exemplary summary of the article, which focused on a Muslim man who was harassed at an airport because of his dark skin. Students raised their hands to contribute to the summary, as if outlining the plot of a movie. They threw out words like "the character" and "the story" and "the mean airport guy." While those words don't belong in discussions of personal essays, I was pleased by the students' enthusiasm, so I didn't correct them. But at some point during that initial outlining, my ignorance stirred and got up from its chair.

In an attempt to steer the discussion toward our rights as citizens, I told my students about how I, nearly 10 years earlier, had been a victim of profiling. I was pulled out of line in London's Heathrow Airport and had my stuff searched. It was December 2001, three months after 9/11, and I was heading home after a four-month stint in Dublin writing for the Consumer's Association of Ireland and Ireland's consumer-advocate magazine, *Consumer Choice*. Airport security was quite suspicious of the 25-year-old with the three-inch goatee, especially given the length of time I'd spent away from the United States and the fact that I was standing in the line for first class. (While my mother-in-law, after the first time she met me, described me as a Middle-Eastern-looking young man, I am as mixed-up genealogically as the next Caucasian-looking dude.)

The job was legit, the upgrade a gift, and the goatee just a show of my tempered rebellion. Even as I told the story, I still felt indignant. As I ranted, I waved my arms around and danced around the classroom with teacherly enthusiasm, prodding students with questions like "Has anything like that ever happened to you?" "Can you believe it?" and, sarcastically, "Is anyone else glad they took those extra measures to secure our country?"

My wild gesticulations and verbal eruptions must have seemed out of control to my stunned students. They sat with their mouths closed, looking at me with wide eyes. My ignorance tried more tactics, but nothing worked. They had proved they'd read the essay, so that wasn't the problem. I had delivered a colorful introduction and tied it to my life, hadn't I? So why the silence? I got angry. I told the students they had to participate to pass the class and lectured that this was a college classroom and silence would not work.

After I'd insulted their preparation and motivation, a hand rose from the center of the room. A young African-American student spoke. "I've never flown before," he said. "It's difficult for me to feel for this man in the essay who got targeted while on his way to some business meeting in another country." His tone was neither hostile nor timid, just honest. Heads nodded around him and lungs released breaths of relief.

"I can't go to a 7-Eleven without getting profiled and stopped by the police," he continued. More heads nodding and bobbing. "That's why I'm here. If I get the chance to fly someday because I get a degree, they can search me all they want to."

Murmurs from other students affirmed the young man's point of view. The conversation turned away from airports and national security to racial profiling on the streets of Tacoma. Students raised their hands and waved their arms, debating intelligently about their rights as citizens and when, or whether, those rights should be sacrificed for the greater good. They made the essay I'd assigned seem trite and elitist. My students opened up a new world, and my ignorance and I did not say a word.

Buildings go up as universities' budgets go down

SF Gate

Jon Marcus, California Watch

Thursday, March 15, 2012

America's universities and colleges have built more than \$11 billion worth of new facilities in each of the last two years, more than double what they did in 2000, according to market research firm McGraw-Hill Construction. The spending has continued at the same pace this year.

Critics say some construction is justified - at jam-packed community colleges, for instance, where enrollment is increasing. But they say many new buildings are going up on campuses because donors want their names immortalized, university presidents like to leave legacies of brick and mortar, and admissions directors are battling for applicants they believe are lured by shiny new amenities.

"You can go into any community and talk to somebody whose son or daughter either can't get in" to college or can't finish "because they can't get this or that course," said David Wolf, co-founder of the Campaign for College Opportunity, which lobbies for higher education in California. "Meanwhile, they go on campus and there's all that fresh cement. That's embarrassing and it's wrong."

In addition to donations, research grants and bonds, the cost of new construction often is also raised from student fees for things like new dorms and gyms, said Vedder, of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity.

After it was forced to shut down an 11-story dormitory in fall 2009 because of an enrollment decline, San Diego State University in fall 2010 started requiring incoming freshmen from outside the university's immediate area to live on campus at costs ranging from \$8,072 to \$13,848 for the academic year, depending on the meal plan they chose.

Inefficient use

While universities say they need more buildings, many don't efficiently use the space they already have, said Lander Medlin, executive vice president of the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers. Academic buildings at universities are used 30 to 40 percent of the time, she said.

"The optimum time for faculty and staff for classes is from 10 to 2, or maybe let's give it 9 to 3, and that's Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday," Medlin said.

The state Legislative Analyst's Office reported in August that almost all California higher education campuses could accommodate more students by making fuller use of existing space and scheduling more morning, evening, weekend and summer classes.

The UC system already has at least \$800 million in deferred maintenance, or needed repairs, and that was in 2008, when a report was prepared for the Board of Regents. At CSU, the estimated cost of deferred maintenance has grown to just under \$450 million systemwide.

Lindsay Hogan, an economist at McGraw-Hill Construction, said there's no sign that the building will stop. It might even accelerate. Philanthropy is rebounding, she said, "which has helped some colleges move forward with projects that were in the pipeline."

Vedder said universities should follow the example of business.

"The private sector has a bottom line, and in calculating the bottom line, you have to calculate the cost of these buildings, and maintaining them, which cuts into profits," he said. "So a businessperson says, 'Do we really have to build this building?' There's no bottom line in higher education."

This story was produced as part of a collaboration between California Watch, part of the independent, nonprofit Center for Investigative Reporting, and the Hechinger Report, a nonprofit, nonpartisan education news outlet affiliated with Teachers College, Columbia University. www.californiawatch.org; <http://hechingerreport.org/>

Dan Walters: Big hazard for Jerry Brown's new tax plan

SacBee

By Dan Walters

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During a stream-of-consciousness speech to a gathering of police chiefs this week, Jerry Brown noted that during his first governorship, personal income taxes generated about a third of the state's revenue, but since have become a dominant source.

The result, he continued, was "more volatility" in the state's revenue, which resulted in "a more or less constant state" of deficits.

That's absolutely correct.

When income taxes spike upward, politicians and voters squander windfalls on difficult-to-lower spending, and when they plummet – as they always eventually do – the state is then left with multibillion-dollar gaps.

Brown told the top cops that he's trying to "deleverage" by bringing state income and outgo into closer balance, citing the meltdown in Greece as an example of what happens when the two sides of the fiscal equation cleave apart.

A worthy goal.

Why, then, would Brown embrace a fiscal plan that would make the state's revenue even more volatile by making them even more dependent on how well a handful of high-income Californians are doing in stocks and other speculative investments, while locking additional billions of dollars of spending into the state constitution?

The answer: political expediency.

Brown had touted "a balanced proposal" of temporary increases in sales and income taxes, coupled with some major spending reductions, but it was not polling well and faced competition from two other measures.

Two days after talking to the cops, he merged his campaign with one of his left-wing rivals, reducing the sales tax portion and sharply boosting taxes on a few hundred thousand high-income Californians that his new partners mock as "the 1 percent."

Brown's earlier plan would have increased income taxes to an estimated 62 percent of revenue.

His new one would push it past two-thirds, mostly coming from the upper-income taxpayers – assuming they don't flee to no-income-tax states or shelter capital gains from the nation's highest tax rates.

It also would engrave into the constitution about \$6 billion in payments to local governments for his "realignment" program.

Democratic legislators are already planning how to spend the extra \$2 billion that the revised scheme would supposedly generate for the 2012-13 fiscal year.

A soak-the-rich approach does have populist appeal, but it would make revenue even more volatile, and the spending splurges even more difficult to restrain. Thus, it raises the likelihood that the state would face even wider budget deficits in future years.

Brown desperately wants to say he's solved the state's fiscal problems, but if his new plan wins, he'll likely just have bequeathed more grief on his successors.

He knows better, or should.

Costly election between Beverly, elusive Doeh hurts ECC's pocketbook

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

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Was it a pseudo-candidacy or democracy in action?

Either way, the November election pitting a union-backed candidate who refused to talk with the media or make any public appearances against a longtime incumbent of the El Camino College board of trustees turned out to cost the taxpayers a pretty penny.

And the hefty bill has landed at the worst possible time.

Officials with the Torrance-area community college had already expected the match between the elusive Wendy Doeh of Hermosa Beach and five-term incumbent Bill Beverly of Manhattan Beach to cost the college district \$400,000. But the actual price tag for putting the contest on the ballot was \$1.1 million, college officials say.

"I think they were thinking they could just put Mickey Mouse or Fido up in there and, if they said enough bad things about me, they'd get lucky," said Beverly, who was the target of a negative ad campaign in the election, which he won handily, bringing him a sixth term.

"Fortunately, the public is smarter than that."

The million-dollar election bill comes at a turbulent time for the college, both financially and politically.

Due to a long-lasting state fiscal crisis that seems only to get worse and worse, El Camino's budget has shrunk by an estimated 10 percent this school year alone, from roughly \$100 million to \$90 million, college officials say. The evaporating money has led to vanishing courses; El Camino's class offerings have dwindled 20 percent in three years, shutting the door on thousands of students.

In this context, the cost of the election was a significant expense, surpassing 1 percent of the college's budget. Put another way, \$1.1 million is what it would cost to give the entire faculty a 1.5 percent raise (for one year).

"It also could pay for two complete winter sessions," added Beverly, referring to the mini term offered between fall and spring semesters. (The board last week considered cutting the 2013 January term, but decided against it.)

Even the president of the faculty union said the situation is regrettable.

"It's unfortunate that Wendy had no platform to offer the public," union President Elizabeth Shadish said. "We just regret she didn't make anything public - we really do."

But Doeh's campaign manager, Jim Lissner, cautioned that criticizing a candidate who posed a challenge to the political establishment is a dangerous game in the land of democracy. Especially at a community college district that, before November, hadn't seen an incumbent challenged in at least a dozen years.

"Should we not have elections then?" Lissner said, speaking on behalf of the 75-year-old Doeh, who couldn't be reached for this article. "Is the public interest served by candidates being dissuaded from running because they are going to be criticized for the cost of the election?"

If that's the case, he added (speaking facetiously), why have presidential elections? "Why not have somebody take a poll for a few hundred thousand dollars and cancel the election to save the money?"

College administrators learned of the \$1.1 million expense a couple of weeks ago, El Camino spokeswoman Ann Garten said. They were so taken aback by the bill they asked election officials at Los Angeles County for a cost breakdown.

Meanwhile, relations between the faculty and board have remained sour ever since breaking down altogether in November.

One sticking point has been the election: The union poured \$20,000 into Doeh's campaign, which made a concerted effort to call attention to an embarrassing blemish on Beverly's professional record. (Beverly, a lawyer, had his law license suspended for three months in 2010 for "constructive fraud.")

But the kicker came a few weeks later, when the Board of Trustees voted to impose a contract on the faculty, thereby putting a unilateral end to the college's most contentious round of contract talks in decades.

The new contract offered no raise to the faculty and shortened the length of the work year for counselors, among other things.

Now, the academic senate - which is not the union but also represents the faculty - is considering asking its members to vote on whether it has "no confidence" in the way the administration has gone about the process.

Meanwhile, the financial outlook could soon get worse for all the state's community colleges. Gov. Jerry Brown is trying to put a tax-hike initiative on the ballot that, if passed, will essentially guarantee flat funding for K-12 schools and community colleges and, if rejected, will result in billions of dollars in additional cuts to education.

As for the El Camino's costly November 2011 election, the tab took the college officials by surprise in part because the college has so little experience with contested elections. But the light election year was also a factor: With so few school board and city council races happening throughout the area, El Camino bore the brunt of the financial burden for putting out a ballot.

However, it's unlikely that the college will be similarly gouged for an election anytime soon. That's because the board last month enacted two significant changes to its elections process: it redrew the boundaries to the trustee areas and, more to the point, made the elections more hyper-local. That is, residents will now vote only for the candidates in their district, as opposed to voting "at large" across the sprawling district, which stretches from El Segundo to the southern tip of Torrance and includes all of Inglewood.

That means the cost of every future election will be considerably cheaper - from one-fifth to three-fifths the cost of the ones to date, depending on how many seats are contested - because El Camino has five trustee districts, officials said.

Untouchable Pensions in California May Be Put to the Test

NY Times

By MARY WILLIAMS WALSH

Published: March 16, 2012

When the city manager of troubled Stockton, Calif., had to tell city council members why it was on track to become the biggest American city yet to go bankrupt, it took hours to get through the list.

There was the free health care for retirees, the unpaid parking tickets, the revenue bonds without enough revenue to pay them. On it went, a grim drumbeat of practically every fiscal malady imaginable, except an obvious one: municipal pensions. Stockton is spending some \$30 million a year to pay for them, but it has less than 70 cents set aside for every dollar of benefits its workers expect.

Some public pension experts think they know why pensions were not on the city manager's list. They see the hidden hand of California's giant state pension system, known as Calpers, which administers hundreds of billions of dollars in retirement obligations for municipalities across the state.

Calpers does not want cities like Stockton going back on their promises, and it argues that the state Constitution bars any reduction in pensions — and not just for people who have already retired. State law also forbids cuts in the pensions that today's public workers expect to earn in the future, Calpers says, even in cases of severe fiscal distress. Workers at companies have no comparable protection.

Stockton is in the midst of a mediation process with its creditors that will determine by the end of June whether it will file for Chapter 9 bankruptcy, which would allow the city to negotiate reductions in its debt in court.

For Calpers, the prospect of a California city in Federal Bankruptcy Court portends a potential test of the constitutional mandate that federal law trumps state laws — in particular, the state laws that protect public workers' pensions in California. Such a challenge could blow a hole in what experts consider the most airtight pension protections anywhere.

“Obviously, what Calpers wants is that it doesn't come up in the process, which I think is ridiculous,” said David A. Skeel Jr., a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania who writes frequently on bankruptcy. “My view is that even the California Constitution is subsidiary to federal bankruptcy law.”

As the United States population ages and more and more public workers qualify for retirement, the cost of their pensions is growing fast, turning into a major drag on many local governments' finances. The pension contributions that cities must make every year

are rising, but their revenue, which often depends on property taxes, is not keeping up. Taxed-out residents, many of whom have lost their own pensions in the private sector, are unwilling to pay more. In tax-averse California in particular, where every tax increase must be put to a vote, officials are running out of options and some are considering bankruptcy.

Bankruptcy in America is a collective process, where creditors of a distressed company or municipality come together under court oversight and negotiate a plan to share the losses equitably, for the sake of the greater good. Some creditors may stand more toward the front of the line and others at the back, but there isn't generally one big creditor that gets paid in full without having to get in line at all.

Yet that's what Calpers appears to be doing.

"They will probably say it's a statutory right and it can't be changed by a bankruptcy court," said James E. Spiotto, a Chapter 9 specialist with the firm of Chapman & Cutler. "I think it's still subject to some question."

A spokeswoman for Stockton's city manager, Connie Cochran, said she could not discuss the city's dealings with Calpers, citing the confidential mediation process.

When a company with a pension plan goes bankrupt in Chapter 11, it typically stops making most of its required pension contributions, just as it can stop paying many other bills. Some companies, like Northwest Airlines, even declare bankruptcy the day before a pension contribution is due, to save the cash.

Chapter 11 also permits companies to shed their pension obligations completely, if they can convince the bankruptcy judge that's the only way they can restructure. The federal government, which insures traditional company pensions, then takes over the defunct plan and pays retirees their benefits, up to statutory limits.

There is no such backstop for state or municipal pensions. But cities, until recently, have managed to avoid bankruptcy, so there is almost no precedent for how public pensions will fare in Chapter 9.

Now that is starting to change.

Prichard, Ala., tried to file for Chapter 9 bankruptcy in 2009, after its pension fund ran out of money, but its case was thrown out by the judge, who cited a rule that Alabama cities must have bonds outstanding to qualify for Chapter 9. Prichard had no bonds at the time, just a big debt to its retirees. The city went for nearly two years without paying them their pensions, then reached an out-of-court settlement that gave them about one-third, on average, of what they had earned.

Central Falls, R.I., declared bankruptcy in 2011, after its pension fund for police officers and firefighters nearly ran out of money. The state withheld aid, and passed a law

forbidding any effort to revive the pension plan by issuing bonds. Central Falls had little choice but to negotiate sharp cuts with the retirees.

In California, the only precedent is in the city of Vallejo, which declared bankruptcy in 2008. Unlike Prichard and Central Falls, which had their own pension plans, Vallejo is part of a state-run system. It kept making all of its contributions to Calpers throughout its three-year bankruptcy.

“We never shortchanged Calpers,” said Robert V. Stout, Vallejo’s finance director at the time.

Mr. Stout said he had expected to renegotiate the city’s retirement plans in bankruptcy, since everything else was on the table. At the time, Vallejo was in a fiscal tailspin with the mortgage debacle, which hit cities in California unusually hard.

But Calpers drew a line in the sand, warning Mr. Stout and his lawyers that in California, public pensions can be increased but never decreased, not just for retirees, but also for workers at midcareer.

What if the city is bankrupt and cannot afford it?

“They made it quite clear that they take that law very seriously,” Mr. Stout said. Calpers also warned that if the bankruptcy judge ruled that the state pension laws stopped at the federal courthouse door, Calpers would appeal, and make Vallejo pay its legal bills.

“We interpreted that as, ‘If we try, they’ll fight us through the courts forever,’ ” Mr. Stout said. He and Vallejo’s lawyers decided the city couldn’t afford it.

The city ended up cutting services sharply, gutting its retiree health plan, adding a 1 percent sales tax and cutting payments on its bonds. But its police officers and firefighters still qualify for full retirement at 50, and other city workers at 55.

Since Vallejo made no effort to cut pensions in bankruptcy, the legal issues remain untested, said Mr. Spiotto, the Chapter 9 lawyer.

“It’s something that’s in the process of being worked out, not only in California, but in every state,” he said. “It’s a global issue.”

A Calpers spokeswoman responded to questions by providing a 20-page position paper on the laws that protect public pensions in California. The report did not mention bankruptcy but acknowledged that some California cities were struggling.

“It will be vitally important for all interested parties to heed the legal rules protecting the vested rights of Calpers’s members,” the paper said. Challenges “may lead only to additional litigation and administrative costs.”

Critics in academic and legal circles say they believe Calpers wants to keep municipalities in its system because it needs to keep their contributions flowing in without interruption to cover the payouts it makes each month to retirees. Gov. Jerry Brown called that situation “a Ponzi scheme” last December, when he proposed a plan to lower public pension costs gradually, by offering smaller pensions to the workers that cities will hire in the future. The governor’s plan was strongly opposed by public employees’ unions, which have a strong voice in Calpers, and his fellow Democrats in the state Legislature have let it languish.

After Vallejo’s bankruptcy, Calpers’s board passed another rule that any municipality wanting to withdraw from its system would have to first pay off its shortfall, calculated in a way that makes the payment two to three times as big as in the past.

Stockton’s city manager, Robert Deis, is focusing on cutting retiree health benefits instead of pensions, because he said the retiree health plan was completely unfunded — as opposed to its pension being 70 percent funded — and the cost was growing at a faster rate.

Changing the pensions would also be complicated by the fact that some of Stockton’s retirees get both pensions and Social Security, and others get only their city pensions.

Still, the city’s annual contributions to Calpers for pensions, currently \$30 million, are greater than its retiree health costs, \$9 million this year. Even before the collapse of 2008, Stockton was struggling with its pension contributions. In 2007, it issued bonds to raise the cash it needed to send to Calpers. But then Calpers’s investments took a pounding in 2008, leaving Stockton with a new pension shortfall to cover — plus about \$7 million of principal and interest to pay on the bonds every year.

Bankruptcy lawyers said that if such issues were not addressed in Stockton, they were likely to come up elsewhere soon.

“There are a bunch of cities in bad shape, and pensions are part of the problem,” said Mr. Skeel. “If you have a string of Chapter 9’s, I don’t think every one of them is going to say, ‘This enormous obligation can’t be touched.’ I think one of them is going to take the plunge.”

El Camino College settles 2nd sexual harassment suit against former dean

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

Posted: 03/21/2012 06:56:45 PM PDT

For the second time in a little more than a year, a female employee at El Camino College has received a large settlement of a lawsuit claiming sexually harassment by a former vice president and dean.

El Camino administrative assistant Linda Olsen charged that, from 2004 to 2010, James Schwartz - who worked as a dean in several departments over the years - glared at her breasts, subjected her to unwanted touching, kissing, and groping, and made demands for unwanted sex, according to court documents. She also accused him of threatening to punish her with negative job evaluations or even termination if she refused to have sex with him.

Olsen, a 53-year-old Torrance resident, was awarded \$750,000 on Feb. 29. The settlement came about a year after she filed the claim, and about 14 months after another woman, former secretary Nyesha Artiaga of Los Angeles, received a \$2.5 million award for a sexual-harassment suit against the same man, who is now 75 years old. About 40 percent of Olsen's settlement will go to her attorneys, the Meyers Law Group of Rancho Cucamonga.

As in the Artiaga case, El Camino College was on the hook for just a third of the payout. An insurance provider covered the balance.

"I'm disappointed in the whole thing," El Camino board President Bill Beverly said Wednesday, adding that the Torrance-area college opted to settle on the advice of the insurance carrier. "I'm disappointed in everybody who was anywhere near the problem, if there was one."

El Camino has been the target of several sexual harassment suits in recent years.

Olsen's settlement marks the fourth completion of such cases filed by former female El Camino employees against their male bosses in the last year and a half. In two of the cases, the college prevailed at trial. But the Olsen and Artiaga cases were both settled with the help of a mediator before going to trial.

Schwartz, who now lives by himself in Palm Desert, denies the accusations of both women. He added that he hadn't even heard of the Olsen settlement until a reporter called his home on Wednesday.

"I feel victimized," he said. "It's just amazing what people can do to destroy your reputation."

Of the allegations, he said, "All I can say is they're not true."

The Olsen complaint was less incendiary and explicit than the one filed by Artiaga, who is now 34. Artiaga's lawyers claimed that Schwartz - her superior - raped her in his locked office "and eventually ejaculated on plaintiff's underwear." Artiaga also accused Schwartz of offering her up to \$800 in exchange for sex in hotel rooms. (Schwartz did not deny that they had a sexual relationship, but contended in court documents that it was consensual.)

Meanwhile, Olsen's complaint says she was subjected to harassment and retaliation in the form of being yelled at, ignored, isolated, having work taken away from her, and criticized regarding her work.

"(Olsen) failed to complain about Mr. Schwartz's behavior because she feared that she would lose her job if she did so," Olsen's attorney, David Myers, said in court documents. Myers did not return a call Wednesday seeking comment.

The documents go on to say Schwartz warned Olsen that he had a good relationship with her union president, and that the union would believe him over her.

In what appears to be a connection to the Artiaga case, the complaint says that in December 2010 - right around the time attorneys were investigating Artiaga's claim - Schwartz left a message on Olsen's voice mail instructing her to lie under penalty of perjury about what had allegedly happened between Schwartz and Olsen.

The documents say Schwartz's treatment of Olsen grew more harsh "when another female employee began having an open relationship with Mr. Schwartz." In addition, Olsen's camp claims that the alleged misconduct took the form of quid-pro-quo harassment, in which Olsen was "required to have sex with Defendant Schwartz in order to receive good performance evaluations."

While the terms of Artiaga's settlement called for her to sever ties with El Camino, Olsen's agreement included no such clause. She still works as an administrative assistant in the college's athletic department.

Schwartz, who for many years served as the college's dean of health sciences and athletics, said Wednesday that he knew Olsen had filed some sort of allegation. He was under the impression there had been an internal investigation that had cleared him of any wrongdoing.

"My regret is that all this stuff is ruining my reputation," he said. "That people can just sit down and write up stuff and get rewarded for it. ... I certainly loved El Camino."

As the dean of health sciences, Schwartz started the El Camino Hall of Fame and the El Camino golf tournament.

Schwartz's administrative career with El Camino spanned four decades. He served as dean of health sciences and athletics from 1975 to 1996, interim vice president of academic affairs from 1996 to 2005, interim dean of fine arts from 2007 to 2009, and the interim dean of the health services and athletics division from 2009 until his departure in June 2010.

In 2009, he was inducted into the El Camino College Athletic Hall of Fame. During his last year at El Camino, his annual salary was about \$141,000, according to a college record.

Beverly, the board president, said the college was instructed to settle by the insurance carrier, SWAAC, which represents a pool of about 50 community college districts. He said the school could have opted to gamble by fighting the case in court, but then would run the risk of paying in full if it lost.

"Regardless of whether the claim was believable or not, and regardless of the validity of the various defenses that were available, and in spite of how it might look to a jury - with the plaintiff saying 'I want a piece of that, too,' our insurance carrier wanted to settle it," he said.

El Camino College pays about \$350,000 a year for general liability insurance. College spokeswoman Ann Garten said the two recent payouts aren't expected to increase the cost of the college's premium.

"An insurance carrier is not going to look at an individual college," she said. "It will look at the whole (pool)."

Although the two payouts are a blow to the El Camino Community College District, the school has recently prevailed in two similar cases.

In October 2010, the college was vindicated when a judge ruled mostly in favor of the district in a sexual harassment and discrimination case filed by a former dean, Kristi Blackburn, who claimed she was the victim of a "good old boys" club.

In March of last year, a jury ruled in favor of the college over professor Carmen Hunt, who charged that her bosses had tried to force her out because of her extended leaves of absence. She attributed the missed work to post-traumatic stress suffered after an alleged sexual assault by a former dean years ago.

Cut the baloney on tax plan

Brown has a compelling case for his initiative. He should tell it straight.

By George Skelton

Capitol Journal

March 22, 2012

Reporting from Sacramento

It's disingenuous. It's a bait-and-switch. And it's baloney.

That's being polite.

I'm referring to Gov. [Jerry Brown](#)'s merchandising of his latest proposal to raise taxes.

Don't misunderstand. I'll probably vote for it if Brown can collect enough signatures — about 808,000 — to qualify the measure for the November ballot. It could be a tight squeeze, but he should be able to do that. He has until Aug. 13.

My gripe is that I can't stand Sacramento double-speak. I'm all spun out.

Brown wants voters to believe that all the billions raised by his tax hike would go to K-12 schools and community colleges. They won't. And he knows that as well as anyone.

But that didn't prevent him from telling reporters Tuesday: "The taxes that I'm proposing on sales and higher income people goes to the schools — 100% of it."

Then he added in typical government gobbledygook: "But it goes in a way that integrates it with the budget itself. That's very important because the other initiative will leave a budget deficit... I think on balance ours is far superior."

Brown's measure — which recently was merged with a more liberal tax plan backed by the California Federation of Teachers — is superior to a remaining rival precisely because all his new revenue would not go to schools. Most of it would be used to fill a gaping state budget deficit while staving off further cuts to universities and programs to assist the poor.

Practically all new money from the rival plan, sponsored by civil rights attorney Molly Munger, would be spent on schools.

To believe that all of Brown's new revenue would go to schools, you'd have to buy into

the legitimacy of giving with one hand and taking with the other.

Put it this way: Technically, all of the new money would be spent on schools. But some of the old money that now goes into the schools kitty no longer would. It would stay in the state's general fund for budget-balancing. Bait and switch.

In Sacramento, they call that "back-filling." Take away one pot of money and replace it with another.

California school financing is extremely complicated, primarily due to the funding guarantee of Proposition 98, an initiative passed by voters in 1988.

The shorthand explanation of Prop. 98 is that it guarantees schools and community colleges a portion of the general fund — 40%, give or take. The figure bounces around. Don't ask.

This stuff is tall weeds growing in a deep swamp. We'll just say that by increasing general fund revenue, the minimum guarantee for schools also rises. And under Brown's plan, schools would get that extra guaranteed money, but not the entire additional tax take, as he implied.

The first 18 months of the tax hike would raise \$9 billion, according to the state Finance Department. Schools would be entitled to \$3.8 billion, or 42%. The remaining \$5.2 billion, or 58%, would be earmarked for budget balancing.

So schools wouldn't be benefiting from a bump equal to 100% of the new taxes.

But pity the poor civic-minded voter who tries to inform himself. First there's the initiative's official title and summary, written by the attorney general. It says the tax revenues are allocated "89% to K-12 schools and 11% to community colleges." No mention of back-filling, let alone bait-and-switch.

Then there's the actual initiative text.

Reading that, you first encounter 15 paragraphs of "findings" and "intent" that are primarily propaganda. They have no legal standing except to maybe establish the initiative's intent if a court ever has a question. Their main purpose is to spin the public.

For example:

"The new tax revenue is guaranteed in the Constitution to go directly to local school districts and community colleges... To ensure these funds go where the voters intend, they are put in special accounts that the Legislature cannot touch... These funds will be subject to an independent audit every year to ensure they are spent only for schools and

public safety."

Public safety? No money is raised by the initiative for public safety. Those funds already have been dedicated. The measure does, however, enact a constitutional guarantee that the state will continue funding public safety tasks that Brown has shifted from

the state to local governments.

The initiative "findings" are full of double-speak. While promising that the taxes will be spent only for schools and public safety, they also assert that money will be "freed up to help balance the budget."

This was all driven by polling and focus groups. Voters have said they might be willing to pay higher taxes for schools, but not for other programs.

They also don't trust the Legislature to handle the money.

"The marketing folks want to say it all goes to public schools," says an important Capitol Democrat, who didn't want to be identified because the governor might get angry. "The 'findings' are mainly for marketing."

One of California's most successful initiative operatives told me: "Everyone does it. It's not like one side is doing it and another is pristine... Ninety percent of any initiative's 'findings' is bull.

"We've gone to a whole new level of deception. Voters are being sold a bill of goods. It just contributes to the growing cynicism about government."

Brown has a compelling story to tell about his tax plan. He should tell it straight.

It's good to compromise with rivals — bad to compromise with truth.

ACCJC members hold power over colleges

THE COMPTON BULLETIN, March 21, 2012

http://www.thecomptonbulletin.com/news/2012-03-21/Front_Page/ACCJC_members_hold_power_over_colleges.html

Special Report

This is the second in a three-part series on the status of accreditation for El Camino Community College Compton Center. The first article explained the function of the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges. The final article will be an update on the accreditation process that has been underway since 2006.

By Cheryl Scott

Bulletin Staff Writer, March 21, 2012

COMPTON—When the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges revoked the accreditation for Compton College in 2006, it set in motion an arduous process that will one day enable the El Camino Compton Center to be given accreditation as a separate college. The timeline for that process has, to a large extent, already been set by the various steps that must be achieved by the center and the inspections that must be made by the commission.

The members of the commission are not accountable to anyone but the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), one of six regional accrediting organizations in the United States. This gives them what many believe is too much power over local community colleges. There are 142 “member” colleges, and the commission’s decisions directly affect millions of students, faculty, staff, administrators and trustees.

The president of the ACCJC is Dr. Barbara Beno, who took office in 2001. Prior to her appointment, she served as commissioner for both the ACCJC and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Beno served as president of Berkeley City College (formerly Vista Community College) for 12 years, assistant chancellor of the San Mateo Community College District, Research and Planning director for the Peralta Community College District, and a university faculty member in sociology. She served as chair of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions from 2006 to 2009.

In a 2010 interview Beno said, “One common misperception is that the standards and requirements of accrediting bodies are imposed upon institutions and that they are developed by some others or by the federal government. Accrediting bodies are associations of institutions that have voluntarily joined together to help assure a level of quality among the association’s member institutions. The participation in an accrediting

agency's reviews is a voluntary institutional commitment, albeit tied now to financial aid eligibility."

That may be, but the institutions have no means of appealing the decisions of the commission, and individual members are not subject to oversight from outside bodies. And the ties to funding make it impossible for a college to exist without accreditation for ACCJC. That makes the six members of the commission among the most powerful individuals in the field of higher education.

"The commissioners, and the team members who evaluate, are volunteer professionals who care deeply about higher education quality and who donate their time, energies, and thoughts to review institutional quality and to provide institutions with good ideas for improvements," Beno said.

"Thoughtful, concerned peers who comprise the commission decision-making bodies and the evaluation teams are not boogeymen, but are colleagues of all the rest of us working in higher education."

In addition to Beno, members of the commission include Vice President of Commission Operations Dr. Susan Clifford, Vice President for Policy and Research Krista Johns, Vice President of Team Operations and Communication Garman "Jack" Pond, Associate Vice President Dr. John Nixon, Associate Vice President Dr. Norv Wellsfry and an administrative support staff.

Clifford joined the commission in March 2008. She provides staff support for the substantive change review process, office management processes, staff development and cooperative efforts with other educational organizations. She served in both faculty and administrative roles at her former institutions.

Johns joined the commission in January 2012. She provides staff support in policy, evaluation and research. She has held faculty and administrator roles at her former institutions, including vice president of instruction at Berkeley City College and dean of English and business at Diablo Valley College.

Pond has been a member of the commission since July 2004. Prior to that, he was professor of English from 1972 to 2003 and interim dean of arts and sciences from 2003 to 2004 at Leeward Community College in Pearl City, Hawaii. He also served as a commissioner from 1998 to 2004.

Nixon joined the commission in July 2011, following his retirement as president of Mt. San Antonio College. He served as a commissioner with ACCJC from 2008-2011 and has served as chair and member of many of the commission's accreditation evaluation teams. During his 35-year career, Nixon served as faculty and administrator at Santa Ana College and Mt. San Antonio College.

Wellsfry joined the commission in February 2011 after he retired as a professor of accounting and CIS at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento. He held administrative and faculty roles at Sacramento City College and Antelope Valley College and at

Tidewater Community College in Virginia. He also had leadership positions in several state and national organizations. He was a commissioner from 2004 to 2010.

The El Camino Community College District has been operating the Compton Center since its accreditation was revoked. It is working toward accreditation by improving in every area cited by the commission when it pulled the accreditation. It is estimated that it may take another six years before accreditation can be granted.

Once that takes place, the college will be returned to the Compton Community College District.

Aging Professors Create a Faculty Bottleneck

The Chronicle of Higher Education

March 18, 2012

At some universities, 1 in 3 academics are now 60 or older

By Audrey Williams June

When Mary Beth Norton went to work at Cornell University in 1971, she was the history department's first female hire. But now the accomplished professor has a different mark of distinction: She is the oldest American-history scholar at Cornell.

"I've always thought of myself as the sweet young thing in the department," Ms. Norton, who will turn 69 this month, says with a laugh. "But that's not true anymore."

A growing proportion of the nation's professors are at the same point in their careers as Ms. Norton: still working, but with the end of their careers in sight. Their tendency to remain on the job as long as their work is enjoyable—or, during economic downturns, long enough to make sure they have enough money to live on in retirement—has led the professoriate to a crucial juncture.

Amid an aging American work force, the graying of college faculties is particularly notable. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of professors ages 65 and up has more than doubled between 2000 and 2011. At some institutions, including Cornell, more than one in three tenured or tenure-track professors are now 60 or older. At many others—including Duke and George Mason Universities and the Universities of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Texas at Austin, and Virginia—at least one in four are 60 or older. ([See chart below.](#))

Colleges have been talking about an impending mass exodus of baby-boomer professors for at least the past decade, but it hasn't occurred yet because people in their 60s, in particular, aren't ready to retire. But even with the preponderance of older faculty in academe, experts say that widespread retirements aren't imminent, but instead will most likely take place in spurts over the next 10 years or so as more professors reach age 70.

In the meantime, the challenges of an aging work force are especially salient for colleges. Faculty can retire at will (a perk that began with the end of mandatory retirement in 1994), and young Ph.D.'s are waiting in the wings for jobs. Institutions are also struggling to manage faculty renewal at a time when the position left behind by a retired faculty member might be lost to budget cuts.

Older professors understand what's at stake. But at the same time, they have managed to craft professional and personal lives that they're not ready to walk away from. And some administrators, who are themselves often in the same age bracket as the faculty in

question, can relate. Yet their task of preparing for the next generation, while managing the previous one, remains.

Data on faculty ages collected by The Chronicle provides a window into how the shifting demographics of professors is playing out similarly at all types of colleges across the nation. The problem is more pronounced at some places, particularly at elite research institutions like Cornell, where senior professors often have particular freedom to shape their academic pursuits to fit their interests. At other kinds of institutions where the workload isn't as flexible, studies have shown, faculty members are more inclined to retire.

At Cornell, the percentage of professors in their 70s and beyond has doubled since 2000; they now make up 6 percent of the university's 1,500-member faculty. Other places with a sizable percentage of faculty members in their 70s and older include Claremont McKenna College and the University of Texas at Austin, both of which have 7 percent of their faculty in that age group, and the University of Florida, with 6 percent.

The issue of aging faculty is complex, in part because of the nature of academic work. The faces behind the numbers, like Ralph M. Stein of Pace University, are lifelong academics who have often crafted careers at a single institution whose reputation they have helped to build. Their work isn't just a way to earn a living, but instead a major part of their identity. And that can make it difficult for professors to give up their jobs.

Mr. Stein, a founding member of the law school at Pace, is 68 and teaches eight courses each year. "As long as I can do the job, I'm going to keep doing it," he says. "If a person is still performing very well, I don't see why people should suggest that there's a moral or other obligation to let somebody else come in."

In fact, Mr. Stein adds, "Everybody who knows me knows I'm going out of here feet first."

For Peter J. Lang, an 81-year-old graduate research professor at the University of Florida, retirement would mean leaving behind the behavior-therapy research he has conducted over a career that has spanned three universities. "Right now I'm at a really exciting place in my research," says Mr. Lang, who has been employed at Florida for 30 years. "I'd like to hang in and see where it goes."

An Expensive Bottleneck

But on the departmental level, who stays and who goes dictates the game plan for a department's future. A department top-heavy with older faculty members most likely means that new hires, who often bring with them new fields of study and new course ideas, will be few and far between until more retirements occur.

The Aging Professoriate

Susan S. Meyer is chair of a philosophy department in transition at the University of Pennsylvania. Half of the department's 14 professors are nearly 60, or above, and the other half are 50 or under. One professor, who is participating in a phased-retirement plan, will leave at the end of this year. Another person, of retirement age, left for another university. The 60-and-above cohort in the department will shrink in the wake of the departures, and Ms. Meyer, 51, is hopeful that new hires will help the other end of the age spectrum grow.

"What we've got with no mandatory retirement is kind of a bottleneck at the most-expensive end at a lot of places," says Ms. Meyer, who is on sabbatical. "For department chairs that means there's an inability to renew the ranks. Our own graduate students are going off and there are fewer opportunities for them."

The philosophy department at Cornell has a standing committee that "keeps an eye on" young scholars the institution may want to recruit "if the right occasion unfolds," says Scott MacDonald, department chair. "We're small enough that we continually, and without reflection, know what the demographics are in the department."

He expects at least three professors to begin phased retirement in the next three years. In a department of 16 professors, Mr. MacDonald says, there is "a lump of 55- to 70-year-olds, a lump of early-career faculty, and we're a little bit low in the middle."

Meanwhile, young Ph.D.'s lament that retirements aren't happening quickly enough. One poster on The Chronicle's forums recently wondered when the tight academic job market would turn around.

"A part of me thinks that we're just waiting for the baby boomers to retire," the poster wrote. "I wonder how much of the difficult job market right now is a result of these people holding onto their jobs."

Indeed, in an expanding job market, the effect of legions of longtime professors still on the job "might not be as acute," says Peter Conn, a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania and a Chronicle contributor, who has written about aging faculty and their effect on the job prospects of young scholars in the humanities. He is also a former dean of Penn's College of Arts and Sciences, where 7.3 percent of the tenured faculty was over 70 in 2010. "But in a shrinking market it seems to me to be obvious that new or younger colleagues looking for work are going to suffer," Mr. Conn, says.

But why quit, some professors say, when they have all the intellectual stimulation, work-life flexibility, and camaraderie they need on the job?

Productive, or Not?

At the core of conversations about older faculty members is the perennial question: Are they productive? The answer is: It depends. When professors have been around for decades, it's easy enough for them to simply maintain the status quo, refusing to freshen

up tired lectures, shunning new scholarship, and barely bothering to take on departmental duties. But clearly age doesn't dictate levels of productivity. A young assistant professor can fall short of the mark, as well, by not cranking out enough research to attain tenure or never quite connecting with students in the classroom.

"Despite mythology to the contrary, there's very little evidence that older faculty become less productive," says Mr. Conn, who is 69. Faculty at top research universities, in particular, are "if anything, more productive," he adds, as tenure and rich resources work together in their favor.

When it comes to teaching, Ms. Meyer maintains that some of Penn's oldest teachers are among its best, mainly because they are more experienced. Still, "if someone's no longer able to do the work, that's a difficult conversation to have."

Department leaders also have to be cognizant of evening out work in departments, particularly in those with large numbers of older faculty. One of the perks of the job for longtime faculty members has often been the ability to pick and choose how much departmental work to take on, but that's not always possible.

"As people don't retire, but they're still full-time members of the department, you just can't have more and more of the work falling onto fewer and fewer people," says Ms. Meyer, who has been at Penn since 1994. "Unless they have declared a retirement, you have to insist that they do their fair share of work."

G. Howard Miller considers himself an example of how older faculty members can thrive when they work to reinvent themselves.

As Mr. Miller, an associate professor of history, neared the end of his almost 40-year career at the University of Texas at Austin, he says he began to keenly feel the age gap between him and his students. When he first arrived at the institution, in 1971, the commonalities between him and the students he taught were many, including that they were mostly native Texans who shared his Southern drawl. He also was not that much older than his most-senior students.

But as time passed, Texas's flagship campus grew into a nationally known research institution, and most of Mr. Miller's students started to come from outside Texas. And as he aged, a deeper disconnect grew. "The kinds of things I could assume that they knew about, the part of history that we had lived through, was not the same," he said. "Especially with the growth of technology, that gap got to be a little formidable."

Mr. Miller decided that he needed to scrap his standard lectures for his classes on the history of religion in America and instead begin to "speak the technical language that my students did." In the years before his retirement, which was at the end of the last academic year, he revamped his teaching style, which included turning one of his signature courses, "Jesus in American Culture," into a multimedia offering. It featured a video, music and audio recordings, and online lectures. Before he knew it, Mr. Miller

says, the course drew attention from his peers, who nominated him for teaching awards that he ultimately won.

"I had to learn about using films and images and music and stop being a lecture-oriented professor," says Mr. Miller, who is now 70. "I carved out an entirely different type of reputation for myself at the university, and I was really rewarded for that. But if I had retired earlier, none of that would have happened."

Tough Talks

Mr. Miller, who said recent health problems had made it harder for him to get around campus, initiated talks with his department chair about his timetable for retiring. But not all professors raise the issue, and it's a dicey proposition for administrators to broach the subject with faculty.

"As an administrator I'm dealing with two conflicting messages," says Ralph J. Blasting, dean of liberal arts at Siena College. "The first is to plan three to five years out, and the second is to never use the 'r-word' with a faculty member because of perceptions of ageism and discrimination."

So administrators trying to make plans for new hires are often working only with age data and supposition.

"We can look at a department and we can determine who is close to retirement age, but that doesn't tell you much," Mr. Blasting says. "Someone 60 might want to work until they're 65 or work until they're 90."

But administrators have found some ways to plan. Mr. Blasting says the post tenure reviews he conducts every three years of his college's faculty have helped him get a better handle on when some professors might choose to retire. As faculty members discuss their goals for the next three years, it's not uncommon for someone to mention that the next time he or she meets with him, the person will probably want to talk about retirement.

"It just sets the stage for people to talk about their job and what they want to do in a way that's really helpful," Mr. Blasting says.

Institutions also rely on phased-retirement programs to help them fine-tune planning. Such programs typically offer professors a prorated salary as they scale back their duties, while maintaining a full retirement and health benefits. In return, professors must give administrators a specific retirement date up to three years in the future. Some institutions, like Cornell, allow professors to retire over a five-year period.

But experts on faculty-retirement patterns say that, even as institutions are doing more to work with faculty on financial planning, not enough are paying attention to the psychological effects of retirement and how to guide professors through the uncertainty about what their lives might be like after academe.

"Lots of places have an HR focus about retirement for faculty, like how to get your financing in order," says David Stein, an associate professor of work-force development and education at Ohio State, who has done research on aging faculty. "But they don't tend to get beyond that to, What am I going to do next? What does it mean to not be a faculty member? Some people have real issues with that."

Good Timing

Sometimes, retirement is all about timing. Lorraine Dorfman, a retired professor of social work at the University of Iowa, had contemplated entering phased retirement in 2001, right after her husband died. But after thinking about it for six months, she decided to wait. "I didn't want two big transitions," Ms. Dorfman says.

Eventually, Ms. Dorfman, who has done extensive research on retired professors, says she got to the point where she believed it was time to pass the baton. She retired in 2010 at age 74.

"Fields change, and most of us realize that there is a new crop of people who have been trained differently with new ideas and they deserve to be heard," Ms. Dorfman says.

Like many professors, she has continued to work in her field, including serving on dissertation committees and reviewing journal articles. But she is also enjoying the personal benefits of retirement. She had the time, for example, to take her teenage grandson on a trip to China last summer.

Elizabeth D. Earle is winding down her career the way she planned, too. A professor in Cornell's department of plant breeding and genetics, she is in her fifth and final year of phased retirement. The 74-year-old says she chose that path so she could begin to shed aspects of her work she was losing interest in, while still doing others where she felt she continued to shine.

A few years into her phased retirement, she closed down her lab, saying she had grown tired of competing for grants to support her research and the people who helped her do it. But she continues to teach. She has taught courses on genetically engineered crops, plant cell and tissue culture, and has made trips to West Africa to teach at a center for plant improvement there.

Ms. Earle, whose department has faculty who are mostly in their 50s and 60s, says she may have retired earlier if there had not been a phased-retirement program and she thought her leaving might benefit her program in some way.

That kind of sentiment illustrates how carefully many professors weigh what impact their retirement might have on their colleagues. It is not uncommon for faculty members to stay put as they try get a better sense of what will happen to their position, and their research areas, once they're gone.

"The retiring professor does care very much about the department and wants to be sure that their line is going to be renewed," Mr. Blasting says. "And not only that, but that the line will be renewed with their particular specialty."

David A. Hammer, a professor of nuclear engineering and electrical and computer engineering at Cornell, doesn't yet see the signs of that kind of renewal in his department. He and three other professors are the only four faculty members who work in his area, says Mr. Hammer, who has been at Cornell since 1977. Talk about new hires seems to center around landing professors who don't have the same specialty that soon-to-retire senior scholars do, Mr. Hammer says.

"Unless the word 'renewal' is used more forcefully, none of the four of us will be replaced," says Mr. Hammer, 68, who is now teaching a course on controlled fusion and an energy seminar. An obvious time for him to retire, he says, would be when his graduate students have all earned their doctorate degrees. "I'm pretty healthy, so I don't need to retire because of my health," says Mr. Hammer, whose wife is a longtime professor in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell. "And my wife isn't pounding on the table every evening saying, 'When are we going to retire?'"

Cornell officials aren't mounting a widespread push for retirements to happen either. G. Peter Lepage, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the institution, says demographics will ultimately do the trick.

Crunching the Numbers

Four years ago, Mr. Lepage examined the age distribution of the college's 500 faculty members. The theoretical physicist crunched the numbers back to 1983 and found that the faculty of Cornell's largest college was steadily aging. In 1983, 5 percent of the faculty was 65 and older, compared with 20 percent in 2011. The explanation, he says, is a simple one: A critical mass of faculty members hired in the 1970s had aged in place.

"Most of our faculty stay here, so what we have is a big lump of faculty members that have just been marching through our system," Mr. Lepage says.

Now the pace of retirements, he says, is gradually picking up. About 15 people retire each year in his college, he says, roughly double the annual rate of retirements in the late 1980s. Each year about a dozen more professors leave for other reasons.

Mr. Lepage's data were at the crux of a 2010 decision by the university's Board of Trustees to commit \$100-million to hire new professors university wide over the next decade. The plan, which donors will help finance, will allow young faculty members to establish themselves before the senior scholars they're replacing retire.

"We're basically hiring our reputation for the next 20 or 30 years," Mr. Lepage says.

The college has begun to "pre-fill" jobs, hiring young professors to take the place of senior professors who are expected to retire with the next decade. The College of Arts and Sciences needs to hire about 28 professors each year to replace faculty who leave. Last year, partly because of its pre-filling efforts, the college hired 35 professors.

Hiring new faculty in advance of retirements comes with obvious risks, but Cornell is constantly securing and setting aside "bridge funds" to cover the cost of hires that may overlap for as many as five years.

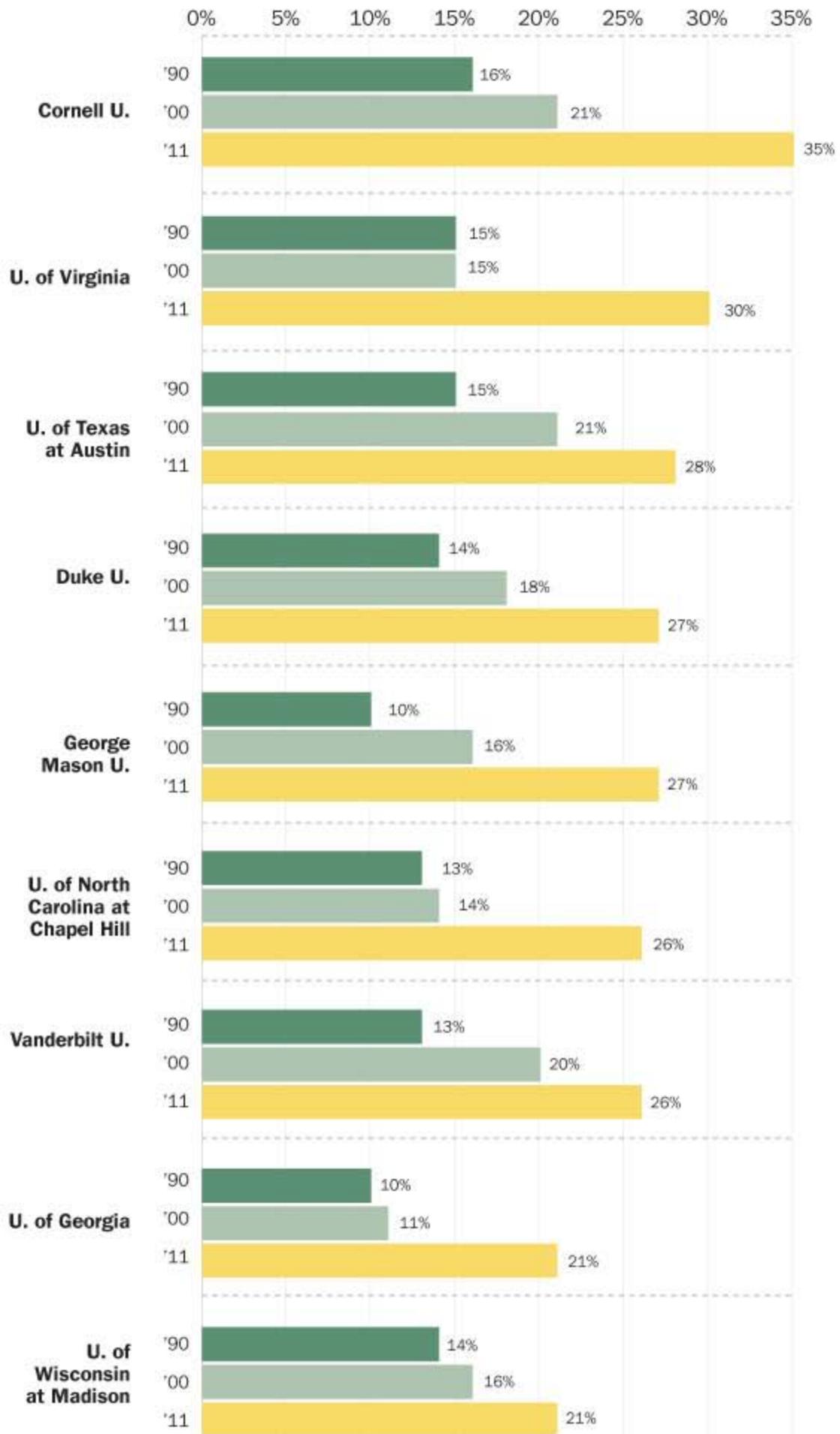
Ms. Norton, Cornell's oldest American-history professor, is one of the faculty members who has no immediate plans to retire.

She still enjoys teaching. In fact, a popular new course that she teaches with the principal investigator of the Mars Exploration Rover Mission, who is also a Cornell professor, has basically pushed thoughts of retirement off her radar.

"It's a very exciting class to teach," Ms. Norton says of the course, "History of Exploration: Land, Sea, Space." "I hate to give it up by retiring."

For now, Ms. Norton plans to teach through the next academic year. After that, "I'm leaving my options open," she says. "I'll likely retire sooner rather than later, but I haven't decided anything."

Proportion of Faculty 60 and Older Has Grown at Colleges Across the Country





SF City College slashing summer school enrollment

Monday, March 26, 2012 (SF Chronicle)

City College of San Francisco will shut out thousands of students from summer school this year by delaying its start two weeks and accepting less than half the usual enrollment, all to save \$500,000.

The biggest losers will be California State University students, who often take summer classes at community college to graduate on time from CSU.

With City College enrolling just 40 percent of the usual summer crowd, CSU students will be last on the priority list and may not get into any class at all.

"This will be a big financial problem for a lot of CSU students," said Mayette Delos Santos, a marketing major at San Francisco State University who needs to retake an accounting class this summer to graduate by 2013.

She lives in the East Bay and will take the course in Oakland or Alameda.

But she is among many students who depend on community college to keep from having to spend an extra year at CSU, where tuition and fees will cost \$7,017 next fall.

California's persistent budget crisis means City College of San Francisco had to close a \$4.7 million gap in the current year. Staff and administrators have agreed to four furlough days, and faculty will accept a retroactive pay cut of almost half a percent, said Vice Chancellor Peter Goldstein.

Now, with the summer school reduction, this year's gap has been whittled down to \$1.8 million, Goldstein said.

Instead of starting classes in mid-June as usual, summer school will begin on July 2 - one day after the start of the new fiscal year. That means the campus won't have to pay for the program in the current fiscal year.

The campus will also save money by slashing summer enrollment by 60 percent.

Goldstein acknowledged the strategy essentially kicks the can down the road. Next year's budget gap already tops \$17 million.

A win for Jerry Brown in school budget fight

LA Times

March 27, 2012

Gov. Jerry Brown scored a rare court victory in the legal war over California's budget on Tuesday when a judge defended the state's reduction in school funding.

The ruling disappointed school advocates and pleased the Brown administration, which has suffered several setbacks as judges block cuts to healthcare for the poor.

The legal fight stems from Brown's effort to fund realignment, a sweeping effort to route low-level offenders to local jails to reduce overcrowding in state prisons.

To pay for the plan, Brown and the Legislature last year moved \$5 billion in revenue from the sales tax and vehicle license fees into a separate account. Because that lowered the amount of money in the state's general fund, it reduced funding for public schools under Proposition 98, the voter-approved constitutional amendment that requires the state to spend roughly 40% of its budget on K-12 education and community colleges.

In response, a coalition of school groups sued the state, saying they were being shortchanged \$2 billion.

But Superior Court Judge Harold Kahn said the state didn't do anything wrong.

"Nothing in the language of Proposition 98 or its ballot materials precludes the Legislature from assigning revenue to a special fund that previously had been deposited in the general fund," he wrote.

The ruling is temporary and a hearing will be held Wednesday in San Francisco. But it's unusual for judges to backtrack, and Bob Wells, executive director for the Assn. of California School Administrators, said the group would appeal Kahn's final decision.

Wells said the ruling risks invalidating the purpose of Proposition 98.

"If the Legislature wants to avoid the restrictions of Prop. 98, they would simply transfer all the general fund revenues into another fund," he said. "The reason voters put Prop. 98 into the Constitution was to stop those workarounds."

2-Year College, Squeezed, Sets 2-Tier Tuition

New York Times

Published: March 29, 2012

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — For years now, administrators at the community college here have been inundated with woeful tales from students unable to register for the courses they need. Classes they want for essential job training or to fulfill requirements to transfer to four-year universities fill up within hours. Hundreds of students resort to crying and begging to enroll in a class, lining up at the doors of instructors and academic counselors.

Now, though, Santa Monica College is about to try something novel. This summer it will offer some courses for a higher price, so that students who are eager to get into a particular class can do so if they pay more.

The plan may be the first of its kind in the country, college officials and other higher education experts say, and if the college succeeds in implementing it, many other community colleges are likely to follow. Since 2009, enrollment in California community colleges has fallen by 300,000 students, to 2.6 million, and many believe the difficulty of registering for classes is the most important deterrent.

For generations, community colleges have been seen as a social equalizer, providing a relatively inexpensive education for poor students, immigrants and others without the skills, grades or money to attend a four-year institution.

So the two-tiered tuition structure being proposed here is raising eyebrows, and fundamental questions, about the role and obligations of community colleges. Will the policy essentially block some of the people it is designed to benefit? Many students believe the new policy — if the state does not block its implementation, which it could yet do — will unfairly exclude the poorest students and create a kind of upper and lower class of students.

A financial squeeze since the recession led first to a reduction of federal and then state financing for colleges and universities. Since 2008, California's community college system has lost \$809 million in state aid, including \$564 million in the most recent budget, even as more students than ever before try to enroll.

Many colleges have reduced class offerings. Santa Monica College has cut more than 1,100 classes from its fall term.

David Baime, the senior vice president for government relations and research at the American Association of Community Colleges, called the Santa Monica plan “extremely rare if not completely unprecedented.”

But the impetus behind it, he said, is clear. “In many cases, and California most prominently, amid the recession there was a huge spike in enrollment concurrent with budget cuts,” Mr. Baime said. “The colleges have just maxed out in terms of how many students they can serve.”

Community colleges are hardly the only places suffering budget cuts. Last week, administrators of the California State University system approved a plan to significantly limit the number of students it accepts next year because budget cuts have made it impossible to pay for any enrollment increase.

“Every year we look around and think about how we can serve more students, but what we have now is not working,” said Chui L. Tsang, the president of Santa Monica College. “Literally thousands of students are missing out on opportunities we want to give them and have the ability to give them if we just had the money.”

Officials in the California Community Colleges chancellor’s office said that they could move to block Santa Monica’s proposed tuition increase. They said that it was not clear such a change was legal and that the program could limit access for students, particularly those who did not have enough money to pay for the more expensive courses.

Currently, each community college class costs \$36 per credit hour. Under Santa Monica’s plan, the more expensive courses would cost \$180 per credit hour — just enough to cover the college’s costs, Dr. Tsang said.

While the college is still ironing out the details, it expects to offer about 200 courses at the higher tuition price, in addition to hundreds of regularly priced courses. College officials say that nearly every class is filled to capacity and that they are asking departments to choose which courses have the highest demand so they can offer more of those — typically basic courses in English, writing, math and science.

For now, the college does not plan to offer the higher-priced courses in the fall and spring semesters, but will charge \$180 per credit for all classes in the shorter winter term. Nearly every other community college in the state has eliminated the winter term because of budget cuts.

“There is a real concern about equity here, because if there are higher fees that will only gain access for certain students, does that really address the problem,” said Paul Feist, the vice chancellor for communications of the California Community Colleges. “The reality is that there are hundreds of thousands of students who are not getting access to community college — and access has always been what we are famous for.”

Santa Monica College, which has 34,000 students, is widely considered one of the most successful community colleges in the country, with one of the highest transfer rates to four-year colleges. Many students from Los Angeles choose to attend the school for their first two years as a way to save money.

California community colleges have some of the lowest tuition fees in the country. And for decades, the community college system has operated under the presumption that lower fees translated into greater access, said John Aubrey Douglass, a senior researcher at the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley. But as budget cuts have forced campuses to dramatically scale back what they can offer, that paradigm has begun to shift.

“There’s a sense that if the colleges can generate the adequate income themselves, they may no longer be struggling with the lack of resources, because there is certainly a tremendous level of demand,” Dr. Douglass said. “It’s a much-needed conversation that we need to have — is it possible our tuition is too low? This is a very important move to push the envelope.”

One donor has agreed to give \$250,000 in scholarships for students who want to take the more expensive classes but cannot afford them. Dr. Tsang hopes that will make the program more attractive.

Also, since Santa Monica is prosperous enough to have built a community college relatively rich in facilities, it tends to draw students from across the Los Angeles region. Some say such students may be more willing to pay higher tuition rates.

Janet Harclerode, an English instructor and president of the college’s Academic Senate, said that many professors viewed the new plan as having a “real ick factor,” but that few saw any real alternative. Many instructors have already accepted extra students in their classrooms, even allowing a few to sit on the floor when seats were scarce.

“We hope that this is just a stopgap measure, before taxpayers step up and the state really starts to reinvest in the colleges,” she said.

HAHN PICKS UP ENDORSEMENT FROM BOARD PRESIDENT OF COMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Potent Endorsement from Compton Education Leader Dr. Deborah LeBlanc Strengthens Hahn's Re-Election

SAN PEDRO, CA— Continuing to secure valuable endorsements, today Congresswoman Janice Hahn earned a crucial endorsement from the Board President of the Compton Community College District and Trustee for Area 4, Dr. Deborah LeBlanc, in her re-election campaign.

“I am pleased to enthusiastically endorse Congresswoman Janice Hahn for re-election,” said Board President of Compton Community College District and Trustee for Area 4, Dr. Deborah LeBlanc. “She’s always been a champion for the people that she represents, and the residents of Compton deserve someone like her to be our voice in Congress. Especially when it comes to education, I know that Janice will be a tireless fighter and advocate for Compton College in Washington.”

“Having the support of Board President Dr. Deborah LeBlanc of the Compton Community College District means so much to me,” said Congresswoman Hahn. “She’s been a remarkable leader for Compton College, and her support demonstrates my strong ties and growing support in Compton. I look forward to working with her and the other Trustees to restore Compton College’s accreditation and return control back to Compton.”

Today’s endorsement adds to Congresswoman Hahn’s recent winning streak of endorsements including Compton-base California State Assemblyman Isadore Hall, the LA County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, former Congresswoman Diane Watson, the California Democratic Party, and California State Assemblyman and California Latino Legislative Caucus Chair Ricardo Lara.

Click here to view details about Congresswoman Hahn winning the California Democratic Party (CDP) endorsement: <http://janicehahn.com/news/hahn-secures-endorsement-from-california-democratic-party/>

To view Congresswoman Hahn’s full list of endorsements, click here: <http://janicehahn.com/about/endorsements-2/>

To view the Hahn for Congress campaign’s recently released polling memo, click here: <http://janicehahn.com/news/analysis-of-ca-congressional-district-44-after-isadore-hall%E2%80%99s-announcement-to-leave-the-race/>

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*Congresswoman Hahn is the only incumbent member of Congress in the new 44th Congressional District. She has been a resident of San Pedro for two decades, and raised her three children in the community. The Congresswoman has represented the Harbor-Area and Watts communities for more than a dozen years, as a member of the Los Angeles City Council and an elected member of the Los Angeles Charter Commission. **

*California's new 44th Congressional District includes the communities of Watts, San Pedro, Wilmington, Carson, South Gate, Compton, Lynwood, parts of Long Beach, and Walnut Park. **
