RCC district may have to front more money for aquatic center

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By SEAN NEALON
The Press-Enterprise

With fundraising slowed, the Riverside Community College District may have to pay more money up front to avoid delaying construction of a proposed $14 million regional aquatic center.

The district, Riverside County and the city of Riverside have committed $10 million for the center, which is scheduled to open in August 2010 on the Riverside City College campus. However, $3 million remains to be raised from private sources.

The district board will likely decide next month how to proceed. Believing construction bids will come in lower than previously expected, meaning less money will need to be raised, board members appear willing to front the money to keep the project on schedule.

Board member Mary Figueroa, said she is disappointed the private money has not materialized, especially considering the board approved spending $5 million for the aquatic center in September 2007.

"Yes, there's been a downturn in the economy," Figueroa said. "However, this is not something that came up within the last six months or year. The indication from the beginning was the contributions were going to be there. The contributions should have been there and they're not."

The center will host competitions and serve as a training facility for aquatic teams, whose members will no longer have to drive to Orange County to use a similar facility.

It will feature a 65-meter pool, which can be sectioned off to run several activities at the same time; 10-, 7-, 5-, 3- and 1-meter diving boards; and seating for 800. It will be built near the college's two existing pools, which will continue to be used for training and recreation.

The Division of the State Architect is reviewing plans for the center, said Chris Carlson, chief of staff for Irving Hendrick, interim chancellor of the district.

Approval is expected and the project would be ready to bid for construction by mid-May, she said. Construction would start in September, she said.

Despite the $3 million that remains to be raised, Carlson said several things are working in the district's favor.

Construction bids throughout the region have come in as much as 20 percent lower than expected, she said. That could decrease the cost of the aquatic center by $2 million, she said.

Also, she said fundraising would continue after construction begins. Charitable giving could pick up as people see a tangible building, she said. For example, many naming opportunities -- ranging from $1.5 million for the pool to $10,000 for a 25-yard swimming lane -- could be bought.

Before deciding to front money, Janet Green, a district board member, and Virginia Blumenthal, the board president, want to seek construction bids and see if they are lower than expected.

Green said the board needs to follow through on its commitment to the aquatic center. She believes the center is a business investment that will benefit hotels and restaurants in Riverside.

Blumenthal said bids for another aquatic center in Southern California recently came in 24 percent below the estimate. If that happens in Riverside, she said the board would be foolish not to front the money, especially considering the project would bring construction jobs to the area.

ACCJC ISSUES WARNING TO EL CAMINO
Partnership with Compton district continues unchanged
By Cheryl Scott
Bulletin Staff Writer

El Camino Community College has received a warning from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) that its accreditation could be affected if it does not comply with a set of recommendations.

In a letter sent on Feb. 3 by ACCJC President Barbara Beno to El Camino President Dr. Thomas Fallo, the commission outlined seven recommendations, two of which require action by April 1.

As of press time, a meeting had been scheduled between Special Trustee Peter Landsberger, Fallo and Beno to discuss the recommendations.

“The details of the accreditation report and why we were placed on warning status are not clear to us at this time.” said Ann Garten, a spokesperson for El Camino. “We want to know exactly what we need to do to get off warning.”

Two recommendations must be acted on through a follow-up report due on April 1.

“The recommendations deal with program review and curriculum review,” Garten said. “We take the recommendation very seriously and we want to know specifically what actions we need to take. We will work diligently to comply with the recommendations.”

The partnership that exists between El Camino and the Compton Community College District will continue. Through the partnership, El Camino has added the Compton Campus to its college. Compton Community College no longer exists, and the facility is now known as El Camino Community College Compton Center. The Compton Community College District continues as a separate entity and is currently working to regain its accreditation.

The college lost its accreditation in 2006. The partnership with El Camino was made possible by Assembly Bill 318 authored by then-Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally. It allows the Compton campus to continue to operate at its location within the city.

“We all want El Camino College to be off warning status,” said Provost/CEO Dr. Lawrence Cox. “The center will do its part in assisting El Camino in responding to the recommendations.”

The warning is a result of a routine visit to both El Camino campuses by the ACCJC, Garten said. It is not related to the situation faced by Compton College in 2006.

The commission visits all community colleges regularly, issuing reports based on those visits. Warnings regarding various operational issues are frequently issued as a result of these visits.

“This is a warning to El Camino College,” Garten said. “But the Compton Center is part of El Camino College. It’s important for both campuses that we find out exactly what we need to do in order to get off of warning.”

A source at El Camino said that one third of colleges in the state are under warning from accreditation commissions.

“Such warnings are not uncommon,” she said. “But we do take them seriously and recognize the importance of acting on them immediately.”

Colleges remain accredited while under warning. However if required actions are not taken, they can lose their accreditation.

“We recognize the importance of the recommendations in retaining our accreditation,” Garten continued. “We are working aggressively to comply and have the warning status lifted.”

These Lectures Are Gone in 60 Seconds

Minute-long talks find success at a community college

The Chronicle of Higher Education

March 6, 2009

By DAVID SHIEH

Take a 60-minute lecture. Cut the excess verbiage, do away with most of the details, and pare it down to key concepts and themes.

What's left? A "microlecture" over in as few as 60 seconds. A course designer for San Juan College, a community college in Farmington, N.M., says that in online education, such tiny bursts can teach just as well as traditional lectures when paired with assignments and discussions.

Skeptics, however, argue that lectures involving sustained arguments, such as literary analyses or explanations of complex equations, cannot be boiled down in this way.

At San Juan, microlectures were introduced in a new online degree program in occupational safety in the fall and are now expanding to subjects like reading, tribal governance, and veterinary studies.

San Juan administrators are impressed with the results, as enrollment in the occupational-safety program, which uses microlectures exclusively, quickly ballooned to 449 by its second semester. They hope to expand the use of microlectures to as many online classes as possible. (An agreement with Texas A&M University that allows San Juan students to transfer credits toward a four-year degree may also have been an attraction.)

Instructors at other colleges, such as York University, in Toronto, have experimented with lectures that last about 20 minutes — particularly in online classes, where students can quickly grow bored watching a talking head on their computer screens. But San Juan's systematic use of the 60-second lecture may take the shrinking-lectures trend the furthest.

The microlectures, which last from 60 seconds to three minutes, do little more than introduce key terms and concepts. In an online class on academic reading, for example, students learning about word construction listen to an 80-second microlecture that introduces word parts and explains that they have a bearing on the meaning of words, said Michelle Meeks, a reading instructor. Students then use an online dictionary to look up a list of 25 prefixes, suffixes, and word roots, writing up their findings and discussing them on a message board.

Sandra Tracy, dean of the school of extended learning at San Juan, said she initially doubted that microlectures could be effective — they just didn't seem long enough.

"At first it's one of the most unnatural things," Ms. Tracy said. "But it's an intriguing concept — it gets you away from the idea of a talking head; it's more like snapshots of learning."

Thanks to a flexible course-management system and standardized lesson plans — microlecture, assignment, and discussion — course development is relatively quick: The occupational-safety program had four courses up and running in two months.

Ms. Meeks, who condensed a 10-minute lecture into the 80-second microlecture she uses in the word-construction lesson, said she was initially wary of the format. But when she replaced the in-depth explanations of word parts in the 10-minute lecture with a brief introduction to key words, little seemed to be lost except "verbiage," she said. Student feedback has been almost entirely positive, Ms. Tracy said, and administrators now recommend that new distance-learning programs use microlectures.

The format encourages active learning, says David Penrose, a course designer for SunGard Higher Education and online-services manager for San Juan College. He developed the microlectures for San Juan. While the quantity of information that a 60-second microlecture can convey is limited, he said, it primes the student to learn from completing the assignments that follow the microlecture.

"It's a framework for knowledge excavation," Mr. Penrose said. "We're going to show you where to dig, we're going to tell you what you need to be looking for, and we're going to oversee that process."

Richard Fiske, a first-year student in Ms. Meeks's reading class, said that he sometimes wishes the microlectures would elaborate more on certain areas but that they function well as lesson overviews and give enough information for him to complete assignments and participate in discussions.

In recent years, many distance-learning programs have adopted other short-form pedagogical tools, said John G. Flores, executive director of the United States Distance Learning Association. Podcasts, many of which introduce a topic briefly and encourage listeners to perform their own research, have become increasingly popular with distance-learning programs, he said.

Mr. Penrose said microlectures are so new at San Juan that they have encountered little opposition, but administrators and instructors said the format may not work as well in classes requiring sustained discussion or explanations of complicated processes.

Ms. Tracy, who said she hoped to expand the use of microlectures to as many of San Juan's online courses as possible, said the format works best when instructors wish to impart small chunks of information. In classes requiring extended discussions, like English-literature courses, microlectures fall short, she said.

And Chris Baade, an assistant professor of mathematics at San Juan who is filming a series of two-minute videos that demonstrate how to work through several algebra problems, said she never considered using the microlecture format. Simply using keywords would leave students without crucial step-by-step explanations of how to solve the problems, she said.

Dennis De Turck, who runs a 60-second-lecture series at the University of Pennsylvania that Mr. Penrose looked at before devising San Juan's program, said such short lectures — used at Penn to showcase its faculty rather than provide formal academic instruction — have their pedagogical limitations.

"In a lot of classes, the point is to follow a sustained argument or to build one piece by piece," said Mr. De Turck, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Penn. "A 60-second impressionistic overview is useful, but it's not going to be the be all and end all."

HOW TO CREATE A ONE-MINUTE LECTURE

Professors spend a lot of time crafting hourlong lectures. The prospect of boiling them down to 60 seconds — or even five minutes — may seem daunting. David Penrose, a course designer for SunGard Higher Education who developed San Juan College's microlectures, suggests that it can be done in five steps:

1. List the key concepts you are trying to convey in the 60-minute lecture. That series of phrases will form the core of your microlecture.

2. Write a 15 to 30-second introduction and conclusion. They will provide context for your key concepts.

3. Record these three elements using a microphone and Web camera. (The college information-technology department can provide advice and facilities.) If you want to produce an audio-only lecture, no Webcam is necessary. The finished product should be 60 seconds to three minutes long.

4. Design an assignment to follow the lecture that will direct students to readings or activities that allow them to explore the key concepts. Combined with a written assignment, that should allow students to learn the material.

5. Upload the video and assignment to your course-management software.

Shifting Faculty Mission
March 5, 2009

Inside Higher Ed

Every three years, education researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles release a national survey of faculty attitudes and norms, and various categories show movement of a few percentage points. This year's survey, being released today, finds significant shifts in several categories related to social change:

While the above data reflect an apparently broad view of the social responsibility of higher education, other findings suggest that professors are more likely to embrace instruction and assessment methods that focus on students' individual needs. Compared to three years ago, faculty members were more likely to believe it is part of their job to "help students develop personal values" (66.1 percent, an increase of 15.3 percentage points over 2004–05), "enhance students' self-understanding" (71.8 percent, a 13.4 percentage-point increase), "develop moral character" (70.2 percent, a 13.1 percentage-point increase) and "provide for students' emotional development" (48.1 percent, a 12.9 percentage-point increase).

- 75.2 percent of professors now say that they work to "enhance students' knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups." That is a gain of 17.6 percentage points in the three years since the survey was last done.
- 55.5 percent of professors consider it "very important" or "essential" to "instill in students a commitment to community service," an increase of 19.1 percentage points since the last survey.
- 71.0 percent believe that colleges should be "actively involved" in solving social problems, up 4.1 percentage points in three years.

While about one third of professors in the survey use multiple-choice exams, the latest survey found gains for those more likely to use short-answer questions (45.5 percent vs. 36.9 percent three years ago) and those more likely to use term/research papers (44.3 percent vs. 34.7 percent).

These figures come from "The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2007–08 HERI Faculty Survey," which is issued by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. The results reported are based on the responses of 22,562 full-time college and university faculty members at 372 four-year colleges and universities nationwide. The responses are weighted to provide an accurate profile of the teaching population at four-year colleges.

On political leanings, the survey is largely consistent with the last one, in finding that academics are more likely to consider themselves on the left of the political spectrum than the right, although there is a very slight gain for the left, and also a slight gain among those on the far right. The gains on the left were more notable between 2001-2 and 2004-5, but those gains held in the more recent survey.

Professors' Political Leanings Over 3 Surveys

	2007-8	**2004-5**	**2001-2**
Far left	8.8%	8.7%	5.9%
Liberal	47.0%	46.5%	45.1%
Middle of the Road	28.4%	27.4%	32.3%
Conservative	15.2%	16.9%	16.3%
Far right	0.7%	0.5%	0.3%

A key note about all of the figures in the survey and cited in this article is that they are for full-time faculty members at four-year colleges and universities, excluding community college faculty members entirely, and part-timers at four-year institutions. In past years, the survey has included community colleges, whose faculty members tend to be more centrist politically and who differ on a range of issues from their counterparts at four-year institutions. This year, UCLA officials said, participation at community colleges was too low to provide valid data. All of the comparisons above for past years are only of four-year colleges and universities, so the shifts are not skewed by the lack of community college professors this year.

Community colleges are not the only type of college where different political leanings may be found. At the university level, faculty members at private institutions are more likely than those at publics to be conservative (17.2 percent vs. 12.3 percent) and less likely to be liberal (44.7 percent vs. 50.3 percent).

At four-year colleges, consistent with past years, the greatest concentration of conservative professors may be found at colleges that are religious, but not Roman Catholic.

Professors' Political Leanings by Sector at Four-Year Colleges, 2007-8

	Public	**Private, non-religious**	**Catholic**	**Religious, non-Catholic**

Far left	8.8%	10.9%	7.6%	6.8%
Liberal	45.5%	50.8%	46.2%	37.6%
Middle of the Road	30.1%	23.4%	31.1%	28.8%
Conservative	15.1%	14.2%	14.5%	25.9%
Far right	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.8%

The survey also features data on college faculty members' job satisfaction, which it generally finds to be high -- although the fact that this pool excludes the growing part-time ranks should be noted here. Just under 75 percent of those in the survey reported that they were satisfied with their careers. Men are more likely than women to be satisfied by their careers, and men are also more likely than women to be satisfied by their pay (48.9 percent vs. 41.9 percent).

Numerous surveys in recent years have pointed to the satisfaction gaps between men and women in academe, but many of them have focused on women entering the profession, those who have not yet won tenure and who may be facing that challenge while also trying to juggle family responsibilities. In the new survey from UCLA, the largest gaps between men and women were at the rank of full professor -- those who have won not only tenure, but a subsequent promotion. Among these women, in the area of scholarly pursuits, 50.6 percent reported satisfaction, compared with 66.0 percent of men. Female full professors are also less likely to be satisfied than their male counterparts with their teaching loads (53.2 percent vs. 66.2 percent) and their prospects for career advancement (58.1 percent vs. 66.9 percent).

Linda DeAngelo, a UCLA researcher involved with the study, said that she was both surprised and concerned by the level of frustration of senior faculty women. "They are at the pinnacle of the profession, and yet they are just not satisfied with their careers in the way we would hope," she said, urging colleges and universities to consider how policies or practices may be affecting this gap.

The most striking shifts overall, DeAngelo said, were in the significant gains in percentages of faculty members taking diversity education as a key part of their responsibility. While the survey is typically scrutinized especially for the political statistics on faculty members, DeAngelo argued that these should be viewed as "separate issues."

She said that the growing faculty interest in diversity and social values generally reflected what colleges are hearing from those who will hire their graduates. "The fact of the matter is that employers want employees that understand how to work with people who are different from them, and that's become a major thrust of the faculty role," she said. Faculty members are appropriately "providing that ability" because their students "are always going to be working in groups with people different from themselves."

Neil Gross, a professor of sociology at the University of British Columbia, who has conducted numerous studies on faculty political leanings (and who argues that professors are generally more centrist than people believe), said he wasn't surprised by the left-leaning findings in the UCLA analysis. The most survey was conducted at a point when he U.S. electorate was shifting to the left, so Gross said that there would be no reason to think academe would move in the opposite direction.

In fact, one theory he has -- which he calls "intriguing" but not one he can yet demonstrate -- is that professors' political identity may be affected in part by a "backlash effect," in which academics are so frustrated by the "conservative criticism of the liberal professoriate that they cling to their identities as leftists even more fervently than they would otherwise."

Critics of the way colleges focus on diversity said that they were concerned by the findings. Peter W. Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars, a group that has questioned affirmative action policies and urged more of an emphasis on a traditional college curriculum, said that he doesn't think professors are becoming more supportive of diversity. He thinks they are just becoming more open about their support for diversity efforts. "I think something that was in the closet is now more open than it used to be," he said. Wood said he rejected the idea that colleges need to teach students to get along with members of different groups -- even while he believes that people should get along in a diverse society.

"Americans have been working with people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds for centuries," he said. "It's never been something that required a college degree to overcome your biases."

Mark Bauerlein, an English professor at Emory University who has written about black and civil rights history, but also has criticized higher education as too focused on diversity, said he was also concerned about the growing percentages of faculty members who embrace teaching about various groups as a key part of their job. Bauerlein said that when scholars' research leads them to minority history or culture, it makes perfect sense to pursue those topics. But he said that diversity in higher education has become "a fetish or fixation," with professors expressing more and more interest in it just as the United States is making notable progress toward equality, as evidenced by the election of President Obama among other developments. Many on campus, he said, "have an investment in racism" because "their jobs are combating racism."

Back to Normal (Read: Boring)

InsideHigerEd.com

March 6, 2009
WASHINGTON -- Even at their most intense, the 2007 negotiations over proposed federal regulations governing accreditation lacked the drama of an Academy Award-winning movie or a high-stakes sporting event. Nor would it be accurate to say that accreditation topics, during the last years of the Bush administration, were on the tip of every tongue in higher education.

But there is no disputing the fact that issues surrounding accreditation -- higher education's system of peer-reviewed quality assurance and institutional self-improvement, which normally operates in relative obscurity -- got white hot (at least in the normally tame context of higher education policy making) once the U.S. Education Department of then-Secretary Margaret Spellings decided to try to use accrediting agencies and the government's process for recognizing them to compel broader change within higher education.

Never was that more clear than during a round of "negotiated rulemaking" in 2007, when department officials, prodded by the report of Spellings' Commission on the Future of Higher Education, sought to require accrediting agencies to more aggressively monitor how the colleges they oversee measure the learning outcomes of their students, among other changes. Such changes were necessary, department officials argued, to satisfy the public’s need for a better and clearer sense of how effective higher education is.

The department's approach brought an outcry from colleges and accreditors alike; they accused the department of trying to fundamentally alter the relationship between the federal government and accreditors and, importantly, between accreditors and colleges, with the government essentially seeking to set explicit federal standards for what counts as quality at institutions. This, critics argued, threatened an unprecedented level of federal intrusion not just into the traditional role of accreditation as one of self-governance aimed at institutional improvement, but ultimately into institutional academic policy making, which raised the issue to a significantly higher level of importance than accreditation matters typically hold for many college professors and administrators.

The tension between federal officials and some leaders in higher education, particularly at traditional colleges and universities, intensified to the point that, at one particularly memorable session of the federal negotiating committee in April 2007, the lead Education Department negotiator was accused of making an in appropriate late-night telephone call to try to encourage the panel's most vocal dissenter to resign from it. The federal official denied that that was her intent, but the brouhaha reflected the poisoned atmosphere of the deliberations.

The perceived overstepping by the Education Department led Congress to step in to block the education secretary from promulgating rules on accreditation, and in renewing the Higher Education Act last summer, lawmakers barred the Education Department from issuing regulations going forward that are designed to ensure that colleges are measuring student learning outcomes.

To respond to perceptions that Spellings had manipulated the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, the federal panel that advises the education secretary on accreditation issues, the Higher Education Opportunity Act also scuttled the committee and reconfigured it so its members are appointed by both houses of Congress as well as the secretary.

A Decidedly Different Tone

Against that backdrop, flash forward to this week, when a new committee began its work to recommend how the Education Department should carry out the changes the Higher Education Act renewal made in federal law governing accreditation.

As the panel met for a second day at an Education Department office building here on Thursday, there was no shortage of issues on its agenda: how accrediting agencies that assess the distance education programs of colleges show that they address the quality of such programs; how closely accreditors must monitor institutions that are growing rapidly; and how the process should change for institutions to appeal decisions made by accrediting agencies.

Those are important issues for accreditors and, to some degree, for the colleges who work with accreditors, and for officials closely involved in the inner workings of accreditation, like the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the recommendations made by the panel in the coming weeks will have significant implications. The members of the panel -- college administrators and lobbyists, state higher education executives, and accreditors -- undertook their work earnestly Thursday, debating fine points, for example, about the difference between having a *plan* or an *agreement* to "teach out" (or shut down) a campus when the institution gets in serious trouble. It was not scintillating.

But with Congress having limited the scope of the government's activities on accreditation, and the Obama administration, at least for now, focusing its attention elsewhere, federal policy making regarding accreditation is likely to be of relatively minimal interest on campuses in the short term.

Whether that's a good or bad thing is likely to be in the eye of the beholder. Critics of accreditation have long argued that it is ineffective and greatly in need of change, and many of them believed that the scrutiny from Spellings, even if misdirected at times, served to prod the agencies to change. And even defenders of accreditation, like the man who came to the rescue against Spellings in 2007, Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, have warned higher education to use the respite not to relax, but to reform.

— Doug Lederman

CalPERS: Thinking the unthinkable

By Ed Mendel

Last spring CalPERS doubled the amount of a program that uses the pension fund's gold-plated credit rating to help state and local governments borrow more cheaply, moving the cap from $5 billion to $10 billion.

Now as the economy crumbles, CalPERS is taking a look at what seemed unimaginable last year: What happens if the government borrowers default on their debts and CalPERS has to repay the loans?

"In exchange for only a couple million dollars you are taking on a heckuva a tail risk," Michael Schlachter of Wilshire Consulting told the CalPERS investment committee last week.

CalPERS earned $3.9 million last year as it guaranteed $748 million in loans, bringing its total commitment to back the borrowing of government agencies in California and other states to $2.3 billion.

When the program cap was doubled to $10 billion last June, CalPERS officials thought that troubles for municipal bond insurers and a tightening credit market could be an opportunity to earn more fees while providing a public service.

Schlachter said in a letter to a CalPERS investment official last month that the "credit enhancement program is one of the areas where we believe that CalPERS 'does well by doing good.'"

A CalPERS board member who also is a Kings County supervisor, Tony Oliveira, said his dual role gives him conflicting views of the program. He asked the staff for a white paper on local governments and the risk for CalPERS in the credit program.

"I looked at the amount of yield versus the potential macro liquidity risk factor and it scares me," Oliveira told the committee. "To be honest with you, I'm one that thinks it's not worth it.

"On the other side," he said, "I must tell you as a local government representative in California we appreciate it, because it helps, obviously. It facilitates."

Schlachter said the risk of local governments defaulting on their debt is "very remote," but should not be ignored. CalPERS staff said the credit program uses careful screens and is grounded in studies going back to the U.S. Civil War.

A senior portfolio manager, Arnold Phillips, told the committee that he is responsible for a type of investment that has not been served well by looking at history as a guide: mortgages.

"I think we really do need to look at this because it does appear in some sense we are in a new world here," said Phillips. "So I agree 100 percent that probably this needs to be looked at, a white paper and so on, to really decide this."

In the program, CalPERS issues a letter of credit or similar backing that allows a government agency with a lower credit rating to use the pension fund's top rating, lowering the cost of the loan.

But the credibility of the ratings issued by the three major Wall Street rating agencies — Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch — is being questioned for two reasons now, even though they continue to be used in the bond market.

The ratings agencies have been criticized for giving top ratings to complicated mortgage-backed securities that have since been declared "toxic," a leading cause of the financial crisis.

Rosy ratings are said to have been given to the shaky financial products of firms that paid the rating agencies fees, pumping up their profits. There are *reports* that the rating agencies are under investigation.

"The story of the credit rating agencies is a story of colossal failure," U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Beverly Hills, said during a congressional hearing last fall. His committee released *messages exchanged* by two Standard & Poor's employees.

Rahul Shah said a deal is "ridiculous" and "should not be rated." Shannon Mooney replied that the rating model "does not capture half the risk … We rate every deal … It could be structured by cows and we would rate it."

Before the financial meltdown last fall, state Treasurer Bill Lockyer launched a drive urging the rating agencies to stop holding government bond issuers to a higher standard than corporations.

The treasurer said history shows that the government agencies are far less likely to default than corporations. He said the unwarranted lower ratings "cost taxpayers billions of dollars in higher interest rates and bond insurance premiums."

Lockyer said the interest paid on a bond rated "A" was 0.38 percent higher than a "AAA" rating. He said the difference on $61 billion worth of 30-year California infrastructure bonds would be $5 billion.

Another Lockyer example of credit-rating costs: California paid $102 million from 2003 to 2007 to buy "AAA" insurance for bonds, which would not have been needed if the state were rated by the same criteria as corporations.

Some rating agencies appeared to be considering *Lockyer's complaint*, co-signed by 10 other state treasurers. But a Lockyer spokesman said movement stopped when the financial crisis erupted last fall.

Then last month Standard & Poor's, citing state budget problems, dropped California's credit rating from "A+" to "A." California had been tied with Louisiana, but now has the lowest Standard & Poor's rating of any state.

"We know we have fiscal management problems, but a rating downgrade from any of these guys is tough to swallow," said Tom Dresslar, a Lockyer spokesman. "Taxpayers are getting screwed by a rating agency that helped create the problem."

In recent years, the state has made some use of the CalPERS credit program, which now backs two bond issues totaling $297 million. The state also has purchased backing for three bond issues totaling $549 million from the California State Teachers Retirement System.

The CalSTRS credit enhancement program began in 1994, about a decade before the CalPERS program. The next annual report on the CalSTRS program is expected in April.

In a quarterly report filed at the end of last year, the CalSTRS program said it was backing loans totaling $2.5 billion and had earned $3 million last year, bringing total earnings since the beginning of the program to $46 million.

CalSTRS had partnered with Union Bank to back one or more bond issues by the City of Vallejo, which declared bankruptcy last year. A Vallejo spokeswoman, Joann West, said the CalSTRS letters of credit expired and were not renewed.

But one of the top creditors listed in the Vallejo bankruptcy is Union Bank, owed $49 million.

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

Pre-Emptive Layoffs

By Dean Dad March 5, 2009 9:26 pm

An alert reader sent me the link to this article from the Springfield (Mass.) Republican. Apparently, the University of Massachusetts is sending out layoff notices to 60 faculty now, just in case it needs to actually go through with layoffs this Fall. If the stimulus package delivers enough, it will call some fraction of the 60 back.

On the face of it, this is insanity. To say “you're fired,” only to follow it weeks later with “never mind,” pretty much guarantees a serious morale issue. The message it sends to the affected employee is “you are on the absolute bottom of the totem pole, and your job is hanging by a thread.” There's a tremendous difference between “we may need to do some layoffs” and “you, personally, will be laid off unless we get more money.” It inflicts terrible stress on people for whom it may ultimately prove to have been unnecessary. My fearless prediction: if most of these folks do come back, I'd expect most of them to leave voluntarily over the next few years.

But the article suggests that this may not just be managerial tone-deafness. The key quote:

The university is contractually obligated to notify these lecturers, said UMass spokesman Edward F. Blaguszewski. The contract of the first group required longer notification.

Anyone who has managed in a unionized setting knows what this means.

Contracts usually contain notification deadlines for retrenchments or layoffs. Failure to comply with those deadlines is grievable, and may ultimately result in forced payouts. In other words, if the university decides in May or June that it doesn't want someone back in September, it may be too late. The penalty for late notification can be drastic, but there's no penalty for an early 'false positive.' So the fiscally rational thing to do, perversely enough, is to send out notices to as many as your worst-case scenario suggests you'd need to, and then to call back the ones you can.

The irony, of course, is that this is a side effect of a contract provision usually favored by the union. A workers' protection clause winds up generating unnecessary pink slips.

At my campus, we're facing a variation on this. It isn't yet clear how the federal stimulus money will affect next year's budget, but we're coming up on some hard contractual deadlines. Our state money has been cut severely, but some fraction of that cut may – or may not – be restored for July. People on campus are nervous and jumpy, and looking for answers, but “I don't know” is the truth. Budgets are always based on assumptions – if we assume two percent enrollment growth, then we have x dollars – but the range of plausible assumptions this year is unusually wide. We keep waiting for the dust to settle, hoping to gain some clarity, but the contractual deadlines don't give us much wiggle room.

It would be easy to bash the University of Massachusetts for this, and there may be other valid reasons to do that. But this is a (perversely) rational response to an insane situation. For everybody's sake, I hope we can get some clarity soon. Until then, I expect to see more stories like this.

13 Reasons Colleges Are in This Mess

How greed, incompetence, and neglect led to bad decisions

The Chronicle of Higher Education

March 13, 2009

The economy may not have hit rock bottom, but the finger-pointing over what went wrong is well under way.

In some ways, higher education has been a victim of the recession — but not a defenseless victim. Smart moves clearly helped some colleges and universities avoid the worst of the downturn. But mistakes have left many others in the lurch.

The downward spiral has brought layoffs, budget cuts, and anxiety to many campuses. With the cuts have come protests and recriminations.

Scores of college presidents have written open letters that describe dire finances and make the case for an era of belt-tightening. But missing in many of those messages are explanations of how colleges landed in their predicaments, and who is to blame.

The Chronicle came up with 13 common mistakes that have put many colleges in the fix they're in. There's plenty of responsibility to go around, in the industry and beyond. And the choices that people made are likely to haunt higher education for years.

1. Took on Risky Investments

David F. Swensen is a rock star among endowment managers, and many colleges have tried to duplicate his success.

With a portfolio heavy on hedge funds and private equity, Yale University's chief investment officer averaged annual returns of more than 16 percent for 20 years. Yale's endowment reached $23-billion last year.

Times have changed. Yale officials say a quarter of the value of its investments have evaporated. The university is considering layoffs and delaying construction projects.

The pain will be deeper for most imitators of the Yale model, who have far less cushion.

Mr. Swensen has said the diversity of his model will pay off in the long run. But he acknowledges that most colleges lack the resources to have properly followed his lead.

2. Sloughed Off as Trustees

By most accounts, the glory days of rubber-stamp governing boards have passed. But the shocking tale of Bernard J. Madoff and J. Ezra Merkin, two trustees of Yeshiva University who allegedly defrauded the institution — and many other investors — suggest that some boards are still nodding off on the job.

Trustees are fiduciaries, responsible for ensuring that colleges have sound finances. They must push back when administrators take on risky debt or allow an institution to become too tuition-dependent. That clearly has not happened at many colleges. Even worse, some board members (Mr. Madoff was treasurer of Yeshiva's board) continue to have conflicts of interest.

3. Relied on Cheap Credit

Colleges have assumed tens of billions of dollars in new debt over the past decade in pursuit of better facilities and expectations of growth. Many of them saved millions in interest payments with the bond-market equivalent of adjustable-rate mortgages. But when the credit markets seized up last fall, those low-interest bonds and loans, on which they had banked their futures, suddenly became a lot more expensive to carry. Institutions with healthy reserves have managed their way through — though certainly at a price.

Even under the best of circumstances, there are costs to refinancing variable-rate debt and unraveling complicated "swap" agreements. Some institutions, like the Colorado School of Mines and Simmons College, with fewer resources to fall back on, have seen their credit ratings downgraded. The price of cheap credit may soon be measured in program cuts and job losses.

4. Failed to Play Well With Others

Millions of workers have lost their jobs in recent months. But tenured professors are hard to fire. And some powerful faculty unions have resisted when colleges asked their members to teach more classes, despite what seemed like reasonable requests.

The faculty union at Kean University, for example, balked last year when administrators tried to require professors to teach on Fridays and some Saturdays. The public university, located in New Jersey, was facing a $4.5-million cut in the state's contribution and was trying to get more use out of classroom buildings.

Faculty members considered the proposal an assault on their autonomy and a retaliation for a previous squabble with administrators. Since then Kean has postponed several construction projects and raised in-state tuition by about 8 percent.

5. Overbuilt

For more than a decade, colleges have had a tremendous appetite for building. According to Sightlines, a company that analyzes space utilization on more than 200 campuses, 14 percent of those colleges' buildings have been built in the past 10 years. Among research institutions, the proportion is even higher.

Many motivations have led to this building boom, but often a key driver is the quest to impress prospects, whether faculty members or students (and their parents). Energy-intensive research buildings. Swanky residence halls. Climbing walls. Olympic-size swimming pools. They are like the expensive cars that real-estate agents drive — they project an image of success.

What kind of future have these colleges built for themselves? A burdened one. The bulk of the cost of any building comes after it is built — in the energy needed to run it and the maintenance needed to keep it functioning. Those happen to be costs that well-heeled donors are unlikely to support, whether their names are on the buildings or not.

Deferred maintenance is already a problem in higher education, running into the hundreds of millions of dollars at many institutions. In the building boom, many colleges have merely added to infrastructure they already cannot support.

6. Bowed to Boosters

Many voices stoke lofty gridiron ambitions. Trustees and politicians often clamor for a good football team, particularly at flagship public universities. Even governors have been known to meddle in coaching decisions.

But big-foot boosters like Philip H. Knight, at the University of Oregon, and T. Boone Pickens, at Oklahoma State University, often call the shots. Viewing themselves as majority stockholders in a company, some high fliers browbeat administrators into making accommodations for king football.

Scores of fancy facilities were built on donors' pledges. But with the donors' bank accounts taking a dive, it's the universities that will pay.

7. Stumbled at the Statehouse

Even in good times, competition for state money can be tough, as some lawmakers charge that colleges waste tax money on pretty buildings and underworked faculty members.

It can be much worse during economic downturns, when higher education must compete for scarce dollars against elementary schools and health care for low-income families, among other needs.

More colleges are finally waking up to a well-known reality: Politics is the art of compromise. The University of Arizona hopes to appease state lawmakers by consolidating more than a dozen colleges and eliminating dozens of majors that produce few graduates. The university has also assembled a team of economists and policy experts to present budget alternatives to lawmakers.

Not so in neighboring Nevada, where the university system's chancellor, James E. Rogers, has waged a bitter public battle with Gov. James Gibbons over his proposed 36-percent cut to the system's budget. While legislators may not go along with the governor's entire plan, Mr. Rogers's fiery rhetoric may leave hard feelings after he steps down this year.

8. Led With Unchecked Ambition

Building booms and hiring sprees can be fine during flush times. But a recession requires a president who can say no, not one who pads his résumé at the college's expense.

Some observers say an abundance of ambition helped bring down John D. Petersen, who last month announced his resignation as president of the University of Tennessee. The system is facing a budget deficit of up to $100-million, which it says could result in 700 layoffs. Apart from Mr. Petersen's commitment to the university, some critics say he was too focused on research and expensive growth.

"We are really struggling to meet core competencies," says John Nolt, a professor of philosophy on the flagship campus, in Knoxville, and chairman of the Faculty Senate.

9. Failed to Find a Niche

Small private colleges that have failed to differentiate themselves will face increasing obstacles as the student population shrinks.

Tuition-driven private colleges that have not established a firm identity will lose prospective students to those that have staked out a clear market position, as well as to lower-cost public universities, community colleges, and for-profit institutions, which are nimble at marketing.

Pamela Fox, president of Mary Baldwin College, says the key to staking out turf is doing it within the college's mission. For Mary Baldwin, that means adding a personal touch to both a traditional women's campus and adult education centers. Colleges must clearly show that they add value beyond their liberal-arts core, she says: "That's the gravy that goes with your meat and potatoes."

10. Ignored Customers' Needs

Dormitories and the campus quad are images of America's higher-education past that now apply to only a minority of students. Today's college students are older, often have jobs, and are less likely to be white. Many are not interested in a traditional residential experience.

What's more, as the nation's population growth has shifted to the South, the numbers of potential students who can pay full freight are now more often located in hot spots like suburban Dallas and Atlanta.

Colleges that have paid close attention to those shifts are generally in decent shape. Leading that pack are for-profit institutions, most of which have healthy bottom lines despite the recession.

The colleges that succeed in this evolving new world will be the ones that aren't afraid to try new ideas, like setting up out-of-state branch campuses, spending more on strategic advertising, and building partnerships with community colleges.

11. Built Duplicative Centers

Universities love nanotechnology laboratories. Biotech ones, too. And while some of those labs may reap benefits for the institutions and for society as a whole, it's a safe bet that the country has many more nanotech and biotech facilities than it can support.

So, too, with a host of other research ventures, many of which quickly prove redundant or unproductive. With fewer federal grants available, these centers are often a drain on a university's finances, drawing resources that could be used for student financial aid or faculty raises.

12. Overcommitted Their Budgets

Much of higher education lived high on the hog for the five years before the credit implosion of 2008. Endowment returns averaged 17.2 percent across the industry in 2007, and state budgets were flush.

While few budget planners could have foreseen the scope of this financial crisis, those who set money aside in recent years are much better off today.

Experts say the most serious mistake colleges made was to commit almost every dollar of their projected income to capital and operating expenses. Institutions that made overly optimistic building plans and other commitments are much likelier to be laying off employees or slashing budgets now.

13. Stymied Accountability Efforts

When the Bush administration's Commission on the Future of Higher Education aimed to bring more accountability to colleges and universities, the only member of the panel who refused to sign the document was David Ward, who represented the nation's biggest higher-education group.

It was a clear act of defensiveness.

College lobbyists eventually succeeded in killing the commission's proposal to develop a national system to track the progress of each student in the country. They also resisted efforts to make the accreditation process more open and to establish a consumer-friendly database that would allow parents, students, and policy makers to compare institutions. Instead, the higher-education associations decided to build their own online tools — except they couldn't agree on a model. So the public colleges created one system, and the private institutions another.

Left unchecked, college costs have continued to rise, along with student debt. Some for-profit lenders pushed loans that few students understood while some financial-aid officers stood silently by. New York's attorney general later accused dozens of colleges and alumni associations of taking kickbacks, and financial-aid officers of accepting consulting fees and stock options from lenders.

College chief in line for huge raise

Daily Breeze

Proposal to boost Tom Fallo's pay, perks to $337,000 has critics.
By Nguyen Huy Vu, Staff Writer
Posted: 03/12/2009

El Camino College officials are considering giving President Thomas Fallo a $36,000 pay raise, which with salary and perks will give him an annual income of about $337,000.

The proposed raise comes just weeks after he was named a finalist for the chancellor's post at Riverside Community College District.

Fallo, who in February withdrew his name from the candidacy, had also been named a finalist for the top spot at a college in northern San Diego County a few months ago.

Some at the campus have been critical of the administrator, saying he uses the job offers to leverage a salary hike.

Fallo, who also serves as superintendent at El Camino, could not be reached for comment.

The board of trustees will decide Monday if Fallo will receive what amounts to a 13.4 percent annual pay hike, a $2,450 monthly stipend and a $550 monthly transportation allowance, which will be paid retroactive from January.

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office reports the average salary of a single-college CEO is just over $193,000.

When Fallo was courted by the Ventura County Community College District in 2004, the board responded by giving him a 14 percent base salary jump, from $174,653 to $199,000. He also received a 5 percent annual pay hike on top of yearly cost-of-living increases in the deal.

Trustee Bill Beverly said the pay increase is merely compensation for Fallo's work at the Compton Community Education Center. Fallo was at the helm when the district took over the ailing Compton Community College as a satellite campus in 2006 and injected it with new leadership and curriculum.

"Ever since we've begun the Compton contract, he has taken on additional responsibilities to oversee and supervise the operation of the Compton Education Center, which was not a part of his original duties," Beverly said.

The timing of the proposal did coincide with the Riverside chancellor candidacy, Beverly said.

He said the board made sure to add a clause in the plan that will force Fallo to pay back all or a portion the additional money if he decides to leave within three years.

Trustee Maureen O'Donnell said she opposes the proposal because Fallo already is paid adequately compared to other college leaders in the state.

She said $36,000 "would pay for a lot of books and tuition for students."

Sean Donnell, president of the El Camino College Federation of Teachers, said the pay hike plan is the wrong idea at the wrong time, considering California's budget problems.

"It's not that I think president Fallo is a bad president," he said. "However, considering the fact that no one up and down the state that's getting a public paycheck is getting a raise seems absolutely out of place at this point in time."

El Camino president says no to raise

The Daily Breeze

By Nguyen Huy Vu, Staff Writer
Posted: 03/16/2009

El Camino College President Thomas Fallo backed away from a proposal that would have made him one of the higher paid college administrators in the state.

Fallo surprised many Monday when he announced at a board meeting that he wanted to remove the proposal from the agenda.

"The attention this has gotten has far outweighed the benefits," he said after the meeting.

The college's Board of Trustees was expected to review plans to give Fallo a $36,000 pay raise, which with salary and perks would have given the college president an annual income of about $337,000.

The package specifically called for a 12 percent annual pay hike, a $2,450 monthly stipend and a $550 monthly transportation allowance, which was to be paid retroactive from January.

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office recently reported the average salary of a single-

college CEO is just over $193,000.

The plan had infuriated some on the campus who said it would be a bad time to be asking for a raise, especially as educators across the state are facing layoffs and budget cuts.

I want to focus on El Camino College's excellence and on our opportunities for students," Fallo said, "and we should not be diverted from that or anything else."

Board Trustee Maureen O'Donnell believes the only reason Fallo took the plan off the table was because of the negative public opinion.

"The idea of a raise was obscene," she said.

Other board trustees had said the pay increase is fair compensation for Fallo's work at the Compton Community Education Center - a site where other educators at El Camino have been paid for their additional services.

Someone in the audience asked if the board had any future plans to give Fallo a pay hike.

"The issue about the president's raise is gone," said board trustee Ray Gen.

Sean Donnell, president of the El Camino College Federation of Teachers, was pleased by the decision and said it was a victory for the entire campus and the surrounding community.

"I think that President Fallo wisely saw the direction this was heading and decided to forgo any difficulty that may have arisen in relation to a raise," Donnell said.

The proposal came just weeks after Fallo was named a finalist for the chancellor's post in the Riverside Community College District, but later withdrew his candidacy.

Fallo had also been named a finalist for the top spot at a college in northern San Diego County a few months ago.

When Fallo was courted by the Ventura County Community College District in 2004, the board responded by giving him a 14 percent base salary jump, from $174,653 to $199,000.

He also received a 5 percent annual pay hike on top of yearly cost-of-living increases.

Fallo told Riverside officials he decided to pull out of consideration partly after El Camino received a warning in January from the state's accreditation commission.

That warning, he said, focused primarily on continued difficulties with accreditation for Compton Community College.

Fallo was at the helm when the district took over the ailing Compton Community College as a satellite campus in 2006.

But according to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the warning also detailed instances dating back to 1990 of inadequate planning, budgeting and reviewing programs.

The commission also recommended the administration revise its curriculum standards.

The other reason for the withdrawal, according to Riverside officials, was that the El Camino Board of Trustees asked Fallo to stay on as chancellor and offered him a "significant salary and benefits/retirement package to stay at the college."

Fallo also told Riverside officials he had accepted the board's offer and agreed to withdraw from the district's chancellor search.

"In doing so, he noted his desire to address `the unfinished business at El Camino,'" stated documents from the Riverside Community College District.

Hal Keating, 82, advocated local news coverage

Published March 12, 2009

Longtime South Bay journalist Hal Keating died March 4 at a local hospital where he was being treated after having suffered a fall at his Redondo Beach home in early February. He was 82.

Known throughout the 1960s and 1970s for his work as a news editor with the Los Angeles Times, he emphasized coverage of politics in the beach cities and in Torrance. He was fascinated with the beginning and development of Easy Reader and featured the fledgling weekly in several stories. He was a strong advocate for local news.

Harold Smith Keating Jr. was born June 19, 1926 in Chicago. The family later moved to Coronado, Calif., where he graduated from high school in 1944. He immediately enlisted in the United States Navy, serving in World War II and in Korea.

His journalistic career included the San Diego Union, the Santa Monica Outlook and the Los Angeles Times. Upon retirement in 1984, he became a volunteer at El Camino College, working as the first office manager for the college's foundation. He was a supporter of the Beach Cities Symphony and the Friends of the Banning Museum.

He is survived by his wife of 32 years, Mary Ann. Any memorials may be made to a local charity of choice. ER

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Editorial: Focus on Fallo detracts from EC goals

By:

Posted: 3/19/09

With President Thomas Fallo deciding to withdraw the potential of his receiving a 13.4 annual percent pay increase, a $2,450 monthly stipend and a $550 monthly transportation allowance, there is indeed a sigh of relief among students and faculty.

It must be mentioned that President Fallo said and did the right thing.

Some may say that he denied the raise because he didn't want to incite a riot among faculty, staff and students. However, he publicly acknowledged that the idea of a pay raise is unnecessary at a time like this.

The real call to arms, however, came from the voice of the campus community. In a decisive swoop, like an infuriated flock of birds, the campus voiced their outrage at the projected salary increase and protested the board of trustees' proposal.

Almost everyone in the campus community is sore from the effect of the budget cuts and the hypothetical salary raise caused a rippling reaction of dropping jaws and disbelief.

The increase in pay was said to have been compensation for Fallo's work at El Camino College Compton Center, of which he was said to be the only one not being paid for his work. However, he agreed to do the work without reward.

Some believe that Fallo is using the threat of leaving as an excuse for a raise.

However, Fallo said during the board meeting Monday that the focus of a raise is taking away from EC goals, which are accreditation, excellence and student success.This was the right thing to say to alleviate the outcry from students and faculty.

We, as a campus, have to take into account that Fallo is not being compensated for his additional responsibilities associated with the Compton Center and the board of trustees is nervous about losing Fallo.

Fallo earns $301,000, which is approximately $108,000 more than the average salary of a single-college CEO.

It is safe to say that Fallo is being appropriately compensated for his work at the Compton Center considering his annual salary is that much more than the average superintendent.

The timing of this proposal isn't necessarily felicitious considering the state budget woes. In fact, no president of a public institution throughout California is receiving a pay increase.

This alleged pay raise is also reminiscent of the news about AIG's $165 million bonuses. Not to compare the fiasco with AIG to Fallo's proposed pay raise, but the public mind is still tinged with righteousness and outrage.

Fallo is right, the current focus of EC and the board of trustees should be about the students who are struggling to get the classes they need, as well as pay for other expenses. It should also be about the faculty and staff who are not receiving any bonuses themselves and who were told by Fallo that they were not to receive any bonuses.

It is reasonable for someone living in a time of economic hardship to want money they believe they are entitled to for their extra work, but not when that person is already making much more than an average person in their position would be making.

It was rather thoughtless for the issue of a pay raise to even have been discussed. The less provoking thing to do would have been to decline the raise in the first place instead of kicking up a hornet's nest.

Fallo has asked for and been granted raises in the past, all of which took place in better economic times.

Raises should never be on their agenda in times of crisis and when the college is suffering.

Focus should always be placed on the benefit of the college and what can be done to help it before helping themselves.

-See related article on Page 1

El Camino College offers high school exit exam course

Daily Breeze

Posted: 03/15/2009 10:48:40 PM PDT

El Camino College is offering a new CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) Prep program geared for high school students who have not passed the exam. Classes in the 10-week program are free and are taught by college instructors who focus on strengthening math and English skills.

Participating schools include El Camino College Compton Center and at the El Camino College Inglewood Center. Information: 310-973-3159.

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El Camino plans early compliance with ACCJC

Recent meeting held with accreditation officials clarifies requirements

By Cheryl Scott
Bulletin Staff Writer

As a result of a routine visit to both El Camino campuses by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), El Camino College has received a warning that its accreditation could be affected if it does not comply with a set of nine recommendations.

Among the nine recommendations for improvement, only two raise the sanction level to warning status.

"We are surprised at this status, since our prior interim visit report indicated that we had satisfied the planning and program review recommendation from our last accreditation visit," El Camino College President Dr. Thomas Fallo said.

Fallo and Special Trustee Peter Landsberger met with ACCJC President Barbara Beno on Feb. 24 to discuss the details of the actions the college is required to take in order to have the warning status lifted.

El Camino College is required to complete two follow-up reports. The first, due by April 1, will define the college's plan to address the two recommendations that affect the warning status. The college must also make sure that its planning, program review, budgeting and evaluation processes are linked to its budget.

The second report, due Oct. 15, is a plan and show of progress for the remaining recommendations.

Those include the publication of a timeline determining how the college will develop and implement student learning outcomes at the course, program and degree levels and systems for assessing outcomes.

The college needs to assure that online courses are on a par with classroom instruction and are included in student learning assessments, which must also be integrated into the faculty evaluation process.

A fiscal management plan must be developed at all sites and matched to revenues to assure the fiscal soundness of the college.

The college must develop a staffing plan for both sites that includes written criteria for all personnel, and assigns individuals to duties appropriate to their expertise and the needs of the college.

A facilities master plan must be developed for all sites, linked to educational planning and the overall planning process.

The Board of Trustees must include in its code of ethics a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violates this code.

Some of the regulations require El Camino

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Continued from Page 1A

College to work with the Special Trustee at Compton Center to ensure that El Camino College has the authority over the Compton campus to assure quality at the center.

The partnership that exists between El Camino and the Compton Community College District will continue. Through the partnership, El Camino has added the Compton Campus to its college. Compton Community College lost its accreditation in 2006. The partnership with El Camino allows the Compton campus to continue to operate at its location within the city.

"We have begun the process of satisfying the recommendations due by October," Fallo said. "We are working diligently to complete the report that is due in April, and we have every confidence that it will be done on time."

The college plans to completely satisfy all recommendations by Oct. 15 and has begun working toward that goal, according to spokesperson Ann Garten.

The accrediting committee visits both campuses in October and April. It then meets in January and June to review reports on those visits. If the college can satisfy all of the recommendations by October, the reports can be viewed at the January 2010 meeting of the ACCJC.

"We are working very aggressively to comply and to have this warning status lifted," Garten said.

The college also received commendations relative to its partnership with the Compton Community College District. The commendations were based on a review of El Camino's Self-Study and a report from the evaluation team that visited the campuses in October 2008.

The commendations were for: "Extending assistance, support and training to the faculty, staff, administration and community of the Compton CCD to retain access to a community college education within their community; the efforts made between ECC and the Compton Center to integrate very different organizations to work toward common goals and direction to meet accreditation standards; the dialogue between the faculty and staff at El Camino Torrance and the Compton Center and the collaboration taking place to bring the center into compliance with the Commission standards;" and for the "high degree of coordination taking place between the Torrance campus and Compton Center in the delivery of student services programs."

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Filip Jerzycke/Union

EC president declines raise

By: MEGAN TAROS

Posted: 3/19/09

With a proposed 13 percent pay raise which would boost his salary to $337,000 a year on the agenda, President Dr. Thomas Fallo decided to withdraw the proposal by removing the item from the board of trustees agenda Monday.

"My actions speak for themselves," Fallo said. "I think the focus got taken away from EC, so I believe the focus should be brought back to our goals, which are excellence, accreditation and student success."

Ray Gen, board of trustees member, said that Fallo did not ask for the raise, but it was proposed to Fallo by the board as compensation for his work at the El Camino College Compton Center.

"We had an agreement that work at Compton College would be the source of funding and President Fallo was the only person who was not being paid for his work at Compton and we thought that was unfair," he said.

Sean Donnell, president of EC's federation of teachers, however, said otherwise.

"That is absolutely, 100 percent not true," he said. "Classified employees, by and large, are not compensated for work at Compton. Faculty members are only compensated if they serve on evaluation panels or hiring committees. Any other work that a faculty member does for the Compton Center goes unpaid."

Gen, however, said this was a mistake and that it has been clear that work should be compensated.

"I'm trying to get to the bottom of this," he said. "The board made sure everyone understood that anyone who does anything from the Compton Center should be compensated."

Maureen O'Donnell, board of trustees member, said that even if Fallo was not compensated for his work at the Compton Center, he made a promise to do the work without reward.

"When we acquired the Compton Center, he said he wasn't in it to gain anything," she said. "I think we should hold him to that."

Others believe that the raise was proposed to him because of a job interview Fallo received from Mira

Costa College in November as a way to prevent him from leaving.

"I think part of the rationale behind this issue is that we would collapse without Fallo. It seems normal that anyone would want to advance, but to use money as a bait to keep (him) around is problematic. He won't always be here and we need to instead start planning for his eventual departure," Florence Baker, history professor, said.

The removal of the pay raise from the agenda, however, brought about pleased reactions by some members of the faculty.

"I'm shocked and I'm glad. I didn't know if (President Fallo) would listen to us when we were discussing this with him. Never in my wildest dreams did I think this would happen," Luukia Smith, president of classified employees, said.

Some believe that the fact that this issue even came up was damaging to the college and that, in the future, the college should take better care of the community's interest.

"EC took a black eye. We have a lot of work to do with the community to prove that we are worthy of their trust, dollar and students," Pete Marcoux, English professor, said.

Members of the faculty believed that with the economic crunch taking its toll on the country, it was wise of Fallo to decline the raise.

"I was pleasantly surprised that President Fallo pulled this item from the agenda. It would have been a bitter pill to swallow if he had received such a raise in the midst of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression," Donnell said.

Board members said that Fallo accomplished his goal of bringing focus back to the college and retaining its success and credibility, while being driven to uphold the mission of the college.

"I think the president was very magnanimous and he saw the community not understanding the situation, so, with a big heart he withdrew this item. The heart of the institution was definitely on his mind when he made his decision," Gen said.

Other members of the board said Fallo withdrew because he was feeling pressured to do so because of the outcry from the community.

"(It was because of) public pressure," O'Donnell said. "The idea of that raise is obscene. The $36,000 should be used for books and help with tuition. His withdrawal was not magnanimous. If he was, the item would have never been on the agenda in the first place."

She said that while she didn't believe Fallo was considerate of the community, she did believe that the community prevailed due to their own efforts.

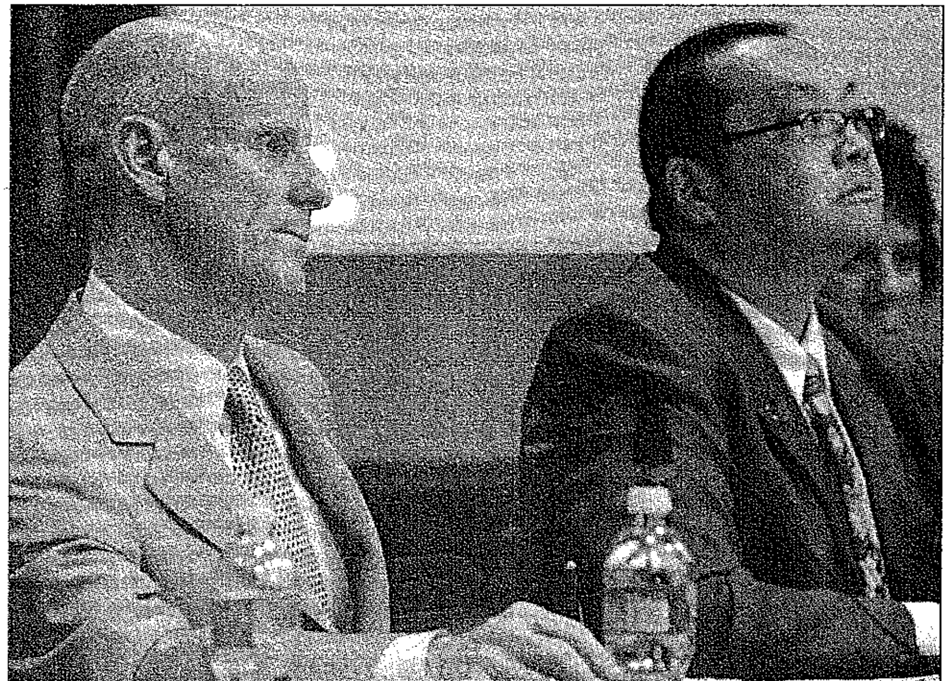
This goes to prove that voices will be heard when they are raised," O'Donnell said. "The students, faculty and community won a victory today. Due to the pressure they put on him, they won."

Donnell said that Fallo was not only pressured by the community, but because of the pressure being put on the country to not use public money for raises.

"Fallo declining his raise was probably motivated as much by the perfect storm of criticism that had arisen from the community and from President Obama on a national level," he said. "Without these criticisms, I don't see any reason that President Fallo would pull this item from the agenda."

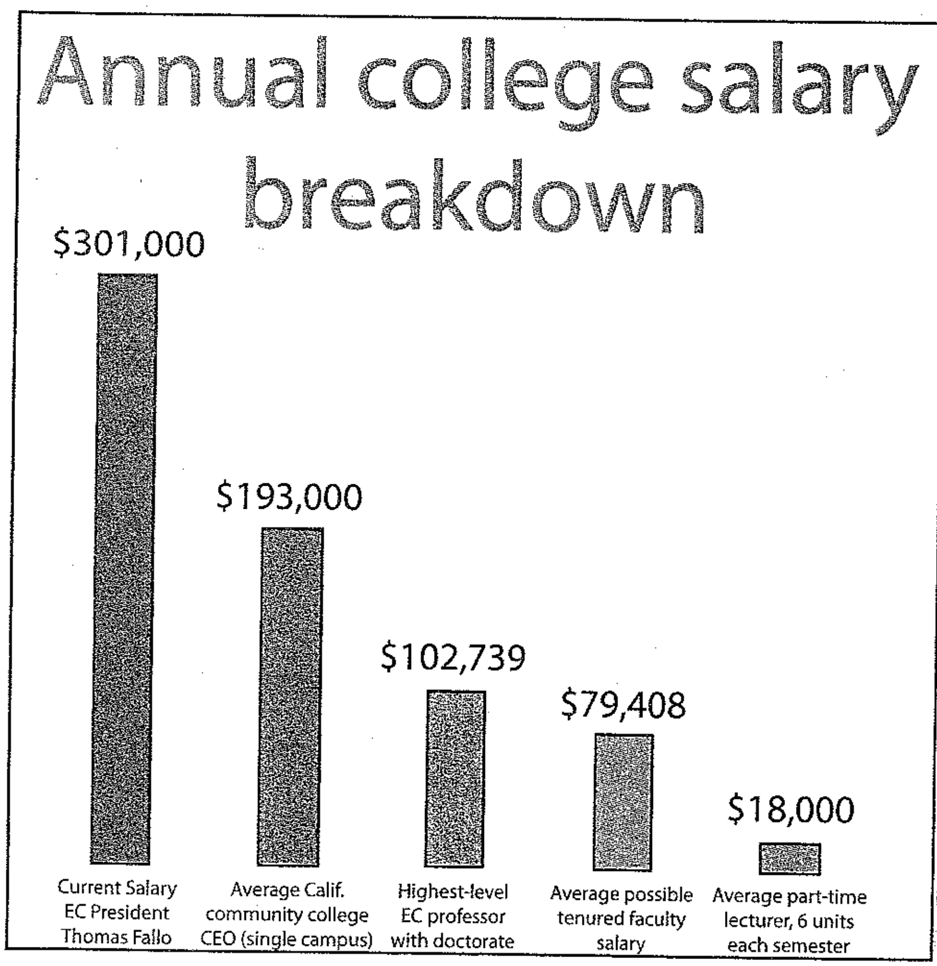
Fallo said he saw the drawbacks to the raise and decided it was not worth it, which is why he decided not to go through with it.

"It far outweighed its benefit," he said. "We have to redirect our focus to the core and heart of this campus."



Filip Jerzycke/Union

Dr. Thomas Fallo, president of EC and Ray Gen, board of trustees member, listen to feedback from the public after Fallo's decision to not accept a 13 percent pay increase.



Aaron Dobruck/Union

Dodging Bullets and Crying Wolf

InsideHigherEd.com

- **By Dean Dad March 22, 2009 8:05 pm**
  I'll admit that this can be filed under 'good' problems. That said, it's still a problem.

  Between extraordinarily good work by our budget people, a few lucky breaks, and the likely support from the stimulus package, it looks like we might actually get through this year without any layoffs.

  First, hooray!

  Then, there's the issue of expectations and credibility.

  Taking transparency seriously, we've done quite a bit of communication with the campus at large. Nobody out there could credibly claim to be surprised if layoffs ensued. We've eliminated some vacant positions and postponed filling others, even going so far as to reorganize certain areas to take advantage of some vacant administrative positions. (Yes, contrary to stereotype, we're streamlining administration rather than cutting faculty. Still some people object. Ya gotta wonder...)

  All of those savings are part of what may make layoffs unnecessary. (I say 'may,' because there are still plenty of unknowns.)

  My concern now is that it will be easy for people to interpret 'scarily near miss' as alarmism, and to discount future expressions of concern as crying wolf. If all these months of communication wound up being largely irrelevant on the ground, then why engage in more? Annoyingly enough, our success in dodging the bullet could actually lead to future credibility crises. If “this too shall pass” gets confirmed in practice, then it will be that much harder to get future warnings taken seriously.

  I don't mean for this to sound whiny; again, it's a better problem that what I had been expecting to face at this point. I'd rather inadvertently confirm complacency than throw people out of work.

  The communication hasn't just been “abandon hope, ye who work here.” It's been pretty specific about numbers, including specifying which ones are relatively predictable and which are effectively unknowable in advance. The idea has been to treat everybody like adults, on the theory that most will reciprocate. (There's always that ten percent or so who sing the old Groucho Marx song “Whatever it is, I'm against it,” but that's to be expected.) It hasn't been anything like the old Bush-era terror color code, in which shifts were based on hunches or poll results. We've shared such facts as we've had, as we've had them, and been honest about the limits of what we've known.

Now it looks like all may be relatively well, at least in the very short term. Which is great, but still. I can't help but wonder how many people will think that the entire thing was some sort of weird charade.

The stimulus funding is for two years. It would be easy to revert to a relieved business-as-usual, and just hope that the economy is up and running again two years from now. I hope we don't do that, though. In my best scenario, we take this two-year window as a chance to examine what we're doing more thoroughly, to emerge stronger overall when the crisis passes. This year's crisis has been harrowing, but it has basically been an acceleration of a much longer-term underlying trend of shifting the cost of public higher education from taxpayers generally to students (and, in a sense, adjuncts) specifically. When the crisis subsides, the pace should become less scary, but the underlying trend will still be there.

It would be a normal, natural, human reaction for people to wipe their brows, say 'whew!,' and try to forget the whole, scary thing. And maybe for a week or two, that's fine. But I hope that we don't just revert to habits that – it's easy to forget now – have been part of a longer decline.

Compton Bulletin: January 7, 2009

College District Foundation On its Way Back
Fresh leadership breathing new life into defunct organization
By Gene C. Johnson Jr.
Bulletin Staff Writer

The president of the currently defunct Compton College District Foundation told The Compton Bulletin that he and Lawrence M. Cox, provost of the El Camino College Compton Community Center, are in the process of re-activating the service that, in the past, has provided financial assistance, job placement and mentoring for Compton students.

"Right now, we had our first executive board meeting on December 19," said George G. Washington, president of the Compton College District Foundation. "It was with the provost, the Title V administrator and a consultant hired by the Title V (administrator).

"Also, we're going to eliminate any negative history that has manifested about the foundation," he said. "A lot of it (the criticism) was overemphasized and made it more than what it really was—about the trustworthiness of the foundation and its board members."

And it appears the first item on their agenda is what to do with the $70,000 in the foundation's trust fund.

"That money is still there," said Washington, who has been a board member since December 2006. "And it's going to be there until the foundation members get to the point where there can be a quorum and we can vote on how we want to administrate that (money)."

Cox could not be reached for comment.

Still, Washington said he was excited to have Cox on board in his effort to re-establish the foundation back on campus.

"Even though we may have not agreed on certain procedures, we're moving forward," Washington said. "We're not sitting still. We're moving. We're still just not placed in a closet."

After Compton Center lost its accreditation—and going through three subsequent provosts—the foundation remained stagnant, Washington said.

"The foundation was not a priority," he said. "The foundation began to have problems moving forward. The vice president resigned. A lot of the members resigned because of the fear that the foundation would crumble and fall. I felt that as long as I stayed on, there was hope. I stayed on and kept pressing the current administration to do something.

cc: Bd.

"I got fed up that it was pushed to the side," Washington said. (So) I spearheaded a large amount of fundraising when I came onboard. That money and other funds were still there—myself and other board members had created, still sitting in a trust."

As of now, Washington said, he is seeking new board members to fortify the foundation.

"There are a lot of organizations that would love to support Compton College, but the only route they really have is through the foundation," he said. "The problem with the foundation is that it doesn't have the staffing that it once had. We're rebuilding the infrastructure."

"I know that they have had several meetings and we're just waiting to see what's going to happen," added area activist Ronald Williams. "They're getting the foundation ready to be active so that they can start raising money for the kids (students) to help them succeed. I do believe in this foundation, and I want to see it up and running."

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
ContraCostaTimes.com

TO: CHIEF TREVIS
OFC. ALVARINO

Colleges ill-prepared for influx of parolees

By Matt Krupnick
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 03/15/2009 04:18:33 PM PDT

OAKLAND — Laney College student Leonard Hutton seems to have his life together: dean's list, a goal to transfer to UC Berkeley, a love of computers.

But the 37-year-old Oakland resident also has a prison record, making him one of thousands of former inmates seeking a return to the workforce through community college.

Their ranks could soon grow precipitously.

A federal court has tentatively ordered California to release as many as 57,000 inmates to relieve overcrowded prisons. Although the state is fighting the order, it could bring thousands of new students to the colleges in the next two or three years.

Hutton prepared for his release by studying through the Prison University Program, so he was ready for college when he finished his 16 months behind bars. But not all parolees can handle the transition, he said.

"Some people aren't ready for that. It would be easy for them to slip back into their old ways."

A handful of colleges are beginning to consider how to help avoid those kinds of failures.

City College of San Francisco, which has been working closely with former prisoners for about 20 years, is discussing enhanced services ahead of the surge. The school has 11 campuses and is considering opening offices at several to work with former inmates, said Jorge Bell, the college's dean of financial aid.

"We wanted to be ready, to make sure we had services when they came in," he said. "Depending how long they've been incarcerated, they might need different services."

The new population of ex-offenders would come at a particularly challenging time for the state's 110 two-year schools, which have been besieged by a sharp increase in out-of-work students. More than 2.7 million students are in the colleges this year, including about 100,000 for whom the schools are not being paid by the state.

Already underfunded student services, such as counseling and financial aid, also have been pressed by sudden increases among the disabled and veterans. Both groups generally require more face-to-face contact with college employees, like the former inmates.

"Many of (the parolees) will need housing, some of them will need clean-and-sober living environments," said Jody Lewen, executive director of the Prison University Project, which educates inmates at San Quentin State Prison. "They'll need support very much like veterans returning from combat."

The state college system has not formed a strategy to deal with more convicts, but administrators began discussing the issue in the past week, said Linda Michalowski, the system's vice chancellor for student services. Although funding continues to be a problem, the colleges are used to nontraditional students and should be able to handle the increase, she said.

"The (inmate) population is not that different from the students we currently serve," she said. "We're less likely to freak out over these students than, perhaps, the four-year schools."

For some urban campuses, former inmates are nothing new. Counselors at Laney and Contra Costa colleges, for example, said they come across many students who have been incarcerated.

Some of those students require special counseling, said Kenneth Reynolds, the outreach coordinator for Extended Opportunity Programs and Services at San Pablo's Contra Costa College.

"There is some stress about dealing with crowds," Reynolds said. "In prison, you have to sleep with one eye open. We work on those things."

A handful of community colleges have tried to educate inmates before their release, including successful programs at Palo Verde College in Blythe and Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga. Some would like to see more of those programs.

"When people are released with a bus ticket and $200 and an eighth-grade education in today's economy, their chances of success are not good," said state Sen. Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley. "What we need is for people who are released to be equipped."

Matt Krupnick covers higher education. Reach him at 925-943-8246 or mkrupnick@bayareanewsgroup.com .

College students and staff protest budget cuts, proposed fee hikes

Sacbee.com

By Laurel Rosenhall
lrosenhall@sacbee.com
Published: Tuesday, Mar. 17, 2009 - 12:00 am | Page 3A

Students and staff from colleges across the state marched from West Sacramento to the state Capitol on Monday, protesting budget cuts and proposed fee increases at California's universities.

With bullhorns, drums and hand-painted signs, they complained that shrinking state funding is causing the number of courses to be reduced at community colleges and limiting the number of students who can get into universities.

"I'm concerned that as the economy continues to change, it's so important that my generation is educated," said Tim Snyder, 23, a student at California State University, Sacramento. "Students are being denied because there's no room. Classes are already filled."

The Legislature's most recent budget deal cuts about $680 million from California's universities and about $40 million from community colleges. About $510 million of that may be reimbursed by federal funds. Because of the cuts, California State University campuses will accept 10,000 fewer students next year, while the University of California is cutting freshman enrollment by 2,300.

The budget also calls for UC and CSU students to pay 10 percent higher fees next school year. University officials will decide on those proposals in May.

The budget does not call for fee increases at community colleges. But with the $8 billion shortfall announced Friday, community college advocates fear their ticket may be up. The Legislative Analyst's Office has suggested that California raise the price of a community college education.

At $20 per unit, California has – by far – the lowest community college fees in the country. A full-time community college student here pays $600 per year. The national average for community college fees is $2,700 a year, according to the California Postsecondary Education Commission.

Community college students from up and down the state participated in Monday's protest. Students from San Francisco marched in yellow T-shirts. Students from Fresno wore red. Shasta College students were dressed in green.

Richael Young, president of the student senate of the California Community College Council, urged the Legislature to reject the LAO's proposal to raise fees. "We are the product of the Legislature's decisions," she said. "We want to make sure they are making wise decisions."

Collaborations Could Help Ease the Nursing Bottleneck

Community colleges are seeking experienced nurses who are willing to return to the classroom

The Chronicle of Higher Education

By ERIC HOOVER

In the third grade, Kacie M. Spencer resolved to become a nurse. She read about Florence Nightingale, bandaged her little brothers' scrapes, and started thinking about the courses she would take.

Years later, Ms. Spencer earned an associate degree in nursing at McLennan Community College, in Waco, Tex., and took a job at a nearby hospital. She worked there for six years, but then chose a different professional path. After earning a master's degree, she returned to McLennan last fall to become a full-time faculty member in nursing. "Teaching was always in the back of my mind," says Ms. Spencer, 28. "I just reached a point in my life where I thought it would be a good idea."

Community colleges everywhere are searching for Ms. Spencers — experienced nurses with advanced degrees who are willing to leave their jobs and return to the classroom, usually for significantly less pay. People who fit that description have long been difficult to find, but the need for them is growing.

The dearth of instructors has contributed significantly to the nation's nursing bottleneck: Most institutions that train nurses have many more qualified applicants than they can enroll. The problem has become dire in regions with an increasing shortage of health-care workers.

Nationally, an aging population and a wave of retiring nurses will cause a "surging demand" for new nurses over the next decade, according to a recent report by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. The agency projects that the supply of full-time registered nurses will fall 36 percent (about a million nurses) short of the number required by 2020, unless health-care-training programs expand substantially.

Much of the responsibility will fall to community colleges. About 60 percent of the nation's registered nurses come through associate-degree programs, according to the American Association of Community Colleges. In recent years, many two-year institutions have increased the size of their nursing programs while seeking ways around the shortages of both nurses and faculty members.

Take Lewis and Clark Community College, in Illinois. A few years ago, the college received a federal grant to operate a nurse-managed center that provides health care to local residents and gives nursing students the opportunities to complete their clinical-service requirements. "Finding clinical sites for students had been an issue, so we built our own," says Donna Meyer, dean of allied health and director of nursing at Lewis and Clark.

Last summer the center received another federal grant that allowed it to purchase and operate a mobile clinic that would offer dental, general health, and mental-health screenings to some 90,000 residents in the rural communities near the college. Local fuel companies donated all the gas for the vehicle, which gets about six miles per gallon. Since December, the clinic-on-wheels has hit the road about three times a week. "Once we did 500 flu shots in six hours," Ms. Meyer says.

Some job-training experts say more community colleges must pursue creative solutions. "Many places are trying to address this on their own and are not looking to partnerships," says Julian L. Alssid, executive director of the Workforce Strategy Center, a New York City nonprofit group. "No single community college alone is going to solve this issue without active involvement with employers, four-year schools, and economic-development officials."

An ailing economy has emphasized the need for collaboration, as it has driven more students to pursue careers in nursing, a field that guarantees long-term employment. Many community colleges face budget cuts, and educating nurses is among the most expensive things those institutions do. "We lose money on every nurse we train," says Dennis F. Michaelis, McLennan's president.

Over all, the college's nursing program loses about $550,000 annually. A major reason: Like many states, Texas requires that nursing programs have one faculty member for every 10 students, a ratio designed to ensure the safety of patients who receive treatment from nursing students in clinical settings.

The requirement also limits how fast McLennan's nursing program can grow. Each year about 120 students graduate from the program, a number Mr. Michaelis has pledged to eventually double. (The program's waiting list usually goes about 250 deep.)

The goal hinges on the imminent completion of a new science building on the campus, part of a $75-million project financed by local bonds. The plan also depends on the hiring of new faculty members. McLennan officials plan to add about 10 students each year to the nursing program, which means the college would add just one instructor at a time.

As the program grows, Mr. Michaelis expects to seek help from local hospitals, whose financial support helped the college create an evening nursing program. This time the president would ask them not for money but for volunteers — nurses with master's degrees who might like to teach on the side. "Loaning them to us on a part-time basis, to teach a class or so, it would be a great thing," he says. "But we know they're limited in terms of how much help they can give us."

Partnerships like the one Mr. Michaelis envisions have become commonplace elsewhere. Recently, the Community College of Baltimore County, in Maryland, made a deal with a nearby hospital that allowed the nursing program to expand its enrollment. The community college reserved 10 spots for hospital employees who had completed their nursing prerequisites and qualified for admission. In return, the hospital provided the college with instructors for both the theory and clinical components of Baltimore County's nursing curriculum.

A total of 20 hospital staffers, including IV therapists and clinical nurse specialists, served as part-time teachers in the program, which was offered on evenings and weekends. Most of the clinical instruction occurred at the hospital, which eased the challenge of finding sites for nursing students. The partnership, which will continue in the fall, allowed Baltimore County to graduate 24 more students this spring than it otherwise could have enrolled.

In recent years, Baltimore County's nursing program has typically had two or more open faculty positions at any given time. Each job usually take between six and 18 months to fill, according to Carol Eustis, dean of the college's School of Health Professions. As of early March, the college had four openings. "The salaries we are able to provide are not competitive," she says.

Some of the college's nursing graduates get jobs that pay $50,000 a year, she notes, about what faculty members with four or five years of experience make. Nurses who go on to earn master's degrees can earn tens of thousands of dollars more than they could teaching at two-year colleges.

Yet partnerships like Baltimore County's may have a crucial benefit for higher education: bringing more nurses into the teaching fold. The college recently hired two of the nurses who taught in the program as adjuncts.

Giving nurses an opportunity to work with students part time can hook them on teaching, says Deborah Berg. An associate dean and director of nursing education at San Diego City College, she started teaching there part time in 1982 and became a full-time faculty member seven years later. She has taught nearly every course the program offers.

"If you want to effect change in the profession," she says, "this is the way to do it."

It's a pitch she has made to nurses from local hospitals. San Diego City College has 10 full-time faculty members for its 160 nursing students and usually must rely on at least three adjuncts to help carry the teaching load.

Next year the college will open a new career-technology center that will include additional space for the nursing program. That would allow the college to start admitting nursing students twice a year, doubling the number of slots. It would help the program cut into its waiting list of about 700 applicants.

Expanding is one thing, but paying for it is another. The new facility will include 16 offices for nursing faculty members. Given the budget shortfalls in California, however, Ms. Berg is not sure the college can fill those additional offices any time soon. And so she might turn to more adjuncts, who can make $60 to $70 an hour, working 12 to 15 hours per week.

Sometimes those adjuncts become full-time faculty members because they seek a new challenge or want to work a different schedule. "There are some positive things that tend to appeal to people, especially how fresh it makes your outlook on nursing," Ms. Berg says, "plus weekends off and summers off."

The transition from nurse to teacher does not always work, however. Ms. Berg has hired a few faculty members who stayed only one year. "They just couldn't swing it financially," she says.

Money is not the only hesitation nurses may have about teaching. Ms. Spencer, who left her hospital job to return to McLennan Community College, says associate-degree programs are so intense that some nurses are reluctant to pursue a master's degree.

And working with students is different than working with patients. During her first semester as a faculty member, Ms. Spencer says, she was often apprehensive. This semester, though, her confidence grew. "I'm watching these students," she says, "and their light bulbs are coming on."

Classes for the Young@Heart

DailyBreeze.com

Staff Writer
Posted: 03/21/2009 08:26:06 PM PDT

El Camino College Community Education will have an open house early next month to announce plans for its new Young@Heart program, a collection of classes expressly for older adults.

The community is invited to meet the instructors, observe class presentations, enjoy live entertainment, sample light refreshments and receive giveaways from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 4 at the college's Robert Haag Recital Hall, 16007 Crenshaw Blvd., near Torrance.

The new program of low-cost, short-term, not-for-credit classes will target the needs and interests of older adults. Classes include computer basics, write your life story, creative aging, literature series, financial planning; tai chi, chronic pain management, brainpower, digital photography, and a sampling of popular older adult community education classes such as cooking, magic, juggling, travel, dance, floral design, yoga, balloon decorating, ukulele and one-stroke painting.

For information about Young@Heart, visit www.ECCom

munityEd.com or call 310-660-6460.

About Town El Camino College’s Young@Heart Program

DailyBreeze.com

By Meredith Grenier, About Town
Posted: 03/22/2009 11:41:48 PM PDT

As part of a commitment to life-long learning, El Camino College's Community Education division will kick off its Young@Heart program from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 4 at Robert Haag Recital Hall (the music building) on campus.

Classes are designed for people 55 and older, says director Betty Sedor.

"Our goal was to develop a curriculum that would appeal specifically to seniors," said Sedor.

Tuition for the not-for- credit classes is $14 to $79 for the eight-class term, and Sedor said she searched long and hard to find inspiring and engaging teachers.

Among the classes - which will be held on site and at senior centers in Redondo Beach, Manhattan Beach, Hawthorne and Torrance - are those on computer basics, life-story writing, creative aging, literature, financial planning, tai chi, chronic-pain management, brain power, digital photography, cooking, magic, juggling, travel, dance, floral design, yoga, balloon-decorating, ukulele and one-stroke painting.

The public is invited to attend the free launch of the Young@Heart program, where they can meet the instructors, observe class presentations, enjoy live entertainment, sample light refreshments and receive give-aways.

Included in the entertainment line-up is a performance by the South Bay Strummers playing ukuleles, a magician, a juggler and vocal and dance presentations.

For information about Young@Heart, go to www.eccommunityed.com, or call 310-660-6460.

El Camino College is at 16007 Crenshaw Blvd., near Torrance. Peninsula Symphony conductor auditions

Riverside Community College District picks new chancellor

PE.com

10:00 PM PDT on Tuesday, March 17, 2009

By SEAN NEALON
The Press-Enterprise

The Riverside Community College District board voted unanimously Tuesday to appoint a Miami community college president the next chancellor of the district.

Gregory W. Gray, president of Miami Dade College's Kendall campus, entered the board meeting to a standing ovation from the board and about 100 people in attendance.

"I'm thrilled to be here," said Gray, who has more than 30 years of higher education experience.

The selection of Gray culminates a nearly two-year search for a permanent chancellor, the chief administrator of the district and its campuses in Riverside, Moreno Valley and Norco.

Two previous searches ended without a candidate selected. Combined, the searches cost $258,000. Meanwhile, two interim chancellors have served.

The long search process was on the mind of board members Tuesday.

"You don't compromise," said Mary Figueroa, a board member who was board president during the past two searches. "You wait. The best will come. It's with that, that I sit here tonight knowing the best did come to us."

Jose Medina, a board member who sat on the chancellor search committee, expressed similar sentiments.

"Dr. Gray took some of the words out of my mouth: It's been a long time coming," Medina said.

Gray, who is expected to take over in July, comes to Riverside at a challenging time.

The district is in the middle of a complex accreditation process that would transform the Norco and Moreno Valley campuses into full-fledged colleges that can grant their own degrees.

It's also a time when state funding is not keeping up with enrollment growth, which is being driven by rising unemployment rates in the Inland area and planned enrollment cuts at the University of California and Cal State systems.

During his brief remarks Tuesday, Gray acknowledged that the forces impacting the country are very different than they were four to five years ago.

"I don't think that's something to be intimidated by," he said. "I think it's something to be excited about."

During a community forum at Riverside City College last month, Gray said his experience at colleges in New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Florida prepared him to lead the Riverside Community College District.

He spoke about leading a fundraising campaign in Pennsylvania that exceeded its goal by three times, developing partnerships with industries ranging from coal to hospitality and bringing Jon Secada, a Latin pop star in the 1990s, to Miami Dade College's Kendall campus as a visiting professor of music.

In 2006, Gray became president of the Kendall campus, which enrolls about 38,000 students, more than the Riverside, Norco and Moreno Valley campuses combined.

Richard Mahon, president of the Riverside City College Academic Senate and a humanities professor, said Gray was the preferred candidate of all three campus academic senates.

Hours of phone calls to faculty who worked with Gray and the other finalists -- Wayne D. Watson, chancellor of the City Colleges of Chicago, and Charles A. Taylor, who is on sabbatical as president of Thomas Nelson Community College in Hampton, Va. -- convinced Mahon that Gray was the right choice.

"I'm delighted," Mahon said.

El Camino student reports sex assault

Daily Breeze

By Larry Altman, Staff Writer

Posted: 03/24/2009 10:42:39 PM PDT

El Camino College police are investigating a student's report that she was sexually assaulted by four men in a restroom in the Natural Sciences Building.

The student said the attack occurred at 3 p.m. March 5 but she did not report it until Friday, police said.

Investigators wanted to question the student Tuesday, but she missed her appointment.

Campus officials issued an alert to students and faculty, as required by law, over the weekend.

The student last week provided detailed descriptions of her assailants.

One was black, about 20 years old, about 6 feet 3 inches tall, with a medium muscular build and nearly full beard with a thin mustache.

He wore a black baseball-style hat with an orange visor, a black T-shirt with what appeared to be a white T-shirt underneath and shorts of an unknown color.

He had a large scar about 10 inches long on his right lower leg and had two earrings in his left ear.

One was yellow metal in the shape of a five-pointed star, and the other was square with a yellow stone setting.

The second man was black, about 20 years old, about 5 feet 10 inches tall with a skinny build and dark skin color. He wore a tightfitting "do-rag" skull cap, a gray T-shirt and blue jeans.

The third man was black, about 20 years old, about 5 feet 9 inches tall, with a medium muscular build and medium skin color.

He had a short fade-style haircut and wore a brown or tan shirt with long sleeves.

The fourth man was black, about 20 years old, with a light skin color. He wore a white long-sleeve shirt under a white short-sleeve T-shirt. He had what appeared to be a mole on his left upper cheek.

Anyone with information is asked to call the El Camino College Police Department at 310-660-3100.

Promoting Early College
InsideHigherEd.com
March 26, 2009

WASHINGTON -- In an effort to streamline the pathway to postsecondary education, some educators and researchers have argued that challenging underrepresented and remedial students to earn at least two years' worth of college credit while they are working on a high school diploma can improve their outcomes. This model, known as an “early college high school,” has been catching on around the country and showing early signs of success.

Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia, declared Tuesday that there was a “dropout crisis” in America’s high schools, noting that about 7,000 students drop out every day. Speaking at a symposium on “early college high schools,” he suggested that the staid state of the country’s secondary institutions might be to blame.

“If Henry Ford were to come back to Earth, the only thing he would recognize is the American high school,” quipped Wise, adding that he believes the current crisis has made this the most exciting moment for education to make substantive changes since President Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society.”

Among the innovations lauded by Wise is the Early College High School Initiative, coordinated by Jobs for the Future and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The initiative, begun in 2002, recognizes more than 250 “early college high schools” in 24 states and the District of Columbia. These schools encourage their students -- currently more than 100,000 annually -- to graduate with not only a diploma but also an associate degree or two-year’s worth of college credit.

Practitioners argue that they can improve the outcomes of their at-risk and underrepresented students by challenging -- instead of simply remediating -- them. In the process, these schools hope to boost their graduation rates, prepare their students for high-skill jobs and reduce the amount of time it takes them to earn a college degree.

Andrew Smiles, program officer at the Gates Foundation, said the inspiration for the initiative came from the Bard High School Early College, a New York City public school run jointly by the city and Bard College. He cited it as an example of how secondary and postsecondary institutions could be held jointly accountable for the success of their students, working together to ensure that their credits are authentic and transferable. The Bard model is so successful, its officials recently announced, that a second location in Queens is being planned to handle overflow from its lower Manhattan location.

At the symposium, the American Institutes for Research presented preliminary data from 157 “early college high schools” in 2007-8, providing a window into their composition, operation and early successes. Of the schools surveyed, 66 percent of them are brand-new institutions. The remaining schools are either previously existing “middle college” models -- there were a number located around the country prior to the initiative -- or are programs within traditional high schools.

More than three-fourths of these schools team up with a community college to provide college-level courses, and 35 percent have four-year institutions as partners. (Some collaborate with both.) About half of these schools are located on a college campus, boosting what many practitioners refer to as the “power of place.”

Ben Byers, director of evaluation at Gateway to College -- another “early college high school” program, distinct from the Gates effort -- said he believes that at-risk students perform better when they are taught outside their traditional high schools, on college campuses. This, he said, provides students with the both the perception and the reality that they are in a serious environment where instructors and peers expect much of them. Students at schools situated on college campuses, according to data presented at the symposium, have higher graduation and retention rates than similar programs located on their own or at traditional high schools.

In other data, most of the students taking advantage of these programs are those with low performance in traditional high schools. Sixty-seven percent are members of minority groups, 59 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, 10 percent have limited English proficiency and 46 percent will be first-generation college students.

Andrea Berger, principal research analyst for the American Institutes for Research, said students in the 9th and 10th grade typically have less exposure to college-level courses than do upperclassmen. These students usually need a great deal of remediation before they are deemed ready to continue. On the whole, however, 61 percent of “early college high school” students have taken college-level courses and earned appropriate credit.

As students progress in these high schools, Berger noted, they have much more access to “an authentic college environment” in which they take classes with traditional college students. Thirty-nine percent of ninth-grade students in these programs mingle with actual college students in their courses, while more than three-fourths of high school seniors integrate with older students.

Though the figures have not been finalized, early calculations from 2007-8 show overall success for these models’ graduates. Berger reported that 88 percent of “early college high school” graduates enrolled in college the next fall. Forty-one percent of them chose to attend a four-year institution, while 47 percent of them enrolled in a community college.

Nancy Hoffman, director of the initiative, suggested that the federal government could make a few minor changes to encourage the proliferation of this model around the country. Among other things, she suggested that restrictions on who can receive Pell Grants be lifted so that some high school students could be eligible. Currently, high school students do not qualify for these federal dollars. Hoffman suggested that they be made available to high school students who demonstrate that at least half of their course load is for college credit.

She also suggested that the federal government adjust its method of calculating four-year high school graduation rates in a way that does not discourage secondary schools from adopting “early college” models. Currently, she noted that many secondary schools will not consider offering this model because most students will have to remain for a 13th grade to complete either their associate degree or earn more college credit, skewing their federal graduation rate.

— David Moltz

What They're Saying on the Web

The Daily Breeze

Thursday, March 26, 2009

"The ECC police are more interested in giving out tickets than protecting the students. …If you make a wrong turn or run a stop sign, they always seem to be there, but if somebody gets hurt, they are never anywhere to be found. What can we, as frustrated parents, do?

- in response to the article headlined "El Camino student reports sex assault"

Add your thoughts or read more comments at www.dailybreeze.com.

March Money Madness: The Coaches vs. the Professors

The Chronicle of Higher Education

April 3, 2009

By THOMAS COTTLE

College basketball's March Madness has come at a time when one prominent coach's salary has been held up for inspection. Apparently, the fact that the $1.6-million annual income of the University of Connecticut's Jim Calhoun makes him the highest-paid public employee in his state has rankled some people. Or are they more upset that he was caught off guard at a postgame news conference and appeared somewhat haughty?

Whatever the case, Calhoun did offer a rather strong defense of his salary. His elevated income, he argued, was more than offset by the fact that he raises almost $12-million each year for his university. Point well taken. Not too many university professors could make that claim. In fact, that has always been the argument for justifying what some people would deem exorbitant salaries for football and basketball coaches at Division I institutions. As a university professor myself, I surely wouldn't dare argue with the coach's logic.

Or would I? On the surface, it seems presumptuous to allege that a mere professor of education could match his value in financial terms with a basketball coach. And if that same professor would further contend that his financial contribution may actually be far greater than the coach's, one might wonder about the state of his mental health. After all, my salary of some $73,000 represents slightly more than 4 percent of the coach's salary. Already it appears we're comparing an ant with a skyscraper. Moreover, it's hard to compete with that $12-million in revenue deposited directly in the university's coffers.

But consider this: Every year I teach about 150 students, all of whom, presumably, will be going into the teaching and counseling professions. Each of those students will, in due time, be working directly with say, 85 students annually, a number representing slightly more than 21 students in each of four classes. (Some people would suggest that that number is actually closer to 100.) That means that I have a direct effect, hopefully a salubrious one, on close to 12,750 students. And remember that effect continues year after year. But let's just stay with one year.

Grant me the estimation that, over time, each of those 12,750 students will earn an average annual income of $45,000. That means that the students whom I influence will produce a total annual income of almost $575-million. Considering that they will pay roughly a 20-percent income-tax rate on their $45,000 salaries (in truth it is slightly less), I calculate that the government can count on almost $115-million in annual payments.

So while the coach's talents and accomplishments yield $12-million a year to the university, my talents and accomplishments may be yielding something better: Every year I send out more and more teachers who are teaching more and more students. I state the obvious when I say that many of the students whom I taught in 1995 are still teaching, which means they continue to directly and indirectly produce income for the country through their students' and their own employment in the form of taxes, not to mention what they spend in discretionary money that they may have.

Therefore, according to my calculations, in 15 years of university teaching, I have affected, however modestly, the lives of 191,250 human beings in what I hope is a positive way. Again using that modest estimate of an annual average salary of $45,000, those people now together earn $8.61-billion each year.

So now let's compare what the coach has brought in with what my students are bringing in.

For the past 15 years, the coach has attracted more than $180-million to his university. Not bad. But my students have deposited more than $1.72-billion in the government till in taxes, an amount representing more than nine times that which the coach delivers. Not only that, he has several presumably well-paid assistants working with the 15 or so young men on his team. I get one teaching assistant whose salary is embarrassingly low. Granted, some of the coach's graduates are earning a lot of money in the National Basketball Association and other professions and thereby making significant tax contributions. But, given the numbers of people whom I teach and the multiplier effect that I've described, I seriously doubt that figure can match the number produced by my students.

I rest my case with the recognition of two obvious problems inherent in this argument. First, my colleagues also teach the same students that I do. So given that our students study with say, 10 professors, the annual salary cost is closer to $700,000, or 41 percent of the coach's salary. Second, no one can deny that I am, of course, comparing apples with oranges, or more precisely, the financial value of apples and oranges. To that charge I plead guilty. I simply have no defense for any comparison of the financial value, or the human value for that matter, of education and entertainment.

Court Broadly Defines Job-Related Speech in Upholding Delaware Professor's Dismissal

The Chronicle of Higher Education

March 30, 2009

By PETER SCHMIDT

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit held on Friday that a public-college professor’s statements can be considered job-related, and thus not “citizen speech” protected by the First Amendment, even if they were made in connection with activities not specifically covered by the professor’s contract.

Affirming a decision by a lower court last year, a three-judge panel of the Third Circuit, which covers several mid-Atlantic states, ruled that Delaware State University was entitled to fire a communications professor for statements he made about a university presidential search, in reference to his organizing a campus breakfast, and in relation to advising his students.

The court rejected an assertion by the professor, Wendell Gorum, that his job description did not cover advising a student because doing so went beyond his responsibilities as specified in a collective-bargaining agreement. Citing a 2006 Supreme Court ruling in the case *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, involving the disciplining a Los Angeles deputy district attorney, the appeals court unanimously said the definition of job-related speech is a practical one, and formal job descriptions often bear little resemblance to the duties people actually perform.

The Third Circuit panel also rejected Mr. Gorum’s argument that all the speech at issue in the case involved matters of public concern that qualified it for First Amendment protection. The judges held that Mr. Gorum had failed to show that he believed any public issues were at stake in advising a student-athlete during disciplinary proceedings for weapons possession, and similarly had failed to demonstrate that he was dealing with a matter of public concern—or had even spoken publicly—in rescinding an invitation to Allen L. Sessoms, then the university's president, to speak at a 2004 prayer breakfast.

The Delaware State case was being followed by many advocates of free speech and academic freedom. They are worried about a recent wave of court decisions that have applied the Supreme Court's *Garcetti* ruling to academic settings and limited how much public-college faculty members can count on the First Amendment to protect speech connected with their jobs.

Such advocates had not publicly rallied behind Mr. Gorum, however, because of the circumstances of his case.

The university said it had fired him for doctoring student grades, and the appeals court described his First Amendment claims as “makeweight attempts” to fight his dismissal for violating the university's academic code. It held that he would have been fired even if he had not made any of the statements that he cited in claiming he was the victim of illegal retaliation.

California pension funds close to bankruptcy

February 2, 2009

The two largest pension funds in California, the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) and the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS), have lost billions of dollars in value. Hundreds of thousands of retiring state employees and teachers now face the stark choice of accepting much reduced pension checks or working past their retirement age.

CalPERS is the largest pension fund in the US and the fourth largest in the world. At its height in October 2007 it had $260 billion in assets, comparable to the GDP of Poland, Indonesia or Denmark. At the end of 2008 CalPERS was worth $186 billion, one of its worst annual declines since the fund's inception in 1932. It is one of the latest casualties of the financial collapse on Wall Street.

After years of gambling in real estate investments, the state workers pension fund has lost more than 41 percent of its value, after peaking last fall. Its real estate holdings have dropped from $9 billion to $5.8 billion, according to the Sacramento Bee.

CalPERS manages pension and health benefits for more than 1.6 million retirees and their families. The pensions are guaranteed by law, but given the current economic malaise employers may be asked to contribute more from their payrolls. The average employer, a taxpayer-funded government agency, contributes 12.7 percent of their payroll to CalPERS, while workers must contribute 5 to 7 percent of their salaries.

For now, a "rainy day fund" is being used to offset the worst in losses. It is likely, however, that CalPERS will ask for additional funds starting in July 2010 from state employers and July 2011 from local employers. The increases could be from 2 to 5 percent. Since the employers are public entities, the money will have to come from taxpayers or from budget cuts to other social programs.

CalPERS's losses are intimately tied with the collapse of the housing bubble and the economic downturn in general. The Dow Jones Industrial Average has dropped 39.8 percent during the same period that CalPERS fell 31 percent. Because of the fund's aggressive purchasing of real estate during the property bubble, CalPERS is now the largest owner of undeveloped residential land in America, much of it purchased in Arizona, California and Florida, some of the states hardest hit by the real estate crash. Many of these properties were purchased when their prices were at their peak.

The pension fund is expected to report paper losses of 103 percent on its residential investments in the fiscal year that ended June 30. It is estimated 80 percent of these investments were paid with borrowed money, which means that CalPERS will eventually be obligated to pay them back at the original market price.

The second largest pension fund in the US, CalSTRS, covers 794,812 teachers. Its value has fallen from $162.2 billion to $129.3 billion. CalSTRS's pension funds are guaranteed just like CalPERS, but unlike CalPERS, it does not have the authority to ask for increased contributions from employers. CalSTRS is funded by school districts contributing 8.25 percent of its payroll.

The state general fund pays 2 percent and a further 8 percent comes from the members' salaries. Any contribution changes would have to be added by the state legislature and approved by the governor.

While CalPERS' losses are currently being defrayed by the rainy-day fund, state administrators are hoping that the economic situation will improve, otherwise CalPERS and other pension funds will have to ask for further contributions. California Treasurer Bill Lockyer, who sits on the CalPERS board, told the San Francisco Chronicle that the current crisis means "both state and local government employers would be spending more on retirement than on some immediate program needs. Paying the commitments to pension obligation is a high priority, and it would take precedence over many other spendings."

He added, "You either cut some other program expenditures or you tax something." In other words, the pension deficit will be placed on the backs of working people who had no control over the investment decisions made by the government, let alone the recklessness and avarice of the banking executives and Wall Street speculators who are responsible for the crisis.

In the midst of a severe recession, this will only add to social anxiety and financial insecurity, particularly since hundreds of thousands of public school teachers and state employees covered by these massive pension funds have seen the value of their personal retirement savings, including 401(k)s and IRAs, reduced by 25 percent or more.

Pacific Grove, a coastal town north of San Francisco, highlights what cities and towns are being forced to do. In fiscal 2002, Pacific Grove paid less than $100,000 to CalPERS, only 1 percent of the town's general fund revenue. By 2006, this cost shot up to more than $2.2 million, or 15 percent of its revenue.

The city of 15,000 would have to spend $10 million or more to pay its pension obligations if it were to pull out of CalPERS. The recreation department staff has already been reduced from seven to one and budgets for the library and Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, a 125-year-old institution, were cut in half.

Joanne Nolan Stewart, a 48-year-old with two children, told the Wall Street Journal, "The people who used to run the recreation programs grew up here and sheltered the kids like they were their own." Joanne is also an account manager for AT&T and said, "If I were to retire, my retirement would be one-quarter of what I make today for the rest of my life."

California's pension and budget defaults are not isolated phenomena. All across the US state pension funds have been collapsing due to the broader economic crisis. According to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, state governments have run up pension fund losses totaling $865.1 billion. Assets for 109 pension funds dropped 37 percent to $1.46 trillion in the 14-month period ending December 16. By comparison, the S&P 500 fell 41 percent in the same period.

To return to 2007 funding levels by 2010, the 109 funds would need annual returns of 52 percent, the center found. Alicia Munnell, the center's director, told Bloomberg.com, "Even if markets recover, this will be a one-time loss that will have to be made up in the future by taxpayers."

State and local governments contributed more than $64.5 billion to pension plans in fiscal 2005-2006, according to the US Census Bureau, which is about 57 percent of the $113.2 billion spent on police and firefighters. A report by the Pew Center on the States did a survey in December 2007 that found that states owed $2.35 trillion in pension payments over 30 years.

Unsurprisingly, state authorities are attempting to cut benefits for new state hires in order to ameliorate the crisis. In Kentucky, lawmakers set the minimum age of retirement at 57 for employees hired after September 1, and required 30 years of service, up from 27, to receive full benefits. They also capped cost-of-living adjustments, tied to the Consumer Price Index, at 1.5 percent. Democratic Governor of New York David Paterson, trying to close a $15.4 billion gap over 15 months, also wants to reduce new workers' benefits while raising the retirement age from 55 to 62.

Rhode Island state and local governments were scheduled to make contributions to their pension funds equaling 25 percent of their payroll expenses in 2010, and the contributions may increase up to 30 percent in 2011 with a deepening recession. With increasing membership growth in state pension plans, these defaults will be even more exacerbated. State funds have been experiencing 12 percent growth since 2002, with 23.1 million now participating.

Company pension funds, or so-called defined benefit plans, have also been starved by the economic crash, falling to $1.2 trillion as of December 31 compared to $1.6 trillion a year earlier.

What Colleges Should Learn From Newspapers' Decline

The Chronicle of Higher Education

April 3, 2009

By KEVIN CAREY

Newspapers are dying. Are universities next? The parallels between them are closer than they appear. Both industries are in the business of creating and communicating information. Paradoxically, both are threatened by the way technology has made that easier than ever before.

The signs of sickness appeared earlier in the newspaper business, which is now in rapid decline. The Tribune Company, owner of the *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, is bankrupt, as is the owner of the *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* are gone, and there's a good chance that the *San Francisco Chronicle* won't last the year. Even the mighty *New York Times* is in danger — its debt has been downgraded to junk status and the owners have sold off their stake in the lavish Renzo Piano-designed headquarters that the paper built for itself just a few years ago.

All of this is happening despite the fact that the Internet has radically expanded the audience for news. Millions of people read *The New York Times* online, dwarfing its print circulation of slightly over one million. The problem is that the *Times* is not, and never has been, in the business of selling news. It's in the print advertising business. For decades, newspapers enjoyed a geographically defined monopoly over the lucrative ad market, the profits from which were used to support money-losing enterprises like investigative reporting and foreign bureaus. Now that money is gone, lost to cheaper online competitors like Craigslist. Proud institutions that served their communities for decades are vanishing, one by one.

Much of what's happening was predicted in the mid-1990s, when the World Wide Web burst onto the public consciousness. But people were also saying a lot of retrospectively ludicrous Internet-related things — e.g., that the business cycle had been abolished, and that vast profits could be made selling pet food online. Newspapers emerged from the dot-com bubble relatively unscathed and probably felt pretty good about their future. Now it turns out that the Internet bomb was real — it just had a 15-year fuse.

Universities were also subject to a lot of fevered speculation back then. In 1997 the legendary management consultant Peter Drucker said, "Thirty years from now, the big university campuses will be relics. ... Such totally uncontrollable expenditures, without any visible improvement in either the content or the quality of education, means that the system is rapidly becoming untenable." Twelve years later, universities are bursting with customers, bigger, and (until recently) richer than ever before.

But universities have their own weak point, their own vulnerable cash cow: lower-division undergraduate education. The math is pretty simple: Multiply an institution's average net tuition (plus any state subsidies) by the number of students (say, 200) in a freshman lecture course. Subtract whatever the beleaguered adjunct lecturer teaching the course is being paid. I don't care what kind of confiscatory indirect-cost multiplier you care to add to that equation, the institution is making a lot of money — which is then used to pay for faculty scholarship, graduate education, administrative salaries, the football coach, and other expensive things that cost more than they bring in.

As of today, there's no Craigslist busily destroying the financial foundations of the modern university. Teaching is a lot more complicated than advertising, and universities have the advantage of sitting behind government-backed barriers to competition, in the form of accreditation. Anyone can use the Internet to sell classified ads or publish opinion columns or analyze the local news. Not anyone can sell credit-bearing courses or widely recognized degrees.

But the number of organizations that can — and are doing it online — is getting bigger every year. According to the Sloan Consortium, nearly 20 percent of college students — some 3.9 million people — took an online course in 2007, and their numbers are growing by hundreds of thousands each year. The University of Phoenix enrolls over 200,000 students per year. In one case, the dying newspaper industry itself is grabbing for a share of the higher-education market. The for-profit Kaplan University is owned by the Washington Post Company.

And it would be a grave mistake to assume that the regulatory walls of accreditation will protect traditional universities forever. Elite institutions like Stanford University and Yale University (which are, luckily for them, in the eternally lucrative sorting and prestige business) are giving away extremely good lectures on the Internet, free. Web sites like Academic Earth are organizing those and thousands more like them into "playlists," which is really just iPodspeak for "curricula." Every year the high schools graduate another three million students who have never known a world that worked any other way.

Some people will argue that the best traditional college courses are superior to any online offering, and they're often right. There is no substitute for a live teacher and student, meeting minds. But remember, that's far from the experience of the lower-division undergraduate sitting in the back row of a lecture hall. All she's getting is a live version of what iTunes University offers free, minus the ability to pause, rewind, and fast forward at a time and place of her choosing.

She's also increasingly paying through the nose for the privilege. Few things are more certain in this uncertain world than tuition increasing faster than inflation, personal income, or any other measure one could name. People will pay more for better service, but only so much more. And with the economy in a free fall, more families have less money to pay. The number of low-cost online institutions and no-cost alternatives on the other side of the accreditation wall is growing. The longer the relentless drumbeat of higher tuition goes on, the greater their appeal.

Institutions that specialize in their mission and customer base are still well positioned in this new environment, much as *The Chronicle* is doing a lot better than the *Rocky Mountain News* (RIP). Tony liberal-arts colleges and other selective private institutions will do fine, as will public universities that garner a lot of external research support and offer the classic residential experience to the children of the upper middle class.

Less-selective private colleges and regional public universities, by contrast — the higher-education equivalents of the city newspaper — are in real danger. Some are more forward-looking than others. Lamar University, a public institution in Beaumont, Tex., recently began offering graduate courses in education administration — another traditional cash cow — through a for-profit online provider, with the two organizations splitting the profits. It's an innovative move and probably a sign of things to come. But the public university still looks like something of a middleman here — and in the long run, the Internet doesn't treat middlemen kindly. To survive and prosper, universities need to integrate technology and teaching in a way that *improves* the learning experience while simultaneously passing the savings on to students in the form of lower prices.

Newspapers had a decade to transform themselves before being overtaken by the digital future. They had a lot of advantages: brand names, highly skilled staff members, money in the bank. They were the best in the world at what they did — and yet, it wasn't enough. The difficulties of change and the temptations to hang on and hope for the best were too strong.

That's a problem for more than just newspaper shareholders. A strong society needs investigative journalism and foreign bureaus. It needs knowledgeable local reporters who can ferret out corruption and hold public officials to account, just like it needs faculty scholarship and graduate programs and even an administrator or two. Undergraduate education could be the string that, if pulled, unravels the carefully woven financial system on which the modern university depends.

Perhaps the higher-education fuse is 25 years long, perhaps 40. But it ends someday, in our lifetimes. There's still time for higher-education institutions to use technology to their advantage, to move to a more-sustainable cost structure, and to win customers with a combination of superior service and reasonable price.

If they don't, then someday, sooner than we think, we're going to be reading about the demise of once-great universities — not in the newspaper, but in whatever comes next.

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