13-year-old fights for community college classes

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LEESBURG, Fla. -- The parents of a Sumter County girl say their teenager should be allowed to enroll at a community college, despite her young age.

Anastasia Megan has nearly finished her high school coursework, and she and her parents were eyeing classes at the Lake-Sumter Community College. Megan's parents, who home school the 13-year-old, say she meets the qualifications for the college. However, Megan's enrollment has been turned down.

College President Charles Mojock wouldn't comment on the matter to the Orlando Sentinel, but did say the campus is a different environment than a high school, with "many adult students having adult conversations on adult topics and that may or may not be suitable for some young students."

Angst for an Accreditor

June 7, 2010

College presidents, faculty/staff unions and state education leaders rarely agree about anything. But mutual frustration with a regional accreditor has united strange bedfellows in California’s community college sector.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, which accredits two-year institutions in California, Hawaii and numerous Pacific island nations and territories as part of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, placed 41 (or 37 percent) of the 110 California community colleges on "sanction" from 2003 to 2008. A study of other regional accreditors in the United States shows that, during this same period, the percentage of their community colleges being sanctioned, or warned that their accreditation could be stripped, ranged from 0 to 6 percent. As of

The unusually large number of penalties for California's community colleges prompted an array of interest groups from the institutions to form a task force last year to study the accreditor's actions; its recommendations covered a wide swath of issues but can be summed up as urging the commission to focus on institutional "improvement rather than compliance."

Leaders of the accrediting commission largely rebutted the task force's findings, saying that the agency, in taking a tougher stance on institutional performance, is responding to increased pressure (from the federal government and elsewhere) to hold colleges accountable. ACCJC officials also challenged the extent to which the panel represented the views of the accreditor's members: California's community college presidents. The dispute escalated last month when California's community college chancellor, Jack Scott, writing on behalf of the task force, complained to the U.S. Education Department that the ACCJC was not following its own bylaws in its process for selecting commissioners.

The issue at the core of the California clash – whether accreditation is designed to stimulate change within a college, or assure accountability to external audiences – is a fundamental one in the increasingly agitated national debates over higher education accreditation. And the dispute is the latest sign of tensions between the government, the agencies and their member institutions.

A Growing Conflict

The continuing dispute between the task force representing California’s community colleges and the ACCJC has grown out of what some officials, on both sides, describe as a lack of communication and collegiality.

After submitting their written recommendations in October and meeting with a small group of commissioners shortly thereafter, task force members were initially told that they were not allowed to speak before the entire commission at their next meeting in January. When that decision was eventually reversed, Scott was given five minutes to sum up the task force's findings, after which there was no public discussion.

Weeks after the meeting, ACCJC officials wrote a detailed critique of the task force's suggestions and largely considered the matter solved. But, in March, the task force again asked to meet with the commission, this time at its annual retreat. Receiving no response to their request, task force members took offense, and have sought some intervention from the federal government.

The task force's recommendations deal primarily with the perception, due to the number of sanctions levied, that California's community colleges are falling short. One key recommendation is that the ACCJC provide more guidance to troubled community colleges seeking to avoid losing their accreditation – but it wants this communication provided out of the public square.

Currently, the ACCJC levies only "public sanctions," or three distinct warnings that an institution could lose its accreditation. With each "public sanction," local news media generally write articles that some community college officials believe unfairly worry students and their parents, who may not know much about the accreditation process.

By contrast, some regional accrediting bodies send informal letters to troubled institutions letting them know how they can reverse their fortunes before they come up for formal review again, essentially helping many save face while they privately correct potentially worrisome institutional issues.

"Some folks have reported these public sanctions as being something of a 'gotcha' moment for the ACCJC," said Jane Patton, president of the Academic Senate of California Community Colleges and a member of the task force. Others have told her they found the sanctions damaging rather than helpful.

Other faculty representatives said the public flogging some institutions receive as a result of these "public sanctions" has generated a climate of fear among many college officials.

"Administrators are scared of asking questions [about the accreditation process] for fear that, when they're up for evaluation, there will be some backlash putting their accreditation at risk," said Ron Norton Reel, president of the Community College Association, a constituent faculty union of the National Education Association, and a task force member. "The spirit that exists right now is one of punishment. We would like that to change to one of accomplishment."

In order to encourage this change in "spirit," the task force also suggests that the ACCJC should work collaboratively with community college officials to train faculty and staff who serve on accrediting teams investigating their own college or peer institutions. Some faculty groups already run their own voluntary training sessions out of concern that training from the accrediting agency is not sufficient.

“Some visiting teams are prepared and others aren’t,” said Patton. “There are cases where an individual is asked to evaluate, say, the student services of a college, but they have no background in such a program. Some teams have no faculty on them. There are people out there who are making judgments on institutions without being well-prepared.”

ACCJC officials stressed in their rebuttal to these recommendations that they receive “ample feedback,” positive and negative, from their members and that they provide plenty of opportunities for faculty and staff to learn more about the accreditation process.

“Accreditation is higher education’s system of self-regulation,” wrote Lurelean B. Gaines and Barbara A. Beno, the accrediting body’s chair and president, respectively. “It is a peer review process and [colleges' accreditation liaison officers], as well as faculty, college administrative leaders and trustees have a professional obligation to read, seek to understand, and apply the standards to their own institutions.”

Still, they argue that “it often seems to be the case that those individuals and institutions that most misunderstand accreditation are those who don’t take advantage of existing accreditation training activities.”

Defending the ACCJC’s use of “public sanctions,” Gaines and Beno argue that when the commission made use of informal warnings, they did not carry much weight and were easy to dismiss.

“The genie is out of the bottle on this issue,” they write. “The [ACCJC] moved to all public sanctions many years ago in response to pressures from the Department of Education. The increasing public, student and government interest in institutional quality has created a climate in which more information about accreditation decisions is demanded.… In this time of increased expectations of transparency, it is not in the best interest of higher education’s system of self-regulation to try to regain privacy or secrecy of accreditor actions on institutions."

There has been a greater push for openness from groups besides the Department of Education as well. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation, for example, is in the process of revising its rules to require more disclosure of accreditors' actions.

Who Represents Whom?

Apart from the complaints about the accreditor's practices and their impact, the two sides also disagree about the standing of those complaining.

Beno does not view the task force as being representative of ACCJC's constituency, even though it includes representatives from the Board of Governors, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, the group of chief executive officers, the group of chief instructional officers, the Academic Senate, the California School Employees Association, the Community College Association and the chancellor of the state's two-year colleges.

"The institutions are our members, and we communicate through their presidents and their accreditation liaison officers," Beno said in an interview. "These third-party analyses are important, but they can't supplant the view of the individual institutions. Also, I don't think our response to the task force was dismissive. I thought it was quite sincere. I just think their work could have been done differently."

Scott vehemently disagrees with Beno, arguing that he cannot think of a more representative body than the task force and that any suggestions, no matter their source, should be welcome by the commission.

"Other commissions, including [the Western Association of Schools and Colleges], let people voice themselves at meetings," Scott said. "I just can't understand their unwillingness to sit down and talk. They should say, 'come on in.' But, to put up a barrier and say that they're not willing to listen to recommendations that are designed to improve the process, I just don't understand."

Several community college presidents from throughout the state, however, believe that the task force's view of the accrediting body does not reflect their views, even though an elected representative from the state's group of chief executive officers is an active member. Many of these critics note that they were never given the results of the presidential survey from which the task force's recommendations were supposedly culled. (Scott's office provided a blank copy of the survey to *Inside Higher Ed* but not a report revealing its results.)

James Meznek, chancellor of Ventura Community College District, said he disagrees with most of the task force's recommendations. For example, he argues that the current means of expressing complaints about accreditation process is sufficient. He also takes issue with the suggestion that ACCJC collaborate with various state-associated groups in the training of faculty and staff members who serve on accreditation peer-review teams. Mostly, however, he simply thinks this conflict is a needless distraction.

"The strength of accreditation is that it is not linked to the state government," Meznek said. "Some of these recommendations are a real departure from my view of what an accrediting body should do. This worries me. Honestly, I'm struck that we have bigger fish to fry in California. This is just a sideshow. We should be focusing on something else."

— **David Moltz**

Dan Walters: Budget deadline nears with no progress in sight

Sac Bee

By Dan Walters

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It's a week before the June 15 constitutional deadline for enacting a state budget, an appropriate moment to consider the status of this year's version of the annual fiscal drama.

And that is? Up the proverbial creek without the proverbial paddle.

In the weeks since Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger unveiled his revised 2010-11 budget, there's been absolutely no progress on closing the deficit that approaches $20 billion. In fact, the situation may have grown worse because the extra federal funds that the governor and the Legislature have counted on are evaporating.

Originally, Schwarzenegger projected that the state would get an extra $7 billion. His May revision cut that in half, but a congressional measure that would boost federal medical payments to states has stalled, perhaps permanently. And that means the state may receive no more than an extra $1 billion.

Adding to the rudderless turmoil is a conflict between the Democratic leaders of the Senate and Assembly, even though they jointly reject Schwarzenegger's big health and welfare cuts.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg wants about $5 billion in new tax revenues, mostly by extending temporary taxes due to expire or by postponing scheduled tax cuts. Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez, while proposing some additional revenues, is touting a very gimmicky borrowing scheme.

Meanwhile, Republicans – some of whose votes would be needed for any budget and any new taxes – are simply saying no.

We in the media often make too much of the tardiness of the budget. After all, a rational budget is more important than a timely one, and on-time budgets have usually been fiscal disasters. But this is one of those years when lengthy delay could have meaning.

State Controller John Chiang is warning of another cash crunch if a new budget isn't enacted by August. The state cannot float "revenue anticipation bonds" – short-term borrowing to ease cash flow problems – without a budget in place. Chiang says he may be forced to issue IOUs to pay the state's debts if the state treasury runs dry.

Chiang, in a letter last week to the Legislature, declared that "the worst thing you can do is nothing." But nothing, at least for weeks and perhaps months to come, is the most likely scenario.

Given the size of the deficit, the one-time gimmicks that already have been exhausted (such as paying June's payroll in July and deferring payments to schools and local governments), and the wide political disagreements in the Capitol, no one would be surprised if the budget is still pending when summer turns into autumn.

Schwarzenegger and the Legislature already suffer from historically low public approval ratings. This year's version of the budget melodrama shows every sign of driving their abysmal standing even lower.

Sacramento City College breaking ground on transfer center at UCDavis

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Sacramento City College and UC Davis will celebrate breaking ground for the Sacramento City College Davis Center at UC Davis on Thursday.

Sacramento City College's Davis Education Center will be the first community college center located on a University of California campus. Designed to be LEED silver certified, the 20,000-square-foot structure will be located at UCD West Village, a 205-acre zero net energy community now under construction on the UC Davis campus.

The Davis Center will offer a curriculum centered on general education and transfer courses, providing community college students whose long-term goal is to transfer to a UC or a four-year institution with affordable, high-quality education offerings -- all in a university environment.

The groundbreaking will take place at 10 .m., Thursday, at the construction site, which is in Davis off Hutchison Drive west of Highway 113.

Will a New Federal Rule Do the Trick?

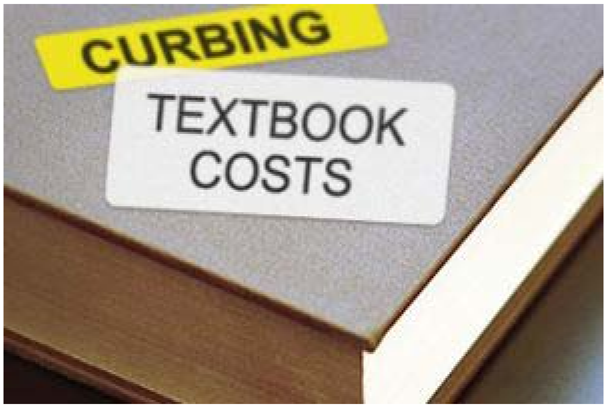

Photo Illustration by Ron Coddington

Campus bookstores are leading the way in alerting colleges to provisions of a new textbook-affordability law.

By Don Troop

College bookstores are reporting early successes in complying with new federal rules designed to reduce textbook costs, but some faculty members say the new procedures have burdened them with busywork.

Congress passed the rules as part of the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Although the textbook provisions won't take effect until July 1, many colleges told faculty members to provide reading lists and other information for electronic course catalogs in advance of summer- and fall-term preregistrations. So far the early reviews have been mixed.

At the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the provost's office e-mailed Daphne Patai and other faculty members in March, only a week ahead of fall registration, asking them to provide a list of required and recommended texts for their courses, including supplemental materials like course packs, along with ISBN's and prices. (The provost, James V. Staros, told *The Chronicle* that the notice went out late because the online course schedule wasn't ready.) The provost's message contained a hyperlink to the textbook provision of the new law, and Ms. Patai, a professor of languages, literatures, and cultures, was vocal in criticizing it as government micromanagement of faculty jobs.

"The whole effect of this is that it's going to lock people into their book lists," she said. "It's not going to encourage change. It's not going to encourage innovation."

Elsewhere, colleges have offered several months of PowerPoint presentations, online tutorials, and educational workshops to help faculty members and officials comply with the new law.

Margaret Horner oversees the campus bookstore as director of auxiliary services at Anne Arundel Community College. She said her team began training top administrators about the new rules in January 2009, just five months after the reauthorization bill was passed, and proceeded down through the ranks. Faculty members have had no trouble complying, she said. The college's effort was eased because Maryland imposed its own, far stricter, textbook rules last summer.

"The faculty are feeling more empowered" by the rules, which require publishers to give them information like ISBN's and descriptions of what has changed in new editions of textbooks, she said.

A number of other states also have their own textbook-affordability laws, often a result of lobbying by the Student Public Interest Research Groups, which also played a key role in the push for change at the national level. Nicole Allen, director of the student public-interest group's textbook campaign, said the economic underpinnings of the college textbook market have long been flawed. In a typical market, the buyer chooses which product to buy based on considerations of cost and quality. But in the textbook market, the person who chooses the product, the faculty member, is not motivated by the incentive of cost. Or so the argument goes.

Resale Value = Price of Pulp

The Student PIRG's also contend that publishers' practice of "bundling" textbooks with workbooks, CD's, DVD's, and other media—materials that might not even be used in a course—has driven costs higher. (However, the Association of American Publishers reported in 2008 that as tuition increased, textbooks remained at a steady 4 percent of total college costs.) Additionally, the PIRG's say, each time a publisher releases a new edition of a textbook and a faculty member assigns it, the earlier edition's resale value drops roughly to the price of pulp.

Rich Hershman, director of government relations at the National Association of College Stores, said the new federal rules have three goals: to provide students more time to shop around for deals on books; to ensure that campus bookstores know by buyback time which books will be used again; and to allow students to consider the costs of books and other required materials when deciding whether to register for a course.

To meet those ends, the new rules require publishers to tell bookstores how much they'll charge them for the textbooks; provide general descriptions of changes that have been made in new editions (so that faculty members can decide whether to assign the new version); and unbundle textbook packages before selling them, unless doing so would make the book unusable.

The law calls on colleges and their stores to provide, at preregistration time, ISBN's and textbook prices on the electronic course schedule "to the maximum extent practicable."

"The vast majority of colleges and universities were already posting ISBN's and book information," Mr. Hershman said. "The new wrinkle here is that now they're trying to get it out at the time of preregistration."

He also pointed out that the "maximum extent practicable" wording was added to provide wiggle room for cases in which, for example, colleges don't know at the time of registration who will teach the course, and thus what books will be required.

Bookstores have long struggled to get faculty members to submit their textbook lists in a timely fashion, for the sake of both the stores and the students. If a professor hasn't settled on a syllabus in time for book buybacks, departing students might have trouble reselling their texts, which then results in a dearth of used books for the next semester's students.

Don Newton, general manager of the bookstore at the City College of San Francisco, said that although he has had to stay on top of faculty members to ensure that they submit their book orders on time, most have complied with the new rules. The multicampus college serves about 100,000 students, many of whom are working adults trying to get by in one of America's priciest cities. That makes faculty members more sympathetic to students' expenses and to what his bookstore is trying to do, Mr. Newton said.

Ms. Patai, at UMass, said she was also in favor of keeping textbook costs down but suggested that Congress could have dealt with the biggest part of the problem by applying the new rules to classes of 75 or more students, the types of courses that use big, expensive textbooks.

Because she tends to assign relatively inexpensive novels and change them from year to year, she said, complying with the law will be difficult, if not impossible.

No Penalty

The law actually places the burden of providing the information on the colleges and their bookstores (though not on vendors who merely lease space). Furthermore, although Mr. Hershman insisted that the law has teeth, it contains no provision for penalizing colleges that flout the rules. The Department of Education, which has no authority to enforce the law, will issue "Dear colleague" guidelines in the next month advising colleges on how best to comply.

The law requires the U.S. Government Accountability Office to issue a report by July 1, 2013, gauging institutions' compliance, but it specifies that nothing in the law "shall be construed to supersede the institutional autonomy or academic freedom of instructors involved in the selection of college textbooks, supplemental materials, and other classroom materials."

Mr. Hershman said that the "academic freedom" language was added at the urging of some faculty groups, but that those groups were not heavily involved in the shaping of the textbook provision. Representatives of the American Association of University Professors and the American Federation of Teachers said in interviews that they supported efforts to keep textbooks affordable.

But John W. Curtis, director of research and public policy at the AAUP, said his group was wary of what individual colleges are asking faculty members to do to comply with the textbook rule.

"It could be implemented in such a way that it could limit faculty members' abilities to choose their textbooks or be a hassle to them," said Mr. Curtis. He added that professors' concerns about the textbook provision have begun trickling into his office.

Ms. Patai said she did not even try to submit her orders for fall preregistration. She is wagering that she isn't the only faculty member who feels as she does.

"I just made a bet with a colleague that in a year, no one will be paying attention to this anymore," she said. "It's just one more bad idea that will go away."

May 30, 2010

A Place to See and Be Seen (and Learn a Little, Too)

$109-million renovation of Ohio State's library reinforces its role in connecting the campus

Brad Feinknopf, Feinknopf LLC

In the renovation of Ohio State U.'s main library, a central tower that once held closed stacks was stripped of concrete and now reveals open stacks behind glass.

By Scott Carlson

Columbus, Ohio

Library-renovation projects are often characterized by a central tension: Should the building emphasize the people it serves or the materials it contains? How can a renovation emphasize both?

An answer might be found in the recently completed renovation of the William Oxley Thompson Memorial Library at Ohio State University: transparency. It was quite literally a central theme of the project. Walk in the door and into the sunlit atrium and look up. You can't miss the central stacks tower, its skin ripped off and replaced with heavy-duty glass. The books inside beckon, and the people studying and milling around them are clearly visible.

Gund Partnership, of Cambridge, Mass., designed the building with Acock Associates Architects, of Columbus. During a tour of the library this spring, Dave Lee, an architect with Acock, points to the ubiquitous glass and open sightlines, noting that the transparency of the design was "a social statement."

"Students are really into seeing and being seen," he says, "and this plays into it."

Not long ago, in the earlier, euphoric days of the Internet, college administrators could be heard questioning the role of the library as a physical place on the campus, especially when one could trawl an ocean of knowledge from the convenience of one's own dorm room or office. What's the point of a library building in an interconnected world?

Enlarge Image 

photographs by Brad Feinknopf, Feinknopf LLC

The Thompson Library renovation melded a main building constructed in 1913 with additions from 1951 and 1977 and added new space, like a curving, glassy reading room.

Ohio State's $109-million library project, which renovated some 300,000 square feet of space constructed in pieces over the past 100 years, is about the strongest refutation of that point of view as any, reinforcing the role of the library as a central hub and place of connection. This renovation—one of the most ambitious on a college campus in recent years, and certainly one of the most important library projects in some time—establishes the library as the living room of a major American campus.

"Clearly the university wanted to signal that knowledge generation, use, and application is a priority of the institution, and there is no better place than in the stature and status of the library," says Mike Sherman, vice provost for academic administration.

A Messy Conglomeration

The project was so large and expensive that it had to be supported by nearly $80-million in state capital appropriations spread out over three years, a time span that led to some worries early on. Bernard J. Costantino, Ohio State's university architect, says campus officials delayed the groundbreaking on the project until they were sure of a Democratic victory in the 2006 gubernatorial election. In his campaign, the Republican candidate, Ken Blackwell, had vowed to cut the state's capital-construction budget, and Ohio State officials were concerned they would not have enough money to finish the job if Mr. Blackwell won. (Slightly more than $30-million of the library's construction costs were covered by gifts. The university's athletics department contributed $9-million; Ellen Tressel, the wife of OSU's football coach, Jim Tressel, was co-chair of the fund-raising committee.)

The library here may be iconic today, but before the renovation, completed last August, it was a messy conglomeration of three major segments: a main building constructed in 1913, a 11-story stack tower that was added in 1951, and a typically soulless 1977 addition on the back end. The three pieces did not gel, and various attempts to cram in storage for books and offices for staff members had marred some of the most attractive places for the public. A grand reading room in the 1913 segment, for example, had been lopped in half in the 1960s so that librarians could add bookshelves.

The renovation began with a major debate. A faction of people—including Joseph Branin, then director of the library, and Graham Gund, the design architect—wanted to demolish the stack tower at the center of the building. The tower was never meant to be visible on the inside; it was originally designed to house closed stacks, from which scholars and students had to request books to see them.

"There was a lot of negativity associated with it," says Mr. Costantino, who was part of a group that wanted to keep it. With the support of experts in historic preservation, he argued that the tower was a major landmark on the campus and that tearing it down would be risky and expensive. Demolition would cost more than $1-million and result in the loss of 92,000 square feet.

The debate rose all the way up to the president's office. "It was felt that we're facilities, and they are academics, and they didn't want the facilities department making a decision over the academic side of the house," Mr. Costantino says.

Prudence won, and it's a good thing, too. The tower not only is a prominent structure on Ohio State's Oval, the campus's central lawn, but proved to be a fantastic asset to the renovation. Now clad in glass on the first six floors, the tower is a striking feature at the center of the building. Mr. Lee, from Acock Associates, says that the entrances to the building were intentionally designed with low ceilings, so that visitors could not help but look up and see the stack tower when they entered the atria.

"It was a conscious attempt to manipulate you by compressing you and then letting the space really open up," he says.

It is even more thrilling seen from the inside—especially if you take the elevator to the fourth floor and walk to the edge, where concrete deck meets glass, and look down. You can feel the blood rushing through your ankles.

"You can crack this, but you can't go through it," he says, tapping on the glass and explaining that it is impregnated with a resilient plastic. To penetrate it, "you would have to drive a truck through it."

You get a similar feeling from the four-story staircase that hangs, suspended, in the atrium in the library's new west addition, which replaced the 1977 portion. A structural engineer reviewed the staircase over and over to make sure it wouldn't shimmy and shake as people walked on it.

"If you try to do handrails to glass and the surface shakes, the glass won't hold up," Mr. Lee says as we climb, pointing out that the handrails are connected to nothing more than thick glass.

"There are people on our staff who won't use the stairs," says Carol Diedrichs, the library director.

It seems the designers and the university were trying to draw thrills from visitors in other ways, too. Ms. Diedrichs says new spaces in the library, like the curving, glassy reading room at the library's west end, are real attractions for receptions and university fund-raising events.

The top floor of the tower is one such space. It once housed air-handling equipment and random stuff that had accumulated over the years. The architects moved the air-handling equipment to a lower floor on the tower, hired the wrestling team to clear out the junk, and transformed the space into a study area with incredible views. Now, in the wood-paneled room, new dormers cut into the pitched roof look out on the city of Columbus in all directions. The room has its own climate control to handle crowds.

Quadruple the Visitors

But Ms. Diedrichs also appreciates what the library symbolizes in terms of scholarship, and how its design might draw people to discover the intellectual treasures inside. Library renovations inevitably lead to greater use of the collections and more visits, and Ohio State's project is no different. The building attracted around 3,000 people daily before the renovation; now 12,000 people walk through the door each day.

Here and there, the designers laid down clues to the intellectual mission of the building, including the "foundation stones," 49 brass plates set in the terrazzo floor, along with 45 panels etched into elevator doors. The plates and panels represent various forms of writing that have been developed over the past 5,000 years. You can walk around the building and find alphabets, syllabaries, and graphic systems representing a host of languages, including Cree and Aztec, the old Irish alphabet Ogham, musical notation for the African drum called a djembe, and even Tengwar, the elvish script invented by J.R.R. Tolkien.

The stack tower is probably the building's most important statement. Ms. Diedrichs says the glass box of the tower serves as a reminder of what the library is for. "It conveys that scholarship and serious study are an important part of a college education and are a central part of the college," she says.

Ms. Diedrichs works on the third floor and takes the stack-tower elevators up in the morning to see what students are doing and what books they are pulling off the shelves. Early one recent morning she had already seen about 20 books lined up in a book truck, ready for reshelving.

"We like to talk about how everything is digital, but it's not entirely," she says. The marriage of study spaces with a prominent place for print is "like being at the intellectual crossroads of our campus," she says. "Students say, 'I am reminded of why I am at the university.'"

A Jobs Mismatch

Inside Higher Ed

June 15, 2010

WASHINGTON -- The United States economy is in serious danger from a growing mismatch between the skills that will be needed for jobs being created and the educational backgrounds (or lack thereof) of would-be workers. That is the conclusion of a mammoth analysis of jobs data being released today by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

The new report says that the United States is "on a collision course with the future" since far too few Americans complete college. Specifically, the report says that by 2018, the economy will have jobs for 22 million new workers with college degrees, but, based on current projections, there will be a shortage of 3 million workers who have some postsecondary degree (associate or higher) and of 4.7 million workers who have a postsecondary certificate.

"This shortfall will mean lost economic opportunity for millions of American workers," the report says.

Colleges may like much of the rhetoric surrounding the report, which will be released officially today at an event scheduled to feature representatives of the Obama administration and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The clear implication of the report is that the United States needs to spend much more on higher education -- and in particular on the educations of those who are not on the fast track to earning degrees at elite institutions.

But the lead author of the report said in an interview that the report should also shake up colleges -- and challenge most of them to be much more career-oriented than they have been and to overhaul the way they educate students, to much more closely align the curriculum with specific jobs.

The colleges that most students attend "need to streamline their programs, so they emphasize employability," said Anthony P. Carnevale, director of the Georgetown center.

Carnevale acknowledged that such a shift would accept "a dual system" in which a select few receive an "academic" college education and most students receive a college education that is career preparation. "We are all offended by tracking," he said. But the reality, Carnevale said, is that the current system doesn't do a good job with the career-oriented track, in part by letting many of the colleges on that track "aspire to be Harvard." He said that educators have a choice: "to be loyal to the purity of your ideas and refuse to build a selective dual system, or make people better off."

The Data

The data in the report trace a long-term shift, from the 1970s to the next decade, in the jobs in the United States for which postsecondary training is needed. In 1973, only 28 percent of jobs required a postsecondary education, while by 2018, 63 percent will.

Shifts in Educational Attainment Required for All Occupations

	1973	**1992**	**2007**	**2018**
Master's or higher	7%	10%	11%	10%
Bachelor's degree	9%	19%	21%	23%
Associate degree	12%	8%	10%	12%
Some college	n/a	19%	17%	17%
High school diploma	40%	34%	30%	28%
High school dropout	32%	10%	11%	10%

The report also stresses the shift over time in the likelihood that people without postsecondary education can join the middle or upper income classes. In 1970 only 26 percent of the middle class had postsecondary education, while today, 61 percent do. Notably, in 1970, it was not only possible but likely that those in upper income levels lacked a college degree -- a circumstance that has changed dramatically. In 1970 only 44 percent of the upper class had postsecondary education, compared to 81 percent today.

The report proceeds from these broad trends to a wealth of data about states and specific fields, showing that the growth in jobs (until now and for the next decade) will primarily be in fields that require various levels of college education. And the report suggests that if various players -- students, colleges, the government -- don't act on that conviction, many Americans will lack good jobs and many key jobs could go unfilled.

Carnevale said that he hopes the message reaches multiple audiences. He said he wants high school students not only to realize the importance of going to college, but also to plan for a career at the time they make their college choices. "It matters a great deal that they go to college and get a credential, but what matters the most now is the occupation that they will pursue," he said.

The key psychological change that is needed, he said, is to move away from "the old model, where you go to college and then go out and find a job" to one in which the college years are explicitly "preparing for an occupation." He said that his recommendations may not apply to the highly competitive colleges whose graduates can still focus on jobs (or graduate education) after they finish a bachelor's degree. "But the world isn't like that anymore" for everyone else, he said.

This doesn't mean that community colleges or state universities should eliminate the liberal arts, he said, but that they should counsel students to pick programs based on careers, track the success of various curriculums in preparing students for jobs, and adjust programs to assure that they are focused on jobs. "It's all about alignment," he said.

And that does mean a clear priority at most colleges for career-oriented programs over all others, Carnevale said. He said that, without major changes in education policy, there is no way the country can meet President Obama's goal of having the United States lead the world by 2020 in the proportion of adults who are college graduates. And that requires honesty, he said, about the fact that the current system is not working

He also said that a serious focus on these issues should lead to a shift in resources -- one he said he wasn't sure would take place -- from the universities that educate the best prepared to those who educate most of America. That would mean less money for flagships and more for the community colleges and other public institutions. Carnevale said that the institutions that need more are also those that educate larger proportions of minority and low-income students, and that such patterns have led to many a court case when they involve elementary and secondary schools.

While Carnevale's findings are likely to receive plenty of praise today, there are some who are skeptical. A number of economists, including some prominent conservatives, have been gaining attention of late for suggesting that the value of a college education may be overrated. An article in *The New York Times*, "Plan B: Skip College," has prompted widespread discussion (and much criticism).

But the new analysis from Carnevale's research center may also receive criticism from the left. Amy E. Slaton, associate professor of history and politics at Drexel University, is a scholar of the history of education politics, and she argues that the push for a career orientation to higher education limits the potential for many students. "This approach accepts the notion that you need a tiered education system," she said, "and that seems like a good way of making sure that the least number of people are given a chance to develop their potential to be innovators, to learn creative skill sets."

Slaton said that she agrees that many students benefit from learning job skills and the current system has many flaws. But she said Americans should be wary of a focus that could limit options at the institutions most people attend. "How do you know when you look at people what their potential is?" she asked.

— Scott Jaschik

Budget Borrowing...Or Not

June 15, 2010 · Posted By John Myers · Filed Under CA Budget

Most budget watchers will tell you that 2004's Proposition 58 bans borrowing to pay off deficits. But what constitutes deficit borrowing? Welcome to the world of state budgeting.

Governor Schwarzenegger said today that the ban includes an Assembly Democratic proposal to help close the current deficit through a 20 year financing plan.

"It's illegal," said Schwarzenegger in a quick chat with reporters after an unrelated event this afternoon. "Under Proposition 58, we cannot borrow."

But is it borrowing? Don't be surprised for that to be one of the debate points.

The proposal in question is the key part of a broader jobs and budget fix package unveiled by **Assembly Speaker John Perez** on May 25. It calls for the state to essentially get an upfront $8.9 billion cash advance from Wall Street investors on 20 years worth of revenues from the beverage container recycling fund -- revenues that would be linked, in part, to a new tax on oil production. (I'll spare you the details this time around; you can see my blog posting from that day for more.)

The plan avoids the 'deep cuts vs. major tax hikes' choices that others have suggested, thereby appearing to be a 'third way' around this year's morass. Some, though, have criticized it as a risky move that will stretch out this year's red ink over two decades.

The governor had not commented on the plan until today, when I asked him whether his stated opposition to new budget "borrowing" included the Dems' plan -- which is technically a 'securitization' of future revenues.

It's unclear whether Schwarzenegger's dismissal of the container fund securitization as illegal under Prop 58 would be backed up in court. Assembly Democratic staffers said today the Guv is wrong because the voter-approved ballot measure's ban is much narrower than the plan they're pitching.

And here's what Prop 58 actually says:

...the State may not obtain moneys to fund a year-end state budget deficit, as may be defined by statute, pursuant to any of the following: (1) indebtedness incurred pursuant to Section 1 of this article, (2) a debt obligation under which funds to repay that obligation are derived solely from a designated source of revenue, or (3) a bond or similar instrument for the borrowing of moneys for which there is no legal obligation of repayment. This subdivision does not apply to funding obtained through a short-term obligation incurred in anticipation of the receipt of tax proceeds or other revenues that may be applied to the payment of that obligation, for the purposes and not exceeding the amounts of existing appropriations to which the resulting proceeds are to be applied. For purposes of this subdivision, "year-end state budget deficit" does not include an obligation within the accumulated state budget deficit as defined by subdivision (b).

Clear, huh?

Assembly Democratic staffers maintain that the securitization is not a plan to fund a deficit, this not banned under Prop 58. They also point out that a fair amount of the money would go towards a jobs program and not the actual state budget.

The proposal has yet to be heard by the joint budget committee that's now going line by line through the governor's proposal. And staffers say when it's heard in committee, the securitization plan will likely include some modifications from its original form -- not because of Schwarzenegger's pronouncement on its legality, but rather to improve on what's still a work in progress. But it will still include the securitization, they say.

It's also worth noting that the governor offered his own complex securitization plan last year, one that used future lottery proceeds as the source for paying back the money. So why was that one okay under Prop 58? Because, says his staff, it would have first been ratified by the voters; the Assembly Democratic plan would not.

Of course, we know what happened to the Guv's cash advance proposal: voters rejected it and all the other budget measures in the disastrous 2009 special election.

All of this is only the first stage of the debate over the Assembly Democratic plan. There's also likely to be intense debate about the budget offering from Senate Democrats. And yes, all of this has yet to play out as the first of 2010's budget deadlines comes and goes. The sense that budget talks are still a long ways from critical mass is probably what prompted today's warning from **Controller John Chiang**, that a budget deal after August 1 would prompt even more money delays for schools and other state programs.

By the way, you can play along at home... with the controller's nifty chart of what can, and can't, be paid in the absence of a budget in two weeks time.

Concerns aired over future of Compton community college

Originally printed at http://www.wavenewspapers.com/news/local/west-edition/96024294.html

COMPTON — A recent prayer breakfast, intended to enlist clergy and residents to spread the word about progress at El Camino College Compton Community Educational Center, quickly turned into a freewheeling forum on the future of the campus.

Attendees raised concerns about rumors that have long circulated in the community: that El Camino College does not ever intend to return the Compton campus to local control, following a 2006 memorandum of understanding prompted by Compton College's loss of accreditation.

"That was a very impressive presentation," said Lestine Johnson, president of the Compton Chamber of Commerce, who received her associates degree from Compton College in the early 1970s. But "I see what is taking place. When you look at the situation and what we are hearing in the community that we are not going to get Compton College back no matter what … The concern for the community is that there will be no more Compton College."

According to Johnson and others, it appears that El Camino is slowly eroding the traditions and culture of the college.

One such change Johnson noted was that of the school's logo. Another change deals with graduations: This year's graduating class will not be overseen by the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees — a newly configured five-member board that was filled, according to officials, to help ensure re-accreditation once the opportunity arises.

However, to some, this move is seen as a way to diminish the CCCD's voice.

"We were told that as we move toward accreditation that we must have a standing board," said Marie Hollis, president of the Concerned Citizens of Compton. "Now we have a standing board that the citizens have voted for, and many prices have been paid for the right to vote, and when you think that in 2010 that your vote is being ignored, that hurts. That is a very serious concern."

Hollis said that in a recent conversation with El Camino College President Thomas Fallo, she reminded him that the memorandum of understanding was supposed to be carried out as a partnership.

"My understanding of a partnership is that there are two voices," she said. "In this particular situation we have one that has a stronger voice than perhaps the other but there are two voices. And what we see is going on and moving now, it looks like a takeover. … We are not looking for misery — we have had enough of that."

While several pleas have been made to Fallo to allow the CCCD to oversee the ceremony, they have — in the eyes of some — fallen on deaf ears.

Fallo defended the action, saying that the same procedure has been taking place for the past three years. In addition, it was noted that while students attend Compton Center, they are El Camino students and receive a diploma under the school's imprimatur.

"The center belongs to El Camino from the standpoint that it's their accreditation under which the center operates," said Lawrence Cox, CEO of the Compton Community College District. "Again Compton [Center] has no accreditation and as a result of that, the center is the sole responsibility of El Camino."

CCCD Board Trustee Deborah LeBlanc, who said she could not speak much on the subject, did say, "Yes, of course we are concerned." She also acknowledged that in some ways, the fears in the community are "spot on."

She added that she feels that the CCCD board is losing its voice, with members now navigating around institutional barriers with the establishment of the African-American California Community College Trustees. The newly-formed caucus is focused on strengthening the position of African-Americans aspiring to become future leaders in the community college system. This, she said, will help them to network and bring attention and a voice to not only the board but the campus itself.

LeBlanc does, however feel some optimism. "Nothing is impossible," she said. "We are going to work to make it happen. We are not backing down or giving up."

As for a takeover, Fallo said the rumors are unfounded, adding that it has always been El Camino's intent to get Compton College back to a state of independence so that it can be handed over to the community.

Cox assured the audience "that there is going to be a Compton College [again]. With any partnership, there are some edges that sometimes don't seem to mesh very well, but we are working those things out. I heard those rumors, but they are just rumors. We are doing everything we can to get Compton College back."

The biggest hurdle to accreditation, he said, is faculty.

When Compton College's accreditation was formally withdrawn in 2006, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges found that there was a lack of unity amongst the faculty, administration and board, causing discrepancies brought up by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team in October 2004 to fall to the way-side; thus aiding in the school's demise.

As for Compton's school colors, Fallo said El Camino College has not changed the maroon color of their Compton Community College District partner, and that the logo has not changed at all.

Rather, the El Camino College blue logo has been blended with the maroon as a sign of the partnership.

Nonetheless, entangled in this battle of ownership are the students of CCCD. Terrance Stewart, vice president of the Associated Student Body, said he does not care who has receivership of the school — as long as the students continue to be educated.

“Me being a student here, I feel the students, the teachers and everybody are still [representing] Compton no matter what people say,” said Stewart. By arguing, “we limit ourselves” and “we are cutting away at the progression of the community. … Ever since I’ve been here, it’s only been El Camino and I love this school to death. It may be an issue [to some], but the people are still the same and the outcome of the greatness of the community is still the same. If we all graduate, whether it’s Compton or El Camino, we [are] still fixing the community.”

CSU trustees scheduled to vote on fee hike June 18

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By Laurel Rosenhall
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Published: Thursday, Jun. 10, 2010 - 12:00 am | Page 6A
Last Modified: Thursday, Jun. 10, 2010 - 10:41 am

California State University trustees are scheduled to vote next week on a proposal to raise student fees in the fall.

The university is recommending that trustees raise fees by 5 percent, or $204, for a full-time undergraduate student. But officials in the chancellor's office suggest that trustees consider raising fees again in November depending on the outcome of state budget negotiations.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposal for the 2010-11 budget increases CSU funding, but assumes that student fees will go up 10 percent. An alternative proposal by the Assembly suggests CSU fees should go up 5 percent.

If trustees approve the 5 percent increase, the cost for an undergraduate education at most CSU campuses this fall would be roughly $5,097 per year – not including books, room or board.

CSU students saw their fees jump 32 percent in fall 2009, as budget cuts caused the university to turn to students to make up some of the funds they lost from the state.

CSU trustees are also considering fee increases for the graduate business professional programs and the education doctorate. They will vote on the proposed fee increases at their meeting in Long Beach on Friday, June 18.

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Read more: http://www.sacbee.com/2010/06/10/2811673/csu-trustees-scheduled.html#mi_rss=Our%20Region#ixzz0qbattAu5

Four state unions agree to roll back pensions

June 16th, 2010, 5:13 pm · 73 Comments · posted by BRIAN JOSEPH, Sacramento Correspondent

With the state facing its third multi-billion-dollar budget deficit in as many years, four state labor unions have agreed to roll back pension benefits for their new hires and increase retirement contributions for all state employees.

The tentative agreements cover 23,000 state employees represented by the **California Association of Highway Patrolmen**, the **California Department of Forestry Firefighters**, the **California Association of Psychiatric Technicians** and the **American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees** and is the result of negotiations with **Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger**.

“I am absolutely committed to getting pension reform done because we cannot continue down this unsustainable path that has taxpayers on the hook for $500 billion in debt,” the governor said in a statement. “I applaud these four unions for stepping up and taking these first steps in helping to reform our state’s out-of-balance pensions and I encourage other public employee unions to negotiate on behalf of their members and California taxpayers. I will continue to fight for taxpayers and work with any union that comes forward and is ready to negotiate reforms.”

The new contracts still must be ratified by members of each union and by the State Legislature. Senate Leader **Darrell Steinberg**, D-Sacramento, who represents many state workers in his district, immediately released a statement indicating his support.

“I congratulate the Governor and these four unions on reaching long-term labor agreements, and proving that collective bargaining works,” he said.

Among the changes agreed to by the unions is a requirement that new state employees work more years in order to receive full benefits; a requirement that retirement compensation be based on an employee’s three highest years of pay, rather than just the highest, in order to reduce pension spiking; and a requirement that state employees increase their contributions to their retirement benefits to a minimum of 10 percent.

Union representatives made it clear in a joint statement that they weren’t pleased with the contracts, characterizing some provisions as “a step backwards for employees.” However, the press release adds that contracts include language they do like, including continuous appropriations that allow state employees to be paid even if the state budget is late.

“It is certainly not a great day when the issue we are bragging about is that our members will avoid being paid minimum wage if the state budget is not implemented in a timely manner,” CDF Firefighters President **Bob Wolf** said in the statement. “We are pleased to put this behind us as we begin fire season.”

John Wooden's first All-American at UCLA stood out in other arenas
LA Times
By Jerry Crowe

June 20, 2010

George Stanich, 81, was the first UCLA All-American under Coach John Wooden and perhaps the most versatile athlete Wooden ever coached. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times / June 17, 2010)

George Stanich never played in the NBA, but he won an Olympic bronze medal in the high jump, pitched in the minor leagues and coached and taught at El Camino College for 37 years.

John Wooden's first All-American at UCLA never played a minute in the NBA. He was neither a prized recruit nor a prolific scorer, and as a shooter, he wasn't much.

George Stanich, however, ranked among the most versatile athletes to ever play for Wooden.

An Olympic bronze medalist in the high jump before he met Wooden, Stanich later was a minor league pitcher. In between, he was a two-time All-Pacific Coast Conference guard who helped UCLA reach the NCAA tournament for the first time and Wooden to win the first two of his 19 conference championships.

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"It was," Stanich says of his days on campus at the midpoint of the 20th century, "a beautiful time in my life."

Later, during his tenure as basketball coach at El Camino College, Stanich again played a key role in helping shape UCLA's run of NCAA titles, recommending to Wooden an unheralded but wondrous athlete not unlike himself: Keith Erickson.

"Of all the men that I've met," Erickson says, "George Stanich is as close to John Wooden as I've ever known."

The list of All-Americans produced by Wooden, of course, includes familiar names such as Willie Naulls, Walt Hazzard, Gail Goodrich, Lew Alcindor, Mike Warren, Lucius Allen, Sidney Wicks, Bill Walton, Henry Bibby, Keith Wilkes and Dave Meyers.

The silver-haired Stanich, 81, predated them all.

He even predated Wooden at UCLA, arriving in Westwood from Sacramento City College in 1947, a year before Wooden was hired away from Indiana State.

Under Wilbur Johns in the 1947-48 season, with the 6-foot-3 Stanich starting at center and his 5-7 older brother John leading the Bruins in scoring, UCLA played a deliberate, methodical style while struggling to a 12-13 record.

A short time later, Wooden put the Bruins through a week of spring drills, permissible at the time, and was aghast.

"I felt that my Indiana State team could have named the score against them," he wrote in "They Call Me Coach," his 1972 autobiography. "I was shattered. Had I known how to abort the agreement in an honorable manner, I would have done so and gone to Minnesota or … back to Indiana State."

Quoted in 1973's "The Wizard of Westwood," written by former Times reporters Dwight Chapin and Jeff Prugh, Wooden was even more direct, calling the Bruins a "pitiful … motley crew like I had in physical education classes back at Indiana State."

Stanich, reminded of Wooden's initial impression, smiles during an interview in the cramped kitchen of his Gardena home.

"Well," he says of the late coach, "he hadn't seen me yet."

He's only teasing, he notes, but his words ring true.

In the spring of 1948, Stanich was busy pitching for the Bruins baseball team — among the right-hander's victories, he says, was a 2-0 shutout against USC, the College World Series champion — and high jumping for the track team.

He didn't meet Wooden until the following school year, by which time he'd won a bronze medal at the London Games.

Initially, he was wary.

"When Coach got there, he moved me to guard," Stanich says, "and I hated this because when you're a center, you always pick up some garbage, and who doesn't like to score?

"At guard," he adds, laughing, "you've got to work too hard."

Work was a recurring theme.

"One of the biggest things he believed in was conditioning, and that's hard work," Stanich says. "Deep down in my gut and in my heart, I was so happy he worked us that hard, but outwardly everybody resisted that. He was tough."

Wooden's demanding ways paid dividends for a team that was picked to finish last in the PCC Southern Division.

A running, hustling group that rarely seemed to tire, UCLA surprisingly won the division title that season, Wooden later calling it "my most satisfying year of coaching."

A season later, the Bruins repeated and, for the first time in school history, qualified for the NCAA tournament.

Stanich, who averaged fewer than 10 points a game during his three seasons while making about 25% of his shots, left his mark as a rebounder and defender.

Says Hall of Famer Bill Sharman, an All-American and two-time all-conference pick at USC in the same seasons Stanich was honored: "He was probably the toughest player I had to play against. He was faster and quicker and stronger than me."

In 1950, Stanich was drafted by the Rochester Royals of the fledgling NBA, winners of the league championship a year later, but signed a minor league baseball contract instead.

"Baseball was where the money was," he says, "but things didn't work out. I got my head knocked off. They got to me, and they got to me good. The harder I tried, the worse it got."

By 1954, after two seasons in the minors and two years in the Navy, Stanich had quit playing and gone into coaching.

A father of three UCLA graduates — son John was a middle-distance runner on the Bruins team that won the 1987 NCAA track championship — Stanich lives within walking distance of El Camino, where he coached and taught for 37 years.

He and wife Valerie have been married almost 58 years.

In retrospect, he wishes he'd given the NBA a chance.

His shooting may have been suspect, he notes, "but I had the ability to jump and I had the ability to scrap."

North-south divide on parcel taxes

Posted in Revenue and taxes

This is proving to be a tough year to pass a parcel tax – unless you live in the Bay Area, where voters in even low-income districts are coming to accept a parcel tax as a necessary price in a low-funded state.

This week, voters in Los Angeles Unified and two other districts rejected parcel taxes by substantial margins, while in Silicon Valley, one community college district and four elementary and unified districts approved parcel taxes ranging from $34 to $160, according to **School Services of California,** which tracked the results. In addition, San Francisco Unified passed a $32 parcel tax for school building maintenance and earthquake safety measures, and Oak Grove, a small San Jose district, for the fifth time extended a $68 parcel tax permitted under the Gann Limit, a vestige of the Prop 13 era.

A parcel tax requires a two-thirds majority of voters for passage. There was hope this year that voters might get a chance to lower the threshold to 55 percent, the same as needed to pass school construction bonds. But the organizers of a possible initiative, **Californians for Improved School Funding,** failed to collect the 659,000 signatures by the late May deadline to put the proposition on this November's ballot. (One organizer told me the organization collected a paltry 16,000 signatures.) And Sen. Joe Simitian's **SCA 6,** which also would put the 55 percent limit to a popular vote, continues to languish in the Senate for lack of any Republican support.

Even the 55 percent majority wouldn't have bailed out Los Angeles Unified (53 percent in favor), Buena Park School District in Orange County (51 percent) and Cutler-Orosi Joint School District in Tulare County (47 percent). What really hurt the campaign for the $100 parcel tax of Measure E in Los Angeles was the turnout: a measly 16 percent. Even parents didn't go to the polls.

Last month, a proposed $120 parcel tax in Pasadena Unified mustered only 52 percent. A handful of Southern California districts have approved parcel taxes.

In Northern California, San Mateo Community College District appears to have made history as the first community college to pass a parcel tax – $34 for four years – though just barely, with 67.1 percent as of Thursday. The other four parcel taxes passed with at least 70 percent.

A sole, if imperfect, source of taxation

Parcel taxes are the one way that districts can raise taxes on their own, and the state can't take it away. Voters can set the length of time and specify how the money will be used. At the same time, parcel taxes have been justly criticized for being regressive and furthering the wealth gap between rich and poor districts. Because of Proposition 13, the parcel tax must be a uniform amount, regardless of the value of the home or property, although some districts are experimenting with basing the tax on square footage. And wealthier districts are charging more:

The average parcel tax is about $100; last month, Palo Alto raised its $496 parcel tax to $589, and Menlo Park upped its $565 annual tax to $743.

But in Alum Rock Union Elementary in East San Jose, where 83 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced lunches, 74 percent voters approved a $160 parcel tax – a further indication that, at least in some parts of the state, voters will spend more for education if they're confident the money will be spent wisely.

Go here for bonds and parcel taxes on the June 8 ballot, courtesy of School Services of California.

SMALL BUSINESS: California Community colleges give firms an education

Workers are receiving free or low-cost training in a variety of subjects to keep them up to speed on fast-changing technologies or productivity-boosting methods.

Larry Valeriano is president of California Screw Products. The Paramount company added to its workforce through a boot camp created by local colleges and firms in need of skilled labor. (Axel Koester, For The Times / June 9, 2010)

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By Cyndia Zwahlen

June 14, 2010

Small businesses need all the help they can get to improve their chances for success, especially when it comes to training workers.

Most small outfits don't have the money, time or expertise to keep employees up to speed on fast-changing technologies or productivity-boosting methods. Even plugging gaps in workers' basic language and math skills can be a challenge.

Savvy small-business owners know that training is vital to business growth and competitiveness. What many don't realize is that help can be as close as their local community college.

At Juanita's Foods in Wilmington, for example, employees at the Mexican food manufacturer are learning how to identify and cut waste in each step it takes to make and deliver the company's signature menudo stew, among other products.

The training takes place at the company's sprawling factory, taught by experts from El Camino College's Business Training Center in Hawthorne. Janitors, meat cutters, workers who can the beef tripe and hominy, and those who drive the forklifts are teamed up to learn how to find ways to cut delays and increase yields.

The program is paid for by a state grant.

"It creates opportunities so you can continue to grow and prosper as a business so you can retain jobs," said David Cardona, director of human resources for the family business that opened in 1946 and now employs 135 people.

Community colleges statewide are grappling with budget cuts, but many of California's 112 community colleges still offer a variety of free or low-cost training for the employees of local companies. More information about the workforce training programs is available online at

Workers at Canyon Engineering Products Inc., a Valencia-based machine shop serving the aerospace industry, go to classes at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita. They learn how to use software programs that help design and create parts utilizing lathes, mills, routers and other machines they use.

"It's a huge advantage for us," said Jerilyn Ritter, director of human resources at the 70-employee business. "It's bringing in business because now we are more equipped to handle making maybe a more complex part."

Developing highly trained and effective workers is more important than ever for small businesses, which play a major role in the California economy and its recovery, program officials said.

"As the small businesses go, so goes the economy," said Catherine Swenson, who oversees training and development for the half-dozen or so industry-specific initiatives set up under the community college system.

The federal government has allocated $2 billion for grants to the nation's community colleges over the next four years to retrain laid-off workers and place them in new jobs in their communities.

Community colleges are also a valuable source of trained workers.

Marcos Opinaldo, 60, landed a job in quality control at California Screw Products in Paramount last year after completing an intensive eight-week training program called Aerospace Fastener Boot Camp. The boot camp was created by local companies that need skilled workers, including CalScrew, and nearby community colleges.

Opinaldo was accepted into the program, based at El Camino College's Compton campus, after his former aerospace-industry employer closed its doors. "It's like a second chance," the La Crescenta resident said.

Ross Milstein of Sherman Oaks took design-software classes 18 months ago through an entertainment industry training program at Los Angeles Valley College in Van Nuys. The classes helped him improve the graphics and labels he used for OmMadeCrafts.com, his candle and soap business, and he said it has paid off.

Milstein's new skills enabled him to redesign labels for his scented soy candles, including adding an image of electrical energy to the black-and-white label of his previously low-selling Cool Fusion candle targeted toward men.

"People would pick it up right away, even though the scent was the same as before," he said. "It was our biggest seller last year."

smallbiz@latimes.com

Student Services, in Outside Hands

THE CHRONICLE
of Higher Education

June 13, 2010

Noah Berger for The Chronicle

Staff members at InsideTrack engage in student-success coaching under contract with more than 50 colleges.

By Sara Lipka

Serving students is big business. Third-party vendors sell orientation sessions, curricula for first-year-experience courses, training and support for RA's, drug- and violence-prevention programs, financial and spiritual advising. They offer software to manage housing assignments, student-conduct cases, retention programs, campus groups. That is to say, almost the full range of what student-affairs officers do.

Enhance your offerings, the marketing pitches go. Save time and money. Make your life easier.

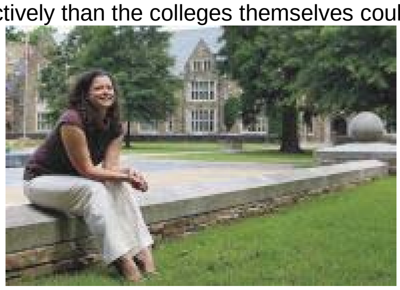
Vendors promise to deliver results, but independent data on whether they live up to their claims are hard to come by. Nevertheless, the industry is growing larger—and colleges' decisions trickier. A few years ago, one firm may have advertised a student-service product. Now five do.

Companies' wares can look more attractive as colleges grapple with accountability and budget pressures, trying to do more with less. "As resources on campuses have dwindled, there is recognition that we still need products. We still need services. We still need to do certain things," says Karen L. Pennington, vice president for student development and campus life at Montclair State University.

Enlarge Image 

Noah Berger for The Chronicle

Alan Tripp, chief executive of InsideTrack, says the company's student-coaching methods have improved colleges' retention rates more effectively than the colleges themselves could have. "They just will never have the same scale," he says.

Enlarge Image 

Lance Murphey for The Chronicle

Katie Lynch-Holmes left the U. of South Carolina to work for Education Dynamics, which offers recruiting and retention services. "I still refer to myself as going to the dark side," she says, "but I'm OK with that."

Some of those things she can more easily pay somebody else to do. Montclair State has 39 private contracts in student affairs. One company provides a platform to track academic-advising appointments and goals; another helps students plan their careers.

The total dollar value of the industry is unknown, but vendors are reporting new clients, sponsoring Webinars, and packing exhibit halls at national conferences. Many administrators say they are overwhelmed with e-mails and cold calls, several a day, significantly more than a few years ago.

Many companies, citing the competition, won't disclose their exact rates or numbers of clients, never mind their balance sheets. But there are some indicators. American Campus Communities, which operates 84 residence halls, in 2004 became the first publicly traded student-housing company, with revenue of $309.6-million last year. *Inc.* magazine's list of the 5,000 fastest-growing private companies in 2007 ranked InsideTrack, a student-success coaching firm, at No. 214, with $10.4-million in revenue the previous year.

Outsourcing first gained attention in the 1990s, as colleges experimented with contracting out pretty much everything but teaching and research. The practice can benefit more than the bottom line: More so than colleges, specialized companies may have the focus to hone one process or tool, the flexibility to innovate, and the scale to operate more efficiently.

But as vendors come closer to colleges' core missions, some administrators are wary. They cite theories of student development, invoke the word "seamless," and question companies' loyalty to institutional values. Campus officials defend their training and expertise, arguing that their jobs shouldn't become somebody else's business.

For Gwendolyn Jordan Dungy, executive director of Naspa—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, the issue is plain: "We don't want to outsource our role as educators."

White Papers and Boards

Doubts notwithstanding, more products and services are on the way. Last month, Ronald D. Chesbrough, vice president for student affairs at Hastings College, a small, private institution in Nebraska, took part in a market-research call with seven other administrators from a range of geographic regions and institutional types. What did colleges outsource now, the firm asked, and what did they imagine wanting to contract out in the future? Enrollment management and student advising, the administrators said, according to Mr. Chesbrough, who prefers to keep student services in-house.

With ideas about what colleges want, vendors offer silver bullets. Student Health 101, an online magazine, says on its Web site that it understands colleges' "inadequate budgets and resources, as well as limited hours of operation." Lifetopia, which sells roommate-selection software, offers "the best, easiest, and most reliable solutions." Campus Advantage, a housing operator, promises residence halls that "anticipate every academic, social, and lifestyle need."

Those messages echo not only in calls, Webinars, and conference presentations, but also in "white papers," complete with citations and footnotes. The conclusions implicitly endorse products the companies offer.

Advisory boards also serve to build vendors' reputations. A list of student-affairs luminaries confers a certain legitimacy. But Dean Bresciani, a former vice president for student affairs at Texas A&M University, wonders how closely those board members examine a vendor's products. "I find it curious how willing higher-education leaders are to have their names associated with some of them," says Mr. Bresciani, who is the incoming president of North Dakota State University.

Still, the advisory boards are for more than marketing. George Kuh, director of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University at Bloomington, participates in annual meetings and bimonthly conference calls on the board of InsideTrack, which was founded by entrepreneurs in 2000.

He has urged the company to develop a database to show the effects of its success coaching, which it now offers through contracts with more than 50 colleges. Mr. Kuh has recommended rigorous research methods as well as proven practices in student engagement. "If somebody's going to be doing this," he says, "they might as well get good advice."

Last year EducationDynamics (more than a few company names are TwoWords, no space) decided it needed some guidance. The firm, which helps colleges recruit, enroll, and retain students, had determined through market research that colleges were dissatisfied with existing programs to help students at risk of dropping out. So it designed EarlyIQ, a Web-based early-warning system that tracks students, allowing faculty and staff members, parents, and friends to enter information and colleges to customize responses.

But design is not use. "When we first developed our product, we were not higher-ed people. We were tech people," says Peter Tomassi, senior vice president for product development. He wanted EarlyIQ to be more attuned to "the way campuses work." Some colleges were testing it, but a practitioner on the inside would lend more insight—and more credibility with prospective clients.

Katie Lynch-Holmes is hoping to provide both. In December she left her job as coordinator of early intervention at the University of South Carolina to join the EducationDynamics. She had been skeptical of private companies—"For every five vendors, there is an actual solution," she says—but she had tested this tool, saw its potential, and wanted to help refine it.

EducationDynamics introduced EarlyIQ in March, and Ms. Lynch-Holmes has been tweaking and promoting it since. This month she went to corporate-management training sessions at the company's headquarters, in Hoboken, N.J.

"I still refer to myself as going to the dark side, but I'm OK with that," she says. "I really believe in the company."

Making Decisions

The crowded market for products and services can make it hard to distinguish the good from the mediocre.

Amid pitches and cost-cutting pushes, student-affairs officers must decide whether and what to outsource, and to whom. Generally vice presidents consider potential cost savings and any increased revenue—by higher rates of retention, for example, or reductions in a particular division's budget. Staff cuts do not generally accompany outsourcing, say colleges and vendors.

Maybe a private company has better economies of scale or deeper expertise in a certain area. But does it match a particular institution's mission and culture? Can it show a track record of success?

George Mason University, a pioneer in outsourcing, developed a 126-point decision-making scale. The more central a service is to instruction, the less likely the university is to contract it out. A lot of interaction with an outside company counts in favor; a negative impact on public image from a potential misstep counts against.

Colleges must also evaluate a third party's stability. "You better make sure they're going to be in it for the long haul," says Richard J. DeCapua, associate dean of students at Suffolk University, who recently wrote a dissertation on attitudes about private management of residence halls. "If they go bust, it's almost going to be twice the work."

Also: Make sure the company is well insured, its software works with existing programs, and contracts are solid. Under federal regulations, contracts with third parties that handle student data must reflect that the information is owned by the institutions and governed by privacy law. Agreements should also incorporate quality-control and assessment measures, says Larry Moneta, vice president for student affairs at Duke University. Duke's risk-management or general counsel's office and an outside consultant examine all contracts, he says. "Before I sign anything, I've gotten both an in-house and an external review."

Most important, talk with colleagues. The world of student affairs is relatively small, says Linda S. Kuk, an associate professor of education at Colorado State University at Fort Collins, who spent more than two decades as an administrator. "People are going to learn very quickly," she says, "who's good and who's not."

Some private partnerships come to an end. In December, George Mason bid farewell to Campus Living Villages, its latest partner in residence-hall management, which it had outsourced in 1995. Back then the university just wanted someone to run the 2,500-bed residence halls; now it wants students, more than twice as many, to be learning there, too, says Maurice W. Scherrens, senior vice president.

Administrators had worried, he says, about the academic performance and campus involvement of residential students. A few years ago the university hired a director of housing as its main point of contact with the firm, and in January it took back all control, hiring 120 staff members, including many of the company's employees.

The shift will cost George Mason $300,000 a year in a $33-million housing budget, Mr. Scherrens says. He says it's worth it. He likes to think that university employees will recall their diversity training, for example, every day. "You can have a corporate partner that can be part of the extended family. But when you're as close to the core as residence life, I think that makes it difficult."

Not Just Handoffs

Many colleges see outsourcing in terms of us and them. If administrators provide a personal touch, while vendors sell the same service more cheaply but turn a profit, they must be cutting corners, the thinking goes.

Contracting out services like orientation has come up at numerous meetings in the past few years at Marlboro College, in Vermont. Administrators have decided against it every time, says Kenneth Schneck, dean of students. Davidson College has a similar stance on outsourcing: "We have made very deliberate decisions not to go that route," says Thomas C. Shandley, vice president for student life.

He can't imagine a vendor running any part of orientation. "The services we're offering are about sustained relationships over time," he says. "To put that off to somebody else just doesn't make any kind of sense to me."

At Mount St. Mary's University, in Maryland, outsourcing one component of career services did seem sensible, if not ideal. Two counselors there serve 1,500 students, and when the economic downturn brought alumni looking for help in finding jobs, the small career center was overwhelmed, says Sabira Vohra, its director. Unable to hire another counselor, she initially felt hesitant to seek outside help. But she asked colleagues at the University of Richmond and Western Illinois University about ReadyMinds, a company that offers career counseling by e-mail and phone.

Reports were good, and starting last academic year Ms. Vohra combined her own office's funds with some from alumni services and other divisions to hire ReadyMinds. She declines to specify the amount of the contract, because she negotiated for a lower price, given Mount St. Mary's small size. The career center directs alumni and continuing-studies students to the service, and surveys show that they are satisfied. "This is the thing we need at this point," Ms. Vohra says.

Outsourcing can be not a handoff but a collaboration. The University of Missouri at Kansas City looked for a cooperative arrangement as it shopped for an early-warning system last year. The university needed a tool but wanted to control it, says Mel Tyler, vice chancellor for student affairs and enrollment management.

Missouri went with MAP-Works, a retention-and-success program sold by Educational Benchmarking Inc., and branded it as UFirst. "We wanted this to look and feel like a university initiative," says Mr. Tyler. Administrators have tried to run the software without a lot of help from the vendor, as they consider home-growing an early-warning system, he says.

California State University at Fullerton has found it most effective to work in tandem with a new private partner, StudentVoice, which conducts outcomes assessment through surveys and data crunching. The company's annual license for research in student affairs, at about $25,000, lets administrators design surveys and quickly provides them with graphs and charts of students' satisfaction, engagement, and retention.

Lea M. Jarnagin, assistant to the vice president for student affairs at Fullerton, monitors an online dashboard that shows 50 assessment projects the university is conducting in preparation for reaccreditation. At biweekly meetings, a StudentVoice consultant participates by phone. She helps administrators shape big-picture questions, offers technical support for administering surveys, and gives 30-minute professional-development sessions on assessment.

Eric Reich, who founded the company in 2002 as a law and business student at the University at Buffalo, thinks of its 50 employees as an extension of a campus staff. Maybe they can provide specific data that an institutional research unit doesn't have time to collect.

Five hundred campuses now contract with StudentVoice, with a 99-percent contract-renewal rate, Mr. Reich says. He credits demand for assessment services, not entrepreneurial prowess. "You can't always be selling," he says. "Campuses need to realize themselves what they need."

Returns on Investment

No doubt colleges have plenty of options. One administrator jokes that student-affairs divisions could become general contractors, primarily managing relationships with vendors.

Certainly across institutions, private companies are expanding their reach. EducationDynamics is developing another version of EarlyIQ for community colleges. InsideTrack has set its sights on adult students; it is adding two to four institutions a quarter, with contracts at $400 to $700 per student.

Having coached 250,000 students and improved retention rates, typically by five to seven percentage points, InsideTrack has developed better services than colleges could, says its chief executive, Alan Tripp. That's part of what the firm tells prospective clients. "They just will never have the same scale," says Mr. Tripp. "The advantages we have will continue to get bigger and bigger."

He hopes his company becomes entrenched in colleges. "My dream," he says, "is that someday, when a student is thinking about applying, they'll call and say, 'Well, do you have InsideTrack coaching?'"

Whether a student's chance of success would be better at a college with a contract is unclear without research on the effects of private partnerships. But vendors must show colleges returns on their investments. "If we don't get the results," says Mr. Tripp, "our client isn't going to renew our contract." For now, it's up to the market to measure success.

Adjuncts and Retention Rates
Inside Higher Ed

June 21, 2010
Freshmen who have many of their courses taught by adjuncts are less likely than other students to return as sophomores, according to a new study looking at six four-year colleges and universities in a state system. Further, the nature of the impact of adjunct instruction varies by institution type and the type of adjunct used, the study finds. And in some cases, students taking courses from full-time, non-tenure track instructors or from adjuncts well supported by their institutions do better than those taught by other kinds of adjuncts.

The study -- published in the journal *Educational Policy* -- is likely to be closely scrutinized by adjunct activists, who sometimes see such research as “blaming the victim" in that such instructors lack the resources and job security that can allow many tenured faculty members to connect with students.

But the research could also be influential in that it goes beyond previous research in not treating all adjuncts alike, and in that it frames the issue very much around retention at a time that many policy makers are focusing on how to improve graduation rates. The authors note that the typical four-year college loses 26 percent of its students between the first and second years, and that about 60 percent of college students who fail to finish end their program in the first year -- suggesting that any push to improve retention and graduation rates must address factors that relate to first-year retention.

The authors of the study, who have written previously on adjunct instructors, are Audrey J. Jaeger, associate professor of higher education at North Carolina State University, and M. Kevin Eagan, a postdoctoral research fellow at the Higher Education Research Institute of the University of California at Los Angeles.

The six institutions they studied included one doctoral extensive institution, two doctoral intensive institutions, two master’s institutions and one baccalaureate institution. And in a significant difference from past analyses of adjuncts, the scholars had a large enough sample to examine the relationships between retention and having different kinds of adjunct instruction: from full-time, non-tenure track instructors, from graduate student instructors, and from “other” adjuncts (including part-time instructors, postdoctoral fellows and others). The study also tracked a number of other factors related to grades, finances and academic programs, so that the adjunct impact could be isolated. Multiple cohorts were used from each of the universities, and patterns were relatively consistent across cohorts.

Here are the findings (compared to those taught by tenure-track faculty members):

Doctoral extensive university: For every 10 percent increase in instruction by “other” adjuncts, the probability of a student coming back as a sophomore drops by 4 percent. For every 10 percent increase in instruction by graduate students, the probability of coming back drops by 3 percent. And while there was a slight negative impact associated with instruction by full timers, it was not statistically significant.

Doctoral intensive universities: In a difference from the other sectors, more adjunct instruction helps retention. A 10 percent increase in adjunct instruction results in a 3 percent increase in likelihood of retention if taught by “other” or full-time adjuncts, and a 2 percent gain for instruction by graduate students. (The positive impact led the authors to investigate these institutions further, and they found that these institutions provide more support to adjuncts than is the norm, in both orientations and professional development for their non-tenure-track instructors.)

Master’s institutions: Here a 10 percent increase in use of adjunct instructors resulted in a 7 percent decrease in first-year retention for “other” adjunct instruction, a 2 percent decline for graduate student instruction and a 3 percent reduction for those taught by full-time adjunct instructors.

Baccalaureate institution: This institution did not have graduate student instruction, and it saw a 2 percent decrease in odds of continuing for freshmen who saw a 10 percent increase in adjunct instruction (regardless of full-time or part-time status).

The authors write that these findings suggest a significant impact when considering the widespread use of adjuncts at these (and many other) institutions. At all but one of the institutions studied, the average freshman had more than 50 percent of credits earned from courses taught by an adjunct instructor of one of the three kinds identified. Students with typical (for their institutions) use of adjunct instructors would see between a 10 and 30 percent decrease in their odds of coming back as freshmen, compared to students taught by those on the tenure track, the authors note.

Jaeger and Eagan are clear in the summary of their findings that they are not suggesting that adjuncts are bad instructors, or that the key to success in retention is using fewer adjuncts. They stress the importance of looking at adjuncts as distinct groups, not as a monolithic one -- and the evidence in their study is consistent with those who say adjuncts do better with more courses at single institutions and where they are provided with more support.

At the same time, Jaeger and Eagan say that, looking at the data in their entirety, the impact of adjunct instruction is real and needs attention. They suggest that colleges consider having adjuncts teach more of a mix of courses, including upper division courses. And they suggest that colleges consider the use of policies that would get more tenure-track faculty members teaching freshmen.

And while they note that their research suggests the importance of looking at different types of adjuncts (for example, to focus on unique teaching issues that might face graduate students), they found that many colleges don’t have the data. Some institutions that the researchers had hoped to include in the study didn’t have the ability to look at different kinds of adjuncts, even though they used them.

Further, they note that because adjunct hiring is so decentralized -- with individual departments deciding which instructors to assign to which courses -- administrations may be unaware of the cumulative impact of these decisions: notably, that there are first-year students taking all of their courses from part-time instructors.

The bottom line, Jaeger and Eagan write: If state university systems want to get serious about improving retention, considering the use of adjunct hiring must be part of the discussion, and states need to consider that the savings they get from using lesser paid adjuncts may not justify the impact on retention.

Adjuncts have been critical of such work in the past, while praising work that questioned whether there is an adjunct impact on student success.

The blog of the American Federation of Teachers' Faculty and College Excellence campaign -- which works both to increase the share of courses taught by those on the tenure track and to improve working conditions for adjuncts -- offered some praise for the new study. The findings about how the adjunct impact was positive on the campuses where adjuncts receive more support, the blog said, "hold promise for both improving the working conditions of adjunct faculty and helping students succeed with their educational goals."

Maria Maisto, board president of the New Faculty Majority, a new national adjunct group, said she was encouraged to see the study note "that better support for adjuncts translates into better outcomes for students." Maisto said she would have liked to have seen more study of the nature of support that makes a difference.

While she said those findings suggested "respect for contingent faculty" that hasn't always been clear in earlier studies, she criticized the use of "dehumanizing" language, such as references to "exposure" to adjunct faculty members. "All of that contributes in its own way to perpetuating a culture that is unsupportive of contingent faculty," she said. Still, she added of the new study that "provided its findings are closely examined and limitations properly appreciated, this report does contribute to the effort to improve undergraduate education through the improvement of working conditions for the majority of faculty directly responsible for it."

— Scott Jaschik

Dan Walters: Brown, Whitman offer no direction on budget
SacBee.com

Monday, June 21, 2010

While Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and legislators wrestle with the latest version of the state's perpetual budget mess, the two people who aspire to succeed him seven months hence aren't offering voters any direction on how they'd close the income-outgo deficit.

How Jerry Brown or Meg Whitman would resolve the state's fiscal crisis is not merely an academic question. There's about a 99.9 percent chance that when one of them receives the keys to the governor's Capitol suite, the budget problem will be at least as big as it is now – and will probably be bigger.

The state's economy remains moribund, with sky-high unemployment and only indirect clues that recovery is on the horizon. Even if recovery begins later this year, it will be slow and, at least initially, jobless.

That means, most likely, that state revenue will continue to fall billions of dollars short of financing the state's spending commitments, not to mention more billions of dollars short of paying off the direct and indirect loans the state has taken out to finance its past deficits.

Even more ominously, some temporary taxes enacted last year are scheduled to be phased out next year, creating another hole of $10 billion or so in the revenue stream.

A sluggish economy and the temporary taxes' expiration have led the Legislature's budget analyst, Mac Taylor, to suggest deficits in the range of $20 billion per year are on tap for at least several more years.

Sooner or later, one assumes, Democrat Brown and Republican Whitman will be compelled, perhaps at one of their debates, to get specific on the budget. But they're obviously in no rush.

Whitman has offered what she says is a plan for fiscal recovery, but it involves an impossible-to-achieve massive layoff of state workers and economy-stimulating tax cuts that would not even come close to closing a $20 billion gap.

After winning the Democratic nomination, former two-term governor Brown told reporters, "I am going to be an independent servant of this state, and I will do whatever it takes to get this budget aligned with the revenue." But a few days ago, in response to a question about the budget, Brown replied (facetiously, he said later), "It's very difficult, and I have a plan. I'll tell you after the election."

The disclaimer doesn't alter the fact that Brown so far is offering nothing but good intentions while Whitman is giving us pie-in-the-sky sloganeering about shrinking government while channeling supply-side guru Art Laffer.

It would appear that neither wants to alienate voters by describing, in realistic terms, the tradeoffs involved in ending California's long fiscal nightmare. They don't want to tell spending lobbies about spending cuts, and they don't want to tell recession-wracked voters about raising their taxes.

Trust me, each is pleading. Why should we?

Get Them In, Get Them Out
Inside Higher Ed
June 21, 2010
WASHINGTON – A pair of education advocates urged President Obama to prioritize the distribution of funds from the recently created Community College and Career Training Grant program to those institutions that radically remodel their certificate and degree programs to emphasize speedy graduation and job placement.

Jamie P. Merisotis, president of the Lumina Foundation for Education, and Stan Jones, president of Complete College America, made the pitch Friday during a discussion moderated by *The Washington Monthly* to James Kvaal, who will take over as deputy under secretary of education next month. Many community colleges, they argued, cannot get displaced workers a credential and back into the workforce fast enough.

“Many of these programs, quite bluntly, simply take too long to finish – particularly for families already under financial pressure,” Merisotis said. “Time is a major factor for many of these individuals – adults and traditional-age students. It forces them back into, if they can find them, low-wage, low-skills jobs that simply intensify the need for more and often costly education down the road.”

While Merisotis and Jones did not set a time limit, they generally praised as models programs that take a year, maximum, to finish – quite a contrast from the two-year norm for many associate degrees – assuming students enroll full time. Though community colleges offer low-cost programs, they do not, Merisotis argued, offer students the “quicker-to-graduation curricula and job-placement” of the best for-profit institutions. But Merisotis does not think the answer to what he suggested was community colleges’ inefficiency is found in brand-new institutional design. If anything, the model Merisotis believes community colleges around the country should emulate is a rather old idea – that of a traditional vocational school.

In a handful of states – Ohio, New York, Tennessee, Washington and Wisconsin – there are technical institutions separate from community colleges. In Tennessee, for instance, 13 community colleges offer associate degree programs, whereas 27 “technical centers” offer only one-year certificate programs in high-demand fields. These institutions, like for-profit trade institutions, focus on getting students a credential and getting them out out in a short period of time.

“By having a calendar that’s every 72 days, students do not have a long period of time to say ‘Oh, maybe I won’t go back. Maybe I’ll take this semester off. Maybe I’ll take this term off,’ ” said Carol Puryear, director of the Tennessee Technology Center at Murfeesboro. “They’re expected to go those 72 days every term. They sign up and come back. We offer very specific programs.… We really limit that. You choose your program, and you choose if you want to be full-time or part-time.”

Jones applauded the limited-choice approach, arguing that it does not allow many opportunities for students to lose their way.

“I was an engineering student, and I don’t remember having a choice until I was a junior in college,” Jones said. “People say that people who were pre-med didn’t have a choice either. It was pretty much a lock-step curriculum. There’s nothing wrong with directed choice. … I call it kind of back to the future. They didn’t invent this yesterday; They’ve been doing this [in Tennessee] for 20 years. Some of the rest of us kind of discovered it – that they were on the right track for 20 years. Block scheduled, cohort-based, integrated – it’s highly effective.”

The completion rate at Murfeesboro is about 83 percent, and its job-placement rate is about 75 percent, Puryear noted. She noted that her students realize time is of the essence and are extra-dedicated to their work as a result. For example, she said she has a student now whose wife decided to work overtime after he was laid off so that he could go to a technical center to earn a truck-driving credential.

“He lives on $20 a week,” Puryear said. “That’s pretty hard for people to imagine unless you’re looking at this particular student. But for $20 a week, he pays for his gas, and that man eats more ramen noodles than I’ve ever seen. … But they make sacrifices because there’s an exact end in sight. They see it. They do not sign up for classes. They up for a program.”

Jones and Merisotis believe the government should encourage the development of short-term, quick-hit programs like this at community colleges around the country with the $2 billion Community College and Career Training Grant program, which passed as part of the health care/student loan reconciliation bill earlier this year.

“We’ve invested hundreds of millions of dollars as a society in tax-payer dollars to ensure that banks and automobile manufacturers emerge from the recession on a sound footing,” Merisotis said. “From our vantage point, the unemployed now represent a major long-term challenge for the country, and we think it’s important for us to invest what would really only be a tiny fraction of the amounts we’ve already invested in those other industries in the future for workers who area the backbone of our economy.”

Additionally, Jones and Merisotis say that Congress should extend unemployment benefits so that anyone receiving them can attend college, as long as they are enrolled full-time in a one- or two-year degree program. Finally, they suggest that the government create a new program of “education stipends” to offset the tuition and living costs of going to college, essentially making the completion of a program the “job” of the recipient.

Acknowledging the death of the larger American Graduation Initiative, Kvaal said the administration was open to these ideas so that it could effectively make use of the $2 billion being appropriated to community colleges.

“It wasn’t everything we asked for, but we actually are quite pleased,” Kvaal said. “It’s important to realize that the money is coming sooner than the president proposed. Even though the dollar figure is not as large, it’s over four years instead of ten years. And $2 billion is a sum of money that can make some important investments in community colleges. … We think there’s a lot of potential for this funding to fund programs like the ones that have been described today. We think there’s a lot of merit in these ideas.”

Some in the audience questioned applying the quick-entry, quick-exit model of a technical institution to community colleges writ large, especially to liberal arts associate degree programs. Merisotis and Jones, however, defended their proposal.

“The model of higher education in our country is evolving,” Merisotis said. “The seat-time, credit hour approach … is probably going to continue to evolve. … If you move towards a more learning-focused system, it’s pretty clear that how much time you spend on doing that is going to be less and less important.”

— David Moltz

In Budget Crisis, States Take Aim at Pension Costs

By MARY WILLIAMS WALSH
Published: June 19, 2010

Many states are acknowledging this year that they have promised pensions they cannot afford and are cutting once-sacrosanct benefits, to appease taxpayers and attack budget deficits.

Seth Perlman/Associated Press

Gov. Pat Quinn said an overhaul would save Illinois's pension system $300 million in its first year. But the fund is weakened.

Payback Time

Untouchable Benefits

Articles in this series are examining the consequences of, and efforts to deal with, growing public and private debts.

Previous Articles in the Series »

Illinois raised its retirement age to 67, the highest of any state, and capped public pensions at $106,800 a year. Arizona, New York, Missouri and Mississippi will make people work more years to earn pensions. Virginia is requiring employees to pay into the state pension fund for the first time. New Jersey will not give anyone pension credit unless they work at least 32 hours a week.

“We can't afford to deny reality or delay action any longer,” said Gov. Pat Quinn of Illinois, adding that his state's pension cuts, enacted in March, will save some $300 million in the first year alone.

But there is a catch: Nearly all of the cuts so far apply only to workers not yet hired. Though heralded as breakthrough reforms by state officials, the cuts phase in so slowly they are unlikely to save the weakest funds and keep them from running out of money. Some new rules may even hasten the demise of the funds they were meant to protect.

Lawmakers wanted to avoid legal battles or fights with unions, whose members can be influential voters. So they are allowing most public workers across the country to keep building up their pensions at the same rate as ever. The tens of thousands of workers now on Illinois's payrolls, for instance, will still get to retire at 60 — and some will as young as 55.

One striking exception is Colorado, which has imposed cuts on its current workers, not just future hires, and even on people who have already retired. The retirees have sued to block the reduction.

Other states with shrinking funds and deep fiscal distress may be pushed in this direction and tempted to follow Colorado's example in the coming years. Though most state officials believe they are legally bound to shield current workers from pension cuts, a Colorado victory could embolden them to be more aggressive.

Colorado pruned a 3.5 percent annual pension increase to 2 percent, concluding that was the fastest way to revive its pension fund, which was projected to run out of money by 2029. The cut may sound small, but it produces big results because it goes into effect immediately. State plans vary widely, but many have other costly features, like subsidized early-retirement benefits, which could likewise be trimmed for existing workers.

Despite its pension reform, Illinois is still in deep trouble. That vaunted $300 million in immediate savings? The state produced it by giving itself credit now for the much smaller checks it will send retirees many years in the future — people who must first be hired and then, for full benefits, work until age 67.

By recognizing those far-off savings right away, Illinois is letting itself put less money into its pension fund now, starting with $300 million this year.

That saves the state money, but it also weakens the pension fund, actually a family of funds, raising the risk of a collapse long before the real savings start to materialize.

"We're within a few years of having some of the pension funds run out of money," said R. Eden Martin, president of the Commercial Club of Chicago, a business group that has been warning of a "financial implosion" for several years. "Funding for the schools is going to be cut radically. Funding for Medicaid. As these things all mount up, there's going to be a lot of outrage."

Joshua D. Rauh, an associate professor of finance at Northwestern University who studies public pension funds, predicts that at the current rate, Illinois's pension system could run out of money by 2018. He believes the funds of other troubled states — including New Jersey, Indiana and Connecticut — are also on track to run out of money in less than a decade, unless they make meaningful changes.

If a state pension fund ran out of money, the state would be legally bound to make good on retirees' benefits. But paying public pensions straight out of general revenue would be ruinous. In Illinois's case, it would consume about half the state's cash every year, bringing other vital state services to a standstill.

Mr. Rauh said he thinks any state caught in that trap would have little choice but to seek a federal bailout. Bigger pension contributions and higher taxes can go only so far.

Many state officials, hoping for a huge recovery in the markets, say that such projections are too pessimistic, and that cutting benefits for future workers must suffice, given laws and provisions in state constitutions that make membership in a state pension fund a contractual relationship that cannot be breached.

Lawyers, though, are raising the possibility that those laws are being misinterpreted.

"It makes no sense to suggest that an employee who works for the state for a single day has acquired a right to have future pension benefits calculated for the next 20 to 40 years under whatever method was in effect on that single first day of service," states a legal memorandum prepared for the Commercial Club of Chicago, which is concerned that a public pension collapse would badly damage the city's business climate.

The club's members include senior executives of big companies, like Boeing, Aon, Kraft, Motorola and I.B.M., that have frozen pensions or slowed the rates at which their workers build up benefits.

Some of those cuts set off titanic battles. The most famous was at I.B.M., which changed its pension plan just when many of its older workers were about to earn sharply higher retirement benefits. Aggrieved workers sued, but after a long battle, a federal appellate court found that the cuts were legal.

“An employer is free to move from one legal plan to another legal plan, provided that it does not diminish vested interests,” or the benefits workers have already earned, wrote Chief Judge Frank H. Easterbrook of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago. He did not distinguish between corporate employers and states.

Colorado is basing its legal defense, in part, on a 1961 state supreme court ruling that said pension cuts for current workers were allowed if “actuarially necessary,” and will argue that it applies to retirees as well. Other states may not have such legal tools.

In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has gone a different route, bargaining with the 12 unions that represent public employees. Last week four of them agreed to let the state cut its own contributions by requiring current workers to pay sharply more for the same pensions. The workers will contribute 10 percent of their pay, in some cases double the previous rate, to the state pension fund. Some other states are raising employee contributions as well, though less sharply.

In New Jersey, the administration of Gov. Christopher J. Christie recently imposed pension cuts on future hires, but has been quietly looking into whether it could also reduce the benefits that current employees expect to accumulate in the coming years.

“Can they change the benefit formula going forward? Sure. It’s not etched in stone,” said Edward Thomson III, an actuary and trustee of the New Jersey pension system who was asked to offer an opinion on whether New Jersey could adopt the federal pension law — the one that covers companies — as its governing statute.

A state assemblyman, Declan J. O’Scanlon Jr., recently introduced a bill to ratchet back a 9 percent pension increase that the state gave most workers in 2001.

“I think this will pass constitutional muster,” Mr. O’Scanlon said. “Otherwise, I fear the whole system will fall apart. Nine years — we’re out of money.”

Amy Schoenfeld contributed reporting.

State employees are not the budget culprits

CAPITOL JOURNAL

LA Times

June 21, 2010

By George Skelton

From Sacramento

It's the summer budget-brawling season in Sacramento, a time for regurgitating old myths and simplistic solutions.

One persistent myth about the perpetually bleeding state budget is that it's all the fault of public employee unions.

They are to blame for some things: bullying liberal allies they deem insufficiently subservient (Senate leader Darrell Steinberg [D-Sacramento] is the latest target); blocking reforms they feel threaten members (teacher unions are notorious); and driving up retirement benefits to unsustainable levels (CHP officers, prison guards and civil servants are all guilty).

But none of that really contributes to the $19-billion deficit projected for the state general fund.

Another myth is that California government can cut its way out of the hole. Sometimes when government cuts spending, it actually costs money.

In truth, California's budget nightmare stems from a devil's brew of sins: lack of discipline on both spending and tax-cutting in the past; an outdated and unreliable tax system too susceptible to economic booms and busts; the unhealthy dependence of local governments on Sacramento; and a dysfunctional state budgeting process that requires a gridlock-generating two-thirds majority vote.

Based on my e-mail, many people believe that the way for Sacramento to make ends meet is to cut state employees' salaries by, say, 10%. Well, in the last year, most have been cut by 14% through furloughs. And the state still has a $19-billion projected deficit.

For the fiscal year starting July 1, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is proposing to cut salaries by 5%, require workers to contribute an additional 5% of pay to retirement and cut the workforce by 5%. That would save a mere $1.8 billion.

Even if Schwarzenegger could fire every state employee under his control — roughly 230,000 — it still wouldn't balance the books.

"Fire every prison guard, every CHP officer, everyone who works at the DMV, everyone who works for the state parks system … and you're still not there," notes H.D. Palmer, spokesman for the state Finance Department.

That's because roughly 70% of the state general fund flows out to local governments and schools, one of the unintended consequences of Proposition 13, which slashed the property tax 32 years ago.

And those pension costs? The governor has budgeted $3.8 billion in state contributions for the next fiscal year. But only $2.1 billion of that would burden the bleeding $83-billion general fund. The rest would come from self-sustaining special funds.

So even if employee pensions didn't cost the state a cent — an impossibility — the savings would fill only 11% of the general fund deficit hole.

Pressured by politicians and a private sector with pension envy, four public employee unions last week reached agreement with the Schwarzenegger administration on some retirement rollbacks for future hires.

The unions represent about 10% of the governor's workforce, including firefighters, Highway Patrol officers, health and welfare personnel and psychiatric technicians.

The pacts return pensions for future employees to roughly the levels that existed before then-Gov. Gray Davis and the Democratic Legislature boosted benefits substantially in 1999. And that rollback is long overdue.

But the grand savings? All of $72 million a year. And only $43 million of that helps the general fund.

The state gain from the union agreements derives from increases in employee contributions, a workforce cut and one unpaid day off a month. The actual pension rollbacks will help future generations balance the state books, but they'll be of no use to current budget-writers.

The administration also is negotiating with other unions that represent most of the remaining employees. If the same deal is cut for all workers, it would hardly be a budget-balancer — filling only about 6% of the hole.

So lawmakers need to whack away at spending. But some cuts result in no savings or actually increase costs — if not for the state, for local governments.

If Schwarzenegger, for example, succeeds in his effort to close down the state's main welfare program — a $1.2-billion savings — that "clearly would have a significant impact on the counties," Palmer concedes.

That's because counties legally must provide the safety net of last resort for the poor with their general assistance programs. Dan Carson, deputy legislative analyst, estimates there'd be a cost shift to the counties of "at least $1 billion" if the Legislature accepted Schwarzenegger's proposal. Which it won't.

Schwarzenegger also is trying to cut spending on In-Home Supportive Services by $750 million. But that could force many frail, elderly people into much more expensive nursing homes. This would significantly jack up Medi-Cal costs.

The governor has proposed scrapping the state's adult day healthcare program to save $135 million. It serves mostly disabled, chronically ill or elderly poor, some with dementia. This could propel many into emergency room care or even nursing homes and wind up costing the state more.

"These are folks who are at risk and are right there on the edge," says Dr. Rafael Amezcua, medical director for AltaMed Health Services, a major provider under the program.

Palmer rationalizes: "We've got to close a $19-billion gap. And to do that without raising taxes, there's going to be some collateral effects."

Effects such as more misery for a lot of people — and maybe even higher costs for the state.

There's much denial about the true causes of California's fiscal fiasco. And until the real culprits are confronted, the Legislature will keep passing unbalanced, gimmicky budgets rooted in the rhetoric of myth.

Student Evaluations, Grade Inflation, and Declining Student Work Effort
The Chronicle of Higher Education

June 19, 2010, 02:00 PM ET

By Richard Vedder

The *Chronicle*'s Susannah Tully has brought my attention to a great article in the prestigious *Journal of Political Economy* by Scott Carrell and James West dealing with professorial approaches to teaching, student evaluations and student performance. It seems professors who do more than teach the basic bare-bones knowledge and are in some sense more rigorous tend to get poorer student evaluations (no surprise there). The less rigorous professors even get good performances out of their students in the courses taught but those students subsequently, in follow up courses, do poorer than the more rigorous professors who do more than teach to the standardized test. Sounds reasonable to me.

This got me thinking more about student evaluations and some other evidence. Specifically, I would note that student evaluations began to become popular during the 1960s and early 1970s as a common evaluation tool for faculty. I would also note that most of the great grade inflation in America has occurred since evaluations began, with national grade point averages probably rising from the 2.5 or 2.6 range in about 1960 to well over 3.0 today (admittedly, this is based on limited but I believe likely correct evidence). Professors to some extent can "buy" good evaluations by giving high grades, so the evaluation process is probably a major factor in grade inflation.

So what? What difference does it really make if the average grade is a B- or C+ instead of a B or B+? This is where another working paper of the National Bureau of Economic Research comes in. Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks present evidence in Working Paper 15954 that in 1961, the average student spent 40 hours a week engaged in their studies—attending class and studying. By 2003, this had declined by nearly one-third to 27 hours weekly.

One advantage of getting old is that you gain some historical perspective, and I have been in higher education for over a half of century and believe that Babcock and Marks are right. Students do less reading, less studying, even less attending class than two generations ago. Why? They don't have to do more. With relatively little work they can get relatively high grades—say a B or even better. And student evaluations are one factor in explaining the underlying grade inflation problem. Go to the campusbuddy.com Web site and see for yourself evidence on the grade-inflation phenomenon. The colleges of education, which in my judgment should be put out of business (topic for another blog), are the worst offenders, but the problem is pretty universal.

College is getting more expensive all the time—and students are consuming less of it per year as measured by time usage. The cost of college per hour spent in studying is rising a good deal faster than what tuition data alone suggest. Why should the public subsidize mostly middle-class kids working perhaps 900 hours a year (half the average of American workers) on their studies?

What to do? We could move to reduce the impact of student evaluations, or even eliminate them. One reason for their existence—to convey knowledge to students about professor—is usually met separately by other means, such as the RateMyProfessors.com Web site. Alternatively, colleges could by mandate or the use of financial incentives encourage faculty to become more rigorous in their grading. If state subsidies started to vary inversely in size with grade-point averages, state schools would quickly reduce grade inflation. In any case, we need more research into WHY students today are working less. But I would bet a few bucks that grade inflation and student evalauations are part of the answer.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan is commencement speaker at Foothill and De Anza

By Lisa M. Krieger

lkrieger@mercurynews.com

Posted: 06/16/2010 05:51:07 PM PDT

Celebrity orators are a routine feature of graduation ceremonies at Stanford, Santa Clara University and University of California campuses.

But this year, a local community college district trumps them all — landing America's top educational leader, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, to be the speaker at commencement exercises on June 25 at Foothill College and June 26 at De Anza College.

De Anza President Brian Murphy wrote the Obama administration seeking a graduation speaker and hit a jackpot.

Many campuses make such an effort — and Duncan has spoken to several other schools this year, including the teacher-focused Lesley University in Boston; the small, Catholic, liberal arts-based St. Michael's College in Vermont; and the major research institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

But the selection of the community college district may have been influenced "by the work the Obama administration is doing to call attention to the important role of community colleges," said Becky Bartindale, spokeswoman for the two-year college system. Also working in the district's favor is the diversity of its student body, she said.

Duncan's choice of the local colleges may have been swayed by former district Chancellor Martha Kantor, who now serves as an undersecretary of education.

Duncan graduated with magna cum laude honors at Harvard, then his career took twists and turns. He played pro basketball in Australia, ran a nonprofit education foundation and became chief executive officer of the Chicago public schools.

His mission, as leader of President Barack Obama's educational team, is to expand the number or students attending college. The U.S. has fallen behind other developed countries in college attainment. There are also large gaps in completion for low-income and minority students.

Obama has singled out two-year associate-degree institutions as critical to boosting education and the nation's economic recovery. Community colleges serve nearly 40 percent of America's college students. For many students, especially during a recession, they offer the most convenient and affordable path to a bachelor's degree. They are also a source of job training and work force development, with the scheduling flexibility needed by adult working students.

Last year, Obama called for an additional 5 million community college graduates by 2020. To help students, the administration raised the maximum Pell grant award from $4,860 to $5,550 and is providing $17.3 billion for the program in the stimulus package. The stimulus package also strengthens support for community colleges through funds for school modernization, work study, and additional funding for programs under the Workforce Investment Act.

$40 per unit community college fee gets some support

June 23, 2010 | Erica Perez


Flickr photo by Ed Yourdon

A move to increase the fees that California Community College students pay from $26 per unit to $40 per unit is getting some support in lawmakers' budget discussions.

Unlike costs to attend UC and CSU campuses, the fees at California's 112 community colleges have managed to resist dramatic hikes. This makes California's two-year colleges the most affordable in the nation, according to the College Board's annual Trends in College Pricing report. The second most affordable state is New Mexico.

The state Legislative Analyst's Office is recommending a 54 percent fee hike to $40 per unit – an increase that would still maintain the state's position as the least expensive, the LAO says.

Sen. Bob Huff, R-Walnut, made a motion during the state legislature's budget conference committee to implement the $40 fee. While the issue was not resolved in the committee, lawmakers may negotiate some sort of fee increase once they get the full picture of state funding for community colleges, said Paul Steenhausen, an analyst with the Legislative Analyst's Office.

In its support for the fee increase, the LAO has pointed out the increase would bring in about $150 million in revenue for the college system, based on a conservative estimate. The analysts have recommended that the system use the increased fees to fund enrollment growth, rather than increase Proposition 98 funding, as the governor's budget has proposed.

The governor's revised budget actually provides about $126 million in new Prop. 98 funding for enrollment growth. But if it turns out the state can't afford that, the student fees could fill in the gap, Steenhausen said. If the state can afford the enrollment growth money, then the extra fee revenue could be used for even more enrollment and support services, he said.

Students with financial need would still be eligible for a waiver that covers the cost of fees, as they are now. Middle-class students could apply for federal tax credits that would cover all or nearly all of the fees. And upper-class students would still enjoy the cheapest rates in the nation.

"This is not like we're throwing people to the wolves here," Huff said.

Scott Lay, president and chief executive officer of the Community College League of California in Sacramento, said an increase in student fees may have to be part of the budget solution, but that the LAO's proposal was misguided.

"The LAO used it as an opportunity to go on a tirade as to why students should pay more," he said. "I don't think we're prepared to sign on to student fees purely for enrollment growth right now."

The LAO points out that low-income students can apply for a fee waiver, but Lay questioned whether all needy students would find out about their eligibility for a waiver.

One interesting wrinkle is the matter of the federal tax credits. Several different programs allow taxpayers to write off portions of their educational expenses. The most generous program provides a tax rebate of up to $2,500 including fees and books – a figure that would more than cover a year's worth of study at a California Community College, even with the proposed fee increase.

But the reality is that few students take advantage of the refund. According to data from the California Student Aid Commission, only 10 percent of California Community College students in the 2006 tax year claimed the Hope or Lifetime Learning tax credits.

Steenhausen described that statistic as "a great source of irritation for this office." Often, advisrs who work with students focus primarily on the board of governors waiver form - an easy, quick way for needy students to get out of paying the course fees. But students are less informed about the free Federal Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA) and the tax credits.

Bob Huber on Office Picketing

Posted May 4, 2010

Many of you have inquired as to why there were picketers outside of my office.

For those of you who don't already know, I am Chair of the Board for the Ventura County Community College District. The Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD) operates the firefighter training program in Camarillo through the auspices of Oxnard College. The VCCCD is building a new, state-of-the-art, Fire, Sheriff and Police Academy (from Bond money approved by the voters in 2002) in the same vicinity where we currently train our Firefighters. In our college buildings, we train people and provide them with job skills so they can obtain employment, which in turn bolsters our local economy.

We are proud that over the last 8 years, the $356 million Bond project approved by the voters has put over $200 million to date into the local economy and most of the jobs provided have been to Ventura County people.

The week before last, a Los Angeles labor union set up pickets at the Firefighters' training facility, potentially disrupting our Firefighter training program. The VCCCD administration requested that the pickets relocate their line so as not to obstruct access to the site. They got mad and decided to picket myself in Simi Valley (as Chair of the College District), Dr. Jim Meznek in Ventura (College District Chancellor), Trustee Art Hernandez in Santa Paula (Chair of the College Board Construction Committee), and the Camarillo site of the Firefighters training facility.

So why is the union upset? Their beef is that the Bond project is using a non-union sub contractor, N-U Enterprises, to work on building the state-of-the-art, Fire, Sheriff and Police Academy.

Our job for the protection of the taxpayer is to award the job bid to the lowest qualified bidder. We have no control whether the workers are union or non-union.

We, as College Trustees, are required by law to take the bid of the lowest qualified bidder – regardless of whether or not they are union – as long as they are paying the prevailing wages (i.e. union scale). We take our role as College Trustees very seriously and, whether or not a contractor uses a sub contractor which hires union or non-union labor is out of the control of the College Board.

State law requires contractors to pay prevailing union scale wages. We are required to audit our contractors to ensure that they are paying prevailing union scale wages and if they do not pay prevailing rates we will not pay them when they submit their invoice. The Ventura County Community College District Board of Trustees has been vigilant in complying with labor laws.

We have performed an audit and verified the fact that the contractor (N-U Enterprises) is rightfully paying the "prevailing wage" (union scale) to his employees – which is the strict requirement of the state law.

The union is requesting that we force a change of subcontractors at the new state-of-the-art Fire, Sheriff and Police Academy; this would require that the Board of Trustees violate an existing, legally binding, lawful contract – which we cannot do.

To shut down the job of building our new, state-of-the art, Fire, Sheriff and Police Academy would require our Board of Trustees to violate the state law. <u>I will not be a party to breaking the law!</u> Because I will not vote to break the law, the union is picketing me.

cc: Board.

It's unfortunate we are being targeted by Los Angeles based labor leaders. The Board of Trustees, however, cannot require that all contractors are union. The Board CAN make sure that all contractors pay the correct prevailing wages, and we have hired a firm to monitor all wages paid to make sure all contractors are in compliance. Since the District is doing everything it can legally do in this regard, it would be unfortunate for the students and the community if the union dispute interferes with the training of our brave Firefighters and with the timely construction of our Fire, Sheriff and Police Academy!

Additional Information Received May 7, 2010:

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 7, 2010
TO: Mr. Robert O. Huber, Chair, Board of Trustees, VCCCD
FROM: Grant Mitchell, Business Manager, Painters and Allied Trades DC36

SUBJECT: Carpenters' unlawful activities

Regarding your post, "Bob Huber on Office Picketing", I would like to clear up some misconceptions. The Los Angeles labor union you are referring to is the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. The Carpenters are a labor union in name only. More accurately they are a rogue organization of thugs who attempt to bully their way into contracts. They left the National AFL-CIO so they would not be bound by the rules governing all other labor unions across the country in order to pursue their favored method of growth: raiding other unions of their memberships. They frequently engage in unlawful activities at picket sites and in one case were ordered to pay an employer $450,000 and take extensive training on legally acceptable picket line behavior.

Across the country the Carpenters hire homeless people to picket and hold banners for them, paying them minimum wage with no benefits, so their members can remain on the job making union wages with benefits.

As for the unlawful picketing at the Regional Fire, Sheriff, and Police Education and Training Academy jobsite, The Carpenters are simply angry that a drywall contractor who is signatory to another union is performing the work. N-U Enterprises is signed to a union contract for work on the Training Academy and pays the correct, state-mandated prevailing wages and benefits, including health insurance and pension benefits, to their employees on the project. Both District Council 36 and N-U Enterprises have filed Unfair Labor Practices charges with the National Labor Relations Board against the Carpenters, and expect an injunction to be issued shortly.

As you stated in your post, the Carpenters are attempting to bully you into unnecessarily changing contractors and violate the lawful contract you entered into. The Painters and Allied Trades Union, District Council 36 applauds your stance against the tactics being used by the Carpenters, and whole-heartedly support the Ventura County Community College District Board of Trustees in your efforts to fight unfounded attacks on public agencies.

The Painters and Allied Trades (Drywall Finishers) is a member of the AFL-CIO, and as such, is a legitimate labor union. We do not engage in thug tactics and are a responsible member of the business community.

Attached are some documents which will help illustrate the thuggish tactics employed by the Carpenters across the country.

cc: Ms. Cheryl Heitman, Vice Chair- cheitmann@vcccd.edu
Mr. Stephen P. Blum, Esq., Trustee- sblum@vcccd.edu

Compton owes $5.7 million to L.A. County Sheriff's Department

LA Times
Robert Faturechi and Sam Allen
June 17, 2010

The city also owes $100,00 in late fees for failing to pay its bill, which calls into question whether it has enough money to go ahead with the council's plan to resurrect its own police force.

The city of Compton owes the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department $5.7 million for law enforcement services and an additional $100,000 in late fees for failing to pay its bill, authorities said.

Compton's financial problems come as the city plans to eliminate its contract with the Sheriff's Department and reorganize its own police force. The city already has put away almost $20 million for startup costs.

Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore said Compton has ignored verbal and written requests from the department for payment. Of the more than three dozen cities that contract law enforcement services from the Sheriff's Department, Compton is the only one accruing late fees, Whitmore said.

Compton officials acknowledged that the city owes the money and will pay up, blaming the holdup on poor communication within the city bureaucracy. They also said the financial flap with the Sheriff's Department would not affect their plans of reactivating their own police agency.

Compton disbanded its local police force 10 years ago amid startlingly high violent crime rates, and tensions between elected officials and the old Compton Police Department.

Ever since, it has contracted with the Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services. During surges in violence, the sheriff has pumped extra resources into the community, often at no extra cost.

Sheriff Lee Baca expressed doubt that the city could manage its own department.

"What a city is doing today is a direct reflection of what they're going to do tomorrow," Baca said in a statement. "The city is not paying its bills today, how can it pay 20 million dollars or so for its own police department[?]"

Compton City Council members voted earlier this month to authorize the formation of an independent local police force, hoping to return a sense of pride and accountability to the city.

"We do owe them money and we will be paying," said City Manager Charles Evans. "It will have no impact on our ability to operate, run and maintain an effective police department, and we will do that."

Council members Yvonne Arceneaux and Willie Jones said the debt's existence had not been brought to the council's attention.

Critics of resurrecting the Compton Police Department say the debt puts into doubt the city's ability to complete the gargantuan task of forming its own police department.

"The elected leaders in the city of Compton are incompetent," said community activist Joyce Kelly. "I don't understand how we owe the sheriff millions of dollars, and there's still millions of dollars in holding to bring back the Compton police."

The debt dates to November, and includes general deputy services, along with extras, such as presences at the city's Christmas parade and other events. Late fees start to be applied after a two-month grace period, amounting to about 10% of the debt annually.

Whitmore said the department's concern existed before city officials voted to form their own police department.

"It's getting to the point where we are starting to get concerned," he said. "This is extremely rare to be this behind.... No other city, not even close."

Compton owes L.A. Sheriff’s Department $5.7 million

Officer.com

June 16, 2010 | 12:46 pm

Compton owes the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department $5.7 million for law enforcement services and another $100,000 in late fees for failing to pay its bill, authorities said.

Compton's financial problems come as city officials announced plans to eliminate its contract with the sheriff's department and form its own police force. The city has already squared away almost $20 million for startup costs.

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Compton disbanded its local police force 10 years ago amid startlingly high violent crime rates and tensions between elected officials and the old Compton PD. Ever since, it has contracted with the LASD for law enforcement services.

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-- Robert Faturechi and Sam Allen

Concerns aired over future of Compton community college

Originally printed at http://www.wavenewspapers.com/news/local/west-edition/96024294.html

COMPTON — A recent prayer breakfast, intended to enlist clergy and residents to spread the word about progress at El Camino College Compton Community Educational Center, quickly turned into a freewheeling forum on the future of the campus.

Attendees raised concerns about rumors that have long circulated in the community: that El Camino College does not ever intend to return the Compton campus to local control, following a 2006 memorandum of understanding prompted by Compton College's loss of accreditation.

"That was a very impressive presentation," said Lestine Johnson, president of the Compton Chamber of Commerce, who received her associates degree from Compton College in the early 1970s. But "I see what is taking place. When you look at the situation and what we are hearing in the community that we are not going to get Compton College back no matter what … The concern for the community is that there will be no more Compton College."

According to Johnson and others, it appears that El Camino is slowly eroding the traditions and culture of the college.

One such change Johnson noted was that of the school's logo. Another change deals with graduations: This year's graduating class will not be overseen by the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees — a newly configured five-member board that was filled, according to officials, to help ensure re-accreditation once the opportunity arises.

However, to some, this move is seen as a way to diminish the CCCD's voice.

"We were told that as we move toward accreditation that we must have a standing board," said Marie Hollis, president of the Concerned Citizens of Compton. "Now we have a standing board that the citizens have voted for, and many prices have been paid for the right to vote, and when you think that in 2010 that your vote is being ignored, that hurts. That is a very serious concern."

Hollis said that in a recent conversation with El Camino College President Thomas Fallo, she reminded him that the memorandum of understanding was supposed to be carried out as a partnership.

"My understanding of a partnership is that there are two voices," she said. "In this particular situation we have one that has a stronger voice than perhaps the other but there are two voices. And what we see is going on and moving now, it looks like a takeover. … We are not looking for misery — we have had enough of that."

While several pleas have been made to Fallo to allow the CCCD to oversee the ceremony, they have — in the eyes of some — fallen on deaf ears.

Fallo defended the action, saying that the same procedure has been taking place for the past three years. In addition, it was noted that while students attend Compton Center, they are El Camino students and receive a diploma under the school's imprimatur.

"The center belongs to El Camino from the standpoint that it's their accreditation under which the center operates," said Lawrence Cox, CEO of the Compton Community College District. "Again Compton [Center] has no accreditation and as a result of that, the center is the sole responsibility of El Camino."

CCCD Board Trustee Deborah LeBlanc, who said she could not speak much on the subject, did say, "Yes, of course we are concerned." She also acknowledged that in some ways, the fears in the community are "spot on."

She added that she feels that the CCCD board is losing its voice, with members now navigating around institutional barriers with the establishment of the African-American California Community College Trustees. The newly-formed caucus is focused on strengthening the position of African-Americans aspiring to become future leaders in the community college system. This, she said, will help them to network and bring attention and a voice to not only the board but the campus itself.

LeBlanc does, however feel some optimism. "Nothing is impossible," she said. "We are going to work to make it happen. We are not backing down or giving up."

As for a takeover, Fallo said the rumors are unfounded, adding that it has always been El Camino's intent to get Compton College back to a state of independence so that it can be handed over to the community.

Cox assured the audience "that there is going to be a Compton College [again]. With any partnership, there are some edges that sometimes don't seem to mesh very well, but we are working those things out. I heard those rumors, but they are just rumors. We are doing everything we can to get Compton College back."

The biggest hurdle to accreditation, he said, is faculty.

When Compton College's accreditation was formally withdrawn in 2006, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges found that there was a lack of unity amongst the faculty, administration and board, causing discrepancies brought up by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team in October 2004 to fall to the way-side; thus aiding in the school's demise.

As for Compton's school colors, Fallo said El Camino College has not changed the maroon color of their Compton Community College District partner, and that the logo has not changed at all. Rather, the El Camino College blue logo has been blended with the maroon as a sign of the partnership.

Nonetheless, entangled in this battle of ownership are the students of CCCD. Terrance Stewart, vice president of the Associated Student Body, said he does not care who has receivership of the school — as long as the students continue to be educated.

“Me being a student here, I feel the students, the teachers and everybody are still [representing] Compton no matter what people say,” said Stewart. By arguing, “we limit ourselves” and “we are cutting away at the progression of the community. … Ever since I’ve been here, it’s only been El Camino and I love this school to death. It may be an issue [to some], but the people are still the same and the outcome of the greatness of the community is still the same. If we all graduate, whether it’s Compton or El Camino, we [are] still fixing the community.”

Dan Walters: A three-way stalemate over California's budget

By Dan Walters

Tuesday, Jun. 22, 2010 - 8:13 am

Budget, budget, who's got a budget?

The governor has a state budget that his fellow Republicans more or less support. Assembly Democrats have a budget whose centerpiece is a complex scheme to borrow billions of dollars. And Democratic senators have a budget that's based on raising taxes and shifting some programs from the state to counties.

Democrats control the 10-member, two-house conference committee that's supposed to be reconciling all three budgets into one version that would be placed before the entire Legislature. They have the votes to do it.

However, the committee has been going through the budget page by page for more than two weeks without settling any big issues and only some little ones. It's now in hiatus after repeatedly hitting a political wall, unable to proceed because it doesn't know how much money it has to spend.

That's because the two Democratic versions of the budget are very much at odds, even if they both agree on rejecting Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's slash-and-burn approach to closing a $19.1 billion deficit.

It's a three-way stalemate, with the new fiscal year due to begin next week and with state Controller John Chiang warning that the state will run out of cash this summer if a new budget is not in place.

Nothing will happen until Democrats in both houses are in sync on whether to borrow or tax their way out of this year's version of the chronic deficit.

But even if they do – and they appear to be very far apart – it would be merely a step, and not a particularly big one, on the budget road. They could put a budget up for floor votes, but they would still need to get some votes from Republicans, who have said anything that depends on higher taxes, or even extending some temporary taxes due to expire next year, is dead on arrival.

The Assembly's Democratic plan would, at least in theory, allow imposition of an oil severance tax by a simple majority vote through some parliamentary sleight of hand, but Schwarzenegger would still have to agree, and he has repeatedly chanted a no-new-taxes mantra.

Moreover, Attorney General Jerry Brown, the Democratic candidate for governor, has declared that the massive borrowing envisioned in the Assembly plan probably would violate a 2004 balanced-budget ballot measure.

Ordinarily by this stage of the annual budget melodrama, the governor would be ensconced with the Democratic and Republican leaders of the legislative houses. The "Big Five," as they've been dubbed, would be beginning the horse trading – often unseemly horse trading – that produces some kind of budget that finally wins enough votes to take effect.

In theory, Capitol politicians are eschewing the Big Five process this year because of backlash from voters and even some legislators about unseemly deals. But the Big Five may be the only way to do it – if, indeed, it can be done.

Mohave Community College mulls tax hike

Associated Press - May 25, 2010 6:14 AM ET

KINGMAN, Ariz. (AP) - The Mohave Community College governing board is considering raising its share of the countywide property tax by up to 2%.

State law allows community colleges to increase property tax levies each year by 2%. If the increase is approved it will bring in nearly $360,000 next year.

College spokeswoman Charlotte Keller says the owner of a $100,000 home would see a tax increase of just $1.55. The board has raised the tax in each of the past seven years. The board will consider the increase at its June 11 meeting.

Information from: Kingman Daily Miner, http://www.kingmandailyminer.com

Natividad steps down as Rio Hondo athletic director

The Sun

By Andrew J. Campa, Staff Writer
Posted: 06/22/2010 10:30:07 PM PDT

After two successful years at Rio Hondo College, athletic director Rory Natividad tendered his resignation to school officials Tuesday morning.

The South Bay resident is heading home, having accepted the position of Dean of Health Sciences and Athletics at El Camino College in Torrance.

Natividad's last day at Rio Hondo is July13, only 24 hours before his first scheduled day at El Camino.

"Professionally, it's a good move and the campus is right across the street from my house," Natividad said. "Nonetheless, it was a tough decision.

"I completely enjoy working (at Rio Hondo) and will miss the faculty and coaches that made my job a pleasure."

Natividad was in charge of athletics and dance at Rio Hondo as both athletic director and divisional dean of physical education.

His new position calls for a greatly expanded role; he'll now oversee nursing, physical education, athletics, disabled students, radiological technology, respiratory care and the student health center.

"My responsibilities are much larger," Natividad said, "but I feel I'm ready for this challenge and look forward to getting started."

Natividad has a master's in education from Azusa Pacific University and a bachelor's in physical education from Cal State Dominguez Hills.

Natividad arrived at Rio Hondo three years ago from El Camino, where he served as athletic director.

"I was really looking forward to taking over a deanship," Natividad said. "I needed the experience, and Rio Hondo gave me the opportunity."

Natividad became Rio Hondo's third athletic director, replacing 30-plus-year veteran Ellie Bewley in 2008.

During his brief tenure, Roadrunner athletics flourished.

The 2009 men's soccer team won the Foothill Conference and entered the playoffs as the top seed in Southern California.

The 2008-09 women's basketball team reached the postseason for the first time in three years in coach Kathy Pudelko's final season.

The softball team also just concluded a 13-game turnaround this past season and posted its first winning season in more than five years.

No squad, however, enjoyed the same success as baseball - Rio Hondo advanced to the State Final Four for the first time in school history this May.

"All the credit goes to (baseball coach) Mike Salazar and his players," Natividad said. "The same goes with Pudelko.

"We communicated, and I tried to help my coaches the best I could."

Natividad took most pride in establishing three new degree and certification programs in his division, including an athletic training course and an associate in arts in physical education.

"We made some positive steps in two years," Natividad said. "But that goes back to my staff that worked hard."

Natividad takes over at El Camino for Dr. James Schwartz, who retired.

While word of the impending resignation leaked a couple of weeks back, nothing was definite until the ECC Board of Trustees approved his hire at Monday's meeting.

"I know it was a formality, but I didn't want to announce anything until I was sure," Natividad said.

"Now that it is final, I can get ready for my new job."

Rolling back pension costs: how far will it go?

By Ed Mendel

The Highway Patrol union that negotiated the most generous pension formula a decade ago, a trendsetter for police and firefighters statewide, has tentatively agreed to reduce pensions for new hires.

The “three at 50” formula, providing 3 percent of final pay for each year served at age 50, became the best-known part of a sweeping state worker pension increase, SB 400 in 1999, often cited by critics who say public pension costs are “unsustainable.”

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, applauding the Highway Patrol agreement last week, said once again in a news release that rolling back the benefit increase in SB 400 is one of the demands that must be met before he signs a new state budget.

“I am absolutely committed to getting pension reform done because we cannot continue down this unsustainable path that has taxpayers on the hook for $500 billion in debt,” the governor said.

New Highway Patrol hires would get a “three at 55” pension formula, if the bargaining agreement is approved by Highway Patrol members and then enacted by legislation.

That’s a significant cut. But it’s still more generous than the pre-SB 400 Highway Patrol formula, “two at 50,” which provided 2.7 percent of final pay for each year served at age 55.

At a CalPERS forum in January, the chief executive of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen, Jon Hamm, said he might negotiate lower pension benefits for new hires. Pensions promised current workers are regarded as contracts that can’t be cut.

“I have come to the conclusion it’s a very strong likelihood I would be looking out for future employees by negotiating a second-tier retirement system,” Hamm said. “The last thing we want to do is leave it to the initiative process.”

An attempt to put an initiative on the November ballot to reduce state and local public pension benefits and extend retirement ages failed for lack of funding. But the backers are talking about trying again if pension costs are not cut.

This time, however, the initiative might be a proposal to switch new hires from pensions to the 401(k)-style individual investment plans common in the private sector, a change that a poll last fall showed had strong support among voters.

A severe economic recession has sharply reduced tax revenue, forcing deep cuts in state and local government programs. Public pensions are the exception, moving into the spotlight by imposing or projecting big cost increases to replace investment losses.

A study of state pensions issued in February by the Pew Center on the States, grimly reporting a $1 trillion funding gap, said the good news is that a growing number of states are changing benefits and taking other “reform” action.

But in California, Schwarzenegger faces Democratic legislative leaders, traditional allies of labor, who say any cut in pension benefits must be done through labor negotiations, not imposed by legislation.

The tentative agreements announced last week, some including pay cuts, with four unions representing 23,000 patrolmen, firefighters, psychiatric technicians and others are projected to save the state $72 million in the new fiscal year beginning July 1.

That’s about 12 percent of the state workforce. If similar agreements were reached with eight other unions, said the governor’s news release, state savings next year would total $2.2 billion.

In addition to lower pensions for new hires, the four unions agreed to boost the pension contributions from current workers to 10 percent of pay, up from 5 to 8 percent contributed now depending on the union.

The powerful California Public Employees Retirement System board last week ordered an 18 percent increase in the employer contribution from the state in the fiscal year beginning next month. The new state rates range from 20 to 33 percent of pay.

The tentative agreements have an “anti-spiking” provision aimed at manipulations to boost pensions. Pay used to calculate pensions would be broadened from the final year to the last three years, a safeguard already in a number of state contracts.

Meanwhile, some local governments also are cutting pension costs this year. Action in at least 62 local government agencies ranges from considering proposals to completed contract amendments, the CalPERS board was told last week.

“There is no cookie-cutter approach,” said Pat Macht, the CalPERS public affairs director. She mentioned lower benefits for new hires, higher worker contributions, anti-spiking, extended retirement ages, and “golden handshakes” to encourage retirement.

The CalPERS report and tracking done for Dave Low, chairman of a public employee union coalition on retirement issues, show that some local governments are not following the Highway Patrol this time.

Rolling back police and firefighter pensions all the way to the pre-SB 400 formula, “2 at 50,” reportedly has been discussed by city managers in the San Francisco east bay and executives in a half dozen Sacramento area counties.

A decade ago, the Highway Patrol was a clear leader with the “three at 50” formula. Local governments are under pressure in labor talks to meet or exceed benefits offered by other agencies, a competition some say “ratchets up” pensions.

Data from the giant California Public Employees Retirement System, handling pensions for 1,568 local governments, shows that none of its plans were as generous as "three at 50" before SB 400, said an Assembly Republican report earlier this year.

Now 64.7 percent of local public safety plans in CalPERS have the Highway Patrol's trendsetting "three at 50" formula, said the report, but about a third still have lower benefits.

Although SB 400 helped boost local public safety pensions, the report suggests that some of the motivation for the landmark legislation was that state worker pensions in the largest job classification, "miscellaneous," trailed local government pensions.

"More plans that offer SB 400-level benefit formulas were adopted before the implementation of SB 400 (913 plans) than were adopted after (640 plans)," said the Assembly Republican report.

Now 99 percent of local plans have miscellaneous formulas equal or better than SB 400, up from 58 percent before the legislation.

Benefits for miscellaneous state workers were increased by SB 400 from "two at 60" to "two at 55." The "two at 60," still a little-used option, was a reduction enacted under former Gov. Pete Wilson in 1991.

SB 400 also took the unusual step of authorizing a retroactive increase in pension payments to retirees, ranging from 1 percent to persons who retired in 1997 to 6 percent to persons who retired in 1974 or earlier.

CalPERS told legislators that the benefit increases in SB 400 would be mainly paid for by investment earnings, resulting in little change in state costs for a decade. But the state payment to CalPERS, $150 million in 2000, is $3.9 billion in the new fiscal year.

Much of the dramatic increase is because CalPERS, with a surplus from a booming economy, gave the state a contribution "holiday" in 2000, dropping the state payment from $1.2 billion several years earlier.

As local government officials in some areas talk about area-wide agreements that could help "ratchet down" pension costs, would a reduction in Highway Patrol pensions cause the state prison guard union to do the same?

Probably not, but there is some irony.

The California Correctional Peace Officers Association has made perhaps the biggest gains among state worker unions of recent decades, often by negotiating pay and other benefits linked to the Highway Patrol.

But after personal attacks on Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, with portable billboards towed around the Capitol and other tactics, the union has worked with an expired contract since 2006 and may be waiting for a new governor next year.

Reporter Ed Mendel covered the Capitol in Sacramento for nearly three decades, most recently for the San Diego Union-Tribune. More stories are at http://calpensions.com/ Posted 23 Jun 10

South Bay business calendar

The Daily Breeze

From staff reports
Posted: 06/22/2010

Import/export workshop

Thursday. The Small Business Development Center is offering a free Import/Export Orientation, from 1 to 4 p.m. at El Camino College Business Training Center, 13430 Hawthorne Blvd., Hawthorne. Call 310-973-3177 for an appointment.

<u>The Compton Bulletin – June 17, 2010</u>

Some outraged over Juneteenth event's Black stereotypes

Citing it as the perpetration of negative Black stereotypes, some Comptonites are upset about what they said is the inappropriate way in which the city's annual Juneteenth celebration, which is scheduled for this Saturday, June 19, is being marketed. For at least the last four years, Councilwoman Barbara Calhoun's annual event has offered attendees free watermelon and red soda water, as well as dominoes and bid whist tournaments. These will again be offered this year and are included in both print and radio advertisements. This has sparked outrage among locals who say such offerings effectively turn what should be a day of reflection on slavery and the accomplishments of Blacks into Compton's very own "cookout" similar to the offensive and racist "Compton Cookout" party held by UC San Diego students earlier this year. WillowWalk resident April Showers said in a June 11 blog comment on HubCityLivin.com that she is disgusted that the city would celebrate such stereotypes.

The blog, authored by HCL creator Maurice Harrington on June 10, sarcastically asks if fried chicken will also be served. "Yes, I am disgusted by the marketing of this even, which is supposed to be a celebration of African-American freedom and achievement. It is supposed to encourage continuous self-development and respect for all cultures. Instead, it is shaping up to be a cookout — Compton style," he wrote. Several people said they planned to speak out about the matter at last night's council meeting.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:
Residents will boycott Barbara Calhoun's Juneteenth because she voted to bring back the Compton police. CONTROL, CONTROL, CONTROL is the only thing Mayor and Deputy District Attorney Eric J. Perrodin knows because of his dictatorship form of governing. He has proven himself to be a control freak with two of his greatest recipients being Councilwomen Barbara Calhoun (whom the people will not vote back into office) and Lillie Dobson (who's being recalled reading the bottom line). Perrodin has violated the civil rights of the citizens; violated the city charter; had the code enforcement officers put residents out of council meetings because he couldn't handle the truth; and had City Attorney Craig Cornwell change the city charter to benefit the mayor. Perrodin committed nepotism with his brother and cronyism with his former Sunday school teacher Verna Porter and her daughter.

Eric cost the city more than $200,000 for excessive force as a Compton policeman. Now he wants to control the Compton Police Department? Businesses will leave and the city will go straight to hell with the taxpayers enduring the enormous cost. Perrodin, City Manager Charles Evans, Assistant City Manager Rico Smith and everyone who said it would cost less than $20 million to bring back the CPD are liars and need to be in jail for their corruption. They know damn well it'll cost over $50 million.

People say Calhoun and Dobson are idiots who sit on the dais and imitate leaders of Compton without knowing what the hell they are doing and aren't good representatives for the residents.

Dobson says she doesn't live at 7422 Colby Circle in Westminster, yet, recently, an answering machine message (with her voice on the recording) was disconnected at that address. She never said she didn't live there when she was appointed and about two years following.

Poor Calhoun is caught in a "Catch-22 situation" because she has done some unsavory deals for the mayor's campaign. Now, she is in the "BIG" times with her Juneteenth celebration at the golf course as a gift from the mayor for her vote. Taxpayers' dollars have paid for that event (costing over $400,000 if Danny Bakewell is involved). It's probably a sneaky way for her to collect campaign dollars from the taxpayers. The peasants will feast on watermelon and red soda water while VIP guests will receive a meal box lunch. Latinos are upset there hasn't been a celebration for one of their Mexican events, yet, there has been much money spent on celebrations for African Americans. Residents say they've had enough taxation without representation and lack of respect with their appearances at the council meeting. The chambers was packed with articulate people addressing the mayor and Council with their disdain for Compton police returning two weeks ago. Perrodin hasn't denied he will hire former cops to work a year in order to receive full retirement from Compton. The community leaders will meet with Compton's residents on June 19 at Compton College to hold their own town hall meeting to discuss issues.

The residents will win in 2010!
Joyce Kelly
3rd District

The Compton Bulletin, June 22, 2010

Former mayor attends community town hall to stop CPD comeback

Former Mayor, Omar Bradley made his first public appearance in years this past Saturday, when he attended a community town hall meeting hosted by activists opposed to the re-establishment of a local police department.

Bradley cast one of the deciding votes in 1999, when the previous administration voted to shut down the department, which was then mired in charges of widespread corruption and political scandal.

Organizers of the meeting, hosted at Compton Center by resident William Kemp's nonprofit organization, Citizens for a Greater Compton, said they were as shocked as the rest of the attendees when Bradley showed up.

Though he has been out of prison and back in Compton for roughly five years, the ex-mayor has kept a low profile.

Bradley, along with former Councilman Amen Rahh and former City Manager John Johnson, was convicted in 2004 of misappropriation of public funds for his use of a city-issued credit card.

The former mayor has long maintained his innocence, saying he was set up by a group of individuals he claims have a stake in keeping him silent. He believes his arrest, prosecution and subsequent conviction was a conspiracy among certain individuals at City Hall, from the former Compton Police Department — including current Mayor Eric J. Perrodin, a former CPD officer and the brother of a former CPD captain — the District Attorney's Office — the mayor's current employer — and the L.A. Superior Court system, among others.

The meeting, which attracted roughly 80 residents throughout the three-hour series of informal presentations and ample question-and-answer period, addressed three main topics. They include a ballot initiative former City Clerk Charles Davis plans to place on the November ballot that would allow residents to vote on whether or not the city should bring back the CPD at this time; a recall effort targeting Perrodin and Councilwoman Lillie Dobson based on their casting affirmative votes June 1, when the Council voted 3-2 to relaunch the CPD; and what organizers said are the facts surrounding re-establishing a local police department, which they say will cost much more than the city claims, resulting in a property tax increase.

Residents, most of them homeowning seniors who said they want the Sheriff 's Department to stay in Compton, discussed fighting the city's plan to bring back the police department. Some rallied the crowd to begin attending council meetings and speaking during public comments in order to make their voices heard.

At one point, discussion turned to the city's current financial state and the fact that while it has not paid the Sheriff's Department for services rendered since November 2009 — it is supposed to make payments on a monthly basis — officials continue to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars throwing special events like this past weekend's Juneteenth celebration, which could cost the city more than $200,000 once all expenses are paid. Davis read a list of special events and parties the city has hosted during the current fiscal year and the amounts spent on each. The running total was just under $1 million. The funds used to cover these events are taken from the same account from which the city is supposed to pay for its law enforcement services, he said.

The June 19 meeting also served as a boycott of the Juneteenth celebration, which as of last Tuesday, had cost the city more than $169,000, according to warrants issued to Chris Miller, who assisted in organizing the concert. Several of the more vociferous attendees rallied the audience, saying they must heed the lessons of the civil rights movement and organize in order to take their city back.

"It's time for us to come together," said 75-year-old William Colvin. "They are taking advantage of us because we are not together. "We've got to do it, people. We've got to stand up and let them know. We've got to come out in force and let them know," Colvin continued, "we put 'em up there and we can take 'em down."

Following the meeting, Kemp told The Bulletin that he thought the turnout was decent and expects more folks to attend moving forward as word spreads. Similar meetings will be hosted monthly, he said.

Former mayor speaks out

Bradley did not stay for the entire meeting. About 30 minutes into it, he used his turn to speak to rally the residents in attendance. He touched on the controversy surrounding the CPD during its final days and the reasons behind his administration's split vote to shut the department down.

Perrodin and other current city officials have long said that the reasons were purely political, but Bradley contends that there was much more going on with the CPD than the community is aware of.

Too many youth were being shot and killed senselessly in the streets, he said, and response times were sometimes up to an hour or more. The department was too busy running drugs and guns to various local gangs, he said, instead of doing the job it was charged with — protecting and serving the community.

Toward the end of his first speech, he and Davis narrowly avoided entering into a verbal tussle, with Bradley accusing both Davis and Kemp of acting like Perrodin in their attempts to get him to wrap up his comments.

Perrodin and his administration have for the past two years attacked citizens' rights to free speech, kicking out of meetings residents who speak against the City Council, cutting off the microphone while speakers criticize the mayor and Council and even reorganizing how meetings are held in order to place limitations on when residents are allowed to speak on agenda items.

Bradley said the current administration is "stealing democracy."

His impassioned speeches were well-received by the crowd, with a number of audience members rising to their feet and cheering. Joyce Kelly and Lynne Boone, two local activists who almost weekly attend

council meetings to speak against various agenda items and share what they say is vital information with the community during public comments, helped host the meeting with Kemp and Davis. They said that Bradley is not involved in the recall or the ballot initiative and that Bradley's appearance was not staged.

Perrodin has often claimed that Bradley aims to reclaim the mayoral seat, but Bradley told The Bulletin that nothing could be further from the truth. He said he is concerned about public safety in the community and simply wants to clear his name. “The issue is not about Omar Bradley, Eric Perrodin or Walter Tucker,” he said to the crowd. “This is about public safety.

“You see, the reason why those people (the Council) are so callous about your safety” is that “they do not live in Compton,” Bradley continued. “How long are you gonna take this? If you let that police department come back, there are gonna be babies and children” dead in the streets.

During the two times he spoke, Bradley briefly mentioned the election fraud that resulted in Perrodin’s winning the 2001 election, when, according to court documents, more than 150 people who do not exist cast ballots for the current mayor, certain individuals voted more than once using their maiden names and ballot boxes were stuffed.

Bradley challenged the election in court and won the case, resulting in a judge placing him back in office. Perrodin appealed the decision and was successful, resulting in an appellate court judge placing Perrodin back in office in 2002.

Before he left, Bradley imparted to the crowd a final suggestion regarding stopping the CPD’s impending return.

“Tell him (Perrodin) ‘Hell no!’”

Local teacher one of county’s best
Compton educator recognized for creativity, devotion to young children

A local preschool teacher who is pushing the boundaries of the average preschool curriculum has been selected as a Preschool Teacher of the Year in Los Angeles County.

Gwendolyn Crews, founder and operator of Juniorversity preschool located at 2400 S. Central Ave. was recently announced as one of six preschool teachers countywide to receive the honor.

The award, first given in 2008, is sponsored by Los Angeles County Universal Preschool. It recognizes preschool teachers who go above and beyond the call of duty to better prepare students for school and for their future lives.

Crews and husband Bobby Crews started the Juniorversity Preschool when she decided to expand her daycare business, Little Lambs Training Center in Carson. “We started with a home-based child care operation, then opened Little Lambs,” she said. “The business grew so rapidly that we decided to create a learning center. We started Juniorversity in 2006 to put into practice teaching techniques that we had developed through our own experience with small children.

Since then our enrollment has grown from 11 to 50 students.”

Crews can currently be seen on a successful television infomercial for Dr. Robert Titzer’s “Your Baby Can Read” learning system. “I was introduced to this system by a friend, and we decided to put it to the test at Juniorversity,” she said. “I’m very happy to say we were astounded at how well it worked and how well the first students we used it on have done in their early grades of school.”

Crews said that the Your Baby Can Read system is typical of her creative approach to early childhood development and learning.

She works with her daughter, Dr. Sabra Smith, who has five degrees in childhood development and education, to create a curriculum that is successfully broadening the boundaries of what can be learned by children during the preschool years.

“My daughter and I both found, through our own personal experience with young children, that most curriculum and development ideas in common practice do not really answer to the needs of children at this age,” she said. “We found that they are more eager to learn than many people realize and that they can learn more than we had thought.

“They are capable of problem solving and overcoming obstacles as well as learning finer eye-hand-brain coordination,” Crews continued.

“We give each child hands-on attention and work to develop his or her own unique abilities.”

Crews enrolled at Compton Community College when she was “well over 30,” earning an associate degree. She went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in child development.

A companion and partner in her education was her husband. “I needed to have someone my own age for company when I went back to school,” she said with a laugh. “I got Bobby to go with me. He ended up getting his associate degree, then went on to get a bachelor’s in child development, too.”

Now the two of them work side by side at Juniorversity. “He’s my right hand,” she said of the retired Northwest Airlines freight supervisor.

“He may be retired from Northwest, but he hasn’t retired from life. We are both very happy with our careers in early childhood education.”

In addition to teaching children about community service, Crews frequently purchases clothes for low-income children and sends food home with them if she thinks they would not have something to eat in the evening.

Her future plans include a nationwide Juniorversity franchise network. “I want to make our program available for all children, no matter what their family’s financial situation may be,” she said. “And I don’t see myself retiring anytime soon. I keep trying but it just doesn’t take.”

Crews was nominated for the award by Sokcheara Razo, office manager at Juniorversity. “Gwendolyn has a wonderful vision and a creative mind,” Razo told The Bulletin. “She has her own unique way of teaching small children, and everything she does is for the benefit of the students.”

Crews is one of six preschool teachers in the county who will receive Teacher of the Year awards, which will be presented on July 13 at a reception to be held at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration in Los Angeles. The recipients will also be honored at the Board of Supervisors meeting on the same day with the presentation of a proclamation.

Los Angeles County Universal Preschool is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase accessibility to preschool among all children

The Economic Madness Of Cutting Pension Benefits
by: Robert Cruickshank
Sun Jun 20, 2010 at 12:00:00 PM PDT

As pension reform heats up, both here in California and in Congress, it's important to understand the underlying economic context - and why slashing benefits would be a stunning act of madness, likely to prolong our recession and budget problems instead of solving either one, at the expense of our basic standard of living.

We live in an economic era characterized by too much debt, itself a symptom of low wages and high costs of living. Although much of our media discussion of economic policy is still locked in the 1970s, obsessed with an obsolete worry about inflation, the reality is that households are not making enough money to pay the costs of living in 21st century California.

High taxes aren't the problem - how could they when taxes are at their lowest point in 60 years? No, the problems come from elsewhere. As Dave Johnson showed in charts, wage stagnation that began with Ronald Reagan has led to a decline in the savings rate and a massive concentration of wealth at the higher end of the income scale.

Meanwhile, the cost of living has soared. Gas prices are now permanently at a level unimaginable at any time after 1981, and are likely to rise for the foreseeable future. Health care costs are still rising at an unaffordable rate. Even with the market crash, housing is still unaffordable to most Californians unless they're willing to move to the urban fringe, savings which are canceled out by the cost of the commute.

Overall the economic situation is that of what Richard Koo called a balance sheet recession - where the private sector is scaling back on spending to purge debt, creating a long-term recessionary environment. The only solution is to increase wages and create more jobs. The absolute **last** thing you want to do is to slash wages - or pensions, for that matter.

Cutting pensions would be like taking a shotgun, aiming it at our feet, and pulling the trigger. It would cause a cascade of economic problems that would dramatically worsen our economic crisis.

But that's exactly what some people are now arguing needs to be done. Last week Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced a pension reform deal with several state employee unions, including AFSCME. The deal preserves current pension payments, and creates a two-tier system whereby new hires pay more of their wages into the system. It's not an ideal solution, but it's better than the alternative.

In assessing the pension deals, California political commentator and friend Joe Mathews argues that the deals don't go far enough, and that what's needed is to slash the benefits of current workers.

Below the flip is my explanation of why this is a very reckless approach, and if implemented, would produce long-term recession.

Here's Joe Mathews' response to the pension deals:
Current workers, particularly baby boomers, are virtually certain to get so much more out of the system than they pay into it that they ought to be arrested for generational theft. They need to take more of the hit for this. That's a difficult position to take, politically and legally, but it's also the right one.

I could not disagree with this more strongly if I tried. There are many things wrong with this assessment, and I'll take them in turn.

First, the "generational theft" argument. Generational theft is a very real problem. Young folks, those of us under 35, have been systematically robbed for the last 30 years. Our K-12 education was weakened through budget cuts. We were made to take on unaffordable student loans to get the same university education that our elders received for a fraction of the price. Older generations use Prop 13 to subsidize their own wealth while making it almost impossible for younger Californians to purchase a home of their own. When teabaggers in their 50's complain about debt because of the burden it will leave to the young, they are shedding crocodile tears, because they are systematically destroying the future of those same young people they misleadingly claim to care about.

But that does not mean the answer is to engage in our own generational warfare by slashing their pensions. Already many retired Californians struggle to make ends meet. Too many have to choose between pills and other costs, including housing costs. Cutting the pensions of those already retired would merely redistribute those costs onto everyone else, working people already struggling with low wages and high costs of living.

Mathews didn't appear to be calling for slashing pensions to those already retired, but for those currently working. But the outcome would be the same anyway. I'm 30, and my parents are in their mid-50s. One is fully vested in CalSTRS, the other has lost most of their 401k retirement to the market downturn. I cannot possibly imagine how my economic future would be improved if they had less money at retirement. I'd have to make up the difference if they had medical costs, housing costs, or other costs that they might struggle to afford of their state pensions and their Social Security benefits are slashed.

In fact, it would be yet another form of generational warfare against my generation if the pensions of my parents and their generation are slashed.

The better solution is to go after the massive wealth possessed by the top end of the income scale. California is still an extremely wealthy state. We just don't tax most of that wealth, and we should. ~~Yet Mathews argues we shouldn't do it. Nowhere in his column does he indicate higher taxes should be on the table.~~ Mathews suggests that the wealthy and corporations should "give back," but frames it as a general call for sacrifice, when in fact we need a fundamentally different approach to taxation that seeks new revenues from the rich without slashing benefits for others.

Instead he makes this sound like we have no alternative but to cut pension benefits. Remember what he said in the section I quoted above:

They need to take more of the hit for this. That's a difficult position to take, politically and legally, but it's also the right one.

It's neither necessary nor right that current workers see their benefits cut. We have choices, and one of those options is to raise taxes on the wealthy to bring in the revenue we need to sustain current pensions.

Of course, we also have to remember that the current bill for pensions is artificially inflated because of the recession. If we have economic recovery and growth, then state pension funds will be in a much stronger position. But if we give in to the desire to have widespread austerity, recovery will collapse, the state budget deficit will grow and persist, and the pension funds will continue to struggle.

California's unions understand this basic reality. Mathews argues they don't:

But these unions are one important part of the problem. While they don't always seem to recognize it, they have a strong interest in being part of solutions to make state government fiscally solvent.

And yet the solution being proposed - slashing benefits - will do absolutely nothing to make state government fiscally solvent. It will mean there's less money available to spend, meaning less sales tax revenue. Less consumer activity means there'll be less jobs available, meaning less income tax revenue. With fewer jobs available, and wage stagnation, and now the added financial burden of paying the costs of retired family members that used to be borne by the pensions and other state services that have been cut, younger folks won't be able to sustain the economy. Retirees and baby boomers will have to sell their homes for the cash, and in a recessionary environment where the young aren't able to afford the present market value, home values will spiral downward, causing further economic ripple effects as well as reducing property tax revenues.

It is a senseless outcome. California's unions are absolutely right to fight it. While they are framed as solely defending the wages and benefits of their members - as if there was anything wrong with that - these unions are also defending the economic prosperity and fiscal viability of the state of California. Their unwillingness to embrace deflation and depression should be lauded, not chided.

Mathews concludes by reasserting his claim that slashing benefits is necessary to our state's future:

But savings on pension obligations can't be the only money that elected officials and voters grab to balance the budget and put the state on a better long-term footing. Everyone needs to give back -- from those who rely on public services to the wealthy and corporations, who have seen their taxes cut even as Californians experience government service cuts and income and sales tax increases.

Of course, those income and sales tax increases have not damaged the state's economy. Since they went into effect in April 2009, the state has experienced a very halting and slow recovery - but it has not slid deeper into the recession. Had those tax increases not been accompanied by Hooverism - including but not limited to the loss of nearly 30,000 teaching jobs - California might be starting a more robust economic recovery.

More importantly, the notion that "everyone needs to give back" just doesn't make sense given our economic distress. We've already given back too much. We gave back our wages. We gave back our ability to afford health care and housing and transportation. We gave back the robust public sector services that created widespread prosperity in the 1950s and 1960s. We gave back affordable, quality education. And too many of us have given back our future.

No, it's time for someone else to give back. It's time for the wealthiest Californians, and the large corporations, to give back. For 30 years now they have benefited from economic policy designed to take money and benefits from the rest of us and give it to those who already have wealth and power. Mathews agrees the wealthy and corporations should give back - but that ought to be the centerpiece of the solution, instead of being linked to a downward spiral in living standards and economic prosperity.

We are now experiencing the predictable outcome of such policies - the worst recession in 60 years, an intractable downturn. The way out isn't to worsen the crisis by slashing pensions. The way out is to return to the sensible tax rates of the 1950s and 1960s and make the rich pay.

It's the right choice for California. Let's hope that's the choice we wind up making.

The Wrong Metaphor
Inside Higher Ed
By Dean Dad June 22, 2010 9:59 pm

My town is dealing with the same economic pressures as most -- declining state aid, declining tax revenues -- so it's facing some unpleasant budgetary choices. (The culprit behind declining state aid is mostly Medicaid. Until we get a handle on that, we're in trouble. But that's another post.)

Recently a few members of the city council proposed exacting some nasty cuts on the public school budget. Word got out, and I and a few hundred other people attended an astonishingly long meeting to discuss the plan. After a few obligatory pleasantries, the meeting went to the 'public comment' section, in which members of the public at large got to address the council (and the audience). Several dozen people spoke, myself included, and most followed what amounted to a script:

I have lived here for x years. I have x number of kids in the schools. I am shocked and appalled that the council would consider selling out the children. Children are the future. etc.

Listening to the speakers, I realized why it all seemed so familiar. It played like a particularly bad all-faculty meeting! It had the ritualistic indignation, the demagoguery, the direct and very affronted personal accusations, the recitations of litanies, the occasional moonbat, and a coercive level of groupthink. And I say that actually having agreed with the position the audience took!

Watching the council members up on stage, I realized that they face pretty much the exact same thing academic administrators face.

Most of the management literature assumes a for-profit setting, in which managers have the power to decide who they want on the bus. In tenured academia, though, that's not the case. You inherit people, and you can't get rid of them, no matter how toxic they might be. The partisans of tenure -- you know who you are -- rarely, if ever, address what that means for administration; they typically just assume (without actually saying) that something like a self-governing anarcho-syndicalist commune would be ideal, preferably with some distant external agency underwriting it. That is, until someone is mean to them.

But in public higher ed, something like 'local politician' comes closer to the truth. You have to maintain your poise while being viciously attacked by people who aren't accountable for what they say. Instead of focusing on making the right decisions, you focus largely on process. (In this setting, even the right decision can be wrong simply because you made it.) You have to maintain good working relationships with people who get on your nerves, and even with people who go out of their way to defeat you just for the sheer hell of it. There's a constant tension between high purpose and nagging detail.

The metaphor matters because the skills of a good local politician are different from the skills of a corporate manager. The shoot-from-the-hip autocratic style can work in a single-purpose setting, but it’s a train wreck waiting to happen in a setting in which cross-purposes are normal and you can’t just fire people. What looks like ‘insubordination’ in one setting is considered ‘a healthy exchange’ in another. And the ability to not take it personally is unevenly distributed.

In this case, the good guys won. The schools were spared the nasty cuts, and the town found other ways of coping. A painfully long, very healthy exchange led to a reasonable outcome. Everybody left intact. For all the barbed language, nobody was so estranged as to prevent future collaboration. It wasn’t pretty, but it worked. There’s a lesson in there somewhere...

Video Lectures May Slightly Hurt Student Performance
The Chronicle of Higher Education

June 21, 2010,
By Sophia Li

No clear winner emerges in the contest between video and live instruction, according to the findings of a recent study led by David N. Figlio, a professor of education and social policy at Northwestern University. The study found that students who watched lectures online instead of attending in-person classes performed slightly worse in the course over all.

A previous analysis by the U.S. Department of Education that examined existing research comparing online and live instruction favored online learning over purely in-person instruction, according to the working paper by Mr. Figlio and his colleagues, which was released this month by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

But Mr. Figlio's study contradicted those results, showing that live instruction benefits Hispanic students, male students, and lower-achieving students in particular.

Colleges and universities that are turning to video lectures because of their institutions' tight budgets may be doing those students a disservice, said Mark Rush, a professor of economics at the University of Florida and one of the working paper's authors.

More research will be necessary, however, before any definite conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of video lectures, said Lu Yin, a graduate student at the University of Florida who worked on the project. Future research could study the effectiveness of watching lectures online for topics other than microeconomics, which was the subject of the course evaluated in the study, Ms. Yin said.

At City College, a Battle Over Remedial Classes for English and Math

New York Times
By CAROL POGASH
Published: June 24, 2010

At City College of San Francisco, one of the country's largest public universities, thousands of struggling students pour into remedial English and math classes — and then the vast majority disappear, never to receive a college degree.

When Steve Ngo, a 33-year-old college trustee, learned that many minority students, among others, faced two-and-a-half years, or five semesters, of remedial English classes and a year and a half of math at the two-year college, he was shocked into action. His campaign for a one-year sequence of remedial courses ignited a campus furor, with students and a few trustees on one side and faculty members, irate about the intrusion of trustees on academic turf, on the other.

Mr. Ngo's less-than-collegial campaign was expected to prevail. On Thursday night, Don Q. Griffin, the college's chancellor, was to present a proposal for a shortened remedial curriculum, designed to get students into college-level courses more quickly.

While the battle — which Hal Huntsman, the former president of the Academic Senate, likened to a civil war — was about trustees' dictating policies to professors, everyone agreed that the achievement gap, with blacks and Latinos on one side and whites and most Asians on the other, needed fixing.

Some 90 percent of new C.C.S.F. students who take the placement test are unprepared for introductory English 1A; 70 percent are not ready for basic math. There are more remedial math and English classes at the school than college-level classes, the chancellor said. As with community colleges around the country, C.C.S.F., which has 100,000 students, has adopted a role well outside its mission of boosting students into four-year colleges.

Some freshmen do not know that "one-half and .5 represent the same number," said Dennis Piontkowski, chairman of the mathematics department. "We don't want to keep students in math classes forever, but you can't just snap your fingers and bring them up to college level."

Students are leaving high school with a diploma, but "most are testing at middle-school reading comprehension" and many at elementary-school level, said James Sauvé, an English department instructor in charge of revising the remediation classes.

The college's 2009 equity report showed that just 4 percent of black students and 7 percent of Hispanic students who began English remedial classes at the bottom rung eventually completed English 1A. The rest are lost, either failing to enroll, failing a class or dropping out. The number for white students — 12 percent — is not much better.

"If you put people in remediation and they don't succeed, what's the point?" said Steven Spurling, the assistant director of institutional research, who crunched the numbers. "If you elongate the educational process, people will eventually drop out."

Nationally, City College of San Francisco's two-and-a-half year remedial English sequence is one of the longer routes, said Thomas Bailey, director of Community College Research Center at Columbia University Teachers College.

Katie Hern, a Chabot College English instructor who researches remediation, said: "Placement becomes destiny. Students who take Chabot's more intensive one-semester English remediation course pass college-level English at twice the rate of those who took the college's two-semester course."

For faculty members "who devoted their lives to helping students learn," Ms. Hern said, "it's hard to accept that providing more courses can be harmful."

Beth Cataldo, a basic-skills coordinator at C.C.S.F., said that to blame the length of the remedial classes for student dropout, was "a little naïve."

"It's a community issue," Ms. Cataldo said. "We have a whole underclass of the undereducated who tend to be African American and Latinos.

"Here we are in the most progressive city in the nation, and nobody's talking about it."

Lerone Matthis, a business major, took six semesters of remedial math before he could take college-level math classes. With two children and a job, Mr. Matthis, who once was homeless, said he was "one of the more motivated students."

"I've had great teachers in English and a few in math," he said.

Not every course was helpful, though.

Mr. Matthis pointed to one essay and reading class that, he said, "was nothing but global warming," adding, "I didn't become a better writer from that class."

He said that extending the sequence of remedial classes was “a runaround,” and that he had a lot of friends who “just gave up.”

On top of these practical issues, the college’s 2009 equity report found that larger percentages of black, Filipino, Latino, Pacific Islander and Southeast Asian students wanted four-year degrees than did their Asian and white counterparts. Yet, according to the report, those same groups — except for Southeast Asians — transfer to four-year schools at significantly lower rates than Asians and whites. The graduation or transfer rate for blacks is 24 percent; for Latinos it is 23 percent. For white non-Hispanics, it is 31 percent.

Those statistics, and the students’ concerns, galvanized Mr. Ngo, a trustee who is a Vietnamese-American lawyer who is not easily intimidated “The board has a role in saying the system has to change,” he said. “Why else are we here?”

With two other young board members — Chris Jackson, 27, who is black, and Joshua Nielsen, 25, the former president of the student body, Mr. Ngo organized “equity hearings,” forums for students to voice their concerns about the achievement gap.

Mr. Ngo then produced a draft resolution that directed the English and math departments to offer a sequence of pre-college English and math classes “in a length no longer than two semesters.”

Faculty members were outraged. One called Mr. Ngo a fascist. The trustee was accused of violating the education code and of “imperiling” the college’s accreditation, an accusation that the chancellor said he was not aware of. Mr. Ngo received e-mail that attacked his “top-down attempt at micro managing,” and that said he had polarized the campus, setting off “a firestorm of faculty anger.”

At a special Academic Senate meeting in March to address the issue, Mr. Nielsen, the student trustee, tried to speak in support of a shorter remedial program before his microphone was cut off and security was called. Resentful professors criticized Mr. Ngo’s resolution, countering with one of their own, which resolved to work collegially to close the achievement gap and specifying that in academic matters, faculty members “have primacy.”

Mr. Ngo does not agree with that point of view. “They think it’s their college,” he said later. “They don’t think they have to be accountable to the public.”

Still, he withdrew his draft and apologized to the faculty, although he said he had no real regrets for what he had done.

In the spring, Chancellor Griffin “told the bunch of sides to cut it out,” said Mr. Sauvé, the English professor.

In a college-wide memo that tried to smooth the situation, the chancellor said there would be major changes in English and math remediation course sequences. He told the math and English departments to come up with solutions for spring 2011.

At Thursday night's trustees' meeting, the chancellor was expected to make public the math and English department plans for shortened, more intensive sequences of remediation classes to begin next spring. The English department was expected to continue its two-and-a-half year track while giving students a choice of a new intensive one-and-a-half year program. The math department was expected to keep its current track of a year and a half of remediation, while also offering more condensed classes to allow students to complete the cycle in a year.

Mr. Ngo said that if he had not drafted his resolution, there would be no new offerings in the spring.

"I would have been patted on the head and told to move along," he said. "And when my term ended, nothing would have changed."

Competing Principles
Inside Higher Ed
June 28, 2010

A governance dispute between trustees and the faculty at City College of San Francisco has everyone at the college talking about how course design can improve completion rates in remedial English and math. Now that a compromise has been reached, the institution may just be able to do something about it.

The conflict began earlier this year when a group of the college's trustees organized "equity hearings" aimed at figuring out why minority students were overrepresented in the college's remedial courses and if they were shortchanged by a sequence that did not get them "college ready" until they had completed, on average, two-and-a-half years of remedial English and a year and a half of math. The trustees argued that there must be a better way to structure the remedial track and encouraged the faculty to offer a one-year, or two-semester, track for all remedial students to get "college ready."

City College enrolls about 100,000 students. Nearly 90 percent of new students at the college start in remedial English, and about 70 percent of them start in remedial math. A college report from last year shows that only 4 percent of black students and 7 percent of Latino students who started at the lowest level of remedial English eventually made it to college-level courses. For white students who started at the same level, only 12 percent made it to college-level English.

Faculty members did not take kindly to a mandate from the trustees to make curricular changes – decisions they think, by and large, should be made by professors.

"There's been a fair amount of contention about the process here," said Karen Saginor, president of the Academic Senate and a tenured librarian at the college. "Under state law, any curricular decisions have to be made by faculty. The normal process is that the departments that are affected write proposals. In this case, a couple of trustees wrote a resolution saying that the curriculum will be like this, and that was just not really the way to do it."

Still, many faculty members are sympathetic to the argument that the remedial track, especially in English and math, takes way too long to complete, leading many students to leave college before reaching college courses. Faculty would just have preferred to bring forth concerns about it themselves.

"The really controversial aspect of this was that some individuals, including those who were not in English and math who felt the process is way too slow, went and talked to the trustees to try to move it along," Saginor said. "I grant you, the process isn't very fast, but the process has been moving. But, you know how it is, people want to see change happen now. For some students we want to make [remediation] happen as soon as possible, but others are at the fourth or fifth grade level. It's hard to get someone through who's not yet constructing complete sentences and has shaky grammar. It takes time and effort. There's a big learning curve there."

From many trustees' perspective, however, waiting for faculty to come to a consensus on how to improve remediation would simply take too long and hurt those students already in the pipeline – hence their call to action.

"There's a tremendous amount of give and take and politics and turf battles at educational institutions," said Milton Marks, president of the Board of Trustees and one of the original sponsors of the resolution to shorten the remedial track. "Also, there's a culture at City College where people would prefer the board not do anything. Some faculty have taken this to mean that nobody should mess with them and that they can't be questioned. But as a board, we are people who are demanding a higher level of accountability than ever before. Now, for the first time that I've been involved with the college, everyone is talking about the achievement gap, when for years people didn't want to even admit it. I think that's great."

Marks, who describes himself and many of his trustee colleagues as "activist," noted that the push to speed up remediation was not a "one size fits all approach." In that view, he differs from some of his fellow trustees, who argued that the best track was also the shortest.

"We need to have more flexibility," Marks said. "You have to be nimble enough to accommodate different learning styles. I would like to see students placed into rapid remediation if that's best for them. We need to put students in the right place to enable them to succeed."

Though the conflict between trustees and faculty about the process of changing the curriculum has simmered for months, Saginor does not think it has blinded faculty to doing what is best for students. She, too, expressed her openness to letting the short-term remediation track be one of many options for students to choose from to get "college ready."

"For some students, how many semesters they have to persist is what might be discouraging them to get through, while for other students, there's simply too much to learn in one or two semesters," Saginor said. "I'm leaning in the direction of having more options. Some faculty wouldn't want to do [the rapid remediation] only, as suggested by someone from the board, and find out that it doesn't work very well. We don't want to experiment on students."

Faculty need more evidence before abandoning completely the longer-term remedial tracks, Saginor added.

Compromise between the two sides came in the form of a proposal from Don Q. Griffin, the college's chancellor, Thursday night at the latest trustee meeting. Instead of mandating that the entire remedial track in English and math be shortened to a two-semester maximum, Griffin's proposal introduces the rapid model in steps.

"Let's take 20 percent of the program and do it this way," Griffin said. "Then, after one year, you'll have enough evidence to see how it's working. Then, after two years, maybe you'll have enough data to know what students can profit from this experience and we can convince people of the data. I do expect this rapid model will work."

Though aware of the furor the board’s proposed changes caused among faculty at this institution, Griffin believes the dialogue has ultimately been constructive.

“Debates about the achievement gap and remediation are ones that are engaging everybody in the country,” he added.

— **David Moltz**

Congress pulls back state aid package, leaving a $2-billion hole in California budget

House Democrats kill a $24-billion fund to help cash-strapped states cover costs. States are lobbying hard to have it restored, warning of further devastating cuts to healthcare and social services.

By Richard Simon and Evan Halper, Los Angeles Times
June 3, 2010

Reporting from Washington and Sacramento —
With the federal deficit a growing political liability, lawmakers in Congress are backing off plans to send more aid to financially strapped states, putting in jeopardy billions of dollars that California and others were counting on to balance their budgets.

The potential loss of funds is a significant setback for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and state lawmakers, who may not see nearly $2 billion in federal assistance that they intended to use to help bring California out of the red.

The money was to be California's share of $24 billion in proposed assistance, mostly to cover healthcare spending, spread among all states. Budget experts say that is enough to wipe out about one-fourth of the combined state budget shortfalls.

In California and elsewhere, officials thought the funds were a sure thing. The money was one of the few elements of Schwarzenegger's budget plan on which there was bipartisan agreement. But House Democratic leaders last week stripped the money out of legislation amid election-season jitters.

"This is a serious problem," said Jean Ross, executive director of the California Budget Project, a Sacramento-based nonprofit. "The fear of deficits seems to be overtaking Washington. They are not realizing the bigger threat is the economy could slide back into recession as a result of state and local budget cuts."

In California, the governor has already proposed eliminating the state's welfare program, cancelling state-subsidized day care for hundreds of thousands of low-income children, freezing school spending and making a number of other deep cuts to close a $19.1-billion budget gap.

Failure to get the federal money would surely force more drastic proposals. But even if the state eliminated its entire home healthcare program, which serves 440,000 elderly and disabled Californians, it wouldn't make up for the $1.9 billion the state is now scrambling to secure.

The states have launched a frantic lobbying effort to persuade the U.S. Senate to provide the assistance.

"You've got virtually every governor in the country calling on Congress to do this," said H.D. Palmer, deputy director of the California Department of Finance. "This is not just a California issue. It is a national issue."

The states' efforts come as the Democrats who control Congress face resistance to increased spending from fiscally conservative members of their own caucus, many of whom face tough reelection campaigns in districts where they campaigned on pledges of fiscal discipline. Republicans, meanwhile, have highlighted the federal budget deficit, which could reach $1.5 trillion, in this year's mid-term election campaigns.

Michael Bird, federal affairs counsel for the National Conference of State Legislatures, said securing the funds would be a challenge. "We've got our work cut out for us," he said.

Thirty states have been counting on the additional Medicaid money in their budgets, according to the conference. The money was originally provided in last year's economic stimulus bill — but only through the end of this year.

With unemployment still high, a bipartisan group of governors, with President Obama's support, has sought to extend the funding through mid-2011.

The $24 billion was stripped from a package of unemployment aid and tax breaks by House Democratic leaders in response to the demands of fiscally conservative members of their party to reduce the bill's overall cost. The bill was approved by the House last week and is awaiting action in the Senate.

A spokesman for Rep. Chellie Pingree (D- Maine), a leader in pushing for extension of the Medicaid funding, said that the congresswoman has been assured by Democratic leadership that the issue will come back before the House.

Schwarzenegger has aggressively pushed the California congressional delegation to extend the federal aid to states. He expressed confidence in January that Washington would step forward with as much as $7 billion in new federal assistance, which could be used to close more than a third of California's budget gap.

By May, he acknowledged that was unlikely but suggested the state could safely assume it would receive half that amount. Now the state is facing the prospect of getting barely more than $1 billion.

Among those resisting the governor's push for more assistance are his fellow Republicans in the state's Congressional delegation, who say Washington has its own budget problems.

While the loss of Medicaid funds would hit California hard, the House bill does include provisions that would benefit the state.

Among them is an extension of the Build America Bond program that has been used in California to fund infrastructure projects. There is also $400 million in increased Medicare payments to doctors in a wide swath of the state to address longstanding complaints that low reimbursement rates have discouraged them from taking on new patients.

Legislative leaders at odds over budget

June 26, 2010|

By Evan Halper and Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

Senate president's bipartisan work on earlier budgets has cost him popularity in the Capitol. Labor leaders back freshman Assembly speaker's plan despite its heavy borrowing and questionable legality.

Reporting from Sacramento —
The willingness of Darrell Steinberg, the liberal California state Senate leader, to collaborate across party lines won him a lofty Profile in Courage Award from the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston earlier this year.

But back in Sacramento, some of the power brokers who once nurtured Steinberg's career are less enthralled.

Organized-labor leaders, who hold considerable sway over the Legislature, are working to sideline Steinberg (D-Sacramento) in budget negotiations. They complain that his efforts to compromise too often result in capitulation. They question his loyalty. They wonder if his crusade for a lasting solution to the state's accounting mess is just a liability.

They see an alternative in Democrat John A. Pérez, the rookie Assembly speaker from Los Angeles whose spending proposal would generously fund programs these labor leaders value without piling onerous new taxes onto Californians — mostly through massive borrowing of dubious legality. Pérez is approaching the budget as a rigid partisan, vowing to boycott talks with the governor if Democratic demands are not immediately met.

Steinberg and Pérez are jockeying for position in negotiations. Steinberg says it is time to make the painful policy moves needed to shed the state's reputation for fiscal incompetence. But he is meeting considerable resistance as Pérez essentially proposes postponing the day of reckoning — perhaps until a Democrat is in the governor's office.

Steinberg — who in his decade in the Legislature has chaired fiscal committees and negotiated through the night on budget packages — says he refuses to fret about the politics.

"People think state government has become a joke. I am trying to make things better," he said.

But Steinberg's experience has become a liability. Few were pleased with the last several budget deals, which included painful reductions in government services to keep the state solvent. The other three legislative leaders honored by the Kennedy Library for their role in brokering the February 2009 bipartisan accord that saved the state from financial ruin are no longer in their posts. Two were ousted by their own caucuses.

The California Teachers Assn. recently posted billboards in Steinberg's district implying that he sold out teachers — and his constituents — in previous budget deals.

Another union spent heavily in a bid to defeat a Senate candidate whom Steinberg backed — a move widely interpreted in the Capitol as an attempt to weaken the Senate leader.

Labor leaders expressed further disappointment in Steinberg in a meeting earlier this month when he told them he would not rule out a budget agreement that rolled back some retirement benefits their members receive.

Steinberg says he is becoming accustomed to the attacks. "I used to see a billboard or newspaper story and be upset for a week," he said. "Now it is 15 minutes, maybe a half-hour."

The most frustrating thing about the criticism, he says, is that he still considers himself a true progressive and argues that his voting record reflects as much.

"I have not changed my values, what I came here for," he said. "But in this position you have to govern."

Meanwhile, a campaign has been launched to boost Pérez's budget plan.

The California Faculty Assn. is running radio ads to champion it. The California Labor Federation has encouraged members to pressure legislators to support it. County supervisors across the state are being lobbied to pass resolutions endorsing the plan.

One such resolution being considered in San Francisco says the Pérez plan would protect 465,000 jobs, prevent slashing the social safety net, jump-start the green tech industry and stop cuts to schools. It does not mention borrowing.

"Someone has got to start thinking outside the box in how best to address this problem," said David Sanchez, president of the teachers union. "We are encouraging our members to call senators and tell them to support the Assembly plan."

Pérez and Steinberg say only nice things about each other, even as Capitol corridors are abuzz with gossip of a rivalry. Comments the two made at a recent roast in Steinberg's honor fueled such talk.

Steinberg joked that Pérez had put a lot more thought into his speech ribbing Steinberg than he had put into his budget plan. Pérez expressed mock alarm that Steinberg was sitting near the governor's chief of staff, suggesting that any time the two are in the same room the Senate leader agrees to dismantle another government program.

Pérez, who calls his plan the Assembly "jobs budget," says it is rooted not in political gamesmanship but in sound fiscal policy. He says continuing to shred the social safety net and underfund schools will do substantially more harm to the economy than would pushing the deficit forward.

"Over the last couple of years we have done a lot of buckling down, some of which was absolutely necessary and some of which was situational and shortsighted," he said. "I am not at all apologetic about the fact that my approach is predicated on the notion that it is important for us to stabilize and protect and grow employment in the state of California."

Some measure of borrowing is typical when there is a deficit, but not to the extent Pérez wants. The last time California borrowed so heavily for the budget was in 2004, and voters amended the Constitution at the time to prohibit it from happening again.

With the clock ticking — the new budget year begins July 1 — the viability of the Pérez plan is in doubt. Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown's office sent a letter last week to the governor's legal staff saying the plan appears to run afoul of the borrowing ban. State Treasurer Bill Lockyer said the attorney general's finding alone would probably prohibit him from selling the bond at the center of the plan. And a state audit exposed numerous problems with the pot of state money the Assembly plan proposes to borrow against, further undermining the plan.

Pérez says adjustments are being made. But other Democrats question how much flexibility he has left himself — and has left them — to overhaul the proposal now that so many special interests have become so invested his approach.

The unions "have been organizing a campaign around it and [Pérez] has been organizing a campaign," said Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee Chairwoman Denise Ducheny (D-San Diego). "People have to be cautious about something that just may, on a practical level, not be doable."

Sharing Risk, Sharing Reward
Inside Higher Ed
June 29, 2010

For such a mundane undertaking, reforming a campus's back-office information system can be an expensive and risky prospect for a university CIO.

Larry Conrad knows this. Back when he was the chief information officer at Florida State University, Conrad remembers being called into the president's office as he was about to preside over the implementation of a new information system -- known as an enterprise resource planning system, or ERP.

"He said, 'If a project like this goes bad, you know what happens, right?' " Conrad remembers. "I said, 'Yes: the CIO gets fired.' And he says, 'All right, as long as we're on the same page.' "

With those stakes, one might expect that Conrad would take a conservative tack last year when his new employer, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, decided to install a new ERP to manage its human resources, payroll and finances operations. But at a time when North Carolina, like many other states, is cutting funding to its public universities, Conrad decided to try to go a novel route -- one that he thinks could halve the estimated $10 million cost of switching over to the new system.

In order to do it, though, Conrad would have to join forces with the enemy: North Carolina State University.

OK, maybe that's a little dramatic. But when it comes to recruitment, grants and basketball games, it can be rare to see Chapel Hill reach out to NC State with an unclenched fist.

Three things were different in this case: First, back-office information systems are not major differentiators between institutions; as Conrad puts it, "A faculty member, or a student, or a grant committee is not going to choose one university over another because of a great information system." Second, tangible savings trumps an intangible rivalry when the budget is tight.

Third, Conrad's counterpart at NC State happened to be one of his closest friends; Marc Hoit, the CIO at State, served in the top technology post at the University of Florida when Conrad was technology chief at Florida State. The two had collaborated on several projects, including one to connect Florida's public universities and community colleges to the same high-speed internet backbone -- a project that cut the cost to each institution in half while improving Internet speed by a factor of 10.

Now Conrad and Hoit, by combining their ERP systems that govern human resources, payroll, and finances, think they can spare themselves the trouble of hiring 40 new staff between them. (Chapel Hill would have needed to hire 60 or 70 additional staff to run its new ERP alone, but sharing responsibilities with State would eliminate the need for 40 of those.)

That could save them a combined $3 million or more every year on staff, says Conrad, estimating roughly. Exactly how the two institutions will divvy staff savings has not been determined yet, he says, but the two CIOs say they plan to do so as equitably as possible.

The need for institutions to collaborate on technology is rising, says Conrad. A 2009 survey by the Campus Computing Project revealed that information technology budgets, like many others in higher education, were facing cuts. At the same time, demand for better IT tools is still rising, and those tools are often very expensive, says Conrad. Some colleges spend up to $200 million revamping their ERP systems, he says.

“You need to get a pretty good return to make that a good investment,” says Conrad. Overhauling information systems "sometimes costs more than the savings you get,” he says.

However, the savings are more likely to exceed the cost if systems are implemented at scale, says Hoit. Some state systems have consolidated technology investments, Conrad adds, but such collaborations are most often mandated from the top; voluntary partnerships between institutions that have not been instructed to form them are still relatively uncommon.

Large universities that have similar accounting practices and financial reporting guidelines -- state universities, for example -- can be particularly amenable to such alliances, the CIOs say. With institutions increasingly using electronic data systems and high-speed networks, splitting bureaucratic functions does not require common workspaces or filing cabinets; it takes two or more institutions that have similar data-management protocols and officials who are willing to work together.

Chancellors from both Chapel Hill and NC State last week told *Inside Higher Ed* they were not sure the universities could have agreed to do the collaboration if Conrad and Hoit had not been friends. The two CIOs say they don't know about that, but it certainly did make things easier.

After all, says Conrad, when the CIO’s job might be riding on a successful ERP renovation, it takes a lot of trust to put half of it in someone else's hands.

“Can you only do it if the CIOs are long-term friends? No,” he says. “But it does underscore that this is about trust.… There’s a certain level of betting your job on this. You can’t do this with someone you don’t trust.”

For the latest technology news from Inside Higher Ed, follow IHEtech on Twitter.

— Steve Kolowich

Community Colleges Cutting Back on Open Access

New York Times

By TAMAR LEWIN

Published: June 23, 2010

WALNUT, Calif. — When Giovanny Villalta tried to register for winter-term classes at Mount San Antonio College here, he hit the wall. "I was assigned a late registration slot, and by the time I was allowed to register, everything was full," Mr. Villalta said. "Biology, full. Anatomy, full. Physics, full. Psychology, full. History of Asia, full. Any history class that would count toward transferring to a four-year U.C. campus, full."

So Mr. Villalta, who had been a high school athlete, ended up taking track — and nothing else.

"It was pretty frustrating," he said. "You feel like you're wasting time, and your life's just going by."

In this economy, community colleges are widely seen as the solution to many problems. Displaced workers are registering in droves to earn credentials that might get them back in the game. Strapped parents, daunted by the cost of four-year universities, are encouraging their children to spend two years at the local community college.

President Obama has announced an American Graduation Initiative to produce five million more community college graduates by 2020. There is even a popular television comedy, "Community," set at a two-year college.

"We're more visible now than we ever have been," said George R. Boggs, president of the American Association of Community Colleges.

But for students and professors at overstretched colleges, these are hardly the best of times. With state financing slashed almost everywhere, many institutions have cut so deeply into their course offerings and their faculty rosters that they cannot begin to handle the influx of students.

In some parts of the country, the budget stresses are so serious that the whole concept of community colleges as open-access institutions — where anyone, with any educational background, can enroll at any point in life — is becoming more an aspiration than a reality.

"We have a commitment to educate the top 100 percent of Americans, but this is a tough time," said Martha J. Kanter, under secretary of the federal Department of Education and a former community college president. “Students aren’t getting as many classes as they want, so it’s going to take them longer to get through.”

On the sunny, hilly campus of Mount SAC (as everyone calls it) east of Los Angeles, Ashley Diaz is one of many dispirited students. In each of her three terms at the college, she has been able to get into only one academic class and one dance class, which she has taken three times.

“I came in with some Advanced Placement credits, so I don’t need that many courses before I can transfer to a four-year university,” Ms. Diaz said. “I thought I’d be in and out in a year and a half, maybe two. But it’s like working my way through quicksand.”

Many students feel stalled, whether they plan to continue at a four-year university or become a firefighter, a nurse or a welder.

Crystal Boddie, a 28-year-old child care worker, said she was just one course away from certification as a preschool teacher, which would raise her pay by about $6 an hour. But when she went to register for that class this spring, it was not offered.

The college has cut 800 course sections — more than 10 percent of its classes — over the last year, even as the number of people attending preregistration orientation sessions has grown about 10 percent.

“We want to create the illusion that we’re still open access,” said Silver Calzada, chairman of counseling at the college. “But the truth is that with all the classes that have been cut, unless you get a registration slot on the first or second day, you’re not going to get into the classes you need. Students see our banners saying ‘Dream It. Be It.’ And they feel like they’ve been duped.”

Some professors now stretch their class sizes, taking in as many students as the room will hold. When dozens of extra students showed up for a Thursday evening horticulture class with 35 registered members, for example, the professor, Dave Lannom, brought in 24 chairs from a nearby classroom and said anyone who could find a chair could stay.

“This is a terrible situation,” Professor Lannom said. “Students get discouraged and will quit when turned away.”

Because of budget cuts, California community colleges, the largest higher education system in the country, enrolled 21,000 fewer students in the 2009-10 academic year than the previous year. Some districts reported turning away about half of the new students who tried to enroll for the 2009-10 academic year, said Jack Scott, the chancellor of California’s community colleges.

"Unfortunately, we will never be able to accurately account for all of the students who had to either put their college dreams on hold or abandon them altogether because they couldn't get the classes or training they needed," Mr. Scott said.

Open access has passed its limits elsewhere, too. For the first time, the City University of New York and its six community colleges, whose enrollment grew by 43 percent over the last decade, started waiting lists for admission this fall.

"We capped our enrollment for the fall at 10,804, the same level as last year," said Eduardo J. Marti, president of Queensborough Community College. "That means there will be about 200 to 500 students we might not be able to bring in."

At Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem, N.C., where enrollment grew by a third over the last two years, the president, Gary M. Green, said he had no room for hundreds of students who wanted to register.

"I've been in community colleges since 1976, and the door has always been open," he said. "But now, we just don't have the capacity."

Even in flush times, completion rates at community colleges are shockingly low, in part because so many students hold jobs and attend classes only part time. Over all, only about a quarter of community college students complete their degree in six years, said Ms. Kanter, the education under secretary. Then, too, most need some remedial courses before they can begin college-level work, further lengthening their course of study. And at Mount SAC and many other community colleges, remedial math and English classes fill up rapidly.

Recently, foundations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina have been pouring money into community colleges to increase completion rates, in part by improving remedial education.

Almost everywhere, anatomy and physiology classes, and others required for students of health professions, fill up almost instantly. And admission to health-related programs can take years.

Mount SAC, for example, has 986 students on the waiting list for its nursing program, which was cut by a third because of reduced financing. The radiologic technology program, which accepts 38 students a year, has a waiting list of 300.

Giovanni Davalos, an aspiring X-ray technician, said he had expected to spend three years on the waiting list. But his first hurdle was getting into the remedial classes he needed.

This spring, Mr. Davalos took a counseling department class, College Success Strategies. He said he did not necessarily want to take it, but students in that class, which teaches how to plot a sequence of courses leading to a degree, are guaranteed a seat in a remedial English class.

“All together,” he said, “it might take me seven years.”

Competing Principles
Inside Higher Ed

June 28, 2010

A governance dispute between trustees and the faculty at City College of San Francisco has everyone at the college talking about how course design can improve completion rates in remedial English and math. Now that a compromise has been reached, the institution may just be able to do something about it.

The conflict began earlier this year when a group of the college's trustees organized "equity hearings" aimed at figuring out why minority students were overrepresented in the college's remedial courses and if they were shortchanged by a sequence that did not get them "college ready" until they had completed, on average, two-and-a-half years of remedial English and a year and a half of math. The trustees argued that there must be a better way to structure the remedial track and encouraged the faculty to offer a one-year, or two-semester, track for all remedial students to get "college ready."

City College enrolls about 100,000 students. Nearly 90 percent of new students at the college start in remedial English, and about 70 percent of them start in remedial math. A college report from last year shows that only 4 percent of black students and 7 percent of Latino students who started at the lowest level of remedial English eventually made it to college-level courses. For white students who started at the same level, only 12 percent made it to college-level English.

Faculty members did not take kindly to a mandate from the trustees to make curricular changes – decisions they think, by and large, should be made by professors.

"There's been a fair amount of contention about the process here," said Karen Saginor, president of the Academic Senate and a tenured librarian at the college. "Under state law, any curricular decisions have to be made by faculty. The normal process is that the departments that are affected write proposals. In this case, a couple of trustees wrote a resolution saying that the curriculum will be like this, and that was just not really the way to do it."

Still, many faculty members are sympathetic to the argument that the remedial track, especially in English and math, takes way too long to complete, leading many students to leave college before reaching college courses. Faculty would just have preferred to bring forth concerns about it themselves.

"The really controversial aspect of this was that some individuals, including those who were not in English and math who felt the process is way too slow, went and talked to the trustees to try to move it along," Saginor said. "I grant you, the process isn't very fast, but the process has been moving. But, you know how it is, people want to see change happen now. For some students we want to make [remediation] happen as soon as possible, but others are at the fourth or fifth grade level. It's hard to get someone through who's not yet constructing complete sentences and has shaky grammar. It takes time and effort. There's a big learning curve there."

From many trustees' perspective, however, waiting for faculty to come to a consensus on how to improve remediation would simply take too long and hurt those students already in the pipeline – hence their call to action.

"There's a tremendous amount of give and take and politics and turf battles at educational institutions," said Milton Marks, president of the Board of Trustees and one of the original sponsors of the resolution to shorten the remedial track. "Also, there's a culture at City College where people would prefer the board not do anything. Some faculty have taken this to mean that nobody should mess with them and that they can't be questioned. But as a board, we are people who are demanding a higher level of accountability than ever before. Now, for the first time that I've been involved with the college, everyone is talking about the achievement gap, when for years people didn't want to even admit it. I think that's great."

Marks, who describes himself and many of his trustee colleagues as "activist," noted that the push to speed up remediation was not a "one size fits all approach." In that view, he differs from some of his fellow trustees, who argued that the best track was also the shortest.

"We need to have more flexibility," Marks said. "You have to be nimble enough to accommodate different learning styles. I would like to see students placed into rapid remediation if that's best for them. We need to put students in the right place to enable them to succeed."

Though the conflict between trustees and faculty about the process of changing the curriculum has simmered for months, Saginor does not think it has blinded faculty to doing what is best for students. She, too, expressed her openness to letting the short-term remediation track be one of many options for students to choose from to get "college ready."

"For some students, how many semesters they have to persist is what might be discouraging them to get through, while for other students, there's simply too much to learn in one or two semesters," Saginor said. "I'm leaning in the direction of having more options. Some faculty wouldn't want to do [the rapid remediation] only, as suggested by someone from the board, and find out that it doesn't work very well. We don't want to experiment on students."

Faculty need more evidence before abandoning completely the longer-term remedial tracks, Saginor added.

Compromise between the two sides came in the form of a proposal from Don Q. Griffin, the college's chancellor, Thursday night at the latest trustee meeting. Instead of mandating that the entire remedial track in English and math be shortened to a two-semester maximum, Griffin's proposal introduces the rapid model in steps.

"Let's take 20 percent of the program and do it this way," Griffin said. "Then, after one year, you'll have enough evidence to see how it's working. Then, after two years, maybe you'll have enough data to know what students can profit from this experience and we can convince people of the data. I do expect this rapid model will work."

Though aware of the furor the board's proposed changes caused among faculty at this institution, Griffin believes the dialogue has ultimately been constructive.

"Debates about the achievement gap and remediation are ones that are engaging everybody in the country," he added.

— **David Moltz**

Dan Walters: California schools hit reality wall

By Dan Walters
dwalters@sacbee.com

Jun. 30, 2010 - 12:00 am | Page 3A

Jack O'Connell, the outgoing state superintendent of schools, declared Tuesday that a record 174 school districts have been placed on the state's list of financially troubled education systems.

"Schools today are facing a period of unprecedented fiscal crisis," O'Connell told reporters as he released the list, blaming it on state budget cuts.

"This trend will worsen if the governor's proposed cuts to public education are enacted in the 2010-11 budget," O'Connell said in an accompanying statement. "I have grave concerns that more and more school districts will face financial crisis unless state lawmakers find solutions to the state budget crisis and provide adequate funding for our schools."

Certainly a sixfold increase in the number of financially distressed school districts in the last year is alarming. And certainly a major underlying cause is the lean fiscal diet on which the state has placed them in recent years. But to blame the districts' fiscal woes simply on unresponsive or even cruel politicians, as O'Connell and others in the education establishment imply, would be factually incorrect.

The entire state budget is a disaster zone, one created initially by irresponsible squandering of windfall revenue on unsustainable permanent spending and tax cuts and exacerbated by the severe recession that's plagued California in recent years.

The schools have been hit hard, but other aspects of state spending have been hit hard as well. And even with spending cuts, the state continues to overspend its much-diminished revenue.

In addition, some of the districts on the distressed list have been there for years – Oakland Unified, for example – not because the state didn't give them enough money but because their superintendents and boards spent money they didn't have, especially on teacher contracts, while assuming that someone would magically fill the gap.

And while 16 percent of the state's 1,077 school districts have been declared in distress, unable or nearly unable to meet their financial commitments, 84 percent of them have done what they needed to do to keep themselves afloat. All districts operate under the same laws that specify their revenue streams. Most have adapted to the constrained circumstances while others haven't, for reasons known only to themselves.

The fact that many of the distressed districts are big-city systems, such as gigantic Los Angeles Unified, may be a clue since they tend to have bloated administrative structures and powerful unions that control the school trustees they elected.

Does this mean California schools have enough money?

By no means. But as an exhaustive report by Stanford University concluded a few years ago, it would not make sense to give schools a lot more money unless major operational and pedagogical reforms are adopted to make those schools more effective.

O.C. firms begin work on El Camino College building

OC Metro/CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY NEWS

The $20.6 million, 115,000-square-foot project will create 200 jobs

BY TAYLOR FALLON
Published: June 28, 2010

Cypress-based Taisei Construction and Irvine-based LPA Inc. have begun construction on a new $20.6 million math, business and health building at El Camino College, near Torrance.

The project is expected to take 18 months to complete and will create about 200 jobs, says Taisei project manager Joe Jaramillo.

The 115,000-square-foot building will house 72 faculty offices, 58 classrooms and three division suites.

Cast-in-place concrete is being used instead of a steel-frame, which will save an estimated 10 percent in construction costs, says Steve Flanagan, principal and lead designer for LPA. Other design and construction elements are being incorporated to create additional savings.

“Instead of having 15-foot floors, we were able to cut down each floor’s height by three feet,” Flanagan says. “Our design saved about 7,200 square feet of building structure and finishing materials associated with it. The reduction in the overall size of the building also means that there will be much less square footage to heat and cool.”

EL CAMINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

16007 Crenshaw Boulevard Torrance, California 90506-0001
Telephone (310)532-3670 or 1-877-ECAMINO

June 21, 2010

Dr. Barbara Beno
Accrediting Commission for Community
And Junior Colleges
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949

Dear Dr. Beno:

Effective July 1, 2010, Dr. Jeanie Nishime, Vice President of Student and Community Advancement, will become the Accreditation Liaison Officer for El Camino College. All correspondence related to the Accreditation Liaison Officer should be sent to her attention. Her administrative assistant is Mattie Eskridge. Contact information is listed below.

Dr. Jeanie Nishime (jnishime@elcamino.edu)
VP/Student and Community Advancement (SCA)
(310) 660-3471

Ms. Mattie Eskridge (meskridge@elcamino.edu)
Assistant to the VP/SCA
(310) 660-3593, ext. 3472

Should you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Fallo
Superintendent/President

pc: Francisco Arce
Jeanie Nishime

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June 10, 2010

Board Vice President Scott Svonkin
San Gabriel Unified School District Board of Education
408 Junipero Serra Dr
San Gabriel, CA 91776

Dear Board Vice President Svonkin,

As your local state assemblymember I would like to bring you up to date on the California Jobs Budget, which is now being introduced in the state legislature.

As you are well aware of, California is again facing a huge deficit: a $17.9 billion general fund shortfall. The Governor unveiled his May Revise of the state budget that eliminates over 430,000 private sector, school and local government jobs.

In addition, the Governor's proposal cuts $4.3 billion in Proposition 98 spending to schools and childcare programs. The independent Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) reports that the Governor's stated level of public school funding does not meet Proposition 98 required minimums.

The California Jobs Budget, introduced recently by Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez, takes a radically different approach toward resolving the state's budget deficit. The entire focus is about creating and saving jobs and closing the deficit. This budget proposal includes a $10.1 billion jobs and economic stability fund that will protect against the loss of the 430,000 jobs that are earmarked for extinction in the Governor's May plan.

And the California Jobs Budget protects our public school funding. The well-respected Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) just released polling data that shows K-12 education as the most important area of the budget to protect from cuts. The California Jobs Budget rejects the Governor's $4.3 billion in Proposition 98 cuts and instead fully funds our state's constitutional requirement.

Moreover, the California Jobs Budget calls for the delay of new business tax credits to avoid cuts to education and the safety net.

I'm asking two things of you prior to the budget briefing my office has scheduled for June 25th: First, I would like you to visit the California Jobs Budget website at: http://asmdc.org/issues/budget/ and let me know what questions you have. Second, the

cc: Board.

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California Jobs Budget is good for our neighborhood schools and the local community and I would like to get you and your school board's support as we move forward legislatively with our proposal. I have attached a sample resolution for your consideration.

The plan gets us through an extremely challenging financial period in our state's history. It also allows us to move forward on our economic recovery through the focus on jobs.

If you need any further information on the California Jobs Budget or should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Daisy Ma at (626) 450-6116.

Sincerely,

Mike Eng

MIKE ENG
Assemblymember, 49th District

Enclosures

Sample Resolution in Support of the California Jobs Budget

WHEREAS, California is again facing a huge deficit: a $17.9 billion general fund shortfall. The ongoing gap in revenues and spending continues to place an undue burden on educators, and threatens to compromise the quality of public education in the state; and

WHEREAS, other state budget proposals threaten more than 430,000 private sector, school and local government jobs, while cutting $4.3 billion in Proposition 98 spending to schools and childcare programs; and

WHEREAS, the California Jobs Budget, introduced by Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez, takes a radically different approach toward resolving the state's budget deficit by creating and saving jobs while closing the deficit. The California Jobs Budget includes a $10.1 billion jobs and economic stability fund that will protect against the loss of these jobs; and

WHEREAS, the California Jobs Budget protects public school funding. The California Jobs Budget rejects the $4.3 billion in Proposition 98 cuts found in other budget proposals and instead fully funds the state's constitutional requirement; and

WHEREAS, the California Jobs Budget will ensure that $3.8 billion would be repaid to local school districts. This protects tens of thousands of jobs for teachers, aides and counselors—a step which is good for the local community and the local business community.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that (INSERT BODY) supports the California Jobs Budget as proposed, and encourages the State Legislature and the Governor to adopt this budget without delay.

# # #