

State's college plan needs rewrite

The Daily Breeze

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California's system of higher education is one of the nation's great public policy successes. It has produced millions of well-prepared graduates, lifting many of them into the middle class while fueling a booming state economy.

It wasn't by accident. In 1960, the Legislature passed the Master Plan for Higher Education, setting priorities for the University of California, California State University and community college systems. As the 50th anniversary of that prescient document approaches, plans for a long-overdue revision are taking shape in the Legislature.

Without a new strategy for operating our public colleges and universities, the economic future of our state will be in peril. And financing this new strategy needs to be a major part of the discussion. If the state wants to maintain the historic promise of the Master Plan, taxpayers, students or both will have to pay more. And if more of the burden is to fall on students, then the ability of the system to lift low-income Californians toward financial success will be far more limited.

There are signs everywhere that the state's pillars of higher education - access, affordability and quality - are crumbling. The budget crisis that sparked last week's UC protests has forced hundreds of millions in cuts, with students bearing the burden through fees that went up by more than 30 percent. At CSU, for the first time, students now pay more than the state. That's astounding in light of the Master Plan's promise of a tuition-free education for anyone who qualified.

There are fewer classes this fall at CSUs, UCs and the community colleges, making it more difficult and more expensive for students to complete their degrees at a time when unemployment makes returning to school a good option for many. With bigger classes, faculty furloughs and hiring freezes, the quality of instruction is also in question.

History shows this may be devastating for not only individuals but also the economy.

During the recession of the early 1990s, when fees shot up, CSU enrollment declined by 50,000, and it took the rest of the decade to recover. Even before this budget crisis, the Public Policy Institute of California predicted that by 2025, California would fall 1 million graduates short of expected needs. That gap will be more evident in science and technology.

State Rep. Ira Ruskin, D-Los Altos, seized the opportunity of the upcoming anniversary to propose a joint legislative committee to rewrite the Master Plan. The Assembly and Senate agreed. Legislative leaders must move quickly to appoint members so the committee can get to work.

The update must begin with a robust public discussion about the future of public higher education - including what's at stake if the world's finest system continues to deteriorate. Maintaining quality, access and affordability at CSUs, UCs and the community colleges will be expensive, but letting these institutions falter will be far more costly to California's economy and its people.

Sophie's Choice for 2-Year Colleges InsideHigerEd.com

October 5, 2009

Throughout the last year, leaders of many four-year colleges have adopted the mantra that their institutions can "no longer be all things to all people." This has led to efforts to identify areas of strength, to carve out niches, and to drop programs best offered elsewhere.

Last week, leaders of San Joaquin Delta College announced a similar philosophy. Having gone through rounds of across-the-board cuts already (1,000 individual courses have been dropped), and facing more reductions in state support, the college announced plans to eliminate entire programs to try to avoid or at least minimize additional cuts to others. This approach is a bit shocking to many at the community college in Stockton, Cal., even though they are aware of deep and continuing budget cuts facing the institution.

While community colleges don't have the graduate and research programs one would find at a university, they *have* tried to be all things to all people. If local residents want more recreational offerings, they can have them. If many students get through the local public schools without mastering basic skills, the community college will teach them. If local officials need new programs for welfare recipients, for helping local business, for immigrants, the community college won't say no. At least that's the way it's been at many institutions -- and given the word "community" in their names, the philosophy has been a point of pride.

But at Delta, that's not something that can be sustained, officials say.

"We've done the across the board cuts, but you can only do that so far. If you keep doing across the board, you will damage every program," said Raúl Rodríguez, the president. Many of the programs being cut are inherently good and build community support for the college, but that can no longer be the deciding factor, he said.

"We love to do those kinds of things, but when the budget gets cut, we're not going to take away a slot for a student who wants to transfer to a university over a senior who wants to exercise," he said.

His example isn't random. Each semester, almost 1,000 senior citizens take recreational, non-credit courses at the college that are slated to be eliminated now, and these students have been among the most vocal critics of the changes. But Delta is also eliminating academic programs that don't fit into the two missions that are being protected: pre-transfer programs and job training.

What will go? A lot of remedial education. The college will keep remedial courses for those who need just a course or two to be ready for college level work. But for the courses that enroll

hundreds of students a semester who need years of remedial education to get ready for college, Delta is going to say no.

"Over the years, there's been a movement to get to lower and lower levels of basic skills, so we now serve some students at first, second and third grade levels" of math and reading, Rodríguez said. In most of these courses, very small percentages (well under 10 percent, and sometimes closer to 1 percent) ever make it into college level work, he said. "We just can't afford to offer these extreme remedial levels any more."

Similarly, there is English as a Second Language. The college will still offer courses for those who need one or two courses to be ready for Delta's other courses. But the ESL offerings for those just starting to learn English will be eliminated. Many weekend and evening classes will be eliminated, as will some courses offered off campus, in a further effort to centralize offerings and focus on "protecting the core," Rodríguez said.

How did it come to this? Last year, the college had to cut \$8 million out of its \$100 million budget due to state cuts, all while enrollment has been increasing steadily (total is now about 22,000). Those cuts were across the board, but Rodríguez said the new approach will be used for another \$3.6 million that must be cut in the next few months. Rumors from Sacramento suggest that additional cuts are in the offing, and Rodríguez said he sees no sign of the kinds of political or economic changes in the state that might encourage him to wait for a recovery.

"I think it's going to get worse," he said.

Already the college has eliminated many adjunct positions, and there have been staff layoffs. He said that some of those teaching in the programs being eliminated -- including most of those who aren't adjuncts -- will get new assignments. But he said that more adjunct slots are likely to be eliminated.

Jeff Hislop, president of the faculty union at the college, said that he and his colleagues are "ambivalent" about the college's approach to the budget situation. For many who teach in programs that would be protected by the policy, he said that the philosophy understandably makes more sense than it does to those whose courses would end.

But he said that sympathy for the cuts comes from the reality that those in the "protected" areas haven't actually been protected. Hislop's situation illustrates just how bad things are right now. He teaches administration of justice, with some students seeking job training and others planning to transfer to four-year institutions, so his students should theoretically benefit.

But in the last year, as adjunct jobs have disappeared from the department, he and the other two full timers in the program have had to adjust. Hislop's schedule changed from five to six courses a semester. And his class size has gone from 60-80 per course to 95-100, with dozens more on waiting lists for each course. (Classroom size, he said, acts as a limit on enrollments.)

"We are right on that abyss, and the slope is that we have to look closely at what one instructor can do with these class sizes," he said. "If we push these high enrollments this high, we are jeopardizing the quality of education."

National experts on community colleges are not surprised to see the kinds of actions coming now in California.

Steve Katsinas, director of the Education Policy Center at the University of Alabama, and the co-author of [a recent report on declining state support for community college](#), said that he was troubled by these trends, but that colleges are simply not getting adequate support.

"I am afraid that if we continue to get cuts at the level we are seeing, we may see a very quiet and disturbing transition from comprehensive, open door community colleges to niche colleges that are not comprehensive in their missions."

Thomas Bailey, director of the Community College Research Center at Teachers College of Columbia University, said that he also expects to see more colleges make choices like those at Delta, but he sees this as a break from what has been standard practice. As community colleges have taken on new roles in adult basic skills education, he said, there has been an assumption that some funds accompanied the new responsibilities. Even if not all costs were covered, there were additional funds coming in, and economies of scale and a strong commitment to serving students allowed community colleges to add more and more roles, he said.

What's going on now in California and elsewhere is that "the head count-revenue link has been broken," so colleges like Delta are finding themselves unable to serve those already enrolled or who want to enroll.

Bailey said that he was torn about the idea that a college is abandoning remedial education for those who need a lot of remediation, and said he hopes that there are alternatives available near the college. He said that his center's research on remedial education shows that Delta officials are correct about the low success rates with those needing extensive remediation.

"It is true that very few people who start three or four levels below [college level] actually emerge from that," he said. But that doesn't mean that those who never reach college work are not being well served. "if you get someone from 5th grade to 10th grade, even if that's not college level, that's still a useful function" for the college to perform, he said.

"It makes sense for colleges to set priorities, especially when they are subject to such drastic cuts in resources," he said. "Across the board cuts don't make sense. Colleges should look for programs that do not lead to good jobs, transfer, or subsequent education. I also think that colleges, when possible, should coordinate and perhaps consolidate programs, especially when they are costly. This would require some coordination across colleges and it seems to me could be done within the California district system."

Advocates for ESL also fear that the trend at Delta is going to spread. John Segota, director of advocacy for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, said that community colleges play a key role for immigrants seeking to get a better education. Even if basic literacy can be found elsewhere, he said that there is a distinct advantage to offering these classes at a community college. As students start to succeed, they are much more likely to move into the college's courses than if they are studying elsewhere, he said.

ESL is frequently a target, Segota said, because it is perceived wrongly as remedial, when its students never had the chance to learn English in the first place. And an unfair reality that makes ESL vulnerable, he said, is that so many instructors are adjuncts. "So people think they will be easy to cut," regardless of the importance of their work, he said.

Patrice Burke, the student body president at Delta, praised the president and other administrators for "doing the best job they can in a very challenging time." But she is opposed to the new plans, which will eliminate the remedial courses in English and mathematics in which she is enrolled.

Supporters of the cuts say that Burke and similar students should be learning from adult education programs. But she noted that she earned her G.E.D. at a local high school's adult ed, and then learned that the college thought she needed remedial instruction. As a 40-year old single mother, there were not other good options, she said.

She said that the college is using too limited a definition of success by focusing on those who transfer to a university or complete a job-training program. While she still needs more remedial help after two years at the college, she said she has learned much more than she knew coming in, and considers that a success. "If one of our ESL students is here for a few months, and can then get a job, isn't that success, even if he never transfers?" she asked.

"I believe every student is part of this community and the college should be there," she said. "It doesn't matter if you are a level one student or a level three student. You are a human being."

Rodríguez, the president, said he feels he has no choice but the one he is making. But he said he has been moved by the stories of students who have talked to him about the impact of losing their programs. "You hear these stories," he said. "Your heart goes out to them."

— **Scott Jaschik**

At Transfer Time in California, Thousands of Students Hit a Dead End

The Chronicle of Higher Education

October 5, 2009

By Josh Keller

San Jose, Calif.

One of the most productive pipelines in California higher education starts with six community colleges spread among the quiet, space-age suburbs of Silicon Valley. Every year the colleges send thousands of their students to the region's public university, San Jose State.

The community colleges here are a prime source of high-quality students, supplying nearly a third of the graduates at San Jose State, the oldest campus in the California State University system. For generations of local two-year students looking to transfer to a university, San Jose State has been both a top prize and an obvious choice.

Jessica S. Perez, an Evergreen Valley College student, wants to transfer to San Jose State to continue on her path to becoming a therapist. Sharon Grimaldi, a West Valley College student, wants in because it is one of only a few places where she can study speech pathology. In 1970 the future novelist Amy Tan, then a San Jose City College student, transferred to the university to study English and learn how to become a writer.

That pipeline is now closed for at least a semester, part of the fallout from California's deep fiscal problems. For the first time in memory, the roughly 1,300 community-college students who expected to transfer to San Jose State next spring are having to make other plans.

California's community-college system is by far the largest college system in the country, with nearly three million students. And transfer students from two-year colleges here play an unusually large role in the state system of higher education. They make up nearly half of those who graduate from Cal State or the University of California with bachelor's degrees, and they tend to be a more diverse group than their nontransfer counterparts. For decades, regional transfer pipelines in San Jose, Sacramento, San Diego, Long Beach, and elsewhere have been central to the state's promise of upward mobility.

But California's budget crisis has damaged those pipelines and exacerbated long-known problems with the transfer process, such as a poor statewide transfer rate and a confusing set of requirements. A landmark came in June when Cal State announced that it would reduce its total enrollment by 40,000 students, or 9 percent, forcing nearly all 23 of its campuses to essentially close admissions during the spring, when transfer students typically arrive.

In the long term, that decision may alter the flow of students among colleges in the state, with unintended consequences for community colleges, private colleges, and the University of California. In the short term, it has made for a brutal summer for community-college students like Ms. Grimaldi and Ms. Perez, who had intended to transfer next spring.

The transfer problems in Silicon Valley are a microcosm of the pressure California's budget crisis is putting on students: Public colleges in the state plan to cut an estimated 300,000 students from their classrooms during the next year and a half. The decisions Ms. Perez and her fellow students make in response will help determine the ultimate direction of higher education in the state.

Option 1: Stay in 2-Year College

Ms. Perez, 22, fell in love with psychology during her first psych class at Evergreen Valley College. "Everything that you learn is crazy," she says: the stages of sleep, the ways that a child's brain develops. Last year, her second on the campus, she started counseling preteens at a local clinic, and she sees herself becoming a therapist.

Ms. Perez had been in regular contact with Evergreen counselors about transferring to San Jose State. But she didn't learn about the enrollment restrictions until June, when she was browsing online and was about to apply for the spring semester. Her first reaction was disbelief.

"We had done everything," she says. "I was ready. We had heard talk about enrollment [issues], but I didn't really believe it, because I was hoping. I was thinking, I want to transfer. I need to get out of here."

At first her counselor told her to consider a second choice, Cal State-East Bay, about 30 miles north of San Jose, so she sent in an application. But a week later, a representative of the university e-mailed back to say that it, too, had closed its admissions for the spring.

The only option for Ms. Perez is to stay at Evergreen for an extra eight months, she says, even though there is not much more she can accomplish there. She called San Jose State to ask if she

could take any more classes at Evergreen that would count toward her degree, but was told no, she says. Next semester she plans to take a Spanish class and reapply to San Jose State for the fall of 2010.

Having students like Ms. Perez hanging around is a major problem for the community colleges, which are seeing a burst of demand even as they cut courses and fire part-time instructors in response to cuts in state support. The demand is so high at neighboring De Anza College that a record 8,400 students, a third of the student population, are on a waiting list for at least one class this fall, and 2,300 students—about one in 10—have not been able to get into any classes at all.

That means students who are unable to transfer out take up spots that other students might need to complete their own transfer requirements. Those students, in turn, may stick around longer, preventing others from enrolling. Some higher-education observers call this phenomenon "the cascade": Enrollment cuts in one system result in a chain of displaced students elsewhere.

Brian Murphy, president of De Anza College, says he fears that current sophomores at his campus might be held up by students unable to transfer. That reality is lost on state lawmakers, he says: "The system is reasonably fine-tuned, and I don't think Sacramento has any understanding of how delicate some of these relationships are."

Ms. Perez now worries that she may not get in when she reapplies in the fall. A representative from San Jose State recently met with Evergreen students to talk about admissions, but Ms. Perez no longer trusts the process.

"He was like, 'Oh, don't worry,'" she says. "You can't tell us, 'Oh, don't worry' if you're just going to let us down again."

Option 2: Go Private

San Jose State is on a short list of public universities in Northern California that offer a major in speech pathology, and it is the best option for Ms. Grimaldi, a second-year student at West Valley College. The program is not especially competitive, and student advisers told her that if she completed the requirements for her intended major and kept her grade-point average above 2.0, her admission would be a lock.

The bad news came in June, in an e-mail message from West Valley's transfer adviser: San Jose State was out.

East Bay, another university that offers speech pathology, initially encouraged Ms. Grimaldi to apply for the spring of 2010. But then "they started to get indecisive," she says. The university hedged and offered her an application for summer instead; a few weeks later, even that option was gone.

Staying in community college was not an option, she says, because she is tired of waiting. "I've taken everything that I could," she says.

Like many two-year-college students, Ms. Grimaldi is not able to easily pick up and move to another part of California or to another state. She is undergoing jaw surgery next year and needs to stay close to her dentists, and her parents couldn't afford to support her away from home, she says.

So she chose what is becoming an increasingly attractive option for frustrated transfer students: a private college.

Many two-year students in California are unable to afford private colleges, but for those who can, the recession has made private institutions look better in comparison with the state's public universities. Both Cal State and the University of California are expected to respond to cuts in state support by raising tuition more than 30 percent, narrowing the cost gap between public and private colleges.

Ms. Grimaldi chose Notre Dame de Namur University, a Roman Catholic institution in Belmont, 30 minutes up the freeway from San Jose State. Notre Dame does not offer speech pathology, "so I'll have to give up that dream for now," she says. But she is happy to leave the Cal State system behind.

"I understand that it's not their fault, and there's nothing they can really do at this point," she says. But "I can't just wait."

She will have plenty of company at Notre Dame: Officials there say its enrollment of transfer students from two-year colleges, while still small, is growing quickly during the state's downturn.

Rejeetha M. Gort, director of admissions, says the university hopes to see at least a 6- to 7-percent increase in enrollment next spring, driven in large part by students who were shut out of Cal State. Notre Dame is making a big marketing push for those students, she says, holding

specialized open houses for the first time and advertising heavily in the student newspapers of Silicon Valley community colleges.

"We're letting them know that we may not be a CSU or UC, but we're still taking students in for the spring," Ms. Gort says.

Officials at several other private colleges in the state report similar numbers and say they are happy to serve the students shut out of the public systems. At National University, which enrolls about 24,000 students at more than a dozen campuses throughout California, officials expect enrollment of transfer students to increase by 3 to 5 percent this year.

But others warn that while private colleges will see increased interest, they will be unable to handle the hundreds of thousands of students turned away from public institutions, which enroll about 85 percent of the state's college students.

"Most of the privates don't have unused capacity," says Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, based in San Jose. "Anyone who thinks that's going to provide substantial relief is badly mistaken. That's no knock on the privates, it's just a capacity issue."

Option 3: Drop Out, for Now

Edesa Betkolia, a communications student at West Valley, is proud of her progress there but angry that her work has been interrupted. "I struggled between work, family, friends, and school. I somehow managed it. I took winter-session classes, I took summer-session classes. I overloaded. And all of a sudden [San Jose State] is just not accepting any students."

Cal State's restrictions have already led her to take classes that will not help her transfer, including a math class this semester that she doesn't need. Reaching for a campus at the University of California, which is planning for 500 more transfer students this year while it cuts freshman enrollment, would be too expensive, she believes.

If nothing changes, Ms. Betkolia says she will probably drop out of school in the spring to work full time, and then apply to San Jose State again for the fall of 2010. "I honestly hate that. I'd rather be a student full time until I get my degree, and not have to work," she says. "But I guess that if there's really no other option, I have to."

California college officials say they don't know how many students will respond to roadblocks in the state's transfer process by simply dropping out. But given the state's continued budget troubles, they say it is likely that thousands more spots will be lost before any are regained, intensifying the cascade of displaced students and denying many students a chance to graduate.

Officials and researchers warn that leaving college, even with a plan to come back, can be problematic for a student who has already completed two years of transfer requirements. Many would-be transfer students must return to community college to complete more courses, and they no longer get high priority when signing up for classes that they missed.

Judy C. Miner, president of Foothill College, a two-year institution, recommends to students that they continue to take courses even if they are ready to transfer. "There's a lot to be said for continuous enrollment," she says. When students drop out, "it is so easy to just be attracted to other ways of spending your time."

Ms. Betkolia says the most frustrating part has been dealing with the "constant rejection" as she learned that Cal State campuses would no longer be considering applications. In waiting for San Jose State to open up again, she says, "you kind of just gradually waste your time."

Thousands of Students Lose Spots at California State U.

Some 40,000 students will be unable to attend the California State University system in the next year and a half because of enrollment cutbacks. The following seven Cal State campuses are each predicting a 10.8-percent enrollment decline, the highest among the system's 23 institutions. The map shows numbers of full-time-equivalent spots lost.

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| San Diego | 3,065 |
| Long Beach | 3,044 |
| Fullerton | 2,945 |
| Northridge | 2,787 |
| San Francisco | 2,537 |
| Sacramento | 2,488 |
| San Jose | 2,433 |

Source: California State University system

College reps meet to mend fences

Glendale News Press

Educators reach a positive tone in discussing former GCC president, campus climate.

By Max Zimbert

October 6, 2009

NORTHEAST GLENDALE — A team of representatives from a nearby community college said disparate constituency groups across Glendale Community College need to reevaluate their roles and responsibilities to foster better communication.

A report delivered Tuesday by John Nixon, president of Mt. San Antonio College, and one of his communications professors, Phillip Maynard, warned that the process of rebuilding in the wake of several contentious years following the retirement of former Glendale Community College President John Davitt would be long and difficult.

About three dozen Glendale college officials listened and asked questions Tuesday in the auditorium in what many administrators, faculty members, and support staff said they considered to be a positive step toward reaching reconciliation.

In the years since Davitt retired in 2006 after 20 years on campus, interdepartmental rivalries cropped up under the reign of his replacement, Audre Levy.

“Circumstances led to deterioration of trust,” Nixon said. “That’s not unique to colleges in general, but that’s led to a vacuum of authority.”

Before her resignation, Levy and John Queen, a political science professor and president of the Academic Senate, invited outsiders to interview the college’s stakeholders and make recommendations for improving campus governance and communication.

Maynard and Nixon made a similar presentation to a special meeting of the Board of Trustees on Monday.

“It’s always good to get some objective perspective,” said Ramona Barrio-Sotillo, the college’s guild president. “It’s like counseling.”

The Mt. San Antonio College team was brought in to clarify college stakeholder roles, develop communication between groups and cultivate a process to continually evaluate the campus climate and the role of college trustees.

“There will be words, ‘tension,’ ‘motives’ and ‘difficult dialogues,’” Maynard said. “But I think we’ll find something positive at the end of the rainbow.”

Maynard and Nixon said they were still working on a final report, but recommended all constituency groups do a little introspection. They said board members need to understand that

individual actions can create confusion and a perception of micromanaging, something that Joe Denhart, who coordinates classes for adult students, said had been a problem.

“There’s some, if you will, resentment toward the board,” he said. “Community building needs to take place now.”

The consultants also said college statutes, accreditation policy and good practice ought to dictate roles and responsibilities in hiring and evaluating a college president, for instance.

“A board of trustee meeting is not a good place for participatory governance,” Nixon said.

Maynard said serious introspection would be productive.

“There seem to be at times some very, very strong personalities who have their own look and views to how things are on this campus,” he said. “There needs to be this inward look to the extent to, ‘What do I bring as a leader?’”

He also asked the audience to rank the mood of campus communication.

“It depends on who’s talking to who,” one man said to laughter.

Community Colleges Begin \$1-Million Project to Improve Graduation Rates

October 6, 2009

By Eric Kelderman

Washington

With a \$1-million grant, eight community colleges across the country are beginning a two-year effort to study how they can produce more graduates at a lower cost per student.

The project will begin by identifying a set of common data that community colleges need to collect to determine their effectiveness.

"The first step will be to get everyone speaking the same language," Jamie P. Merisotis, chief executive officer of the Lumina Foundation for Education, said in a news release issued on Tuesday to announce the pilot program. The Lumina Foundation, a private organization dedicated to improving college-completion rates, especially among low-income and minority students, is paying part of the cost of the grant and is providing technical assistance.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is also providing money for the grant, which will be used at Cuyahoga Community College, in Ohio; the Dallas Community College District, in Texas; Greenville Technical College, in South Carolina; Ivy Tech Community College, in Indiana; Laney College, in California; the Louisiana Community and Technical College System; Oklahoma City Community College; and the Pima Community College District, in Arizona.

The project's goal is to have a voluntary accountability system in 20 community colleges by 2011.

President Obama has focused increased attention on community colleges as institutions that will help the nation become a world leader in postsecondary-degree attainment. The president has proposed spending \$12-billion over the next decade to improve programs, courses, and facilities at two-year institutions so that they can graduate five million more people.

Board president says 3 percent pay cut would cancel layoffs appealdemocrat.com

October 07, 2009 01:06:00 AM

By Ryan McCarthy/Appeal-Democrat

No employees would lose their jobs if a 3 percent across-the-board pay cut was instituted, says the president of the Yuba Community College District board of trustees — and he'll propose such a measure Oct. 14.

"That's not unreasonable at all," Alan Flory said Tuesday. "I'm sure the trustees would support it."

Contract negotiations with employee groups would have to follow Board of Trustees approval of such a pay cut, Flory added.

"We can say this is what we recommend," Flory noted.

He said he opposes cutting back classified employees of the college district in such jobs as secretary, groundskeeper and custodian.

Faculty in the Yuba College district are among the highest paid in the state, Flory said.

However, Lisa Jensen-Martin, president of the Yuba College Faculty Association, was critical of the proposal. "It doesn't seem the district is doing a very good job managing the district finances when they have to come to the college employees for handouts," she said.

That request comes as the college district intends to keep in its budget a 7 percent reserve, Jensen-Martin said.

Moreover, the Faculty Association president said she has not heard of any salary cut proposal from district officials.

"For President Flory to talk to the press regarding salary cuts before they talk to the faculty is completely inappropriate and troubling," Jensen-Martin said.

The board of trustees is scheduled to take up budget-related issues when it meets Oct. 14 at the Clear Lake campus in Lake County.

Community College Accountability

InsideHigherEd.com

October 7, 2009

Accountability initiatives are not new to community colleges. But because scholars and educators have long disagreed about how to measure and compare the institutions' success in educating students, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation for Education announced Tuesday their funding of an effort to create a national, voluntary accountability system for community colleges.

The project, which is being funded with \$1 million in grants from the two foundations, will gather leaders from groups like the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Community College Trustees and select community college districts to hash out what officials call a “common set of metrics and data points to evaluate their effectiveness, both internally and against one another, developed specifically for their mission.”

Eight community college sites around the country, mostly from urban areas, will pilot the new accountability system. Then, in two years, the project will expand and pilot in up to 20 more localities. Ultimately, project organizers hope their to-be-created system will be adopted by community colleges across the country to help improve the outcomes of their students.

Kent Phillippe, who as director of research at AACC has helped to plan this project, said there are few details of exactly what metrics this universal system would include, as the initiative is still in its nascent stages and the pilot sites still do not know exactly what data they will be tracking. Still, he argued that the project's creation reflects a sentiment among community college officials that the common metrics that have long been used to judge their institutions' relative success -- led by the federal graduation rate -- are insufficient and do not help institutions improve themselves. He also added that some new metrics are needed and must be developed.

“We need to try to build on progression measures of students and not just focus on the final outcome of degree and certificate attainment,” Phillippe said. “For instance, we need to highlight certain points along the learning path toward reaching graduation, such as the attainment of 30 credit hours or 60 credit hours or after the progression from development to college-level coursework [all points after which it is more likely that a student will graduate]. We also need to catch the things that community colleges do that aren't necessarily credential specific, such as work force and community development. Maybe we could track job placement rates in these programs or show the income change among students who've taken x number of courses at a community college.”

Officials from Gates and Lumina expressed a similar desire to see better measurements taken at prescribed benchmarks as students move through community colleges.

“We need to see beyond graduation rates,” said Holly Zanville, a senior program director at Lumina. “Even if colleges find that they have poor graduation rates -- and many of them do -- they can't tell where students get lost and how they can get along to improve themselves. We

need to pay more attention to milestone markers. Of course, we're still interested in outcomes, but we need to know more about what's happening along the way. For instance, it'd be great to know the point at which students transfer onward."

Diane Troyer, a senior program officer at Gates, said the foundation believes its support for this community college project will also help institutions work toward the philanthropy's publicly stated goal to "double the percentage of low-income young people who earn a postsecondary credential by the age of 26" by 2027, a benchmark that has appears to have influenced some of the goals set by the Obama administration. She also believes the critical mass of publicity that community colleges have recently received, not only from the federal government but from organizations like hers, bodes well for the success of this project.

"A lot more attention has been cast upon community colleges and the role they play in the full picture of higher education," Troyer said. "But, more attention has to be placed on completion initiatives. Consensus is what really matters when considering what we should be measuring [for this project]. Having these national benchmarks for colleges to assess their own performance will help them tremendously."

Community college presidents at the project's pilot institutions said they are excited to work with some of their peer institutions to compare and contrast some of the data they already collect to assess themselves.

"Most of us don't have large research departments like universities have, and we haven't had the resources to do this kind of work," said Jerry Sue Thornton, president of Cuyahoga Community College, in Cleveland, Ohio. "For us and others involved with this pilot, it's not about having a measuring stick or a strict comparison base, but trying to improve ourselves by sharing data with each other."

Thornton said Cuyahoga will be using this project to take a close look at what she called its "gatekeeper courses" -- those like algebra that are at the beginning of a sequence and, if not passed, keep many students from graduating. In addition, she said her institution will focus on shortening the amount of time its students spend in developmental courses, comparing and contrasting remedial sections of varying lengths and methods to see which achieve success and which do not.

Roy Flores, president of Pima Community College, in Arizona, said such a universal system will give his institution a more effective way to identify its shortcomings and remedy them.

"We're very data driven, and that's already reflected in our plans and measures," Flores said. "It's something we've been doing for some time. But, more importantly, this is an opportunity to learn from other colleges as well. There's outstanding work being done by other colleges, and we're mindful of the fact that some of them don't look a lot like Pima."

At least one prominent outside observer of this major community college initiative, however, expressed his appreciation for the project but wondered why the two-year sector appears to have

bought into the notion of a universal accountability system long after the idea won favor among many officials at four-year institutions.

“I’ve had a lot of conversations with community college leaders in the past and -- fussed at them isn’t the right word -- but just didn’t understand why they weren’t the leader in this accountability movement,” said Charles Miller, former chair of former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings’ Commission on the Future of Higher Education, known colloquially as the Spellings Commission. “Community colleges tend to have -- not an inferiority complex -- but they feel like they have to wait in line behind their big brothers for some things. I commend them for doing this now. I don’t know the details of what they’re producing, but I have no reason to doubt they’ll come out with a good idea.”

Miller said he hopes the project embraces the idea of a “unit record system,” or a method of tracking a student’s progress throughout his or her educational career. Though this recommendation of the Spellings Commission ultimately never received the support of educators nationally, Miller said it would benefit community colleges most.

“One of the problems with accountability for community colleges is the need to follow students beyond community college,” Miller said. “Most community college students don’t come for the purpose of getting a degree or a certificate, and they’ll have to find a way to measure that. These accountability efforts often focus so much on degree completion, but that’s definitely not the only thing that community colleges do.”

— **David Moltz**

Crowding Out For-Profit Colleges

October 8, 2009

Taxpayers who vote in favor of bond referendums for facilities improvements at their local community college may also be inadvertently hurting enrollments at nearby for-profit institutions, according to a new study.

Stephanie Riegg Cellini, professor of public policy and economics at George Washington University, recently completed a study of successful bond initiatives for California community colleges and their influence not only on the enrollment at those institutions but also at nearby proprietary institutions, many of which compete for the same students. The results of the study appear in the latest edition of the *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*.

Community college boards in California, as in many states, can ask voters to consider bond measures to fund facilities or other needs. If such measures are approved, the bonds are typically funded by additional taxes on property. Most often, community college bonds are to be used only for capital improvements; this is the case in California. Last November, for example, a significant number of these bond referenda were on ballots across the country as community colleges faced record enrollment, mostly as a result of the recession.

Cellini studied the impact of the 101 community college bond referendums that were considered by California voters between 1995 and 2002. These bonds ranged in value from \$8 million to \$658 million.

There were 109 community colleges in California during the frame of this study; these colleges served about 2.5 million students or 1.1 million full-time equivalent students. Each of these institutions enrolls an average of around 10,000 full-time equivalent students. In 2002-3, the full-time, full-year tuition at a California community college was the lowest in the country, at \$330 per year.

By contrast, Cellini discovered that the 3,827 for-profit institutions in California were much smaller and cost much more than their public counterparts. The average proprietary college had an enrollment of about 350 students and charged anywhere between \$3,000 and \$10,000 for a year's tuition.

Using data from the now-defunct California Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education – a body for monitoring proprietary institutions that was disbanded by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2007 – Cellini found that successful community college bond referendums negatively impacted enrollment at for-profit institutions. She writes in the report that “about 700 sub-baccalaureate students per county, or about 2 percent, are diverted from the private sector to the public sector for every \$100 million increase in direct funding to community colleges.”

Cellini also notes that community college enrollments see a net gain of about 700 students per every \$100 million bond. She argues that “these results suggest that bond passage may cause students at the intensive margin to shift from the private to the public sector.”

Still, Cellini notes that it is not clear if this “direct substitution between the private and public sector ... persists in subsequent years” after the passage of these bond referendums. Two to three years after bond passage, she reports, community college enrollments “may actually decrease” as “some classrooms become inaccessible as they are upgraded” or “colleges may be forced to cut back their course offerings in the near term.” She speculates, though, that community college enrollments likely increase 5 to 10 years after bond passage, but that time frame was beyond the scope of her study.

Fortunes for proprietary institutions, however, do not appear to change in the near term following a bond passage. Two and three years later, their enrollments continue to fall. Cellini suggests that “because proprietary schools are notorious for their dependence on student tuition and financial aid, it may be that short-term enrollment shocks wreak financial havoc on these institutions, making medium-run sustainability infeasible.”

Cellini suggests in her study that these findings could influence state legislators to consider public and for-profit entities together when “designing effective policies in the two-year college market.”

“If proprietary schools and community colleges offer education and training of equal quality, particularly in vocation fields where programs exhibit the greatest overlap, then the case could be made that public investment in sub-baccalaureate education should focus on promoting the transfer option in community colleges, while allowing the private sector to address the demand for vocation skills,” Cellini writes. “Under certain conditions, such a change may enhance efficiency.”

In an interview, however, Cellini said her recommendation came with one major caveat.

“Maybe the private sector can accommodate the need for vocational training to some extent, but we don’t really know a lot about the quality of these institutions,” said Cellini, noting the disappearance of California Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education as a major barrier to further research of this nature in the state. “My real plea for policy makers, not just in California but everywhere, is that they, please, start tracking this data at for-profits: enrollment, application data, how many students have jobs after graduation, how many complete their degree on time, etc. We don’t know if these schools are good or bad, and we’re letting the bad ones – if they do exist – go unchecked.”

Cellini said she was unsure if the shift from proprietary institutions to community colleges observed in her study was a positive for the “sub-baccalaureate” sector or not. Still, she added that for-profit operators should take note of her research.

“For them, it means, ‘Hey, you’ve got competition,’” said Cellini, noting that the shift she observed could be even more severe following a bond passage in today’s recession. “A lot of people are just waking up to the fact that there’s a low-cost option that they didn’t see before. People don’t always think about their local community college or hear about it. But today, with Obama highlighting public community colleges, it’s having an effect.”

— **David Moltz**

Served, Yes, But Well-Served?

October 8, 2009

The list published by the Student Lending Analytics blog last month jumped off the computer screen: Of the 10 colleges and universities whose students received the most Pell Grant funds in 2008-9, 7 were for-profit institutions. The massive University of Phoenix led the way with 230,000 students receiving Pell Grants worth a total of \$560 million, way above No. 2, Kaplan University. The only public institution on the list was the 19-campus Pennsylvania State University, and two of the 10 (one for-profit, one private nonprofit) were in Puerto Rico.

There are plenty of caveats about the list and why it doesn't fully represent the true Pell Grant picture. Foremost among them, by far, is the fact that the Education Department database from which the numbers were drawn lists individual institutions.

So huge community college districts (like Phoenix's Maricopa Community Colleges) or public college systems (like the City University of New York) that serve huge numbers of poor students don't show up as single entities, while for-profit colleges like Phoenix and DeVry -- which are structured in a way that makes them equivalent to university "systems" -- do. (If the Maricopa colleges were lumped together, they'd show up in the middle of the top 10, as currently constructed, with about \$60 million. CUNY and California State University would appear well above that.)

That limitation aside, the data on Pell Grants say something important about the state of American postsecondary education at a time when the Obama administration, joining many others, is pushing to increase the number of Americans -- particularly those from low-income backgrounds -- who enroll in college and leave with a credential.

The one clear thing that the numbers say is that -- in a way that wouldn't have been true 20 years ago, or even a decade ago -- for-profit colleges have become a dominant destination for students from low-income families. Nearly a quarter of all Pell Grant dollars now flow to students at proprietary institutions.

That fact is inarguable -- but that may be the only statement about the Pell Grant numbers that won't start a fight. How one sees the implications of that trend line, and whether the enrollment of low-income students in for-profit colleges is a positive or negative development, is very likely to hinge on one's perspective. A financial aid Rorschach test, of sorts.

For administrators at for-profit colleges and many supporters of the institutions, the numbers are proof that the sector is coming of age, and that the colleges are reaching out to a pool of students -- academically underprepared students from low-income families -- that many other colleges have long ignored. These students may have limited options for pursuing a higher education, these observers say, but they are voting with their feet to attend institutions that know how to educate them and are going to give them the support they need to reach their goal -- and a better chance than the other institutions that would open their doors to them.

That's essential, they argue, at a time when there is widespread agreement -- and significant political momentum -- behind the idea that many more Americans need to enter higher education and emerge with a meaningful credential.

"What you see here is that the population that we're focused on, low-income and working class students, are increasingly embracing alternative forms of delivery" and, with their federal financial aid dollars in hand, "are coming to institutions like ours in increasing numbers," says Peter P. Smith, a former Congressman and public college president who is now senior vice president of academic strategies and development for Kaplan Higher Education. "There is an appetite for postsecondary, lifelong, certificate and degree-oriented learning, and learners are taking this money and going where they want to go to get it."

To some higher education and financial aid experts, however, the burgeoning number of Pell Grant recipients at for-profit colleges suggests several realities: that for-profit colleges are more aggressive than most other institutions both in recruiting students (through marketing) and in ensuring that students they recruit apply for federal aid; that other types of colleges that might historically have enrolled those students -- notably public two-year and some four-year colleges -- are finding their enrollments constrained by state budgets; and that for-profit colleges are heavily dependent on federal financial aid (about 80 percent of all students enrolled at for-profit institutions in 2007 received Pell Grants, according to federal data).

More importantly, they argue, is what the Pell Grant numbers alone don't reveal: whether the educational opportunity that they promise is actually delivered, and if it comes at too high a price. To flesh out that answer, they say, one must look at other data -- about such things as student loan burdens and learning outcomes -- that tell a less positive, if still incomplete, tale. Students at for-profit colleges on average accumulate much heavier debt than do those at other types of institutions, and while the available data on graduation rates and other student outcomes are skimpy, for-profit colleges on average tend to have better completion rates than community colleges do, but worse than many four-year public and private colleges.

"To say that low-income students are going to those institutions is a very different thing from saying that low-income students are being *well-served* by them," says Sandy Baum, an economist at Skidmore College and senior policy analyst at the College Board. "The idea that we're having low-income students go to these institutions, not graduate, and come out with tons of debt really concerns me, from a public policy perspective."

A Complex Picture

Any discussion like this one -- about the pros and cons of low-income students attending for-profit vs. other types of colleges -- is complicated by all sorts of factors. A major one is the wide variation within sectors; while some people at traditional institutions of higher education automatically look askance at *any* for-profit college, there is wide variation in the quality and mission of private sector institutions, just as there is among two-year public and four-year private institutions, for example.

Using a single tag like "for-profit" to describe both the University of Phoenix and a local trucking school makes no more sense, in many ways, than comparing Stanford University and a small Bible college -- yet the former would both be considered "for-profit," and the latter both "four-year private."

Another complication is attitudinal. The for-profit sector has a checkered past, prompting a Congressional crackdown in the late 1980s that shuttered 1,300 schools that were widely seen as defrauding the government of financial aid and scamming students.

The 1,200 career colleges that remain -- highly sophisticated publicly traded companies and neighborhood beauty schools alike -- still regularly face complaints from disgruntled students and consumer advocates who accuse them of failing to deliver on their educational promises. But the enmity they face in some quarters of traditional higher education at times seems out of proportion, as if the cleansing of the late '80s had never happened and accrediting agencies and state and federal agencies were doing nothing to regulate the institutions.

It is in that context that the Pell Grant numbers calculated by Student Lending Analytics land with such impact. They show students at for-profit institutions accounting for nearly a quarter of all Pell Grant funds disbursed by the federal government in 2008-9, up, according to an analysis by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, from 19.3 percent in 2005-6 and 13 percent a decade ago.

Thomas G. Mortensen, a senior scholar at the Pell Institute and the cruncher behind those numbers, notes that the vast majority of the growth among Pell recipients attending for-profit colleges in the last 15 years has been among students that many traditional colleges and universities have shunned: working adults, especially from the lower socioeconomic strata. That may be starting to change, though, as the largest area of growth for the University of Phoenix in the last year or so, for instance, has been among students seeking associate degrees through its Axia College division, which is aimed much more at traditional-age students.

While the numbers showing for-profit colleges snaring a steadily increasing share of students with Pell Grants may elate advocates for career colleges and trouble critics, Peter Stokes, executive vice president of Eduventures, a research firm, reads them another way: as an indicator of where we are.

"If these schools represent this much of the financial aid pie, how much longer can we keep pretending they don't exist?" says Stokes. "Some folks may put their heads in the sand and wish these colleges weren't here, but where are we going to get with that?" Wouldn't it be a more productive conversation, he says, to try to understand why this is happening and how to ensure that the students who are choosing this route are coming out better for it on the other side?

As administrators at the colleges tell it, their students are often those who either don't find a place at other institutions or wouldn't otherwise consider college. Nearly three quarters of

potential undergraduates “either don’t meet admissions requirements or meet them and there’s no room for them,” says Bill Pepicello, president of the University of Phoenix.

As the drumbeat about “education as the way to access a middle class lifestyle” grows louder and louder, says Pepicello, more low-income Americans are considering college, a trend accelerated by the current economic downturn, as jobs become scarcer. Many such students would logically turn to community colleges or other open-access institutions, and indeed many of those institutions are reporting booming enrollments now. But many states are also cutting back on funding for their public institutions, forcing two-year colleges in places like California to turn away students who can’t get the classes they need.

“The irony is that the current economic environment creates radically increased demand for higher education, period, and the supply in public institutions, anyway, is capped in many cases,” says Smith, of Kaplan. Add in the fact that, as Smith asserts, for-profit institutions tend to be flexible in adapting their offerings to those most in demand by students and employers, and that, as Pepicello says, the colleges invest significantly in the services and “more careful attention that less sophisticated students tend to need and for-profits are willing to provide,” and it’s not surprising that the institutions are seeing their shares of Pell Grant recipients rise.

Financial aid experts offer other reasons that might help explain the increase. First, the institutions recruit more aggressively than do their competitors for low-income students. “They advertise -- they’re everywhere,” says Sara Goldrick-Rab, assistant professor of educational policy studies and sociology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. “Think how in your living room they are.” (This aggressiveness can be a vulnerability, too, as for-profit colleges occasionally run into regulatory trouble over potential violations of federal laws that bar them from paying recruiters based on their success in enrolling students. The University of Phoenix signaled last week that it was poised to settle a major lawsuit over that issue.)

The institutions are also much more aggressive about making sure that the students they enroll apply for and eventually receive federal aid for which they qualify -- an area that community colleges would be wise to emulate, for the good of their students, says James Rosenbaum, professor of sociology, education and social policy at Northwestern University. “You walk into the admissions office, and when you’re done, they take you by the hand, almost literally, to the financial aid office, where they say, ‘Here’s how we’re going to help you pay for this,’ ” he says. “They spend time with these students, and they get enormous payoff for that time spent. Community colleges don’t.”

”This is a positive thing they do,” says Donald E. Heller, director of Penn State’s Center for the Study of Higher Education. “It’s a model that the rest of us can learn from.”

The Loan Burden

The financial aid counseling that for-profit colleges provide to students not only helps them qualify for significant Pell Grant aid -- it also gets them access to the often hefty loans that they

need to afford the tuitions that the institutions charge, which are significantly higher than those at public colleges, especially two-year ones. And that is what most troubles Baum, the College Board economist.

A policy brief published by the board in August shows that 96 percent of the students who earned bachelor's degrees and 98 percent of associate degree recipients from for-profit colleges in 2007-8 had education loans (more than 60 percent had private, non-federal loans), and 19 percent of the associate recipients who borrowed and 60 percent of the bachelor's holders had accumulated debt of at least \$30,000. The comparable figures for public two-year colleges: 38 percent had any loan debt (5 percent of whom had debt of \$30,000 or more); for public four-year colleges, 62 percent had loan debt, and 20 percent of them owed at least \$30,000.

"The percentage of students who graduate with large debt is higher than for other institutions, and the growth from 2003 to 2007 was huge," says Baum. "I do think students should be discouraged from borrowing that much money to go to school."

Baum acknowledges that the questions about debt levels cannot be easily separated from questions about outcomes. Though it's tricky business, students and families of greater means regularly choose among colleges of differing costs (a more expensive Ivy League or liberal arts college vs. the local state flagship university, for instance) based in part on their expected return on their investment.

But the decision is especially fraught for students from low-income backgrounds, she says. "If you are yourself personally at poor risk of graduating, and you're going to an institution with low graduation rates, at least make sure you're not going to leave that institution with huge debt."

In Baum's calculation, that would appear to suggest that low-income students would generally be better off at less expensive community colleges. But she acknowledges, too, that many community colleges and non-selective four-year public colleges have very low graduation rates – a fact that officials at for-profit colleges are often quick to point out. How, though, do the academic outcomes of students at for-profit and other institutions compare?

Unfortunately, data on that question are hard to come by. Rosenbaum, the Northwestern scholar, co-wrote an article last winter that found that low income students' chances of earning an associate degree were "dramatically improved" by going to private two-year colleges (a category that included private nonprofit institutions, but was dominated by for-profits) rather than community colleges. The study did not consider the quality of the content on which the degrees were based, Rosenbaum acknowledges, and it did not fully explain the better outcomes at private institutions, though it suggested that some of the "more innovative" procedures they used to help students stay on track "could be imitated" by community colleges.

Any meaningful comparison of the graduation or other completion rates of for-profit and other institutions, to be fair, would probably have to focus on students from low-income families -- who often come into college with significant academic deficiencies.

Goldrick-Rab, who [blogged about Rosenbaum's study](#), said the other factor she would throw into the mix of considerations is students' return on investment from going to various types of institutions. It would be easier to justify the significantly larger debt burden that students at for-profit institutions accumulate if the economic returns over the course of a worker's career were significantly higher, she says. But the best available data, she says, offer evidence that "the economic returns are the same" for students who attend community colleges and more-expensive for-profit institutions.

Most of those interviewed for this article acknowledge that too little evidence is available to fully answer the most vexing questions raised by the Pell Grant numbers. While they start from different points – Pepicello and Smith confident that their institutions are a good investment for students (and, to the extent federal aid is flowing into them, for taxpayers), Baum and Goldrick-Rab skeptical – there is widespread agreement that for-profit colleges will continue to make the case for their own quality. The University of Phoenix is about to publish its second annual report on its student outcomes, and other institutions, including Capella and Kaplan, have either begun or are preparing to follow suit.

For Smith, given his experiences as founding president of both the Community College of Vermont in the 1970s and California State University at Monterey Bay in the 1990s, the position Kaplan faces now feels familiar.

"In each case, I had to make the argument that what we were doing was sufficiently good, sufficiently qualitative, that it would change people's lives," he says. "Look at the battles that community colleges won; they used to have to fight, now they've come of age. I think there is a process of acceptance that you go through, and that's what [for-profit colleges] are going through now."

Stokes, of Eduventures, argues that it will be impossible for the country to meet President Obama's goal of 60 percent of Americans with postsecondary credentials unless all institutions, for-profit and non, play a meaningful role. Given their history and their approach, for-profit institutions are, appropriately, "going to be held to a higher standard," and subject to special regulation, he says. But the institutions have long been "rapping at the door, saying take us seriously," and the Pell Grant numbers say, at the very least, that increasing numbers of students are.

"They are here, they are serving someone, so they must be doing something right," Stokes says. "The way I look at it is, are there ways we can improve upon what's being done at those institutions, and are there ways that the public and private nonprofit institutions can learn from the for-profits to increase their scale, to help us meet some of these more ambitious goals?"

"It just seems like we might be able to combine the best of both worlds."

— **Doug Lederman**

Remediation Worries and Successes

October 9, 2009

SAN FRANCISCO -- At one session on remedial education here, a speaker asked the audience of community college trustees how many of them knew their institution's graduation rate. A minority of hands -- maybe 20 percent -- went up. But if trustees are not as well versed on student success at their institutions as the question suggested they should be, that doesn't mean that they aren't interested. The session was standing room only, and other sessions on remedial education here at the annual meeting of the Association of Community College Trustees were also not only well attended, but full of trustees with lots of questions -- about why so much remediation is needed and what can be done to make it work.

There was a strong undercurrent of frustration to many of the questions, with many saying that community colleges were unfairly seen by many in the public as being only remedial institutions, even though they have little control of the factors that lead to remediation. One trustee noted that in her state, scholarships are awarded to students who achieve certain grade levels in high school, effectively making the community college free. About 20 percent of those who enroll through the program need at least some remediation, she said.

If that share of what the state considers top students aren't ready for college-level work, is it any surprise, she asked, that the percentages are even higher for other students?

Trustees offered a range of reasons for focusing more on this issue. Some cited more idealistic motivations, related to wanting every student to have a shot at success. Others were more practical, noting the huge costs of remediation and the political pressure to show success with these programs.

John E. Roueche, director of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin, offered some historical perspective about just how long remedial education has been a tough issue for community colleges. He said he first did a major study of remedial education at community colleges in 1968 and found terrible rates of success -- defining success as completing remediation at levels sufficient for college-level work. At many colleges he studied, only 1 in 10 students could be judged a success by that standard, and that's still the case today.

The major change in the last four decades? The top course at community colleges has switched from remedial English to remedial mathematics.

One part of the problem, he said, is that colleges aren't asking tough enough questions about their own performance in making remediation work. He gave as an example a college where he was brought in to do a workshop for the faculty members providing remedial courses. The instructors boasted to him that they had won awards for their work in achieving a 50 percent success rate. But this didn't mean that 50 percent of students were reaching college-level work (which would indeed be better than many colleges' track records).

What the figure meant was that 50 percent were completing a remedial course successfully. Because most students needed multiple courses to get ready for college-level work, and the 50 percent applied to each course, this meant that only about 12.5 percent of those starting remediation were ever reaching college-level work.

Trustees, he told the audience, need to start asking more questions. Beyond his question about graduation rates, he said every trustee should be asking administrators the following (and judging from the note-taking in the audience, there may be new questions at many colleges' next board meeting):

- What percentage of students need remedial work?
- What percentage pass their remedial courses?
- What percentage reach college-level work?
- How do these percentages change for different demographic groups?
- Are placement policies enforced? (He said too many community colleges let "well intentioned faculty members or counselors" help students bypass remediation that they need, only to watch the students fail.)
- Does the college have attendance policies? (Roueche said too many colleges say that their policy is to let faculty members decide, which is essentially "not having a policy." He advocated strict policies, telling students they can't miss class or register late.)

While Roueche's talk was depressing to many in the audience, he stressed that there are strategies that are working, and said that the first thing colleges need to do is start trying approaches that are being used successfully elsewhere.

One of the colleges praised at Roueche's session -- Parkland College, the community college in Champaign, Ill. -- was the subject of another session for the way it has revamped remedial education, and is starting to see some results.

Since 2006, the college has restructured a series of programs for remedial students and for all students -- in fact grouping them together in a new Center for Academic Success. Randall Fletcher, dean of academic services, said it was important to group services together and not to create a stigma around seeking help. At the same time, he said, it was necessary for the college to try a range of new strategies to try to get more students through courses. All of these new efforts were faculty designed, he said, and a faculty member behind many of the ideas -- Pam Lau -- was recruited to head it.

One initiative she described as important was the creation of a tutoring program for math involving faculty members who teach remedial math, not a separate academic support staff. Lau said that three hours a day, space is available for students to do their homework -- and they are told that they won't be quizzed or bothered if they know what they are doing, and that the faculty help is only there if needed.

Typically they do need some help, but the arrangement makes students more comfortable coming, Lau said. This "just in time" learning is what students don't get if they do their

homework at home, without anyone to ask for help. The faculty members (who have time in the center counted toward their course load obligations) get to see exactly which concepts are taking hold and which aren't.

This seemingly small idea is having results. The pre-algebra course completion rate has been 51 percent. But 63 percent of those pre-algebra students who visit the tutoring center at least five times during the semester successfully complete the course, and the percentages go up further for those who visit more. Similar improvements are showing up for those who are in other remedial math courses.

Another innovation is the division of remedial math courses into five modules. Students can continue to take the modules as a single, one-semester course, or they can take the same material (and take the same final exam) divided into five, with topics covered at a slower pace. Typically, she said, a one semester course becomes two semesters of five modules. The slower pace and narrower focus seem to be reaching students with math anxiety, many of whom have previously been unable to get through a single remedial course. Students must also successfully master one module before going to the next, which is key in math, Lau said, since the ideas build on one another.

Started with a few students three years ago, the module approach is now attracting 50 students a semester. And that's even with tough conditions, such as requiring all homework to be done in the student center, with faculty members and others around to assist. Lau said this isn't going to be the way the next generation of engineers is trained, but that this is keeping in the pipeline many students who need some basic math skills.

The college's center has numerous other programs, and also is rigorous about tracking students, all of whom have a swipe card that they use when they come to the center. As a result, the college of 10,500 students knows that it is attracting more than 36,000 visits to the center a year and starting to see improvements in course completion rates.

Fletcher, the dean, said he realizes that the college is making a real investment in time and money and is only starting to see the impact it would like. But he said that it is far more expensive to admit students and never have them progress at all. "If we lose them in the sequence of developmental education, we've lost them as students," he said.

— **Scott Jaschik**

One Accreditor's Opinion

InsideHigherEd.com

October 12, 2009

A United States District Court judge argued that accrediting agencies should be “afforded great deference in their interpretation of their substantive rules,” when he recently upheld an agency’s decision to strip a small Presbyterian college of its accreditation as a result of the significant debt the institution has accumulated.

St. Andrews Presbyterian College, an institution of about 800 students in rural North Carolina, sued the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in late 2007, arguing that the accrediting agency “denied it common law due process” and that the agency “failed to follow its own procedures in removing St. Andrews’ accreditation.”

SACS had placed the college on warning and probation prior to its 2007 decision to remove accreditation, advising St. Andrews’ officials that their institution was not in compliance with certain aspects of the agency’s “Principles of Accreditation.” Namely, the accreditor found that the college did not have “a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability.” Students can receive federal student aid only if they attend colleges that are accredited, and St. Andrews has managed to maintain eligibility only because of its lawsuit.

“Our board and administration, before I was president, had a business plan of borrowing funds to make capital improvements to expand our campus and to attract more students,” said Paul Baldasare, president of St. Andrews since 2007. “We’re an enrollment-driven institution and make certain decisions about the use of debts. Still, after an evaluation, SACS worried about our debt and our ability to service it.”

For example, one of St. Andrews’ initial reports to SACS showed that, “as the college’s operating expenses exceeded its operating revenue” for multiple years, its “unrestricted net assets had declined from \$1,704,068 in 2002 to -\$524,325 in 2003, to -\$5,035,619 in 2004.”

Throughout the process leading to its loss of accreditation, St. Andrews officials argued that SACS did not provide adequate notice of its compliance requirements, calling them “so vague that they give no notice to the college as to what it must do to bring itself in compliance.” Officials further argued that the institution was not offered any benchmarks to determine compliance, referring to SACS’s standards as a “moving target” determined by the “subjective opinions of varying peer evaluators.”

SACS officials, on the other hand, argued that even though the agency’s requirement that all institutions have a “sound financial base” and a “demonstrated financial stability” are not determined by objective criteria, the agency’s standards are anything but “vague.” They further stated that it would be “unwise to adopt a universal definition for financial stability,” given the “wide variety of institutions” SACS accredits.

United States District Court Judge William S. Duffey, Jr., of the Northern District of Georgia, writes in his opinion that accrediting agencies like SACS “are to be afforded great deference” in their rulings and that “these interpretations should be upheld unless ‘clearly erroneous.’ ” He further notes that “the weight of authority” allows SACS to “maintain flexible standards” to evaluate myriad institutions. Dismissing the arguments of St. Andrews, Duffey states that “SACS’ compliance requirements are not impermissibly unspecific” but “provide sufficient notice to member institutions and thus do not violate common law due process standards.”

Elsewhere in his ruling, Duffey backs away from judicial review of SACS’ decisions again by noting that its “interpretation of its requirements for financial stability and a sound financial base is entitled to deference.” He emphasizes a hand-off approach when the court considers accreditation cases.

“The court will not act as a ‘super-accreditation’ body to evaluate whether SACS’ accreditation decision was right or wrong, or whether the court would have ultimately reached a different conclusion,” Duffey writes. “The court necessarily concludes the process was fundamentally fair and that the college was allowed to present sufficiently complete information about its financial condition and operations. That St. Andrews disagrees with SACS’ conclusions and determination does not demonstrate that it was denied due process.”

Since Duffey’s decision, St. Andrews officials have filed intent to appeal the case to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, in Atlanta. In the interim, Duffey has temporarily maintained a prior injunction so that St. Andrews can keep its accreditation while prepping for the appeal. St. Andrews officials plan to file for another injunction to maintain its accreditation for the time being, noting that the college “will be irreparably harmed” if, as a result of losing its accreditation, its students are no longer eligible for federal and state financial aid.

Belle Whelan, president of SACS Commission on Colleges, did not respond to a request for comment regarding the St. Andrews case. Generally, accreditors argue that financial standards rules are adopted by the colleges in the region and are needed to protect students from enrolling in institutions that may go under or lack the ability to provide a good education.

Baldasare, however, believes Duffey’s ruling may give accrediting agencies like SACS too much control.

“It’s of great concern to me, in large measure, because accrediting agencies argue that they, like private associations, are not subject to judicial review of what they do,” said Baldasare, who argues that they should be subject to judicial review given their control of access to federal and state financial aid. “They’re the final arbiters, for their members, on what is fair. It’s a philosophical divide. They just do not believe they are subject to judicial review. So, when a judge says he will ‘accord great deference,’ it’s almost like, what can you do?”

Despite SACS' determination that his institution did not have a sound financial standing, Baldasare insists that this did not have an effect on his college's ability to deliver a quality education to its students.

“The accrediting agency said that it hadn't seen a diminution in the quality of what we're doing, but that they were afraid we were going to at some point in the future,” Baldasare. “If you can't find specific bright lines for what is financial stability and what is not, then I fear we may run into a situation where there's a wealth standard in which it doesn't matter if you have the academic ability to deliver or not but only if you have a certain amount of money.”

Baldasare dismissed the suggestion that St. Andrews was financially crumbling, saying that its recent budgets and debt reduction have shown that it is now very financially responsible.

“The bottom line is that we've been operating and offering quality programs for two years under the cloud of this action by SACS,” Baldasare said. “If we were so financially strapped in June 2007, then how could we continue what we've been doing ever since? Yes, we've lost enrollment as a consequence of this cloud hanging over us, and there's the whole national economic crisis. But, we're doing a good job amongst the worst economic times with this incredible liability, and here we are.”

— **David Moltz**

Bay Area Community Colleges Cancel Winter Sessions

cbs5.com

Oct 9, 2009 11:57 pm US/Pacific

GILROY (CBS 5) —

Budget cuts at several community colleges in Santa Clara County have become even more drastic. Several have canceled winter sessions, those fast-paced courses between fall and spring semesters.

San Jose City College, Evergreen Valley College and Gavilan College in Gilroy are among those who canceled their winter sessions. West Valley College in Saratoga has reduced the sessions by two-thirds. The cancellations could delay students who plan to transfer to four-year colleges by as much as one year.

Sabbaticals and Layoffs

InsideHigerEd.com

By Dean Dad October 15, 2009 8:52 pm

Should a college doing layoffs simultaneously fund sabbaticals?

First, some context. My college doesn't have a publication requirement for faculty. Most faculty here don't publish with any frequency, and nobody has ever been fired here for lack of publishing. It's a teaching-centered institution, and the promotion and tenure requirements reflect that. So denying someone a sabbatical might put a dent in his overall plans, but it won't put a dent in his tenure or promotion application. In a research university, or a college that styles itself as research-driven, the context for the question is markedly different. I'm talking about a community college.

We have a process for deciding on sabbaticals, and a set of published criteria. Without giving too much away, I can share that the point of sabbaticals is supposed to be to develop or focus on something that will be of benefit to the college over time. They aren't intended for personal renewal, and they aren't entitlements or compensation. (The faculty union contract acknowledges this.) They're basically purpose-driven course release taken all the way out. They're paid, which distinguishes them from leaves of absence.* They're discretionary expenses meant to reassign a professor to something that is supposed benefit the college as a whole. (Since the proposals come from the affected faculty, of course, that rule has been applied with varying degrees of stringency over the years.) The effective cost to the college is the cost of the adjuncts to teach the courses the sabbatical recipient would otherwise have taught. Although the college has a history of awarding a few sabbaticals per year, the number has fluctuated over time, and there has not been a past practice of everybody getting one every x years.

That said, of course, sabbaticals are interpreted differently by different people.

Some professors see sabbaticals as inhering in the role of 'professor,' or as moral (if not technical) entitlements. Others see them as irreplaceable elements of their long-term professional development, arguing (reasonably) that maintaining currency with changes in their fields, or technology, sometimes requires stepping off the teaching treadmill. And there's a perfectly valid objection that in the current climate, anything taken completely off the table is unlikely to reappear for a long time, if ever.

That said, though, there's something fundamentally difficult about explaining why some people are being paid for a full release from their regular job while others are losing their jobs entirely. I can just imagine the headline in the local paper – staffer x loses job while professor y gets full salary without even showing up on campus for months. Ouch. As a public institution, we ignore public opinion at our considerable peril.

The timing cycles don't match up well, either. We have to make decisions for next Fall's sabbaticals, if any, by mid-winter. But we won't know the full extent of state cuts until next summer.

Wise and worldly readers, what do you think? Is it reasonable to juxtapose the two categories, or would it be fair to do both at the same time?

* We also have a category of reduced-load-for-reduced-pay arrangements that can be offered by mutual agreement. Since those involve unpaid intervals, they can be used for personal purposes. I consider those a variation on unpaid leaves, even though some people call them sabbaticals.

At One 2-Year College, Adjuncts Feel Left Out

The Chronicle of Higher Education

October 18, 2009

By Robin Wilson

Des Plaines, Ill.

Two days a week, Kamran Swanson arrives at Oakton Community College just before one of the three philosophy courses he teaches. Between classes, he heads for a windowless office on the second floor of the campus building, where if he's lucky he can find an open desk. Oakton provides 25 of them for its hundreds of part-time faculty members.

After Mr. Swanson is finished teaching for the day and has held his required office hour, he is out the door to catch a bus home—without ever serving on a faculty committee, attending a department meeting, or even having a cup of coffee with any of the college's other professors. If students want extra help, Mr. Swanson usually handles their questions by e-mail. "Without my own desk," he says, "you never really feel at home." Mr. Swanson acknowledges that it is partly his own schedule that leaves him little time to do much more at Oakton than teach. He lives a two-hour commute from the suburban-Chicago campus here and teaches two classes at another community college downtown.

But even adjunct professors who have worked at Oakton for decades and are inclined to hang around the campus—which is dotted with 20 outdoor sculptures and a 16-acre lake—say they feel like outsiders. Their lack of connection to full-time faculty members and to what goes on at the college outside the classroom poses a crucial problem, they say, not just for them but for the institution and its 10,766 students. After all, the college's 540 part-time instructors outnumber its 154 full-time professors by more than three to one, teaching 60 percent of the courses here. While administrators at Oakton have taken several steps to encourage part-time professors to play a bigger role, and even pay them to attend faculty meetings, most of the college's part-time instructors either can't make the time or feel they don't really belong.

"There is a whole social and professional interaction that goes on in the faculty world that ignores adjuncts," says Lawrence E. Marks, who has been a part-time teacher of psychology and global studies at Oakton for seven years. "I don't have any chance to struggle with the faculty over what's right or wrong in the classroom. The ultimate benefit of that is for the students."

'Nobody Knew My Name'

Complaints about a lack of connection are not unique to adjuncts at Oakton. *The Chronicle* heard the same lament from several part-time professors in the Chicago area who took a survey it distributed last spring. "In my role as an adjunct," one wrote in an anonymous comment, "I have very little contact with regular faculty, or even other adjuncts, so I feel very marginal to the educational process of the school."

Part of that feeling is built into the job: Adjuncts are paid to teach, and many work at several institutions, which leaves them little time or inclination to get very involved at any of them. But that poses an increasing problem as part-time adjuncts now make up about 50 percent of the professoriate nationwide. That means that half of the nation's college instructors may not feel much of a connection to the campuses where they teach.

By adjunct standards, Oakton is actually one of the better colleges in the Chicago area to work for. It has the state's oldest union for part-time instructors and pays them a competitive rate—between \$2,475 and \$3,540 for each three-credit course. The college is known for giving adjuncts freedom to teach the way they see fit, and it isn't reluctant to back up instructors if students challenge a grade. It also encourages, and often pays, adjuncts to get involved outside the classroom.

Margaret B. Lee, the college's president, was once an adjunct instructor herself. She taught English at Alpena Community College, in Michigan, during the mid-1970s, while she finished up her dissertation at the University of Chicago and worked on a pig farm with her husband. "I have an innate sympathy in my heart for those people who get called a day before class starts and get sent the syllabus in the mail, and there's no other contact throughout the semester with anyone until you're told, Turn in your grades," she says. When Ms. Lee was an adjunct, she recalls, "I could say, nobody knew my name."

But the president, who entered a convent right out of high school and spent seven years as a nun, says she has worked hard to create the sense of community at Oakton that she learned was so important to the church. At every meeting of the Board of Trustees, representatives of the adjunct union sit at the table with board members, she notes. And, she says, Oakton takes its adjuncts seriously. It was upon the recommendation of an adjunct that the college decided to continue requiring all graduates to pass a test on the country's founding, even though Illinois decided last year that colleges could drop the requirement. "Because you have one title and not

the other is no indication you are less important," says Ms. Lee. "I think you can be as involved in the life of the institution as you want to be."

The adjunct union here, which is affiliated with the National Education Association, has tried to make sure instructors get paid for extra time they spend on university business such as serving on committees and attending training sessions and department faculty meetings. Adjuncts typically earn \$22 an hour for those activities. The union also pushed the college to agree that for every full-time faculty opening, 25 percent of those interviewed must be adjunct instructors. In the last decade, that has helped increase the proportion of full-time professors hired from the adjunct ranks to 63.5 percent, up from 50 percent.

The union has also pressed for symbolic changes, making sure that this year's faculty directory lists adjuncts right along with full-time professors, rather than in a separate set of papers stapled into the back of the book.

Still, Barbara Dayton, a sociology instructor who helped form Oakton's adjunct union nearly 30 years ago, says there is a "definite stratification" among faculty members here. Ms. Dayton has taught at Oakton for 33 years, and as the union's president she is practically an institution on the campus. But when asked if she counts any of the full-time professors among her colleagues or her friends, she comes up blank. "If I wanted to talk to somebody about something, they'd be willing," she says. "But it isn't like they'd casually drop in and say, Barbara, what do you think about this?"

Olivia Cronk, a part-time instructor of English, says she sometimes feels invisible at Oakton. During a department meeting at the beginning of this academic year, she waved at a full-time professor whose classes Ms. Cronk had covered a few times when the professor couldn't make it. But all Ms. Cronk got in return was a blank stare. "She clearly had no recognition," says Ms. Cronk.

The Pay Gap

Part of the gulf between full- and part-time faculty members here is financial. Full-time faculty members at Oakton teach five courses a semester and earn an average of \$86,000 a year. Adjuncts, who can teach up to three classes each semester (a new contract will allow them to teach four), earn a maximum of about \$21,000 during the academic year. Like other colleges, Oakton does not provide adjuncts with subsidized health insurance. And full-time professors can

qualify for up to \$1,000 a year in travel expenses for scholarly conferences; adjuncts usually get only as much as \$100.

That means that when Keith R. Johnson, an adjunct instructor here, traveled to the American Sociological Association's annual meeting in San Francisco in August to present a paper, he bypassed the conference hotel and stayed at a hostel, where he shared a room with five other men (he got a top bunk) and paid \$30 a night.

The gap in pay and benefits feels particularly unfair to adjuncts at Oakton because, unlike at many four-year institutions, the credentials of full- and part-time instructors here are not much different. Nearly as many adjuncts as full-timers hold Ph.D.'s: 18 percent compared to 22 percent. And all but one of the full-timers here are tenured or on the tenure track, while many adjuncts don't know from semester to semester how many courses they will be teaching.

Larry Knapp is an adjunct instructor with a doctorate in film studies from Northwestern University. He gets along well with his department head at Oakton and enjoys teaching. But he is bitter about the status differential between full- and part-time instructors, and the idea that if someone hasn't made it into the full-time ranks it must be because there is something wrong with him or her. "We are not part of the actual family here," he says. "It is like we are servants."

Feeling unimportant, says Mr. Knapp, comes with a price. "There is no incentive to give 100 percent," he says. "Mediocrity is built into the system."

Beverly E. Stanis agrees. She left a full-time legal career 28 years ago, the year she had the second of her five children, to begin teaching business law part time at Oakton. As an adjunct, she says, it is easy to teach the same material the same way, year after year. No one pays adjuncts to take the time to look at things in a new way, or to try out different textbooks or teaching methods. "It is easy to stay with the old," she says. Working as an adjunct, she says, also means "you're always on the edge wondering, Is this going to be my last semester?" The insecurity, says Ms. Stanis, makes adjunct instructors afraid to bring up thorny issues, like problems they might have dealing with a troubled student.

Another adjunct at Oakton, who asked to remain anonymous, says that she has tried to bring up some of her concerns but that no one will listen. Recently, a one-semester class she taught was split into two, but her department has not evenly spread the material over two semesters. Too much is now taught in the first semester, she says, and not enough in the second. But as a part-time instructor she doesn't have the clout to change the curriculum, she says. "I know what

works, but I don't have a voice in that, even though I'm the one teaching it," she says. "I have brought it up several times, but it never gets addressed."

Some full-time faculty members here are just as frustrated over adjuncts' lack of power and their narrow scope. "If you're a full-time person, you're looking at how courses fit into the life of the college and the life of students when they transfer," says Julia Hassett, who heads Oakton's department of mathematics and computer science. "If you're a part-time person, you're looking at your own teaching."

That equation has become a problem, says Ms. Hassett, because over the last few years, several full-time professors in her department have retired but the college has hired adjuncts in their place. As a result, the adjunct ranks have swelled to 80 as the number of full-timers has dropped to only 10. Full-time professors at Oakton are supposed to be mentors for part-timers, but Ms. Hassett's full-time faculty members have told her they can't possibly do the job.

Ms. Lee, the college's president, says Oakton cannot afford to tip the balance toward more full-timers. In fact, she figures, converting all of the college's adjuncts to full-time status would cost \$20-million. But beyond that, she says, part-time instructors allow the community college to remain flexible, offering some classes in hot, new areas while getting rid of others that interest students less. "It would be financially impossible," she says, "and probably not instructionally desirable."

'Bittersweet Irony'

Some department heads here have tried to reach out to adjuncts. At the start of every academic year, Denis R. Berkson, chairman of the performing-arts department, invites its 20 adjunct instructors and three full-timers to a "rally," complete with a buffet dinner. This year he gave everyone a flash drive. "If you have an institution where it's us and them," he says of full- and part-timers, "then you should close the place down." Mr. Berkson has put two adjuncts in charge of a departmental committee to assess student learning, and he is paying them \$400 each to do the job.

Hollace Graff, who leads the department of humanities and philosophy, is sensitive to adjuncts who say they feel like second-class citizens. She lists the department's 37 adjuncts on its Web site, right alongside its six full-time professors. And the full-timers don't cherry-pick their favorite courses. "We have agreed that adjuncts should not be frozen out of the more interesting, advanced classes," she says.

Still, it can be a rough road for adjuncts who try to take a more active role in life outside the classroom at Oakton and deal with full-timers on an equal footing. "You have to be very, very aggressive to be part of that community," says Mr. Marks, the psychology instructor. "The full-time faculty and administration are not any more welcoming than in corporate America. You do not get invitations to sit at lunch with them."

But Mr. Marks feels he has begun to break down some barriers. In August he won the campus's award for excellence in part-time teaching—which comes with a \$1,000 prize. Since then, people Mr. Marks doesn't even know have been saying hello and smiling at him in the hallways of Oakton's sprawling, two-story building. Someone even sent him an e-mail message, asking his opinion on whether final exams should be cumulative or should cover only material since the last test.

"I'm in the loop now," says Mr. Marks.

The day in August that he received the teaching award, though, he was reminded of his status as a part-timer when he went home and checked his mailbox. He had gotten a letter from the private company from which he buys health insurance: His bill, the letter said, was going up by \$400 a month.

"I got great pleasure out of the recognition I got," he says of his teaching award, "but it was a bittersweet irony to be forced the same day to deal with the reality that I'm in this situation because I'm an adjunct, and my employer doesn't give me health insurance."

'Chronicle' Survey Yields a Rare Look Into Adjuncts' Work Lives

October 18, 2009

By Robin Wilson

Adjunct teaching is known as the grunt work of academe: low-paying, part-time jobs filled by highly educated scholars who travel from campus to campus because they can't find full-time work in one place.

At least that's the common wisdom about part-time adjuncts, who have grown to make up about 50 percent of the professoriate nationwide. In a unique survey of 625 adjuncts in the Chicago area, *The Chronicle* found that some of that common wisdom is based on truth. But a lot of it is not.

For example, only a third of the people who responded to *The Chronicle's* survey last spring said they worked as part-time adjuncts because they couldn't find full-time jobs in academe. In fact, almost half said they preferred part-time work, some because they said it fit with the demands of their family life.

And despite the fact that 80 percent of the adjuncts who responded said part-time teaching earned them \$20,000 a year or less, an overwhelming number said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs.

Joe T. Berry, who worked as an adjunct for eight years in the Chicago area and is now a full-time labor-education specialist with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, doesn't find it surprising that adjuncts would tell *The Chronicle* they are satisfied. Just because adjunct work may look like a bad job—as far as pay, benefits, status, and job security, he said—doesn't mean the people who do it aren't passionate about teaching. "People have a pride in the job, a pride in the craft," he said. "Cognitively people also want to say, 'I like what I'm doing.' It makes it easier to get up in the morning."

How We Did the Survey

The Chronicle's survey covers adjuncts' working conditions, their pay and benefits, and their attitudes about their jobs. We wanted to know how many classes adjuncts teach, how many campuses they work on, whether they receive subsidized health care, and how involved they are

in campus activities outside the classroom. The Chronicle focused on Chicago because it is a large metropolitan area with a plentiful mix of public, private, and for-profit institutions.

Adjuncts by definition are not attached to institutions, which makes them difficult to find and to survey. Even figuring out how many adjuncts there are in a city like Chicago is nearly impossible. We sent the survey to 3,356 adjuncts whose e-mail addresses we found listed on 35 college and university Web sites. We also asked groups that represent adjuncts, like the New Faculty Majority and the Chicago Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, to tell part timers about the survey. And we asked adjuncts themselves to pass it along to other adjuncts.

The 625 adjuncts who responded work at 90 institutions across the greater Chicago area. About half work at private four-year institutions, and about 40 percent said they taught at community colleges.

The survey, which was administered between April and July of this year, was not designed to yield results representative of adjuncts nationwide, and it may not reflect the views of part timers in the Chicago area who did not take it. Despite its limitations, The Chronicle's survey is valuable simply because not many of its kind exist. Mr. Berry, who is chair of the Chicago Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, called the results "substantial." He added: "This is a collection of data that is incomparable in a single metropolitan area."

While adjunct leaders nationwide have complained about the trend toward hiring professors off the tenure track, the Chronicle survey found that most of the adjuncts who responded would probably not be qualified for tenure-track jobs at four-year institutions. About half hold only a master's degree, and relatively few, about 25 percent, said they held Ph.D.'s—although an additional 14 percent said they held another "terminal" degree in their field. Most four-year institutions require tenure-track faculty hires to have a doctorate, although community colleges usually do not. Mr. Berry said the Chronicle data on Ph.D.'s are consistent with other surveys of adjunct instructors.

The survey also found that while adjuncts are often known as "freeway flyers," traveling from campus to campus to pick up courses, more than half of those who responded teach at only one university. Mr. Berry said those who taught at only one campus were probably also working part time outside academe. "I know people who have four business cards," he said. "One is being a part-time instructor somewhere, but they're also running a little business, teaching in corporate America, or tutoring."

We gathered responses from 625 part-time adjunct faculty members in the Chicago area about their working conditions and pay, through a survey conducted from April to July. Here are some of their answers.

What is the highest degree you have attained?

| | |
|--|-----|
| Master's | 56% |
| Ph.D. | 24% |
| Bachelor's | 6% |
| Other terminal degree (e.g., M.B.A., J.D.) | 14% |

At how many institutions did you teach as a part-time adjunct during the 2008-9 academic year, including last summer?

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| 1 | 67% |
| 2 | 24% |
| 3 | 6% |
| 4 | 2% |
| 5 or more | 1% |

Which type of class did you teach most often?

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Introductory classes | 33% |
| Courses in the major | 27% |
| Advanced courses | 21% |
| Remedial courses | 5% |
| A mix of all in equal parts | 11% |
| Did not answer | 3% |

Estimate your total income from your part-time adjunct teaching:

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| More than \$20,000 | 18% |
| \$15,100 to \$20,000 | 13% |
| \$10,100 to \$15,000 | 16% |
| \$6,100 to \$10,000 | 21% |
| \$3,100 to \$6,000 | 16% |
| \$3,000 or less | 14% |

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----|
| Did not answer | | | | | 2% |
| What is the primary reason you work as a part-time adjunct? | | | | | |
| Prefer part-time work | | | | | 32% |
| Cannot find full-time teaching job | | | | | 30% |
| Already have full-time job | | | | | 21% |
| Need part-time work to fit with demands of family life | | | | | 12% |
| Did not answer | | | | | 5% |
| Did the institution(s) where you taught provide you: | Almost always | Sometimes | Never | Don't know | |
| Offices | 41% | 26% | 32% | 2% | |
| Money for travel to conferences | 6% | 13% | 66% | 16% | |
| Professional development and training | 30% | 38% | 25% | 7% | |
| Support services like secretarial help | 31% | 34% | 31% | 4% | |
| As a part-time adjunct, did you: | Almost always | Sometimes | Never | | |
| Help develop courses in your department | 14% | 31% | 55% | | |
| Serve on faculty committees | 6% | 17% | 77% | | |
| Attend faculty departmental meetings | 15% | 33% | 52% | | |
| On average, how many hours per week, per class, were you expected to spend advising students outside of class? | | | | | |
| None | | | | | 29% |
| Up to 2 hours | | | | | 37% |
| Between 2 and 4 hours | | | | | 16% |
| More than 4 hours | | | | | 6% |
| Don't know | | | | | 11% |
| Do you pursue your own research and writing? | | | | | |
| Almost always | | | | | 34% |
| Sometimes | | | | | 38% |
| Never | | | | | 28% |

Considering all aspects of working as a part-time adjunct, are you:

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| Very satisfied | 17% |
| Satisfied | 51% |
| Unsatisfied | 26% |
| Very unsatisfied | 5% |

Note: All questions referred to the period covered by the summer of 2008 and the 2008-9 academic year. Adjuncts were invited to take the survey only if they had worked as part-time adjuncts between June 2008 and the date they received the survey invitation this spring. Percentages are rounded and so may not add to 100 percent.

A Board Out of Control

InsideHigherEd.com

October 19, 2009

Most lists of the most influential community colleges nationally would include the Maricopa Community Colleges, a Phoenix system known for incredible growth, curricular innovations, a highly diverse student body, and an ambitious distance education program. However successful the system has been, though, its board has been found by an expert panel to be more than a little out of control.

An expert panel of community college presidents and trustees last week issued a report based on reviews of tapes of Maricopa board meetings, interviews with trustees and employees at all levels. The panel was convened after anonymous employees complained to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools about board micromanagement that violated the accrediting association's rules and the norms of governance.

The findings largely back the complaint. And while there are many boards that come under fire by faculty or student groups, the level of criticism is highly unusual coming from a panel of presidents and trustees, conducting an inquiry for an accreditor.

Among the findings about a majority of board members:

- Board members displayed "a consistent lack of civility ... toward each other and to members of the college community."
- Four of the five board members appeared to regularly act "without any discernible understanding or appreciation of either the complexity of the district or the role/responsibility of the board as governing body."
- A barrage of information requests from board members and "hostile" demands have created "a climate of fear and intimidation and a culture of mistrust throughout the organization."
- Board members constantly refer to voters who elected them and obligations to represent their views, regardless of whether those views reflect the mission of the college. For example, the report cites one board member's campaign to remove references to diversity and the values of inclusiveness from district plans.
- Board members have consistently undercut senior administrators in tasks in which they should be involved. For instance, the report finds that the board members developed the last budget plan by themselves, without any consultation with administrators.

Among the findings that apply to various individual board members (the individuals aren't named with regard to specific issues) were that board members:

- Attempted to censor the student newspaper.
- Asserted the right to control course content.

- Meddled with personnel decisions, trying to both serve on search committees and then to approve selections as a board member.
- Asked (inappropriately) about dates of birth of district employees
- Attempted to influence admissions decisions in programs, such as nursing, that have competitive admissions.
- Engaged in "proselytizing behaviors" with regard to religious and political views.
- Made "inappropriate and offensive comments about race, ethnicity, religion and gender preference."

The report notes that many of the board members interviewed justified their actions by saying that they were acting on behalf of students. But the report questions this, and includes as an example a Maricopa report on the conduct of Jerry Walker, a trustee, when he accompanied district students on a trip to Washington to meet with members of Congress and their aides to talk about issues of importance to Maricopa.

The report was a response to a complaint by one of the students on the trip, who charged that Walker interrupted her presentation and those of others -- while they were in Congressional offices -- when she and others spoke about the DREAM Act, which would provide a route to permanent residency for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children and pursue at least two years of college or military service.

The student said that Walker cut her off and indicated his disagreement with her views during the meetings in Congressional offices, and between visits to various offices told her she shouldn't have spoken in favor of the legislation and accused her of acting inappropriately. The student asked to be excused from some of the visits because she was afraid after a certain point to talk about her views in the trustee's presence.

The investigation notes that advocacy for the DREAM act had been an explicit part of the group's agenda, which had been provided by district officials to Walker in advance of the trip to Washington. Further, the investigation finds that every member of the delegation (except Walker) backed her view of how she was treated rudely, and that the position she was taking was entirely consistent with views of the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees.

The internal investigation says: "Each person interviewed described Mr. Walker's behavior as demeaning, bullying, inappropriate for the setting, and unfair to the student. Several said it was a blatant abuse of power. All interviewed, with the exception of Mr. Walker, stated that his outbursts were out of line. Furthermore, they stated that his actions resulted in students becoming fearful to speak about the issues which had been approved by college officials and for which they had prepared. Several described the setting as oppressive and a ruined or diminished educational opportunity."

In response to the charges, the report says that Walker said that "the entire episode had been orchestrated by liberal administrators and staff in order to embarrass him," but that when he was asked for evidence to back up this view, he offered nothing.

The Maricopa board has not responded formally to the findings, and the board president and Walker did not respond to e-mail requests for comment. But Colleen Clark, the board president, told *The Arizona Republic*: "We welcome the opportunity for board members to partner together with district administrators and move forward as progressively and cooperatively as possible."

Walker, in a *Republic* interview, questioned the assumptions in the report about the importance of shared governance. "The way they're treating us is, they're treating us like we're supposed to be subject to their authority," he said. "People who are elected by the people are not subject to the authority of the people who are hired."

Rufus Glasper, chancellor of the district, issued a letter with the report on the board, saying that he was hiring a facilitator to work with board members and administrators to improve the governance of the system and to respond to the issues raised in the report.

— **Scott Jaschik**

What the Morehouse Man Wears InsideHigherEd.com

October 19, 2009

Since he was named as president of Morehouse College in 2007, Robert M. Franklin has stressed the importance of defining education broadly, well beyond courses. He has been talking about the social and ethical obligations of those who are studying at the elite historically black college. Of late he has been calling for students to have "five wells" -- to be "well read, well spoken, well traveled, well dressed and well balanced."

Last week, the idea of being "well dressed" became much more specific, with the start of an "appropriate attire policy," under which Morehouse is joining a small group of colleges that have in recent years adopted dress codes. Morehouse's policy is generally being well received by students -- and college officials stress that 90-plus percent of students are already in compliance. But the policy is getting some criticism from gay students over the idea of regulating dress, and specifically for banning the wearing of women's attire.

Here are some of the policy's features:

- Caps, do-rags and hoods are banned in classrooms, the cafeteria and other indoor venues. Do-rags may not be worn outside of the residence halls.
- Sunglasses may not be worn in class or at formal programs.
- Jeans may not be worn at major programs such as convocation, commencement or Founder's Day.
- Clothing with "derogatory, offensive and/or lewd messages either in words or pictures" may not be worn.
- "Sagging," defined as "the wearing of one's pants or shorts low enough to reveal undergarments or secondary layers of clothing," is banned.
- Pajamas are banned in public areas.
- Wearing of "clothing associated with women's garb (for example, dresses, tunics, purses, handbags, pumps, wigs, make-up, etc.)" is banned. (Morehouse educates only male students.)

William Bynum, vice president for student services at Morehouse, said that the clothing rules are part of a broader agenda to develop students' minds and "social consciences." He said that Franklin, the president, has pushed President Obama's idea that there should be "no excuses" for black men in an era when one of their own has been elected president of the United States.

Bynum said that while the clothing rules are capturing attention, it is important to view those rules as part of a broad set of values being promoted. For instance, on Saturday, 200 students spent the morning going door-to-door in area neighborhoods, briefing residents on tutoring and mentoring programs run by students, and providing information about nutrition, energy efficiency and job training.

Generally, he said, students have responded well to the clothing rules. And while there are plenty of examples of student attire in the past that would have violated the rules, most students won't have to change the way they dress. An unscientific review of Morehouse students' Facebook pages finds many posing in ties, not the drinking shots that are common at some institutions.

Cameron Thomas-Shah, co-chief of staff of the Student Government Association, said that he backs the new policy, and sees it as consistent with the college's values. "It's about the ideals of the school. If you come to Morehouse college, and want to become a Morehouse man, you should know these things. You should know you don't wear do-rags. You should know that you don't wear caps inside. You shouldn't deviate from the norms of what a man wears."

Many of the styles banned at Morehouse are popular at other colleges, and Thomas-Shah said that doesn't create any doubts in his mind about Morehouse's approach. "On other college campuses, this is common. Other campuses are common, but Morehouse isn't common. It's an institution founded on the principles of producing black male leaders. We have a legacy to protect."

The only vocal opposition to the new rules has come from some gay students on campus. Kevin Webb, co-president of Safe Space @ Morehouse, a gay-straight student alliance, said that under Franklin's leadership, the college has been more committed to equity for gay students than ever before, and that "as an openly gay student, I feel privileged to have matriculated now."

Webb said that gay students are divided about the dress code. But although he will not have to change his style, he said he was bothered by the new rules.

For many gay students, fashion is an important part of self-definition, he said. "Once you try to stop people's expression, everything that is unique about people is going to start to crumble, and you will produce robots, and we wouldn't want that, would we?"

A few gay Morehouse students do dress in women's clothing sometimes, and Webb said that should be allowed. While all Morehouse students are covered by the new clothing policy, Webb said he was bothered that a specific rule singled out a style popular only with some gay students. "I think this borders on discrimination," he said. "While someone can say that it applies the heteronormativity of other students in terms of do-rags and sagging of pants, I can also say that there are gay people who sag their pants and wear their do-rags, but you don't find people here who identify themselves as straight walking around in feminine garb."

If male students wear feminine clothing, he asked, "what impact does it have on how intelligent they are, their grade point average and how much community service they do?"

He also questioned the idea that someone who wears more formal clothing is necessarily a better person. "We are focusing too much on the exterior," he said. "If you put a clown in a suit, he's still a clown."

Bynum, the Morehouse vice president, said that he met with Safe Space before the policy went into effect, and he noted that many of the students there supported the change. He said that the policy isn't about gay students, but about standards for all students. "Morehouse is completely supportive of our gay students. This isn't about them, but about all students."

Two presidents of other institutions that have instituted dress codes in recent years say that they are glad they did so. (Both are coeducational and didn't ban women's clothing, but otherwise have policies similar to the one instituted at Morehouse.)

Richard Holland, president of the University of West Alabama, instituted the rules there in 2007, after he noticed some freshmen wearing caps and cut-off shorts to a performance by the Alabama Symphony Orchestra. He said he's pleased with the results, but added that regular attention is needed. "We have noticed that each fall semester we must remind the university community of the dress code," he said. "This is especially true with beginning freshmen, new transfer students and new faculty and staff."

He said that officials work with a variety of student groups to help in the "selling of the code" to other students.

Michael Sorrell, president of Paul Quinn College, which also adopted clothing rules in 2007, said that rules on clothing "changed the tenor of the campus." He noted that the college started stocking a closet with acceptable clothing, so that any students who need to borrow items may do so.

As president of another historically black college, Sorrell said he's been watching the discussions at Morehouse with interest and said he was "thrilled" to see that college adopt the rules. "I can only hope that more schools recognize the need for leadership in this area," he said.

— **Scott Jaschik**

The Hard Part of Transparency

InsideHigherEd.com

By Dean Dad October 20, 2009 9:41 pm

My college, like so many others, has tried to deal with the Great Recession by having a series of public meetings about what's most important to us. The idea has been to give stakeholders from around campus -- including students -- input *before* decisions are made, so the decisions can be made with a clearer sense of what we all think matters. No secret decisions, no hidden agendas, no "why weren't we consulted?" objections. And some of the conversations have been wonderfully productive, with a surprising degree of consensus around a couple of major issues. But now the process is hitting a wall.

When you ask people "what's crucial for student success?," you can get some wonderful responses. When you ask "what could we do better?," you get some great ideas, some of which could only come from people on the front lines. So far, so good.

But when you get to "and what would we be willing to reduce to pay for it?," the silence is overwhelming.

I get some of the reasons for that. I don't want to start a needless fight by saying that somebody else's job isn't important. I don't know what some people actually do in the course of the day, and presuming to pass judgment without that knowledge would be rude at best. Throw someone under the bus, and you'd better hope the bus does its job; if it doesn't, now you have a righteously pissed-off coworker for many years to come. And it's easy to envision a meeting quickly degenerating into a shouting match, with all that that entails.

But in a very real way, this is where transparency and inclusiveness are the most important. If we get these decisions wrong, the pain will be felt for years to come. This is where we need the most help.

One professor I spoke with suggested moving from a 'public brainstorming' model to something closer to an 'either/or.' He basically suggested that The Administration come up with two or three options -- call them plans A, B, and C -- and asking for the sense of the college as to which made the most sense. That way, you get around both the 'first mover' problem and the 'otherworldly proposal' problem. Instead of asking people whose self-image is based in excellence at critical thought to venture something, you're asking them to compare things, which is a much more comfortable position for them. It plays more to their strengths.

I'm intrigued by the idea, but experience tells me that their first move will be to look for some unspecified plan D. (Something similar happens anytime you present statistics: the first move is always to question the methodology behind the data.) Someone will invoke 'false dilemma,' someone else will propose forming a committee, and you're right back where you started.

This is one of those message-in-a-bottle posts in which I hope someone has a better answer than anything I've seen or surmised. So, wise and worldly readers, I seek your counsel. Is there a productive way to engage the campus community in a discussion of what to cut?

It's All What You Study InsideHigherEd.com

October 21, 2009

At community colleges, an underperforming high school graduate studying computer science is much more likely to see an earnings increase than a well-prepared high school graduate studying literature. That is the conclusion of a new analysis designed to explore the factors that predict which community college students will gain the most from their education.

Tuesday, the Economic Mobility Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts released the results of a study examining the educational attainment and post-college earnings of more than 84,000 Florida students who graduated from high school in 2000 and attended a public institution in the state. Looking at the outcomes of these students, the report then attempts “to identify the most promising educational pathways to increase community college students’ economic mobility” and “the personal and institutional impediments that prevent too many community college students from getting the most from educational opportunities.”

Nearly 40 percent of all students who eventually earn bachelor’s and graduate degrees in Florida start their postsecondary education at a community college. The study finds that a majority of those community college students had lower high school grades and were more likely to be from low-income families as compared to those who attended four-year institutions. Still, among low-income students, those with better high school grades are more likely to attend community colleges than four-year institutions.

Though a community college education boosts post-college earnings for all students, the study notes that those concentrating in certain fields of study can garner greater earnings. Seven years after exiting college, community college students who studied so-called “high-demand” fields like business, computer science and engineering earned about \$12,000 more a year than those who studied the humanities or fine arts, concentrations the report calls “low-return.”

Average Annual Earnings Seven Years After Leaving College, By Field of Study

| Level of Return | Field of Study | Sample Professions | Average Earnings |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Very High | Health care | Nurses, medical technicians | \$60,557 |

| | | | |
|--------|---|---|----------|
| High | Agriculture, business, computer science, education, engineering, environmental science, marketing, math | Computer programmers, engineers | \$53,998 |
| Medium | Building trades, English, legal services, machinery repair, protective services, technical support for business and industry | Paralegals, security guards | \$49,036 |
| Low | Communications, consumer services, fine arts, humanities, human services, performing arts, personal services, public services, social studies | Artists, customer service representatives | \$41,766 |

Chief among the study’s findings, high school graduates with lower grades who attended community colleges can earn more than their classmates who had higher high school grades simply by pursuing “high-return” fields of study like those previously described. In general, the study notes A and B+ high school graduates earn an average of \$9,600 more per year than graduates with lower grades. But it further discovers that “lower-performing high school students who concentrate in high-return fields in community college earn \$48,000 annually, slightly more than the \$44,000 earned by A/B+ high school students who concentrate in low-return fields” there. Still, only a quarter of high school graduates with a C average earned credentials in “high-return” fields, while nearly 40 percent of A and B+ average high school graduates did so.

The study’s authors, a fellow at the [Hudson Institute](#) and two researchers from [CNA](#), present a series of policy recommendations based on their findings. They primarily argue that states and the federal government should provide more funding to increase capacity in “high-cost, high-return” fields, while changing funding streams “to remove perverse incentives to enroll students in low-return courses or other courses they are unlikely to complete.”

Though the authors suggest “information impediments” are the main reason why many community college students do not complete programs in “medium-return” fields, they note that “lack of capacity” is the likely reason why more do not complete programs “high-return” fields like health care.

“The value of increasing the supply of well-training health-care and other professionals almost certainly would justify shifting resources from low-return courses to courses in health care and other fields where costs are soaring, in part, because employers cannot find enough well-qualified workers,” the authors argue, expounding upon one example. “Thus, the key underlying problem is that community colleges’ funding mechanisms do not equate students’ and society’s benefits of completing courses with the schools’ costs. Rather, there are incentives to enroll

students in low-cost, low-return courses and little attention is given to ensuring that students complete courses that will have greater benefit.”

To correct what the authors see as an imbalance in state funding, they argue that states could adjust payments for colleges to support “high-cost” programs based on how well they perform, relative to their peers, in preparing students to enter these “high-demand” fields.

Current reform movements at community colleges, they argue, are misguided.

“The benefits of improving course selection to build skills of value in the workplace and keep students in school long enough to build career-enhancing skills is much less widely recognized and embraced than improving academic performance,” the authors write. “As a result, community colleges generally have given little attention to improving student outcomes by such actions as making high-quality, career-oriented counseling and assessment programs more widely available.”

Some academics, however -- especially those who teach the humanities at community colleges -- worry about the conclusions drawn by the Pew report.

"What is troubling about the report is the assumption that everyone who goes to college -- two-year or four year -- is there only to increase potential earnings, and the student's best bet is to find a major that will have the highest payoff," wrote Sandie McGill Barnhouse, chair of the Two-Year College English Association and English professor at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, in an e-mail. "Should fields of study with 'medium and low levels of return,' such as English, protective services, and communications be discouraged because a student could make more money as a nurse? In the 21st century, a graduate with multiple literacies, written, oral, and digital, has the best opportunities for long-term professional achievement across professional lines."

Barnhouse also argued that it might be detrimental to community colleges to divert students from their career ambitions.

"Furthermore, not everyone is drawn toward a profession in the 'high or very high' level of return careers," she wrote. "Teachers, law enforcement officers, day care providers, and public service workers are vital contributors to society, and if community colleges counsel students to concentrate on fields with higher economic mobility potential, then community colleges stray from their mission of offering students a chance to be able to pursue their personal goals."

— **David Moltz**

Laney College president likely going to Washington

insidebayarea.com

By Matt Krupnick
Contra Costa Times
Posted: 10/21/2009

OAKLAND — Laney College President Frank Chong likely will leave the Oakland community college for a job with the Obama administration.

The U.S. Department of Education is in the final stages of hiring Chong as the deputy assistant secretary for community colleges. Chong, who has led Laney since 2006, declined to comment on the expected appointment Wednesday because it is not final.

Chong would become the latest Bay Area higher-education leader to go to Washington, following Martha Kanter, the former chancellor of the Foothill-DeAnza Community College District, and Hal Plotkin, a former Foothill-DeAnza trustee. San Francisco attorney Jeffrey Bleich, a California State University trustee, was named ambassador to Australia.

Before coming to Laney College, Chong was president of Mission College, in Santa Clara, and previously was a dean at City College of San Francisco. He also was an aide to then-Assemblyman Willie Brown, a close friend of Chancellor Elihu Harris of the Peralta Community College District, which includes Laney.

Chong has a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley, a master's degree from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and a doctorate in education from New York's Dowling College.

A Department of Education spokesman said Wednesday he could not confirm Chong's appointment. Harris was not in the office Wednesday, and two Peralta trustees did not return phone messages.

Community Colleges Remain a Beacon for Higher Education Affordability in Tough Economic Times

prweb.com

October 22, 2009

College Board report reveals community college tuition is only one-third the cost of an average four-year college.

Washington, DC (PRWEB) October 22, 2009 -- The College Board's annual reports (1) on tuition and financial aid were released this week - and the verdict is that community colleges remain an affordable and cost-effective educational option for many students.

By far, community college tuition remains the lowest of any sector of higher education. Community college tuition and fees cost just 36.2% of the tuition and fees paid at an average four-year college. Tuition at for-profit institutions is 5.6 times higher than community college tuition. (2)

"Community colleges are a beacon of affordability in higher education amid tough economic times," said George R. Boggs, AACC President and CEO. "They offer quality educational experiences that are tailored to support students at many stages of life - and because they start at a lower price point than four-year colleges, they are easier for students to finance with financial aid, and students are less likely to graduate with debt."

This fall, community college tuition increases followed a historic pattern of being triggered by cuts in public funding. (3) Still, the average community college tuition only rose by \$172 - from \$2,372 to \$2,544. (4)

Among the higher education institutions analyzed by the College Board, community colleges had the highest percentage change in tuition and fees from the previous year at 7.3%. However, community college leaders point out that community college tuition already starts at a drastically lower price point than tuition at four-year colleges and that tuition costs should be examined over the long-term.

In two of the past 10 years, community college tuition and fees did not increase on an annual basis. "In fact, last year the tuition and fee increase was only 3.4%," said Boggs. "This year's percentage increase is still comparatively lower for a student who enrolls at a community college for more than one year, than for a student at a four-year college. Public and private four-year institutions have traditionally larger year-to-year increases, and they've had yearly increases every year."

Boggs notes that community colleges are also facing serious strains in today's economy. Faced with record-breaking enrollment in double digits at many community colleges this year, Boggs

said that community colleges have added late night sections and scoured budgets for funds to hire more instructors.

The lower cost threshold of community colleges translates into students graduating with less debt. The College Board report on financial aid noted that at community colleges, 62% of associate degree and 70% of certificate earners graduated without debt. Comparatively, only 2% of associate degree and 10% of certificate earners graduated from for-profit institutions without debt. (5)

Community college students received 33% of all Pell Grant awards issued by the federal government. (6) The federal Pell Grant program provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and some post baccalaureate students to promote access to postsecondary education.

Because of federal and privately-funded grants, low-income students at community colleges often paid nothing for tuition and fees. (7)

In 2008-09, more than 2.19 million community college students received Pell Grants, which now have a maximum grant of \$5,350 toward tuition and fees. Unlike a loan, the student does not have to pay this money back to a lender with interest.

Only 10% of community college students took out federal Stafford Loans, as compared to 88% of students at for-profit institutions, according to the College Board. (8)

The College Board's reports, Trends in College Pricing 2009 and Trends in Student Aid 2009 are available online at www.collegeboard.com.

Available for interviews

Dr. Boggs and AACC experts are available for interviews by phone or in the Washington, D.C., media market in person. Schedule by calling Norma Kent, 202/728-0200, ext. 209, 703/585-8556 (cell)

About AACC

For almost 90 years, the AACC has been the leading advocate for the nation's community colleges, which currently number more than 1,177 and serve close to 12 million students annually. Its membership comprises 90% of all public two-year colleges - the largest, most accessible, and most diverse sector of U.S. higher education. As institutions committed to access, community service and lifelong learning, community colleges have long-focused on the needs of adults who are already in the workforce, many of whom are seeking new skills and knowledge for changes in their lives and careers. To learn more about the AACC, visit www.aacc.nche.edu.

Sources

(1) College Board, Trends in Student Pricing 2009 [Trends in Higher Education Series (Washington, DC: Author, October 2009), and College Board, Trends in Student Aid 2009 [Trends in higher Education Series (Washington, DC: Author, October 2009). Herein referred to as Pricing and Aid.

- (2) Pricing, Table 1a
- (3) Pricing, Figure 10b
- (4) Pricing, Table 1a
- (5) Aid, Figure 7a
- (6) AACC analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education data file "pell-inst-08-09" retrieved October 19, 2009 from <http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell-institution.html>
- (7) Pricing, Figure 8
- (8) Aid, Figure 4

Online Education's Great Unknowns Inside Higher Ed

October 22, 2009

Distance learning has broken into the mainstream of higher education. But at the campus level, many colleges still know precious little about how best to organize online programs, whether those programs are profitable, and how they compare to face-to-face instruction in terms of quality.

That is what Kenneth C. Green, director of the Campus Computing Project, concludes in a study released today in conjunction with the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications.

The study, based on a survey of senior officials at 182 U.S. public and private nonprofit colleges, found that 45 percent of respondents said their institution did not know whether their online programs were making money. Forty-five percent said they had reorganized the management of their online programs in the last two years, with 52 percent anticipating a reshuffling within the next two years. And while a strong majority of the

On the question of profitability, many of the colleges — 45 percent — reported turning a tidy profit from online education (with just 1.6 percent registering losses). But just as many officials said they have no idea whether their online programs made or lost money.

“The fact that many of campus officials couldn’t say their programs were profitable, I found interesting,” said Green. “Because the lure of this for the past decade has been, ‘We’re going to make a lot of money on distance ed.’ ” But despite the buzz, he said, profitability has been hard to gauge, since some campus information systems are not configured to undertake relevant accounting measures, such as tagging online students or parsing faculty and staff time devoted to online course delivery. (Nor does it help that the U.S. Education Department’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data system does not require colleges to track technology expenditures, Green added.)

The growth of online programs, especially at public institutions, continues to be based largely on the anticipation that such programs are the wave of the future in terms of broadening access and increasing enrollment — and they will be at least solvent, if not cash cows. Duplicating programs online is not seen as a big risk, despite such notable failures such as the ill-fated University of Illinois Global Campus. John Bourne, executive director of the Sloan Online Learning Commission, noted that colleges generally prefer to be ahead of the curve on building the infrastructure to accommodate widely anticipated shifts, even if there is no way to demonstrate profitability in the short term.

And then there is the question of the quality of online programs as compared to traditional ones. A study released earlier this year by the Sloan commission and the Association of Public and

Land-Grant Universities found that many in higher education — particularly professors — still had doubts about whether Web-based learning measured up to the kind that happens in the classroom. What Green found in his survey was that, irrespective of educational merit, many students are paying just as much, if not more, to earn their degree online than on campus.

Bourne said that despite the reservations of some faculty members (most of whom, he suggested, have little experience with online teaching or learning), the question of whether online teaching produces similar learning outcomes to traditional methods has been settled by 15 years' worth of research saying it does. He said he was heartened to learn that according to Green's findings, most campuses do not appear to be studying whether or not this is true anymore. "They're unlikely to find out anything different than what's been found out already," Bourne said.

But Green contended that institutions' complacency with respect to scrutinizing online learning outcomes is misguided. "I don't think the campus conversation about quality is over by any means," he said. The reason, he said, is that broad-lens studies cannot offer insight on the effectiveness of a specific online program at a specific institution. "The burden still falls on the campus" to find out whether the online equivalents of its degree programs measure up to their face-to-face forbears, Green said. "If you're teaching the same course and not using common assessment, then you just don't know. And for too many of these things, we just don't know."

Among the survey's other findings:

- **Tech support for online programs:** 36 percent provide 24/7 coverage; 25 percent provide coverage on weekdays, evenings and limited weekends; 22 percent cover weekdays and limited evenings; and 17 percent provide coverage only from 9 to 5 on weekdays.
- **Projected enrollment growth:** Almost half (47 percent) of colleges project enrollment increases in online programs of more than 15 percent over the next two years. Hardly any colleges project flat online enrollments.
- **Roadblocks:** Asked to identify factors that impede the growth of online programs, colleges cited (in this order): faculty resistance, lack of key resources, program accreditation and federal regulations as the top hindrances.

Green's own study, while "OK" in terms of statistical robustness, also suffered from a dearth of available data, he said. Despite the high demand for hard math on online education, he said, "It was pulling teeth to get people to do this questionnaire." The response rate was only 23 percent, although he said there was no pattern in those who responded that would lead him to discredit the findings. Green said he plans to make the survey a yearly event. "I know people are hungry for this," he said.

"Hopefully people won't freeload off the survey" next time, Green added.

— **Steve Kolowich**

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENTS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES, 2007/08

| Rank | Institution | State | Total Int'l Students | Total Enrollment |
|------|---|-------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Houston Community College System | TX | 4,241 | 57,364 |
| 2 | Santa Monica College | CA | 3,124 | 29,960 |
| 3 | De Anza College | CA | 2,394 | 26,000 |
| 4 | Montgomery College | MD | 1,994 | 23,866 |
| 5 | North Harris Montgomery Community College | TX | 1,844 | 43,816 |
| 6 | CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College | NY | 1,602 | 19,401 |
| 7 | Northern Virginia Community College | VA | 1,500 | 41,266 |
| 8 | Miami-Dade College | FL | 1,227 | 58,398 |
| 9 | Diablo Valley College | CA | 1,207 | 17,827 |
| 10 | Nassau Community College | NY | 1,171 | 21,483 |
| 11 | Foothill College | CA | 1,149 | 18,522 |
| 12 | City College of San Francisco | CA | 1,141 | 33,676 |
| 13 | Pasadena City College | CA | 1,034 | 29,168 |
| 14 | Green River Community College | WA | 1,033 | 9,500 |
| 15 | Seattle Central Community College | WA | 1,017 | 9,874 |
| 16 | Richland College | TX | 966 | 14,100 |
| 17 | Bellevue Community College | WA | 820 | 18,654 |
| 18 | Edmonds Community College | WA | 819 | 10,700 |
| 19 | North Lake College | TX | 800 | 8,626 |
| 20 | Santa Barbara City College | CA | 797 | 18,500 |

Source: "Open Doors," Institute of International Education, 2008.

Former El Camino College journalism mentor dies

The Daily Breeze

By Douglas Morino Staff Writer

Posted: 10/22/2009 06:45:23 PM PDT



W.A. "Bill" Kamrath taught journalism at El Camino College for 30 years.

W.A. "Bill" Kamrath, a World War II veteran and longtime educator who taught legions of South Bay students the craft of journalism, died Thursday after a brief battle with pneumonia. He was 89.

Kamrath spent his career in the classroom, teaching journalism courses and overseeing student-run publications at El Camino College near Torrance.

"He set a standard for us," said Tom Lew, dean of humanities at El Camino College. "Bill was a one-person program. He was a wonderful teacher and very respected."

Born in Orange on July 3, 1920, Kamrath attended school at the University of California, Berkeley, before joining the Navy in 1943. At times, Kamrath saw heavy combat, safely guiding a landing ship through a blanket of bullets and mortar rounds to the beach during the invasion of Normandy in June 1944.

After his return from war he married his fiancée, Gladys, whom he had met while a student at Berkeley.

"Our years together were beautiful," said his wife of 64 years in the living room of their Redondo Beach home. "It was as happy as any marriage could be."

While Kamrath was away at war, the couple wrote letters to each other, amassing about a thousand through the years. His wife keeps them tucked away in two boxes under a desk in their bedroom. They recently spent several days reading the letters back to each other.

"I had to wait two years with my diamond ring while he was away," Gladys said.

Upon his return, Kamrath began his teaching career as a journalism instructor at Inglewood High School. After seven years, he joined the faculty at El Camino College. Kamrath would stay there for 30 years, teaching journalism and overseeing production of the student-run newspaper, then called The Warhoop, and other school publications.

Under his guidance, students would go on to win 56 All-American Ratings for Journalism Excellence and several Pacemaker Awards.

"No one will ever beat that record," said Jolene Combs of his 30 years as journalism adviser at the school. Combs succeeded Kamrath as journalism adviser after his retirement in 1983.

"He was always there to help, he was always great," Combs said.

Many of Kamrath's students went on to become professional journalists, writing for the Daily Breeze, Los Angeles Times, San Jose Mercury News and New York Times.

Among his students were Fred Claire, former sportswriter and later general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, and Robert Lindsey, author of "The Falcon and the Snowman." A copy of the book sits on a table in Kamrath's bedroom.

After his retirement from El Camino, Kamrath continued to stay active in the field, helping to develop journalism curriculum, serving as national director of the Associated Collegiate Press, putting on "press days" for local high schools, and working on an alumni newsletter for the college. He was an editor of a monthly Lutheran magazine for 15 years.

Kamrath's wife was with him shortly before he took his final breath just before dawn Thursday morning at a Torrance hospital. She held his hand and put her cheek next to his.

"I told him it was OK," she said. "I told him to just reach out and go to that beautiful place."

In addition to his wife, Kamrath is survived by a daughter, Lynette Renner; a son, Rick; and eight grandchildren.

New Meaning for Night Class at 2-Year Colleges The New York Times

By ABBY GOODNOUGH
Published: October 27, 2009

BOSTON — Winston Chin hustles on Tuesdays from his eight-hour shift as a lab technician to his writing class at Bunker Hill Community College, a requirement for the associate's degree he is seeking in hopes of a better job.

He is a typical part-time student, with one exception. His class runs from 11:45 p.m. to 2:30 a.m., the consequence of an unprecedented enrollment spike that has Bunker Hill scrambling to accommodate hundreds of newcomers. In the dead of night, he and his classmates dissect Walt Whitman poems and learn the finer points of essay writing, fueled by unlimited coffee, cookies and an instructor who does push-ups beforehand to stay lively.

Similar booms have forced many of the nation's 1,200 community colleges to add makeshift parking lots, rent extra space and keep thousands of students on waiting lists this fall. While Bunker Hill offers two midnight classes — the other is Psychology 101 — and Clackamas Community College in Oregon holds welding classes until 2 a.m., others have added classes as early as 6 a.m. to make room for the jobless and others whom the recession has nudged back to school.

The deluge also includes an unusually large number of recent high school graduates, diverted from more expensive four-year colleges by the economic downturn.

“I liken myself to the old woman who lives in a shoe,” said Mary L. Fifield, the president of Bunker Hill, where enrollment is up 16 percent over last fall. “The seams are tearing, and people are just popping out all over.”

Virtually every state is dealing with enrollment booms at community colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges says, with some in California reporting increases of 35 percent. The demand comes amid deep cuts to higher-education budgets, but also at a hopeful time for community colleges: President Obama recently announced a \$12 billion plan to increase the number of community college graduates by five million by 2020.

“It shines a spotlight on a sector of higher education that by and large has been viewed as the lowest rung on the ladder,” Dr. Fifield said. “Now we have the president of the United States

talking about community colleges as an engine that will drive and sustain economic success in this country.”

Most of the students in Mr. Chin’s writing class, who range in age from 18 to 59, are employed but hoping a degree will lead to more stable, higher-paying jobs. Some start work as early as 4 a.m. or finish as late as 11 p.m., making the class time more appealing. They include a taxi dispatcher who dreams of going to medical school, a Dunkin’ Donuts cashier who wants to be a homicide detective and a landscaper who wants to be a state trooper.

The group cracked jokes and gently mocked one another for mispronouncing the word “blithe” or not reading aloud passionately enough. When the instructor asked around 2 a.m., “Who’s ready to answer the question?” one student wearily answered, “Who’s confused?”

Mr. Chin, who took the midnight class because other writing classes were full, wants to become a surgical nurse. At 57, he has three small children and has not been a student since graduating from high school.

“I probably would have taken something early in the morning if I’d had my pick of classes,” he said. “But this is working out. I never really need more than about four hours of sleep anyway.”

Mr. Chin and his classmates get plenty of parking — a rarity at community colleges these days. Holyoke Community College, in Holyoke, Mass., where enrollment is up 13 percent over last fall, turned its tennis courts into parking lots; it also sent postcards to all 7,500 students urging them to take public transportation to class.

At Northern Virginia Community College, more than 20 classes start before 7 a.m. this fall; many other colleges have classes running as late as 11 p.m.

But with state allocations down sharply this year because of the economy, many community colleges have not been able to keep up with the demand. At Miami Dade College, whose 170,000 students make it the nation’s largest community college, about 30,000 could not get every class they wanted this fall; about 5,000 others were shut out completely.

At De Anza College in Cupertino, Calif., about 8,000 students found themselves on wait lists last month, as did 7,500 students at Central Oregon Community College. And in New York City, where the six community colleges that are part of the City University of New York experienced a record 9 percent enrollment increase this fall, most closed enrollment early for the first time.

Because of budget cuts, Miami Dade College could not add a single new class this fall despite an influx of more than 33,000 new students. Instead, it has eliminated 1,200 class sections over the last two years, said Eduardo J. Padrón, the college president.

“It’s an almost desperate situation,” Dr. Padrón said. “My heart breaks for these students, because I know many are the ones who really need us the most.”

Colleen Roach, Bunker Hill’s spokeswoman, said higher student fees and an influx of federal stimulus money helped the college offer dozens more classes this fall. It is planning to add a third midnight course, Sociology 101, next spring, along with five business and science courses that will run to 11:45 p.m.

Dr. Fifield said putting dynamic instructors in charge of the late-night classes was crucial.

“Not everyone is going to be able to keep people awake until 2:45 in the morning,” she said.

Wick Sloane, who teaches the midnight writing class at Bunker Hill, tried to transport Mr. Chin and the other students from the windowless, concrete-walled classroom one recent night with an essay by Edward Abbey, the nature writer, about encountering a mountain lion in the New Mexican desert. When one student answered a question with a giant yawn around 2:15, Mr. Sloane asked, “Can everyone make it about 15 more minutes?”

For homework, he assigned an essay analyzing Calpurnia’s rhetoric in Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar,” leading one student to ask whether Shakespeare used an alias. The room started buzzing with opinions.

“Do you want to stay and debate who Shakespeare was?” Mr. Sloane asked.

They did not, but not for lack of enthusiasm. “He’s got me engaged,” Mr. Chin said, “which is not easy at this time of night.”

Lisa W. Foderaro contributed reporting from New York.

Power 101

InsideHigherEd.com

By Dean Dad

October 27, 2009 9:42 pm

Several alert readers sent me this story about Southwestern College, a cc near San Diego. According to the IHE account, the college has banned several faculty, including the past and current presidents of the union, from campus. Their indirect support of a student protest appears to be the reason. (The President is apparently on an extended vacation, which doesn't help.)

I won't go off on the evil of banning critics from campus, since I take that as given. And I won't do the usual administrators-are-the-source-of-all-evil rant, either, because it's neither true nor helpful.

Instead, I'll offer a critique as a college administrator. Simply put, Southwestern's administration is looking amateurish. This is not how it's done.

Anyone who has held an authority position during a budget downturn has faced criticism. Some is probably fair, some is clearly not, and much is highly emotional. People who don't deal with budgets for a living often don't understand the constraints within them, erroneously thinking that money from column A can simply be shifted to column B at will. Worse, rather than taking the time to learn the rules, they immediately leap to the moral high ground and start passing judgments, loudly and publicly, based on misinformation. Being on the receiving end of that can be wearing, and you'd have to be pretty impressive -- or pretty out-of-touch -- for it not to affect you. Some of your less-balanced critics will even make it personal.

This is where leaders need to step up.

Depending on your estimate of the situation, and the direction you want to go, you have several options.

You could enlist the aid of the union (and/or the students) in making a common pitch for more resources. Admittedly, California may not be in a position to respond, but that approach has been known to work in other settings.

Or, you could call the union's bluff on the moral high ground, invite its leaders to the table, explain the very real constraints, and ask them what they would do. Admittedly, some of them will get squirrely at this point, but the smarter ones will see a chance to actually achieve something and jump on it.

Or, you could divide-and-conquer, finding some sort of fault line within the union itself and hitting it with surgical precision. This takes skill and some creativity, but it can be devastatingly effective.

Or, you could take the crisis as an opportunity for a thorough reinvention of the college as a whole. This combines 'divide and conquer' with 'fiscal realism' and 'good PR.' Done well, this can lead to the college coming out stronger -- at least in relative terms -- than before.

Or, you could take the "cut off the head" approach, purge your senior staff, and refill your top admin positions with the union leadership. That way, you deprive the union of its strongest leaders in a way that they can't grieve. ("How dare you promote proven leaders?" won't get them far in court.) You also get the satisfaction of watching the firebrands who used to know everything discover constraints.

Or, you could simply ignore the criticism and go about your business as best you can. It's not ideal, but it's not the worst approach, either. If questioned, just affirm your belief in freedom of expression and go back to what you were doing.

Or, you could do your best imitation of Dr. Evil, go out on limbs that will be sawed off quickly in court, and make yourself look like an idiot in public. That seems to be the strategy here.

From high office, pettiness is amplified. That can be frustrating, since leaders have all the same human failings as everybody else, but less license to indulge them. That's the price of leadership. There's a real and generally unacknowledged unfairness to that, but there it is. If the best response to generally fair criticism you can come up with is to kick the critics off campus, you're probably in over your head. (I say 'generally fair' to distinguish this from, say, slander. Slander is not protected by academic freedom, and those who commit it are fair game.) Worse, playing the heavy in such an obvious way simply galvanizes the other side. One of the easiest ways to get a disparate group to cohere is to unite against a common enemy. Making yourself that enemy simply plays into their hands. It's an amateur's mistake.

I expect that the bans will be overturned posthaste, and I wouldn't be surprised to see this President's tenure end quickly. In a situation as bad as California's, you can't afford ineptitude at the highest levels. This is not how it's done.