

DailyNews

More college students apply for financial aid

By Connie Llanos, Staff Writer

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With a slumping economy and a spike in financial-aid applications, college student Tiffany Dorgan found getting help for school was so tough this year that she had to use her credit card to pay for tuition.

"It is risky," acknowledged Dorgan, a physical-therapy graduate student at California State University, Northridge.

"But I had to. This is a product of this horrible economy."

Schools across the country are seeing a tremendous increase in demand for student aid this year, fueled both by the slumping economy and rising tuition costs.

Nationwide, 8.9 million students filed federal financial aid applications this year, 16 percent more than last year, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Locally, financial aid applications to CSUN jumped by 20 percent. And 34 percent more students applied at Pierce College.

As a result, students have been turning to more creative - though sometimes risky - financing, such as high-interest-rate credit cards and peer-to-peer lending.

And while classes began this past week, many financial-aid directors have been working for months to cope with the demand.

"We have hired consultants, authorized overtime and are working weekends to find a way to make it work," said Lili Vidal, CSUN's director of financial aid and [scholarships](#).

"This is the biggest increase we have seen in a long time."

Even less-expensive community colleges have been affected.

A spike in requests

Financial-aid requests to Pierce College grew by more than one-third in a year, the largest spike among major schools in the San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas.

Pierce financial-aid director Anafe Robinson said one of the factors contributing to the spike includes a concentrated effort to get more students to apply for financial aid.

But Robinson said the increase has been primarily driven by rising school costs. Currently the cost for a Pierce student who does not live at home is more than \$16,000 a year.

"Even though enrollment fees are affordable, students have other educational expenses like books and supplies, transportation and housing. And that has definitely increased, especially in Southern California," she said.

Private schools have also seen increases in their financial-aid applications this year, but the increases have been smaller than at public schools.

"We have always had to promote financial aid to our students to avoid parents getting sticker shock from our tuition," said Don St. Clair, vice president of enrollment and marketing at Woodbury University in Burbank.

A disturbing trend

At public schools like CSUN, Vidal said the increase creates other issues such as longer wait times for students, while others may only have access to student loans - at CSUN, state grants ran out two months ago.

"Normally during a whole year we authorize about 21,000 financial awards. As of July, we had already handed out 25,000," Vidal said.

The situation has left many students with tuition bills to pay and no funds to tap.

Harry Hellenbrand, vice president of academic affairs at CSUN, said it is a growing trend at the school where he says there is a higher percentage of first-generation college students.

"These students do not have parents who are savvy about college finances - no one who can guide them through the process," Hellenbrand said.

"It is a disturbing trend."

No credit checks

One Internet option that has emerged for students, growing out of social networking sites like Facebook, is peer-to-peer lending that lets students get low-interest loans from friends, family and strangers.

"Interest rates on these loans are lower than private loans," said Akash Agarwal, CEO of Greennote.com, a peer-to-peer lending site for students.

"We don't do any credit checks on anyone and it's a [democratic](#) model."

Agarwal said his company acts as a mediator between students and the lenders - collecting money for the students, tacking on an interest rate that currently can be as high as 6.8 percent, and reminding students when loan payments are due.

Even though students' credit is not checked to approve the loans, their credit can be affected if loans are not paid.

Agarwal said in the last few months loans have varied from as little as a few hundred dollars to as much as \$40,000.

"They are trying to get money based on their character, their profile, their life story. And their loans are being underwritten by individuals who want to support them ... and they get a fair rate of return, too."

Going old-school

Still many other students are continuing to go the traditional route to make ends meet.

CSUN freshman Ambar Lopez, 17, said she was lucky to qualify for several grants, meaning she will only have to pay a few hundred dollars for her annual tuition.

Lopez also decided to live at home, tacking on a daily two-hour commute from Huntington Park, to avoid a \$6,000 dorm fee.

And she plans to get a second job.

"I am nervous, Lopez said.

"But it's exciting. ... It's college."

Glendale News Press

August 27, 2008

Senator set to go back to schools

Jack Scott will leave the Legislature in order to lead the state community college system.

By Jeremy Oberstein

Published: Last Updated Sunday, August 24, 2008 10:35 PM PDT

GLENDAL — The sun will soon set on state Sen. Jack Scott's 12-year career in the Legislature, a tenure marked by broad political cohesion and the passage of nearly 160 bills.

"I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to serve the people of the 21st District," Scott said Thursday. "I've had a great experience, and I hope I've done some good. I'll always remember it with much fondness."

After four years in the Assembly and six years in the Senate, Scott is set to retire Dec. 1 en route to his new role as head of the state's community college system.

Born in Sweetwater, Texas, in 1933, Scott shaped his legislative career as an educational reformer after serving as president of Pasadena City College before he joined the Assembly in 1996.

His calm demeanor and capacity for reaching across the political aisle earned him respect from Republicans and allowed the Democrat to craft a vast number of bills, with a similarly high passage rate.

Scott has authored 226 bills since 1997, with 158 of those signed into law for a 69% passage rate that ranks as one of the highest in the Legislature. Twenty-two more of Scott's bills have been approved this year by the Legislature, but most have not been signed into law pending approval of the state's \$15.3-billion deficit.

"When he ran for Senate in 2000, it was one of the things he did to distance himself from [Democratic challenger] Scott Wildman," said Wendy Gordon, who has worked with Scott since his initial campaign in 1996 and now serves as his spokeswoman. "The [passion for] education was always there, but when he got into the Assembly, his big thing was gun control."

Scott's election to the Assembly came three years after his son, Adam, was fatally shot while at a party near USC, where he had recently graduated from law school.

Personally touched by gun violence, Scott launched an offensive against the proliferation of firearms and the ease with which Californians were able to acquire weapons.

“Whenever something attacks you personally, you have some intensity about it,” Scott said. “When there are 30,000 deaths in America every year because of guns, we’ve got a serious health problem. I’m not in the business of banning guns — I’ve never had anything to do with taking guns out of homes — but I have been for reasonable gun regulation.”

Scott, who turns 75 on Sunday, estimated that the Legislature has approved about 15 of his gun safety bills during his tenure, including one this year — SB 1171 — which bars a person from carrying a loaded firearm in a car or on his person while on a street, road or highway in an unincorporated portion of the state.

Drawing on his past term as head of Pasadena City College, Scott turned his emphasis to education where 79 of his bills have been signed into law since 1997.

As the current head of the Senate’s Education Committee, Scott has seen 14 of his education-related bills pass through the legislature this year. But he counts a 2006 teacher transfer bill as one his landmark pieces of legislation.

The bill, which gave principals the right to refuse the voluntary transfer of any teacher not deemed acceptable for the school — something they had previously been precluded from — brought Scott widespread acclaim.

The influential California Teachers Assn. union lobbied hard against the bill, but Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the bill, saying at the time, “In education, many times the battle is all about what is best for the adults, not what is best for the kids.”

The opposition was a prelude to this year’s controversy in which a bill to ban the sale of Mylar balloons that Scott proposed was met with biting resistance from balloon lobbyists in Sacramento, some business owners around the state and vitriol from at least one morning talk radio show.

John and Ken on KFI-AM held a June rally near Scott’s home base in Pasadena to raise awareness about the bill and the possibility that the legislation could “kill business for many retailers.”

“I didn’t realize they would create such a furor, but I guess I should have,” Scott said about the breadth of opposition. “Any time you mess with people’s profits you’re going to get opposition. I made a step in the right direction and I think I heightened awareness, but I did generate a lot of opposition. It was quite controversial.”

The revised version of the bill passed the Legislature this year and did not ban the sale of balloons but raised the penalty for selling a helium-filled metallic balloon without a proper weight from \$100 to \$250 per incident.

The eventual passage of the bill highlighted Scott’s willingness to amend legislation as needed and showed a readiness to listen to complaints from businesses and lobby groups, officials said.

Scott has also run into road bumps when seeking the passage of certain insurance or education bills, but has shown he is not averse to working with Republicans, said state Sen. Mark Wyland, the Republican vice chair of the Education Committee.

“He’s fair, gracious, congenial, and even when we disagree, it’s always been done in a very gentlemanly way,” Wyland said. “He’s someone you always listen to very carefully. I’ve enjoyed working with him and [am] sorry to see him go. He just understood the issues so well. I didn’t always agree with him, but in many instances he convinced me. There’s a lot of work yet to be done, and I don’t know who his replacement will be, but we will miss him. I will miss him.”

Scott is set to assume control of the community college board on Jan. 1 and plans on taking a vacation with his wife, Lacreata, but said he will campaign as needed for Carol Liu, a Democrat seeking to replace the nearly termed out Scott next term.

“I appreciate his reasonableness, his intellect and his commitment to young people in our state in terms of all the education work he’s done,” said Liu, who worked with Scott in the Assembly.

After that, Scott’s role will be strictly nonpartisan, but he will continue to work on behalf of an issue he believes transcends politics: education.

“To me, education is not something that is a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. Education is a human issue,” Scott said. “It’s been a great run.”

Mountain View Voice

August 27, 2008

The learn-from-home set

At Foothill College, more students than ever before are taking classes online

by Casey Weiss

Mountain View Voice Staff

Foothill College student Vivann Chheang is too busy with biology classes and labs during the school year to work full-time at the campus bookstore. During the summer, though, the international student racks up hours at the store while still completing her classes -- at night, from home.

Originally from Cambodia, Chheang, 22, received scholarships to study at the community college, and says the additional work at the bookstore helps pay her bills, especially since her visa does not permit her to work off campus.

After work each night, Chheang spends three hours on the computer participating in class discussions and writing essays for her three virtual courses: geography, women's studies and anthropology. During the fall and winter, she takes biology classes in person for her major, but fulfills her social science requirements online during the summer.

"I usually take [online classes] during the summer, so I can spend my time working," Chheang said. "It's not that we think it's easy, it's just convenient."

Campus administrators say the convenience of online classes helps to explain why more than 18,000 additional students have signed up to take these courses in the last seven years. The college offers about 200 online courses each quarter, and also offers classes where students meet both online and on campus. There are close to 29,000 students enrolled in Foothill's online classes, and nearly 13,000 of them only use the college's "virtual campus center," rarely stepping foot on campus.

The classes are becoming more of a national trend, with many community colleges, four-year colleges and universities offering a larger selection of online courses. Three universities, including Cal State East Bay, offer classes through Foothill's online campus center.

"The universities are actually coming to us," said Judy Baker, Foothill's dean of global access.

Some of Foothill's online students live in other states and countries, but can access the courses and reading via their computer, and rarely have to buy textbooks. The flexibility and low cost is why the virtual college center attracts a lot of new students from all over the world, Baker said. Lack of transportation and high gas prices, work obligations and small children at home are other reasons students say they take the classes online, Baker said.

"This is what community college is about, giving access to people who would otherwise never have a degree," Baker said. "As long as you have some Internet connection, you are good to go."

When the program began during the 2000-01 school year, just over 11,300 Foothill students took courses on the Internet. That number nearly doubled two years later, to 21,917, and has been steadily increasing to last year's 29,948. In the past year alone, the number of students enrolled in online classes increased over 4 percent.

Students sign up for the online classes during Foothill's normal registration period, and pay the same price as they would for on-campus classes. Once enrolled, they can access all of their assignments and tests from a virtual campus center. Instructors often require that the students participate in several discussions a week with their classmates, and students can also send private messages with their peers and instructors.

Chheang said her instructors have taught the classes while on vacation, and one even posted lessons from her hospital bed.

"She was in the hospital, but had her laptop," Chheang said. "She got her assignments back on time."

Virtual transfers

Danny Cho, an admissions counselor with San Jose State University, said sometimes students have trouble transferring online classes from technical schools, but students coming from community colleges rarely have a problem. All California universities have agreements with the community colleges, and will transfer courses from an approved list, whether they are taught online or in the classroom.

"It doesn't matter, if it is on the list, we take it," Cho said.

As the virtual classes become popular, administrators are helping more teachers bring their courses online.

"Offering classes online requires a different set of skills," said Kurt Hueg, director of marketing and communications.

Instructors undergo 12 hours of software training, and learn techniques to prevent students from cheating, among other things. (Baker said cheating is not more of a problem online than in live classes. Although students could conceivably have someone else take a class for them online, this also could happen on campus, she said, since teachers do not check students' IDs.)

Tests in online classes are all open book, since students have access to their coursework. Because of this, teachers try to make the assignments and exams harder.

Chheang agrees that the virtual classes' tests are more difficult. But for her, the payoff is well worth it: For someone in her situation, online classes are perfect for the summer.

ScrippsNews

The higher-education role of community colleges

Submitted by SHNS on Mon, 09/01/2008 - 13:37.

- **By JOHN M. CRISP, Scripps Howard News Service**
- **editorials and opinion**

This is a good time for thinking about higher education in our country, particularly against the backdrop of the faces of the 130 freshmen who filed into my five composition classes last week on the first day of fall semester.

They don't all look like typical college students. Although many of them graduated from high school only a few months ago and wouldn't be out of place in a college classroom anywhere, many others have been out of school for a few years, and they arrive with complicated and surprising histories that include tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, a house full of children, good jobs and menial jobs, and successful and unsuccessful marriages.

Some are overbearingly confident and others are thoroughly bewildered in the academic environment in which they find themselves. Some are very smart and write so well that I don't have a lot to teach them. A few are unlikely ever to pass my class or any other college class, in spite of our best efforts. Some of them are dirt-poor and a few have been in prison.

These are nonresidential college students, many of whom go from classes directly to part-time or full-time jobs, and then go home to face domestic duties. After their kids have gone to bed, they turn to their homework. More than half of them are of Hispanic origin.

Perhaps you've guessed that the college where I teach isn't exactly Harvard. But the faces that range before me in my classes largely reflect the current state of higher education in our country, as well as its future. The fact is, about half of all American college students are enrolled in two-year community colleges like the one where I teach. In some states -- California, for example -- community-college students outnumber traditional four-year students by as much as 2 to 1.

In short, a surprising amount of American education today takes place in community colleges, not only on the technical and occupational side -- health care, airframe maintenance, diesel mechanics -- but on the transfer side, as well. Because of their low cost and accessibility, community colleges are able to provide an entry point to four-year programs for capable students who otherwise would have been overlooked or neglected.

Good things happen at community colleges, but they're hardly an unalloyed success in every respect. Their firm entrenchment in the basement of the ivory tower, without football and fraternities, keeps their profiles low. They are places of considerable achievement, as well as

staggering failure. Because they've accepted the challenging task of dealing with all comers, regardless of their level of previous academic achievement, remedial education plays a significant role in their work, dropouts are common and retention is an ongoing concern.

And their work isn't made any easier by the funding philosophies that many states apply to their community colleges. The numbers are complicated, but in Texas, for example, a state that has never been particularly lavish with funding for education, state money for community colleges has diminished drastically over the last several decades, lagging far behind funding for four-year public colleges and universities, even as enrollment in community colleges has outdistanced that in more traditional public institutions.

Community colleges don't get much respect, serving as the occasional butt of jokes or suffering the cruelest condescension of all: invisibility. Nevertheless, in an era when our economy depends more and more on an educated work force that has to be drawn from an ever-broader base of citizens, many of whom have never been welcome in higher education before, it's occasionally worth noting the quiet but expanding role that community colleges play in support of our national educational system.

Well, so noted.

(John M. Crisp teaches in the English Department at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas. E-mail him at [jcrisp\(at\)delmar.edu](mailto:jcrisp@delmar.edu).)

SignOnSanDiego.com

College district, faculty union settle salary dispute

By Leonel Sanchez

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

August 30, 2008

A lengthy labor dispute ended last week at Grossmont and Cuyamaca colleges after the faculty union and the district reached a salary agreement.

Negotiations had stalled for more than a year.

In March, faculty members stopped volunteering for campus activities, including advising student clubs and serving on certain committees. The Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District responded by filing an unfair-labor-practice complaint with the state, which hasn't been resolved.

Both sides declared labor peace last week after the district's governing board voted 5-0 to accept a state fact-finder's settlement recommendation.

The United Faculty, which represents more than 1,300 full-time and part-time faculty members, approved the proposal two weeks ago.

The three-member fact-finding panel included a state-appointed arbitrator and examined arguments presented by both parties.

The panel concluded that the district has the ability to pay more than it had proposed. However, the panel recommended less than what the faculty had proposed.

United Faculty President Zoe Close said she was pleased with the salary agreement and other concessions.

Dana Quittner, district spokeswoman, said neither side got everything it wanted. Quittner said the salary increases will cost the district about \$1.4 million.

For 2006-2007, full-time faculty members will receive a 5.36 percent salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2006; part-time faculty will receive a 7.36 percent increase.

For 2007-2008, faculty members will receive a 3 percent salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2007; effective Jan. 1, 2008, the increase becomes 3.8 percent for full-time faculty members and 4.6 percent for part-time faculty.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

September 2, 2008

California Judge Orders Community College to Reinstate Fired Instructor

A California judge has overturned the 2006 firing of a Grossmont College instructor who allegedly offered a student a passing grade if she agreed to show him her bra, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* reported on Saturday.

The judge, Charles R. Hayes of the Superior Court for San Diego County, ordered the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District to reinstate Timothy Cliffe, a physical-geography instructor. In his decision, Judge Hayes overruled another judge who had found that Mr. Cliffe had engaged in “immoral conduct.”

According to a spokeswoman for the district, it has not decided whether it will appeal the latest ruling.

In his ruling, Judge Hayes questioned the validity of the claims made by the student, Yu Yu Chen, a native of Taiwan. He said Ms. Chen’s limited English skills might have caused a misunderstanding. He also noted that Mr. Cliffe had once caught the student cheating on a test.

The alleged incident occurred when Ms. Chen asked Mr. Cliffe to change her grade from an F to a C.

Mr. Cliffe has admitted making a sarcastic comment that likened course grades to bra sizes, but has denied seeking sexual favors. —*Allie Grasgreen*

The Compton Bulletin

9/3/08

Enrollment Takes Giant Leap at Compton Center *Registration surges due to addition of new programs, classes*

By Cheryl Scott
Bulletin Staff Writer

If recent enrollment figures at El Camino Compton Center are any indication, the college could be on its way out of a four-year crisis.

“The most recent figures show a 41 percent increase in student registration,” said Provost/CEO Lawrence Cox. “We were all surprised and delighted. It is highly unusual for a college to show such a drastic difference in registration. We feel it is due to the fact that we have been working very hard to be responsive to the community’s needs.”

According to figures released on Aug. 20, full-time student enrollment is at 1,039, up from 805 in the fall of 2007. A straight headcount, including part-time students, is 2,374, up 40.8 percent from last year’s total of 1,686.

Newly appointed Dean of Vocational Services Rodney Murray has been working to restore classes that had been discontinued and establish new classes reflecting new areas of employment in today’s high-tech world.

“Since the reorganization of the college as the El Camino Compton Center, the vocational program has been in transition as well,” he told the Bulletin. “We had several things that needed to be done right away. First we had to make sure our current certification programs were up and running. We also needed to strengthen our community outreach and recruiting in our feeder schools. Finally, we needed to find emerging technology and incorporate it into our program.”

A hallmark of Murray’s strategy has been an approach identifying available jobs that pay salaries high enough to support an individual or a family. An advisory board has been formed representing industry in the community to help the college add new courses that will lead to jobs that will provide a livable salary.

The college is also focusing on the “green” industry.

“We are making sure our vocational program meets needs in that field,” Murray said. “There are lots of new products that help people to be more environmentally responsible. It’s a field that is growing rapidly, so if we can offer the right programs, it can lead to well paid jobs that will only get more available in the upcoming years.

“You don’t just want to get a job. You want to get a job that will pay well enough for you to live on and provide opportunities for advancement. So we’re going out to industry and asking what

they need in the way of new employees. Then we can provide training for the community-at-large that will fill the needs of business, helping to provide economic stimulus in Compton.”

Marketing, communication and community outreach have also been important in increasing enrollment.

“I have a very hard-working staff that is very concerned about the community and the college’s role in serving its educational needs,” Cox said. “We have staff members speaking at all of the local high schools in the area. I have been meeting with the mayors of both Paramount and Compton as well as the city councils in both cities to get the word out that we are ready with a refreshed list of available classes. I think a lot of the reason our enrollment has taken such a big leap is simply that we’ve been spreading the word.”

Cox said that there are 140 students on the college’s football team this fall.

“I think this is going to be a winning season,” he said. “There’s nothing like a successful football team to stir up enthusiasm in the community.”

The educational programs and services offered by El Camino College at Compton Center will continue to include a full range of credit and non-credit courses; library and learning resource center services; counseling; admissions and records; financial aid; student life; categorical programs such as EOPS, DSPS, CalWorks, GAIN and TANF; transfer center services; a child development center; and special programs and services.

The college has also resumed its Emergency Medical Technician program, with two classes already filled. The program was discontinued for a time due to its failure to meet strict health and safety requirements.

“It’s important for the community to know that we are an open-access college,” said Cox. “We intend to serve the community as effectively as we can. I believe everyone should go to college. And if you attend a community college for two years, you can save up your money to use in your last two years at a university or four-year college. If you should stop your education after two years, either temporarily or permanently, you’ve got a degree, which you would not have if you had attended two years at a four-year college.”

There is a renewed sense of excitement on the campus among staff and students.

“This has all the earmarks of a turning point,” Cox said. “The college has stabilized, and we are beginning to see the results of all our hard work. We are very encouraged. This is an exciting time at the Compton Center.”

CNNMoney.com

Foundation for California Community Colleges Selects Blackboard for Mass Notification Service

Partnership Will Enrich Campus Enrollment Management Plans, Mass Notification Capabilities for Nation's Largest Higher Ed System

September 04, 2008: 09:00 AM EST

Blackboard Inc. (NASDAQ: BBBB), a leading provider of educational enterprise technology, announced today that the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FCCC) -- the official foundation for the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and System Office -- has selected the Blackboard® Connect-ED® multi-modal mass notification service as an approved technology.

Under the agreement, Blackboard's Connect-ED service will provide community college leaders with the ability to quickly reach up to 2.6 million students that attend more than 100 community colleges across the state, as well as faculty and staff, with time-sensitive information under a special pricing structure.

"California's 110 community colleges need viable options for connecting directly with their students in a fast and efficient manner for any number of reasons," said Dr. Paul Lanning, President of the FCCC. "We are excited about our partnership with Blackboard because it represents another way for California's community colleges to benefit from the Foundation's commitment to providing excellence for the nation's largest higher education system."

"We are thrilled to team with the Foundation to offer their members a new tool to help efficiently manage campus communications," said Tom Motter, President of Blackboard Connect Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Blackboard. "The best way to keep the campus community informed is through communication, and the Connect-ED service makes it easy. With Connect-ED, administrators can leverage a powerful tool for mass communication without having to purchase new computers, software, or telephone lines."

Recently, Blackboard announced a similar agreement with the Oregon University System to make the Connect-ED service available to any public or private campus in the state, including community colleges.

Blackboard's Connect-ED mass notification service offers a unique benefit to campus leaders by supporting enrollment management, time-sensitive notification, and campus outreach efforts through a direct communication channel with students.

"The Connect-ED service was a critical component in our 2008 Enrollment management plan, helping us to exceed our enrollment goals. Its phone survey tool provided valuable information regarding student registration," said Dr. Mark D. Robinson, Vice Chancellor of City College of

San Francisco. "The Connect-ED service also offers multi-modal notification services, providing us the ability to quickly and efficiently contact our entire student population using voice, text, and email messages."

Built exclusively for postsecondary institutions, the Connect-ED service enables campus leaders to schedule, send, and track personalized voice messages at up to six phone numbers, two e-mail addresses and one text address per student and staff member. In all, the service helps officials reach out to students and staff through:

- Voice messages to home phones, work phones, cell phones, and even e-mail addresses;
- Text messages to cell phones, PDAs, networked digital signage, and other text-based devices;
- Text messages to e-mail accounts; and
- Messages to TTY/TDD receiving devices for the hearing impaired.

In addition to sending enrollment and admissions messages, the system can be used to notify entire student populations and staff members of campus closures and contingency plans due to unforeseen incidents. The Connect-ED service has been successfully used for communication by schools across the country during events, such as the wildfires in Southern California, Hurricanes Gustav, Dolly, and Humberto, school evacuations, campus notifications required by the Clery Act, and missing persons.

Les Jauron, Vice President for Planning and Information at Butte College, explained how a multi-modal notification service recently assisted their campus in a time-sensitive situation. "Earlier this summer, the Humboldt Wildfire in Northern California burned right to the edge of the Butte College main campus. We needed an efficient way to notify students, staff, and faculty about changes to the schedule that resulted from the fire. In this fast-moving situation the Connect-ED service enabled us to quickly notify the campus community about campus closures and schedule changes. This is a capability we just didn't have before. The speed and efficiency the Connect-ED service brings to time-sensitive notification is truly impressive."

For more information about Blackboard Connect(TM) solutions, please visit <http://www.blackboard.com/products/connect>. The Foundation for California Community Colleges is online at <http://www.foundationccc.org>.

Merced Sun Star

Wednesday, Sep. 03, 2008

UC offers discount to Merced College students

The institutions hope the deal will encourage more transfers and help ease the transition.

By **DANIELLE GAINES**
Dgaines@mercedsun-star.com

Merced College trustees approved an agreement Tuesday that allows Merced College students to enroll in one course per semester at UC Merced while paying Merced College tuition rates.

One goal of the agreement is to expose Merced College students to the university environment and coursework before they transfer.

"Sometimes our students think that all students in the University of California system are geniuses and they get intimidated," said Anne Newins, Merced College's vice president of student personnel services. "They are plugging away at school themselves and just don't realize their ability. We hope this program allows them to do that."

While students can only take advantage of one course per semester, it comes at significant savings. Tuition and fees for full-time students at UC Merced are \$3,875 each semester.

Newins said she also hopes the program will increase the number of Merced College students transferring to the university. Now 30 to 40 students transfer there each year.

"Our goal is definitely to increase that number and we think this program is the best way to do that," Newins said.

Kevin Browne, the assistant vice chancellor of enrollment management at UC Merced, said the program is essentially a way to give community members access to untapped resources at the university.

"If we have a class with 24 seats and only 22 students, that is a lost resource," he said. "We want to be able to utilize every seat available at the university."

Browne expects that most of the Merced College participants will enroll in upper-level courses to get a jump-start on their baccalaureate degrees.

The option to enroll in UC Merced courses will be open next semester to all Merced College students who have completed one semester and 12 units of coursework, have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0, and have taken all prerequisites.

Both Newins and Browne say the program is a win-win for the students who choose to enroll.

"At the end of the day, whether they transfer to UC Merced or not, they will have credits from a University of California," Newins said.

MiraCosta expects to have funds to add teachers, give raises

By Lola Sherman

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

September 4, 2008

Despite the downturn in property values countywide, MiraCosta College is expected to have enough money to add instructors and give pay raises in the fiscal year that began July 1.

MiraCosta is one of only three community colleges in California financed by local property taxes and not by state aid. The college is projecting that its overall property tax revenue will increase by 4 percent during this fiscal year.

That will help cover the costs of hiring eight new teachers and giving employees a 2.55 percent pay raise, said Jim Austin, vice president for business and administrative services.

More classes should be available for students who decide to transfer from other cash-strapped districts, he said.

Although the governor and Legislature are still wrestling with the state budget, most proposals don't even offer cost-of-living increases for community colleges, Austin told the MiraCosta College Board of Trustees during a budget workshop Tuesday.

MiraCosta's enrollment, figured in the equivalent of full-time students, is about 8,800, but that could rise 13 percent this semester, interim college President Susan Cota said.

"You're going to have to make a decision down the road what percentage of growth you can afford," Cota told trustees.

Austin said the growth potential is limited only by the capacity of college buildings and parking availability. He called it "a very healthy financial year."

The community college's tentative general-fund budget for the current year tops \$95 million in revenues and expenditures. In the fiscal year that ended in June, the general-fund budget showed more than \$91 million in revenue and \$79 million in expenditures.

The college ended the last fiscal year with a general-fund balance of more than \$30 million. It anticipates an ending balance of \$26 million this year.

Trustees are scheduled to cast a formal vote on the budget when they meet Sept. 16.

Board President Carolyn Batiste said she worried that property taxes, which make up more than 80 percent of MiraCosta's income, wouldn't be enough this year.

Austin replied that if MiraCosta depended upon state aid like most other community colleges in the state, its income would be nearly halved.

He said the college's state apportionment would be \$41 million, whereas it receives more than \$70 million in property taxes.

While property taxes remain a large source of income, the real estate market has affected the district, which covers the coastal area from Oceanside to Carmel Valley.

The 4 percent increase projected in the coming year is the smallest in six years.

In the 2006-07 fiscal year, property taxes in the district increased by 15.6 percent. Last year, the increase was 5 percent, Austin said.

Austin reassured Batiste and the board that 4 percent is a conservative figure – lower than the 5 percent projected by the county assessor – and enough to support the budget.

The Clarion Online

Congress pressures textbook companies to lower costs

Ariel Carmona Jr.

Issue date: 9/3/08 **Section:** Life

The high price of textbooks paid by college students has become a national issue. President George W. Bush signed a Congressional bill into law Aug. 14 which may help ease the burden when the new legislation goes into effect July 2010.

The Higher Education Reauthorization and College Opportunity Act of 2008 (HR 4137) includes provisions to contain escalating textbook costs by requiring publishers to disclose pricing information, unbundling individual textbooks and including retail price information for required and recommended textbooks during course registration.

According to the California Public Interest Research Group, a statewide student-funded consumer advocacy organization, the average full-time college student spends about \$900 annually on textbooks. Textbook prices increase faster than inflation, CALPIRG reports.

"Right now, publishing companies are taking advantage of students, and since professors are choosing the textbooks, pricing is not a priority to them since they are not the primary consumers," said Nicole Allen, textbook advocate for CALPIRG.

Citrus student Edward Reyes, 19, said that he spends about \$300 per 16-week semester and about \$150 to \$200 per six-week intersession on textbooks.

"I think the prices are way too high," he said.

"A lot of kids going to community college are going because they do not have enough money to spend for a university, and instead of saving up, the money is going to books."

Textbook prices have outpaced inflation 2 to 1 in the past two decades. According to the Government Accountability Office, textbook prices account for 26 percent of the cost of tuition and fees at four-year public universities and nearly three-quarters of the cost at community colleges.

In addition, a recent report released by California State Auditor Elaine Howle on the affordability of college textbooks states that "Increases in textbook prices have significantly outpaced median household income, making it more likely that some students will forgo or delay attending college because of the financial burden."

Howle's report states that for the 2007-08 academic year, the average textbook costs as a percentage of student fees were 13 percent at UC, 22 percent at CSU and 59 percent at

community colleges.

Furthermore, the report states textbook publishers charged retailers significantly more than publishers of all types of books. Campus bookstores add their markups to publisher invoice prices.

The markup at the Owl Bookshop at Citrus is approximately 27 percent, said Eric Magallon, Citrus bookstore supervisor.

"We're doing our best to combat the high prices by offering more e-texts and more used books," Magallon said.

Citrus has been working for more than a year on some of the recommendations made by the state, such as textbook adoption policy revision, better communication with faculty and deans and looking into distributor discounts, he said.

"There is no easy solution," Magallon said.

"The bottom line is we're trying to make texts more affordable and to open up avenues for students who can't afford the texts. The good thing is the profits all go back to help the campus by funding the many programs out there."

As examples, he cited Extended Opportunity Programs and Services and book scholarships offered by the Citrus Foundation as options available to certain student populations.

Publishers will be required to include pricing information with other textbook descriptors they provide faculty, according to an analysis of HR 4137 prepared by student public interest research groups.

Pricing information will include wholesale price and suggested retail price; copyright dates for the past three editions; significant changes between the current edition and the previous edition; and the existence and prices of alternative formats.

The CALPIRG report says 77 percent of professors reported that publisher sales representatives rarely or never volunteer the price of textbooks, while only 38 percent of professors reported that the sales representative would always disclose the price when asked directly.

The new law also requires that publishers offer all textbooks for sale as individual bundled textbooks and supplemental items. Textbooks with supplemental materials that are integrated into the content would be exempt (e.g., a CD with clips analyzed in a music text).

This way, students would have the option to purchase only the materials they need for their classes. Instructors will have the option to select less expensive, unbundled textbooks.

Two thirds or 65 percent of faculty surveyed in a recent CALPIRG report said that they "rarely" or "never" use bundled materials in their courses.

Reyes said that bundled materials should be sold separately. Some classes don't even use CDs.

Finally, a provision of the bill says colleges will have to include the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and retail price information of required and recommended textbooks in the internet course schedule of classes students use for registration.

According to the PIRGs analysis, knowing ISBNs makes searching for better deals online more efficient.'

The Daily Breeze

A campus crime alert

Daily Breeze Editorial

Article Launched: 09/08/2008 07:44:24 PM PDT

Anyone who has visited a college campus recently can testify to just how attached students are to their iPods and cell phones. But in the wake of an attempted attack on an 18-year-old student at El Camino College, students must reassess their personal habits and become more safety conscious.

Police at the Torrance area college issued a campus alert Sunday after a student fought off an attacker in a campus parking structure. The incident took place 6:45 p.m. Friday as the student was walking alone to her car in the Lot F lower parking structure along Redondo Beach Boulevard.

Police said she was grabbed from behind but was able to fight off the assailant, who fled the area. The woman, who was listening to an MP3 player at the time, was not hurt.

Campus police should be credited with quickly issuing the alert and getting the information to the media over the weekend.

Over the past year, two other women were sexually assaulted on the campus. Such cases are not easy to solve. The only description of the assailant police released in the most recent case was "unknown sex, race, height or weight possibly wearing gray sweat pants and white Nike shoes hands had the strong odor of a tobacco product."

This week campus police are reminding students to be especially alert and to recognize that the use of iPods and cell phones can distract students when they truly need to be alert to their surroundings.

Other good advice is not to walk alone on campus, especially at night. A campus security shuttle now operates from 5:30p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Monday through Friday to help students get around safely.

And when in a campus parking structure, don't park next to vans. Their sliding doors can be used to pull crime victims inside.

We trust that the safety benefits that were promised to voters when they approved a bond measure for campus improvements in 2002 will begin to pay off. The proceeds of Measure E are allowing the college to move forward with installing video cameras, better lighting maintenance and a system for mass e-mails and text messages during emergencies.

Of course, none of those things can guarantee the safety of all students on the campus, where the enrollment exceeds 25,000. That's why students need to continue to exercise caution and report any unusual or suspicious activities to the campus Police Department.

ABC.com

College student fights off attacker

Sunday, September 07, 2008



TORRANCE (KABC) -- A campus alert is in effect at El Camino College after a student reported she fought off an assailant at El Camino College reported The Daily Breeze.

The 18-year-old woman left the incident unharmed.

According to the police report, the student was walking to her car at an on campus parking structure when the suspect attempted to grab her from behind.

Campus police said the woman elbowed her attacker and screamed scarring him away.

There was no suspect description available and no witnesses have yet to come forward.

However, police are investigating whether Saturday's attack has any connection to a May 23 sexual assault of a 19-year-old student on campus.

In that attack the victim was cornered by two men and forced into a campus gym where she was assaulted.

Anyone with information on either of the attacks

KFI News.com

El Camino College Campus On Alert

Students are being urged to take precautions on the campus of El Camino College after an attempted sexual assault.

Monday, September 8, 2008

Flyers urging students to take precautions are being posted on the campus of El Camino College in the aftermath of an attempted sexual assault targeting a young woman.

The campus police department says the student was walking alone to her car at around 6:45 p.m. Friday night when someone approached her from behind and put his hands his hands on her.

She elbowed the assailant and began to scream ... prompting him to flee. The student couldn't provide a description of the attacker, other than the fact that he was wearing white Nike tennis shoes and reeked of cigarette smoke.

The flyers being distributed around campus urge students to be alert, and either use the buddy system, or the campus courtesy shuttle rather than walk alone.

LA Times

USC students, nearby residents on alert after two sexual assaults

Police have increased patrols around campus and urged caution after the incidents, which occurred within blocks of each other near university-owned off-campus housing.

By Molly Hennessy-Fiske, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
September 10, 2008

Police are warning students at USC and nearby residents to be aware of their surroundings and take extra precautions when walking after two female students were sexually assaulted near university-owned off-campus housing.

The Los Angeles Police Department and USC campus police have increased patrols in the area around the campus, they said, and students have been cautioned to walk in well-lighted areas and to walk in groups.

The first attack occurred about 1:30 a.m. Friday in the 3000 block of McClintock Avenue near the Cardinal Gardens complex. A female student was walking on the sidewalk when she was approached by a man who grabbed her from behind, groped her and sexually assaulted her. The assailant ran away, police said.

The second attack took place about 1 a.m. Saturday in the 2300 block of Hoover Street, blocks from the first assault, police said. A female student walking alone was approached by three men. One of the men, under the false guise of an escort, walked the victim to her apartment. Once inside, he sexually assaulted her and fled.

Both women suffered minor injuries and did not have to be hospitalized, Los Angeles Police Officer Ana Aguirre said.

MyFox Los Angeles

Campus Alert in Effect after Attack at El Camino College

Last Edited: Monday, 08 Sep 2008, 7:16 AM PDT

Created: Sunday, 07 Sep 2008, 10:43 PM PDT

Torrance (myfoxla.com) --

Flyers circulating on the campus of El Camino College urge students today to take precautions following an attempted sexual assault targeting a young woman.

The student was walking alone about 6:45 p.m. Friday to her vehicle in the Lot F Lower parking structure at El Camino College when someone approached her from behind, campus police chief Michael Trevis said in a statement.

The suspect placed his left hand across the victim's mouth and began to touch her left inner thigh with their other hand, Trevis said, but she elbowed him and began to scream, prompting the assailant to flee.

The victim was unable to provide a description or even confirm the attacker's gender but observed that he was wearing white Nike tennis shoes and reeked of cigarette smoke, Trevis said.

A campus alert urges students "be alert" and "use the buddy system or the Campus Courtesy shuttle" rather than walking alone.

This is the third such attack since last November, although campus police say the incidents are unrelated.

Campus police have installed nine new surveillance cameras and special emergency phones to enhance campus safety.

PE.com

Focus of community college courses shifts to career development

07:56 PM PDT on Thursday, September 4, 2008

**By ELAINE REGUS
The Press-Enterprise**

Inland area community colleges are altering their noncredit course offerings in response to changes in the economy.

Riverside and Mt. San Jacinto community college districts are offering more classes in career development and job skills and fewer recreational-type classes such as fly fishing.

"When money is tight, it's better to provide classes that might bring in more income than to provide classes in belly dancing or dog training," said Cyndi Pardee, RCC's community education supervisor.

Jamil Dada, chairman of the Riverside County Workforce Development Board, said that community colleges are going to have to pick up the slack in workforce training because government dollars for such programs are drying up.

Felicia Flournoy, director of workforce development for the Riverside County Economic Development Agency, said federal workforce investment funding has declined over the past five years.

Funding went up this year because the county's unemployment rate was higher "but it was nowhere near the level it has been in the past," Flournoy said.

Unemployment in Riverside and San Bernardino counties was estimated at 8 percent in June, the highest in about a decade.

Rhonda Dixon, coordinator of community and continuing education at Mt. San Jacinto College, said the college looks for programs in occupations where demand is expected to grow and that promise more than minimum wage to start.

The pharmacy technician program, launched in fall 2006, has generated the most interest, Dixon said. Since then, the college has added programs in medical billing, advanced medical coding, optometric technician, barbering and will soon start a medical transcription program.

A lot of students are signing up for the career-certificate programs so they can have a decent job while going to school to earn their degrees, Dixon said.

And many retirees are looking for well-paying, part-time jobs, she said.

Costs for most programs range from \$100 to more than \$2,000, which is still about one-fourth of what students would pay at a private college, Dixon said.

In addition to medical career training courses, RCC's catalog lists classes such as bar management, substitute teaching and modeling for ordinary people.

Enrollment in RCC's career development classes has doubled.

"We're adding extra sessions and they're selling out," Pardee said.

Reach Elaine Regus at 951-368-9478 or eregus@PE.com

PE.com

Several ideas on table to increase Inland college-going rate

07:40 PM PDT on Thursday, September 4, 2008

By ELAINE REGUS
The Press-Enterprise

Top educational and business leaders will meet Sept. 15 to continue their quest for the key to raising the region's rock-bottom college-going rates.

The Educational Leadership Federation of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties will examine existing programs and discuss new ones designed to encourage students to stay in school and to go to college.

Models they will explore include:

San Bernardino County's Alliance for Education, which combines partners from business, government, education and the community to produce an educated work force.

Riverside Community College District's new Passport to College program, which will begin targeting students in fifth grade to prepare them to succeed in college.

An agreement between Riverside City College and Cal State San Bernardino that allows students to be enrolled at both colleges at the same time.

The Inland area has one of the lowest college-going rates in the state, with only about one-third of high school students enrolling in a California public university after graduation.

Community leaders are concerned about what that means not only for the individuals, who likely will wind up in low-paying jobs, and for the economic future of the region.

Robert Grey, UCR's former interim chancellor, and Jim Erickson, Community Foundation president, convened a brain trust of the region's college presidents and select school district superintendents in February to come up with a plan to address the high dropout rates and low college-going rates in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Angela Phillips Diaz, whom Grey borrowed from NASA's Ames Research Center in Northern California for two years, said the group has expanded to include all school superintendents and some top leaders of business and industry in the region.

"We wanted a good representative sample and people committed to increasing the college-going rate in the region," Diaz said.

The group met for the second time in June and heard a presentation about the Alliance for Education, which received a \$350,000 grant from the Irvine Foundation.

Erickson said the alliance could be a national model.

Diaz said she expects to have a plan with specific goals and ways to measure success by the end of the year.

By the end of the following year, Diaz said she would hope to have some measurable results, such as more students taking algebra or more businesses offering internships.

"One of the things we all agree on is that a lot of actions and activities we are pursuing may not see a real impact for five years or more down the road," Diaz said.

Reach Elaine Regus at 951-368-9478 or eregus@PE.com

School needs counselor

As a member of the staff of Middle College High School in South Los Angeles, I am writing to express my concern about the decision to eliminate our one counseling position. The staff of MCHS is small, and everyone assigned to the school has an extra duty or two or three.

We have only three certificated out-of-class-room positions: the principal, the assistant principal and the counselor. Without the counselor, our students will not get the services they require to be successful in both high school and at the Los Angeles Southwest College. Our current rate of college acceptances and high school graduation is far better than average.

This is a direct result of the intensive counseling provided throughout their high school careers by our counselor, who works very well with, and very hard for, our students.

I do not understand why the Los Angeles Unified School District is choosing to change something that is working so well. I would think that they would aggressively look at ways of trimming inefficiencies and red tape – both to get through these hard times and to have more funds for great school programs when times improve.

Indeed, I would suggest that LAUSD look at areas that are not working and find ways to make them work, and do so in a more efficient and less costly manner; indeed, inefficiency and red tape may be part of the reason that these areas are more costly.

I would encourage LAUSD to rethink this decision and look for other ways to reduce expenses.

Dr. Geoffrey Kagel
Torrance

The Chronicle of Higher Education

From the issue dated September 5, 2008

Congress Shows Colleges They're Not Off the Hook on Accountability

By KELLY FIELD

Washington

When President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law in 2002, formally linking federal aid to student assessment, many colleges watched with trepidation, worrying that they would be next.

So far those fears haven't materialized. Sure, there have been some scares for institutions worried about stricter government oversight, such as when Charles Miller said about two years ago that the secretary of education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, which he chaired, was looking for "leverage points" to encourage assessment. Or when the Department of Education, in a 2007 notice of proposed rule making, suggested several specific measures, including standardized tests, by which accreditors should judge colleges.

Ultimately, though, neither of those plans came to fruition. In its final report, the commission merely recommended that colleges measure and report student-learning outcomes. And the Education Department suspended its efforts to write new accreditation rules after lawmakers protested that they were in the middle of renewing the Higher Education Act.

But that doesn't mean that higher education is off the hook when it comes to accountability. Even as Congress was beating back the Education Department, it was writing legislation packed with new requirements for colleges to document their performance. The bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, which President Bush signed in August, will double colleges' reporting requirements, making them disclose considerably more information about their graduation rates, grant aid, and — perhaps most significantly — the success of their teacher-training programs.

Under the new law colleges with teacher-training programs will be required to set "quantifiable goals" for raising the number of prospective teachers in certain subjects with teacher shortages and to report annually on whether those goals were met. The institutions will also be required to provide "assurances" to the secretary of education that their training is tied to the needs of local school districts and that those they train are prepared to teach students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency, as well as meet the needs of students in rural or urban schools.

The new law also requires colleges to report scores on teacher licensing and certification exams that are scaled to allow easy comparison across tests.

It's not yet clear how seriously colleges will take the new mandates. After all, the new law leaves it up to colleges to set their own goals, and it does not include any penalties for colleges that fail to meet them. Nor does it punish colleges whose students perform poorly on the tests, as the No Child Left Behind law does for elementary and secondary schools.

And, while the scores will be publicly available, the law prohibits the secretary from creating a national ranking based on them. It also does away with a requirement that states rank their colleges by pass rates.

Still, the new requirements for teacher-preparation programs could open the door to broader accountability frameworks. If nothing else, the new law makes it easier for policy makers and prospective students to compare programs based on students' test scores. Under the previous law, colleges were required to report only pass rates, not scaled scores.

The new law also includes other provisions that require all colleges to report the average amount of grant aid that they award students and the average "net price" (sticker price minus financial aid) for students receiving federal financial aid.

In addition, the law requires colleges to report separate, "disaggregated" graduation rates for students who receive federal student aid and those who don't, along with employment outcomes for all students. Those requirements should shed some light on how well colleges are doing retaining students from low-income families and preparing students of all income levels for jobs.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

From the issue dated September 12, 2008

Blackboard Customers Consider Alternatives

Open-source software for course management poses market challenge

By JEFFREY R. YOUNG

Las Vegas

Matthew Henry, programming-services manager at LeTourneau University, sat near the front of a ballroom with his arms crossed, ready to watch a multimedia preview of Blackboard Inc.'s next course-management system.

He arrived here in July for the company's annual user conference with more than a few complaints about the company. Its service is poor, he said, its behavior toward competitors is overly aggressive, and its fast growth in recent years has distracted it from supporting the product that helped make it a giant in the usually quiet world of college software.

Blackboard has become the Microsoft of higher-education technology, say many campus-technology officials, and they don't mean the comparison as a compliment. To them the company is not only big but also pushy, and many of them love to hate it.

Mr. Henry's mission here, as he waited with four colleagues from LeTourneau, was to determine whether the company's software remains the best choice to run the Texas university's course Web pages, online discussion boards, digital gradebooks, and other teaching tools, which have become as standard as physical whiteboards on college campuses.

New software called Blackboard NG, for Next Generation, is supposed to keep the company a step ahead and keep people such as Mr. Henry as customers. The user conference was its first public display. "I'm anxious to see whether Blackboard NG is just hype or something that's going to solve our problems" with the company, said Mr. Henry, as the lights dimmed for the presentation.

LeTourneau's contract with Blackboard ends this year, and campus officials may join the growing number of colleges switching to Moodle, a free, open-source course-management system, or Sakai, another free program. Those systems have grown feature-rich enough to pose serious challenges to Blackboard. Giants like the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of California at Los Angeles, along with smaller colleges, like Louisiana State University at Shreveport, have made the jump.

"There are a lot of institutions right now that are upset with Blackboard, to say the least, and looking for alternatives," says Michael Zastrocky, vice president for research at Gartner Inc., a

consulting firm that tracks trends in higher-education technology. "They caused a backlash that's been very difficult for them to overcome."

Blackboard is heading for a showdown with the free-software movement, according to some observers. Although Blackboard remains the clear market leader — about 66 percent of American colleges use its software as their standard, says the Campus Computing Project, an annual survey — there are signs that open-source alternatives are starting to gain ground. The survey found that the proportion of colleges using Moodle as their standard rose from 4.2 percent in 2006 to 7.8 percent in 2007, and that about 3 percent of colleges have selected Sakai. A recent survey by the Instructional Technology Council, which promotes distance learning, found that the proportion of its member colleges using Moodle jumped from 4 percent last year to more than 10 percent this year. The proportion using Blackboard fell slightly.

Blackboard's leaders say they see no sign of an exodus to commercial or open-source rivals. "There's not more people leaving now than there were yesterday," said Blackboard's chief executive, Michael L. Chasen, in an interview this summer in the company's new corporate offices, in Washington, where the brightly lit white corridors and modern accents in staff lounges make it look a bit like a *Star Trek* starship.

Growing Goliath

How big is Blackboard? Three years ago it acquired its major rival, WebCT, solidifying its dominance of the course-management market. The company has also bought other companies in recent years, including the NTI Group, which makes emergency-notification software, and Xythos Software, which makes content-management programs.

How pushy is it? Blackboard claimed a patent on processes that many college officials say were already in widespread use. After the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office granted the patent, in 2006, Blackboard sued a leading rival, Desire2Learn, claiming infringement. Many saw the move as trying to bully a competitor. (A federal judge found in favor of Blackboard, although the decision has been appealed).

Such tactics are common in other business sectors, says Trace A. Urdan, an education-industry analyst with Signal Hill, an investment firm, but not in the world of college software. "They're sharks operating in this universe where you don't see a lot of sharks," he says of Blackboard's leaders. For him that is a compliment. "They're smart," he says.

Mr. Urdan argues that the legal battle has probably caused enough uncertainty about Desire2Learn's future to scare off larger software companies who might otherwise have considered buying it and turning it into a more serious competitor.

Colleges say they have reason for concern about Blackboard's growing dominance. Their biggest fear is that the company will jack up prices once colleges have become reliant on its products. As one of Sakai's founders, Bradley Wheeler, chief information officer at Indiana University, puts it, "When switching costs get high, you can raise the rent."

Blackboard officials have attempted to calm such concerns and to convince colleges that it is a good partner. Two years ago, after the higher-education technology group Educause took the unusual step of issuing a statement criticizing the company's behavior over the patent, Blackboard's leaders held a town-hall session at Educause's annual conference to answer questions and listen as college officials vented.

But some of those college leaders say the company's ways haven't significantly changed since then.

"That's the first thing that comes to people's mind when you come to Blackboard — its lawsuit," says Stephen G. Landry, chief information officer at Seton Hall University, which uses Blackboard. "I don't like working with a company that seems to spend as much money on legal and financial folks as they do on developers."

So now that open-source options are ready for prime time, many colleges are taking a cold, hard look at the price, reliability, and features of Moodle and Sakai.

Hidden Costs

Price seems like an obvious advantage of open-source software. After all, it is free. But officials say open-source programs can end up costing just as much as, or even more than, Blackboard's software when staff time is taken into account. It all depends on how much customization a college wants, or how many features it needs.

"The software is free, but you have to buy the computers to put it on, and you have to buy a development team to move it forward," says Donna Crystal Llewellyn, director of the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Georgia Tech, which recently switched from WebCT to Sakai. Saving money was not the goal, she says, adding that the university already had a staff of programmers to tackle the challenge.

"Our faculty are very techno-savvy," she says. "They always think they can do something better than someone else that's already put it in a box."

But many smaller colleges say price was indeed a major reason to move away from Blackboard.

"They continued to raise the prices," says Scott Hardwick, assistant director of information-technology services on Louisiana State's Shreveport campus, which a few years ago gave up Blackboard for Moodle.

"Had we continued paying what Blackboard wanted us to pay, it probably would have been \$100,000 a year," he says. Now the university pays only about \$5,000 a year to an outside company that provides support for the Moodle software. "It's definitely cheaper," says Mr. Hardwick, even considering the time he spends on maintenance.

Professors, too, at Shreveport have been pleased with Moodle. The only complaint Mr. Hardwick says he has heard is that Moodle's user interface doesn't look as slick as Blackboard's. "I'm like,

'Seriously, that's your complaint? It doesn't look as slick?' Apparently that's a huge deal for people."

Blackboard's chief executive, Mr. Chasen, defended his company's prices. "I don't think that we're too expensive," he said in the interview. "Compared to other enterprise software, we're a fraction of the cost." There's a good chance, he said, that colleges "bought their human-resources package for a million dollars."

A Supportive Environment

The downside of open-source software is that because it is free, there's no one company to call if things go wrong. But the downside of buying a commercial program is that if its maker provides poor support, it's hard to get under the hood yourself to make a fix.

Blackboard has a history of poor support, according to many college officials.

"Support in the past has certainly been a challenge for us," Mr. Chasen acknowledged. He blamed the company's rapid growth. "We went from 100 clients to now over 5,000 clients in a relatively short time, and support is one of those areas that lagged behind."

The company recently hired an outside firm as part of an effort to improve its customer service. "We're on the way to answering it," said Mr. Chasen. "We know that support is improving. Is it there yet? No, we still have a long way to go. But over the next few months, you'll start to see significant improvements across the board."

Some colleges running open-source programs initially had concerns about whether free software could be scaled to provide Web sites and services for thousands of courses on large campuses. But UCLA recently decided to use Moodle across the campus, and things are going smoothly as it adds about 900 course Web sites on the system per quarter, says Rosemary Rocchio, director of academic applications in the office of information technology there.

But the university has plenty of programmers to handle issues that crop up, she notes. "If you're a small university, and you don't have IT staff, then open source isn't a great solution," she says. "I don't think it's one size fits all."

Innovation as Attraction

The biggest benefit of open-source software, say many observers, is that if a college wants a new feature, it can simply build it, since the entire program code is open. When a college adds a new feature, it shares the code with everyone else using the software.

Blackboard's Mr. Chasen argued that there are benefits to the corporate model of software publishing, too. "I have 300 people on my development team working full time on our products and services," he said. "I don't know if there are 300 full-time people currently working on Sakai. Maybe there are. I have a multimillion-dollar hardware-testing lab just to test scalability."

"At a minimum," he said, "we are at least just as innovative as open source."

Michael Korcuska, executive director of the Sakai Foundation, a nonprofit group that coordinates the use of the open-source software, argues that the open-source model is quicker to react to needs of colleges than Blackboard is. "The people doing the work and deciding what features go in the system are sitting on campus next to the users, not in some back office somewhere," he says.

But Mr. Urdan, the industry analyst, says fine-tuning software is a "luxury" that most colleges can't afford. The slight improvements are often not worth the man-hours and dollar costs of adopting them, he says.

The Next Generation

Many of those arguments, users say, will be settled by the performance of Blackboard's new product.

So people were watching carefully as the lights went down at the Blackboard user conference, and Mr. Chasen took the stage to preview Blackboard NG. (Company officials later noted that they used a mock-up because the software is not finished yet. They could not say when it would be released, but some features will appear in a version expected next year.)

Among the features he touted:

- n An easy-to-use interface that lets professors and students arrange course information right in their browsers by clicking and moving sections with a mouse.
- n A new "dashboard" that lets students or professors see all of their course information at a glance. The dashboard also is integrated with the company's other products, including its new emergency-notification system.
- n The integration of social-networking services, including Facebook and Twitter.
- n The ability to interconnect with course Web sites made with open-source software, including Moodle and Sakai.

Some observers see Blackboard's attempt to project a more open policy toward its open-source rivals as a strategic move. As some colleges struggle with the choice between Blackboard and open-source software, the company is offering an easier way for colleges to get the best of both as well as easier access to other Web-based services.

Many features drew enthusiastic applause from the crowd. At one point, Karen Jacobs, an adjunct professor of management at LeTourneau, said to her colleagues, "This is amazing software."

"Over all it was very impressive," said Mr. Henry, the university's programming-services manager, after the lights came up.

"It was a nice commercial," said Ms. Jacobs. But "infomercials sound good," too, she added. "I want to see if it works."

Others were more dubious. Indiana's Mr. Wheeler, a founder of the Sakai project, says that Blackboard has pledged openness before, and that its "claims have rung hollow."

Sakai's leaders say many of the same features touted in the forthcoming Blackboard product are already available in their product. And companies that support Moodle say that developers will quickly add anything that works well.

But many college officials at Blackboard's user conference were eager to find out how to upgrade and said they would probably stick with the company.

"Everybody loves to hate their learning system," says Adam Finkelstein, an educational developer in McGill University's Teaching and Learning Services program. "The grass is always greener."

Fallbrook Village News

Duffin, Dunckel pursue dreams with Don Diego Fund Scholarships

Thursday, September 11th, 2008.

Issue 37, Volume 12.

DEL MAR — June was a transformational month for Fallbrook young adults Julianne Marie Duffin, daughter of Katy Tobler and Scott Duffin, and Melissa Ruth Dunckel, daughter of Ingrid and Timothy Dunckel.

On June 5, they graduated from Fallbrook High School with admirable GPAs while logging many hours of school activities and community service. On June 16, they became two of only 13 high school graduates countywide to receive substantial scholarships from the San Diego County Fair/Del Mar Fairgrounds' Don Diego Fund at a gala celebration. The money is enabling them to pursue their career aspirations.

Chana Mannen, executive director of The Don Diego Fund, stated, "Each year, the Fund provides financial support for deserving San Diego youth who have been associated with activities at the Del Mar Fairgrounds and plan to pursue higher education."

Julianne received one of five \$5,000 Don Diego 2008 scholarships. It was awarded in the category of FFA. She is presently attending El Camino College in Torrance, augmenting the scholarship with money she earns as hostess of a Hermosa Beach restaurant.

She plans to transfer to a four-year university, perhaps Cal State Fresno, and attain a double major in agriculture communications and American Sign Language. The combination will enable her to achieve her career goal: "I plan to educate the youth of the deaf community about agriculture. I want to brighten their future by spreading my passion for this immensely important field."

Upon beginning her classes this September, Julianne confirmed, "I love college! It's a whole new world. The Don Diego Fund scholarship is benefiting me now and will really help when I transfer."

Julianne has been steeped in agriculture, education and the fairgrounds all her life. She confided, "I was even born during the fair!" Her dad is an agriculture instructor at Fallbrook High and her mom teaches at Potter Junior High, so it's no surprise that Julianne maintained a 3.7 GPA, receiving some of her highest grades in her chosen fields: ASL and Ag.

She was an FFA exhibitor at the fair for several years, gaining leadership as a hog and beef barn foreman and FFA chapter president. Among numerous activities, she served as an intern at the Village News from 2005 to 2007.

Melissa is using her \$1,000 scholarship to attend Palomar College. For years, she was a fair exhibitor via Rainbow Valley Grange. She has actively participated in the fair's agricultural program and exhibited to great success in the livestock division, focusing on dairy goats, Boer goats and horses.

She is a natural leader who served for four years on the Del Mar Youth Advisory Board and was selected by the USDA to participate in an elite national Ag Discover Program in 2007. Not one to shy away from hard work, Melissa has cleaned stalls and worked with the above animals as well as alpacas and llamas.

Currently, Melissa is taking general education classes with an interest in animal training and behavior. She noted, "I have chosen marine and mammal training and behavior because I have always wanted to work with orca whales and bottlenose dolphins. My goal is to work at the SeaWorld Marine Mammal Training Center in San Diego."

Inside Higher Ed

New Form of Adjunct Abuse

For many adjuncts, an extra course assignment can make all the difference in the world. More money, of course, but also the chance to do more teaching at a single institution. And for some, that extra course may result in a total teaching load that moves them up a pay scale or entitles them to health insurance or other benefits.

@import url("http://www.insidehighered.com/design/ihe/stylesheets/jobs_rss_stories.css");
At San Antonio College, some of those extra courses are coming with an unusual stipulation. Adjuncts are being encouraged to take on extra courses, as the institution can't afford to hire as many full timers as it would like. But San Antonio also has rules — providing benefits and higher base pay — to those who teach 12 credits or more. What to do? The college is asking some part timers to take on the extra courses that bring their total to 12 or beyond, but then to agree in writing to pretend that they aren't teaching 12 credits.

Concerned faculty members provided *Inside Higher Ed* with copies of signed waivers and memos that are used in such situations. A department chair writes a dean a memo saying that a given adjunct will be teaching just over 12 credits this fall, but then adds that the adjunct is willing to sign a form so that he doesn't get the benefits to which he would otherwise be entitled. Then the corresponding waiver, which is notarized, has the same adjunct certify that he is waiving 1 semester credit of pay, so that he will be paid for less than 12 credits, even though he has committed to teaching just over 12 credits. The faculty members who provided the documentation did so on the condition that the adjuncts who agreed to these terms not be identified.

Gwendolyn Bradley, who works on adjunct issues for the American Association of University Professors, said that the practice “seems to mark a new low in the exploitation of adjunct faculty.” She said that the AAUP was requesting copies of the relevant documents to see if it could help those involved. The ability of a college to get adjuncts to sign these waivers speaks to the part timers' need for more courses and income under questionable circumstances, Bradley said, and to the adjuncts' “lack of any job security.”

Deborah Martin, a spokeswoman for the college, confirmed that some adjuncts are given waivers to sign as a condition of receiving certain course loads — and that those waivers involve the adjuncts accepting pay for fewer credits than they are actually teaching. She said that this isn't the first semester that this has taken place, and that it's done “to prevent a class cancellation” when an adjunct qualified to teach a course already is teaching 9 credits and an additional 3 credits would put the adjunct at 12.

She said that this isn't unfair to adjuncts because it only happens after a dean has “explained the situation.” (Apparently the dean never explained the situation to the Alamo Community College District, of which the college is a part. Officials there didn't respond Wednesday to questions, but a district lawyer told *The San Antonio Express-News* that it didn't know about the policy and would try to stop it and compensate those denied pay in this way.)

Asked if this policy represented an attempt to deny benefits to adjuncts who should be receiving them, she said that wasn't the case. She said that to be eligible for benefits, an adjunct would have to work 90 days at 12 credits and that the full semester is only around 85 days. Asked if some adjuncts might be teaching consecutive semesters and so lose benefits under this scenario, she said "we're not trying to keep them from getting benefits."

Why would the college ask adjuncts to accept payment for a smaller credit load than they are teaching, and to certify this in a notarized form, if this has nothing to do with denying adjuncts compensation they may have earned? Martin said "that's a good question." She then said that Ruben Flores, a college dean who handles adjunct matters (and to whom the waiver forms authorizing pay for fewer credits than adjuncts are working are addressed), would explain the rationale for the system. Flores did not respond to messages.

Martin repeatedly said of the system being used: "It's either that or cancel the class."

Gerald J. Davey, an adjunct at San Antonio College who has served as the adjunct representative on the Faculty Council there, did not sign a waiver, but he has spoken with those who have and is angry about the system being used. Davey said that, in years past, once an adjunct has had a contract for 12 credits, benefits and higher pay scales have kicked in — and that the waivers are an attempt to limit what adjuncts receive from the college.

"It's disgusting that they have sunk to this level," he said.

Because adjuncts need the work, they feel that they "have no choice" but to accept these contracts, even though they are giving up pay (at a minimum for the extra credit hours) and benefits they deserve, Davey said. Adjuncts are being told to "take it or leave it," and so go along with the system, he said. "It's a quid pro quo."

— Scott Jaschik

Los Angeles Wave

New hires seek big changes on troubled Compton campus



BY LEILONI DE GRUY, Staff Writer 11.SEP.08
The arrival of three new deans at El Camino College Compton Center spurs new hopes about regaining academic status.

Students hang out and walk the hallways between classes this week at the El Camino College Compton Center.

COMPTON — El Camino College Compton Center, formerly known as Compton Community College, hired three new deans this fall semester in hopes of linking efforts by new provost Lawrence Cox to get the campus back on track and reaccredited.

“This is a very exciting time. We went through a lot of trying years and now we are growing leaps and bounds,” said Jane Harmon, interim administrative dean of academic affairs who was hired in June along with Susan Dever, dean of academic programs, and Rodney Murray, as dean of vocational education.

Said Murray: “At one [time] we were a working community, goal oriented, we had a growing population and somewhere we lost our way and now we’re beginning to get back on track. We are starting to recruit, build relationships with the community, build relationships with businesses and do a better job in customer service so that the school is doing a better job in learning and reinventing itself.”

Following several comprehensive assessments of the Compton Community College District by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, dating back to October 2004, it was discovered that the district did not meet accreditation standards after rating poorly in five operational areas that were crucial to the establishment’s survival.

In August 2006, after the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges did its own evaluation, the college’s accreditation was formally withdrawn. A memorandum of understanding was then signed, which sealed a partnership between Compton Community College District and the El Camino Community College District, giving El Camino oversight responsibilities of Compton College.

A progress report for April 2007 stated that a concise financial standing could not be determined due to the delayed results of an installed database, and that communication between the colleges had been mostly disconnected. It also found that personnel had either vacated their positions, been suspended, or had been reintroduced into El Camino College’s staff, the roles and

responsibilities of the remaining staff and student body had yet to be structured and textbooks were not accessible. Water mains and sewers posed contamination problems and many buildings lacked equipment, electricity and were not up to code.

“We [now] have a bookstore, we have a cafeteria that is scheduled to open September 10. ... We have a functioning library, we have a lab, a learning lab, a resource lab,” Murray said of the school’s recent progress.

In addition to the report, FCMAT developed a recovery plan for the district to implement. However, they predicted that the recovery would be slow and that the college may not see accreditation for another 10 years.

In the recovery plan, it was suggested that a permanent provost as well as a fully equipped staff and administration were needed to create stability.

According to Murray, who served as a business teacher on the campus for 14 years, that goal has been accomplished along with others.

“The main thing that is important is that we have a new provost who is inspirational, we’ve got all of our administrative positions in place, we’ve got an extremely talented and confident faculty and classified staff. So, all that’s lacking is some of those newer programs from emerging technology, such as green technology [and] robotics,” he said.

Added Harmon, “We have a new team of career and technical education [experts]. We are going to be expanding in that area. We are going to be getting our automotive programs certified so that we can work with the dealerships and train students to go right to work in the automotive dealerships. We are working with businesses. We’re looking at others that are looking into particular fields. We’re looking at pharmacy techs for example and we have alternative energy.”

Student retention was also a factor that weighed heavily.

According to Murray, administration set a goal of having 1,400 full-time equivalent students and thus far has nearly met that mark with 95 percent. The campus has roughly enrolled 3,500 students this fall semester and by the end of the spring semester plan to have 5000 students in attendance.

Murray envisions Compton Center as not just a campus for some but for all. “Part of my responsibility is to reach out to special populations of women who are single, have been battered, foster care kids, juvenile delinquents, people who are in non-traditional jobs. So, my job is to help bring them into career pathways as well as academic pathways. The paradigm has shifted from coming to get an education and then getting a job to training for a job and overlapping it with academic skills,” he said. “We need to envision bringing new emerging technologies here so that Compton can fulfill the needs of Compton, Lynwood, Paramount, Willowbrook, Carson and North Long Beach, to give them all of the things that they need to build a future.”

Dever could not be reached for comment.

Press Telegram

LBCC gallery reopens with reflections on nature

By Shirle Gottlieb, Special to the Press-Telegram

Article Launched: 09/11/2008 03:35:49 PM PDT

The dog days of summer have ended and life has shifted back into high gear.

Schools have reopened, classes have resumed and new art exhibits are being featured on college campuses throughout the area.

It's a treat to have Long Beach City College Art Gallery open again. On view through Sept. 26 is an important theme-based exhibit curated by gallery director Habib Kheradyar.

"Failing Nature" features the work of six artists who create artistic expressions of what is happening to nature in our contemporary environment.

James Griffith presents three trompe l'oeil landscapes of "Synthetic Nature" wrapped in plastic sheeting. One of them is so convincing, you'd swear that Glad Wrap was actually stretched across his painting of ivy growing up the trunk of a eucalyptus tree.

The five dramatic archival inkjet photographs by Ken Marchionno document the yearly re-enactment of the Oomaka Tokakieya tribe as it follows "The Trail of Wounded Knee" through the rocky terrain of South Dakota. All of the photos are soulful, but "The Riderless Horse Leads the Way" and the "Long Line on the Way to Porcupine" are particularly powerful and heart-wrenching.

Using scrap lumber, found objects and splintered wood, Jared Pankin constructs craggy, imaginary landscapes. His 30-by-28-by-30-inch sculpture, "Triple Wrapper," is constructed from an animal skull, dried-up clusters of pine branches, three rolls of twine and multiple chunks of wood that extend, topsy-turvy, from the wall.

You've got to scrutinize all 10 of Naida Oslin's large vibrant flowers to see what her photographs subtly illustrate. Whether it's a bright red rose, bird of paradise, lilac or lily, each "Flora Fictivus" image is a hybrid specimen that has been genetically engineered to exaggerate the flower's beauty.

Also on view are two plates from Kim Abeles' internationally acclaimed "Smog Collection." Both are titled "George W. Bush in Twenty Days of Smog" and both were created by placing cut stencils on porcelain plates, then leaving them outside in the elements to weather. (When the stencils were removed, an image had been stamped on each plate as a result of smog in the air that acted as a print medium.)

Around the rim of the plates, Abeles has printed Bush quotations in gold. One of them reads, "It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's impurities in the air that are doing it."

There are three enigmatic graphite drawings on paper by Eric Beltz. Raised by farmers and old-world mystics, Beltz is known as a "hypobotanist." One of his drawings depicts a farmer skeleton sitting on the stump of a large felled tree. There's no wood left to cut, the forest has been cleared, the land is bare.

In the gallery's Project Room, Iza Jadach (who went to medical school in Poland and art school at UCLA) creates life-sized sculptures by wrapping her own body in plastic, then making a mold of herself from Hydrocal plaster and pigment coated with shellac.

One of her figures takes the form of a child with a "Blue Cloud" for a head. Standing 44 inches tall with bare feet and dressed in pink and gray play clothes, it seems to say that life has changed significantly since we were innocent children.

"Failing Nature," Long Beach City College Art Gallery, 4901 E. Carson St.; 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6 to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday through Sept. 26; (562) 938-4815.

At El Camino College Art Gallery, director Susanna Meiers has organized and curated an outstanding exhibit by 10 local artists who present works "In Black and White."

As Meiers states in the show's study guide, the world is bombarded with intense, stimulating color. When black (the sum of all color) appears with white (the absence of any color), everything is reduced to the basics.

Not only are black and white complete opposites, they allude to a wide range of concepts and emotions: good and evil, known and unknown, happiness and despair.

Visitors are immediately aware of this as they enter the gallery. Perceptions are heightened when everything is stripped of color and reduced to the stark, crisp contrasts of opposites.

Take the extraordinary ink drawings of master craftsman Rico Lebrun, for example. No one can look at his "Dante's Inferno Series" without feeling the power, passion and fear of what his abstract bones and body parts represent.

Or consider Patrick Merrill's mind-boggling, monumental, floor-to-ceiling woodcut - which is so intricate it took a year to carve. Based on medieval iconography, Merrill's "The Whore of Babylon" features a wild nude female figure encircled by ferocious beasts, snakes, werewolves, columns of financial numbers and blazing rings of smoke and fire.

Next to it, in complete contrast, Marshall Astor has painted two black silhouetted profiles directly on the white wall. Taut strings connect the profile on the left (which has horns) to the profile on the right (which has a beard). Called "Equally God and Equally Satan," the title refers to the relationship and interdependence of one with the other.

While some of the work is dark and disturbing, there are several examples of intellectual wit in the show. Check out Connor Everts' delightful suite of 10 lithographs. Step by step, he illustrates how to construct a box out of many flattened pieces; then subtly, oh so subtly, male and female parts are packed into the box.

Angie Bray's "Blind Faith" sculptures also are delightful. Tall motorized sticks are placed in front of one wall painted black and another painted white. As they wave nonstop in the air, they leave circular patterns on the walls behind them.

You'll laugh out loud at the humorous messages of Mariona Barkus' wordplay. Poking fun at herself, they explore "What Does It All Mean?" "Midlife Dialectic," "Huh?" and "I Am Afraid."

Your jaw will drop when you learn that Pierre Picot has an ongoing series of 1,000 ink and collage images of eyes, mouths, hair and tears. On view are 48 of the 725 spontaneous, free-associated, "New in Town" drawings he has completed so far.

"In Black and White," El Camino College Art Gallery, 16007 Crenshaw Blvd., near Torrance; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday and Tuesday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday through Sept. 19; (310) 660-3010.

Shirle Gottlieb is a Long Beach freelance writer.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

From the issue dated September 12, 2008

Blackboard Customers Consider Alternatives

Open-source software for course management poses market challenge

By JEFFREY R. YOUNG

Las Vegas

Matthew Henry, programming-services manager at LeTourneau University, sat near the front of a ballroom with his arms crossed, ready to watch a multimedia preview of Blackboard Inc.'s next course-management system.

He arrived here in July for the company's annual user conference with more than a few complaints about the company. Its service is poor, he said, its behavior toward competitors is overly aggressive, and its fast growth in recent years has distracted it from supporting the product that helped make it a giant in the usually quiet world of college software.

Blackboard has become the Microsoft of higher-education technology, say many campus-technology officials, and they don't mean the comparison as a compliment. To them the company is not only big but also pushy, and many of them love to hate it.

Mr. Henry's mission here, as he waited with four colleagues from LeTourneau, was to determine whether the company's software remains the best choice to run the Texas university's course Web pages, online discussion boards, digital gradebooks, and other teaching tools, which have become as standard as physical whiteboards on college campuses.

New software called Blackboard NG, for Next Generation, is supposed to keep the company a step ahead and keep people such as Mr. Henry as customers. The user conference was its first public display. "I'm anxious to see whether Blackboard NG is just hype or something that's going to solve our problems" with the company, said Mr. Henry, as the lights dimmed for the presentation.

LeTourneau's contract with Blackboard ends this year, and campus officials may join the growing number of colleges switching to Moodle, a free, open-source course-management system, or Sakai, another free program. Those systems have grown feature-rich enough to pose serious challenges to Blackboard. Giants like the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of California at Los Angeles, along with smaller colleges, like Louisiana State University at Shreveport, have made the jump.

"There are a lot of institutions right now that are upset with Blackboard, to say the least, and looking for alternatives," says Michael Zastrocky, vice president for research at Gartner Inc., a

consulting firm that tracks trends in higher-education technology. "They caused a backlash that's been very difficult for them to overcome."

Blackboard is heading for a showdown with the free-software movement, according to some observers. Although Blackboard remains the clear market leader — about 66 percent of American colleges use its software as their standard, says the Campus Computing Project, an annual survey — there are signs that open-source alternatives are starting to gain ground. The survey found that the proportion of colleges using Moodle as their standard rose from 4.2 percent in 2006 to 7.8 percent in 2007, and that about 3 percent of colleges have selected Sakai. A recent survey by the Instructional Technology Council, which promotes distance learning, found that the proportion of its member colleges using Moodle jumped from 4 percent last year to more than 10 percent this year. The proportion using Blackboard fell slightly.

Blackboard's leaders say they see no sign of an exodus to commercial or open-source rivals. "There's not more people leaving now than there were yesterday," said Blackboard's chief executive, Michael L. Chasen, in an interview this summer in the company's new corporate offices, in Washington, where the brightly lit white corridors and modern accents in staff lounges make it look a bit like a *Star Trek* starship.

Growing Goliath

How big is Blackboard? Three years ago it acquired its major rival, WebCT, solidifying its dominance of the course-management market. The company has also bought other companies in recent years, including the NTI Group, which makes emergency-notification software, and Xythos Software, which makes content-management programs.

How pushy is it? Blackboard claimed a patent on processes that many college officials say were already in widespread use. After the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office granted the patent, in 2006, Blackboard sued a leading rival, Desire2Learn, claiming infringement. Many saw the move as trying to bully a competitor. (A federal judge found in favor of Blackboard, although the decision has been appealed).

Such tactics are common in other business sectors, says Trace A. Urdan, an education-industry analyst with Signal Hill, an investment firm, but not in the world of college software. "They're sharks operating in this universe where you don't see a lot of sharks," he says of Blackboard's leaders. For him that is a compliment. "They're smart," he says.

Mr. Urdan argues that the legal battle has probably caused enough uncertainty about Desire2Learn's future to scare off larger software companies who might otherwise have considered buying it and turning it into a more serious competitor.

Colleges say they have reason for concern about Blackboard's growing dominance. Their biggest fear is that the company will jack up prices once colleges have become reliant on its products. As one of Sakai's founders, Bradley Wheeler, chief information officer at Indiana University, puts it, "When switching costs get high, you can raise the rent."

Blackboard officials have attempted to calm such concerns and to convince colleges that it is a good partner. Two years ago, after the higher-education technology group Educause took the unusual step of issuing a statement criticizing the company's behavior over the patent, Blackboard's leaders held a town-hall session at Educause's annual conference to answer questions and listen as college officials vented.

But some of those college leaders say the company's ways haven't significantly changed since then.

"That's the first thing that comes to people's mind when you come to Blackboard — its lawsuit," says Stephen G. Landry, chief information officer at Seton Hall University, which uses Blackboard. "I don't like working with a company that seems to spend as much money on legal and financial folks as they do on developers."

So now that open-source options are ready for prime time, many colleges are taking a cold, hard look at the price, reliability, and features of Moodle and Sakai.

Hidden Costs

Price seems like an obvious advantage of open-source software. After all, it is free. But officials say open-source programs can end up costing just as much as, or even more than, Blackboard's software when staff time is taken into account. It all depends on how much customization a college wants, or how many features it needs.

"The software is free, but you have to buy the computers to put it on, and you have to buy a development team to move it forward," says Donna Crystal Llewellyn, director of the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Georgia Tech, which recently switched from WebCT to Sakai. Saving money was not the goal, she says, adding that the university already had a staff of programmers to tackle the challenge.

"Our faculty are very techno-savvy," she says. "They always think they can do something better than someone else that's already put it in a box."

But many smaller colleges say price was indeed a major reason to move away from Blackboard.

"They continued to raise the prices," says Scott Hardwick, assistant director of information-technology services on Louisiana State's Shreveport campus, which a few years ago gave up Blackboard for Moodle.

"Had we continued paying what Blackboard wanted us to pay, it probably would have been \$100,000 a year," he says. Now the university pays only about \$5,000 a year to an outside company that provides support for the Moodle software. "It's definitely cheaper," says Mr. Hardwick, even considering the time he spends on maintenance.

Professors, too, at Shreveport have been pleased with Moodle. The only complaint Mr. Hardwick says he has heard is that Moodle's user interface doesn't look as slick as Blackboard's. "I'm like,

'Seriously, that's your complaint? It doesn't look as slick?' Apparently that's a huge deal for people."

Blackboard's chief executive, Mr. Chasen, defended his company's prices. "I don't think that we're too expensive," he said in the interview. "Compared to other enterprise software, we're a fraction of the cost." There's a good chance, he said, that colleges "bought their human-resources package for a million dollars."

A Supportive Environment

The downside of open-source software is that because it is free, there's no one company to call if things go wrong. But the downside of buying a commercial program is that if its maker provides poor support, it's hard to get under the hood yourself to make a fix.

Blackboard has a history of poor support, according to many college officials.

"Support in the past has certainly been a challenge for us," Mr. Chasen acknowledged. He blamed the company's rapid growth. "We went from 100 clients to now over 5,000 clients in a relatively short time, and support is one of those areas that lagged behind."

The company recently hired an outside firm as part of an effort to improve its customer service. "We're on the way to answering it," said Mr. Chasen. "We know that support is improving. Is it there yet? No, we still have a long way to go. But over the next few months, you'll start to see significant improvements across the board."

Some colleges running open-source programs initially had concerns about whether free software could be scaled to provide Web sites and services for thousands of courses on large campuses. But UCLA recently decided to use Moodle across the campus, and things are going smoothly as it adds about 900 course Web sites on the system per quarter, says Rosemary Rocchio, director of academic applications in the office of information technology there.

But the university has plenty of programmers to handle issues that crop up, she notes. "If you're a small university, and you don't have IT staff, then open source isn't a great solution," she says. "I don't think it's one size fits all."

Innovation as Attraction

The biggest benefit of open-source software, say many observers, is that if a college wants a new feature, it can simply build it, since the entire program code is open. When a college adds a new feature, it shares the code with everyone else using the software.

Blackboard's Mr. Chasen argued that there are benefits to the corporate model of software publishing, too. "I have 300 people on my development team working full time on our products and services," he said. "I don't know if there are 300 full-time people currently working on Sakai. Maybe there are. I have a multimillion-dollar hardware-testing lab just to test scalability."

"At a minimum," he said, "we are at least just as innovative as open source."

Michael Korcuska, executive director of the Sakai Foundation, a nonprofit group that coordinates the use of the open-source software, argues that the open-source model is quicker to react to needs of colleges than Blackboard is. "The people doing the work and deciding what features go in the system are sitting on campus next to the users, not in some back office somewhere," he says.

But Mr. Urdan, the industry analyst, says fine-tuning software is a "luxury" that most colleges can't afford. The slight improvements are often not worth the man-hours and dollar costs of adopting them, he says.

The Next Generation

Many of those arguments, users say, will be settled by the performance of Blackboard's new product.

So people were watching carefully as the lights went down at the Blackboard user conference, and Mr. Chasen took the stage to preview Blackboard NG. (Company officials later noted that they used a mock-up because the software is not finished yet. They could not say when it would be released, but some features will appear in a version expected next year.)

Among the features he touted:

- n An easy-to-use interface that lets professors and students arrange course information right in their browsers by clicking and moving sections with a mouse.
- n A new "dashboard" that lets students or professors see all of their course information at a glance. The dashboard also is integrated with the company's other products, including its new emergency-notification system.
- n The integration of social-networking services, including Facebook and Twitter.
- n The ability to interconnect with course Web sites made with open-source software, including Moodle and Sakai.

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"Everybody loves to hate their learning system," says Adam Finkelstein, an educational developer in McGill University's Teaching and Learning Services program. "The grass is always greener."

Los Angeles Wave

September 12, 2008

Wall order



Artist Mohammad Mubarak stands in front of a mural he painted, commissioned by the city of Compton, which depicts a number of the community's historic and commercial landmarks.

BY LEILONI DE GRUY, Staff Writer 04.SEP.08

His ties to top 1970s Black nationalists gave Mohammed Mubarak wisdom and a lifetime of memories. But he may leave his most indelible legacy as an artist.

COMPTON — It began as an innocent infatuation with the arts while in kindergarten, finger-painting which has blossomed into a career that has allowed Compton artist Mohammed Mubarak to rub shoulders with cultural icons the likes of Redd Foxx, Stevie Wonder and Muhammad Ali, just to name a few.

But the road wasn't easy for the man born Anthony Quisenberry, who changed his name when he became a Muslim in 1982, and will turn 56 later this month.

The Tennessee-native moved to Compton when he was 7, spending his formative years at George Washington Carver Elementary, Rosecrans Elementary, Walton Junior High, Vanguard Junior High and finally Centennial High School.

Throughout elementary school, Mubarak's association with the Cub Scouts and eventually the Boy Scouts of America furthered his desire to become an artist. Teaching himself how to draw based on half-drawn illustrations from a monthly magazine called "Boys Life" — distributed in connection with the Boy Scouts of America — is where he "learned how to shade and ... how to draw faces."

"Basically that's where it really got started, that knack for wanting to stick with it," Mubarak

said.

Once he finished high school, at the age of 18, he looked to a physical source of inspiration who came in the form of David Mosley, Sugar Shane Mosley's Uncle, who did charcoal portraits of several Black militants, such as Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton and Malcolm X.

"He was my mentor," said Mubarak. The association stemmed from Mubarak's own affiliation with the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s, where he was a member of the Los Angeles-based group, doing murals and taking photographs.

When he left the Black Panther Party in 1970, "I started hanging around all the slicksters out here, the hustlers and the people who were doing a lot of dirt. I wanted to be like them because they were hanging out in new Cadillac's and staying sharp everyday and had money in their pockets. A lot of them were robbing banks, hijacking liquor store trucks, selling dope, doing a lot of stuff to make money."

The rewards Mubarak viewed as provided by street life led him and a couple of his friends to follow suit. Following a bank robbery attempt in Compton in 1971, he was caught and sentenced to six years in federal prison, though he only actually served two years and two weeks.

"It was in federal prison that I sat myself down and had enough time to evaluate my situation and cultivate my talent," he said. "Most of my time there was devoted to developing my talent so I could get to the place where I could do something with it when I came out."

Once he was released, Mubarak was introduced to the owners of the nightclub Total Experience through some of his former prison mates. Giving them a taste of his art work, "they just took me under their wings."

His involvement with the nightclub and its owners led to his introduction to Redd Foxx, who he had always dreamed of meeting. One night Foxx came into the club and Mubarak, who roomed with someone in Leimert Park just a few blocks away from where they were, thought back to a portrait he made of Foxx while in prison. After shooting to the apartment and bringing it back to the club where it could be presented to Foxx, Foxx reached into his pocket and gave Mubarak \$300.

"From that point on I had established a relationship with Redd Foxx and he would look out for me anytime he saw me. And from that point, I started to meet just about everybody," including Muhammad Ali in 1974 when the Nation of Islam held an event at the Shrine Exposition Hall.

That same year, he "met Rod McGrew, who was the station manager over at KJLH and he was also an on-air personality and when I showed him the portraits I did of these jazz artists while I was in prison, they kind of adopted me. I wanted to learn radio so I hung around the station a lot, was recording my own little commercials and then I went to broadcasting school, the Los Angeles School of Broadcasting. ... By me being part of the family over at KJLH, I did this portrait of Stevie and Minnie Riperton and I did it for Stevie's birthday ... I did it so he could feel it with his hands, I put a lot of paint on it so he knew who it was when he felt it. He was

getting ready to do this album 'Hotter Than July' and somebody recommended me to do the design for it ... Next thing I know, I'm over at his recording studio."

Mubarak's concept grew from the album title. "I came up with this design concept, which was Stevie on the front cover with these braids, beads in his hair and sweat coming off his face like it's really hot, hotter than July and on the back cover you have a baby grand piano with fire coming out of it."

These opportunities gave him the courage to think bigger, wanting to move his skills to the world of boxing and envisioning himself as the go-to man for all the boxers. In 1981 he got his chance when he was introduced to and presented a self-portrait to Don King.

But what goes up, must come down. It seemed like he was at the peak of his career and his existence until the life he surrounded himself with swallowed him up. With a cocaine addiction from 1982 to 1991, Mubarak could no longer put his skills to use and lost everything, including his wife and children.

Two of his three children were placed in foster care when they were about 9 or 10 years old, four or five years following his separation from his wife. Both he and his wife were on drugs.

Though he was able to quickly rebound, career-wise, once he made up his mind he wasn't going to stop using drugs, "it was tragic. We [he and his wife] can still feel the fallout from that. My kids now are like 26 or 27. I have another son who's 29. My 27-year-old son is in prison, he has about 12 and a half more years to go. My daughter just came home from prison, she's staying with me. She's still trying to recover from her habit that she developed and I have legal guardianship of her daughter, who is 9 years old."

Under the previous administration of the city of Compton, which was headed by former mayor Omar Bradley, he was contracted to do two portraits, one of Martin Luther King Jr. and the other of Ceasar Chavez.

Then in April of this year, he was given a second chance to give back to his city, this time under the current administration, headed by Mayor Eric Perrodin.

After the city council approved a \$75,000 no-bid contract, Mubarak, along with Phil McAlister and Tariq Bilal, began working on one of three murals.

The first mural, located on the back wall of city hall, facing Willowbrook, began two months ago and has been completed for more than 3 weeks. Mubarak took all of the key elements that makes Compton what it is, such as the Gateway Towne Center, City Hall, the Court House and Compton College.

The second phase will be two paintings on the walls within City Hall. Ten people who were prominent in Compton's history, from its founder to those current, will be included in the 10-foot-by-20-foot murals. On one wall will be the pioneers of Compton and on the other wall will be those currently or more recently birthing a new Compton. In between the two will be historic

moments of each, as to join the old with the new.

Also under that contract are an additional 20 oil paintings, each 16-inch-by-10-inch.

“It’s definitely worth a lot more than what they’re paying me but I don’t mind doing it because I am leaving my mark on the city,” Mubarak said.

Currently he has an ongoing exhibit of his work at L.A. City Hall in Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa’s office.

“Just like your mind can be made up to do something negative, your mind can be made up to do something positive,” he said. “And that’s how I’ve stayed on track.”

- Photo by Gary McCarthy

Los Angeles Wave

September 12, 2008

In retirement, Clegg reflects on career of hometown service



Legran H. Clegg II's retirement became official last month.

By BETTY PLEASANT, Contributing Editor 04.SEP.08

Longtime Compton city attorney says he will spend golden years pursuing a passion for African history.

Legrand H. Clegg II, an icon in Compton, has retired as city attorney after 31 years of service in his hometown.

Clegg, 64, Compton's city attorney for the past 15 years, was first appointed deputy city attorney in 1977, then chief deputy city attorney in 1981. The City Council appointed him city attorney upon the death of the sitting official in 1993, and Compton voters kept him in office ever since, electing Clegg to four consecutive terms, making him one of the two longest-serving public officials in the city's history.

Clegg retired effective Aug. 8 after a special night-long city council/town hall meeting at which hundreds of the city's residents and officials heaped accolades upon him for hours as he sat in a rocking chair on the chamber dais.

A native of Los Angeles who was reared in Compton, Clegg was lauded by the California Legislative Black Caucus, the California Assembly, the county of Los Angeles, the Sheriff's Department, the school and college districts, all of Compton's municipal departments, judges and lawyers, historians and educators and just about every entity in Compton that had made his acquaintance, while his proud 92-year-old mother, Lee Omia Clegg, beamed from a chair nearby.

Led by Mayor Eric Perrodin, they came to praise Clegg as "one of the best legal researchers in the state," a man of impeccable integrity which was sorely tested during a notorious period in the city's government, a valiant civic leader and a role model for all men.

Clegg is a graduate of Centennial High School who received an AA degree from Compton College, a BA from UCLA and a law degree from Howard University.

During the 1960s, he worked as an intern in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department and in the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office. From there, he became an attorney for the Greater Watts Justice Center of the Legal Aid Foundation and spent a few years in private practice with the firm of Edelen, Meshack, Clegg & Calhoun in Compton. After that, it was all employment with the city of Compton in the City Attorney's Office.

During his 15 years as city attorney, Clegg and his staff implemented a number of programs and actions which residents say benefited the city, including shutting down a local gun shop, filing a

civil injunction against a criminal street gang, reducing loitering on city streets, enforcing neighborhood parking restrictions and prosecuting people engaged in prostitution.

Clegg was also praised for having introduced an extensive community outreach program that included conducting public speaking engagements, hosting a cable TV program, chairing the youth-enriching “Dine and Dialogue” program at Compton College, providing expungement options for newly released prisoners, hosting monthly meetings with local students pursuing a legal career, serving as liaison to the County Human Relations Commission, among many other activities.

And that was his day job. In his spare time he served 12 years on the Compton Community College Board of Trustees and became an internationally acclaimed historian and Africa scholar whose writings, lectures and video presentations over the past 35 years have helped to transform the world’s perception of African history and culture.

Clegg’s revelations about Black inventors in “What Would America Be Without Black People” has educated thousands of people on the Internet, and he has pioneered in research about the black presence in America before Columbus. Clegg is passionate about his work on the African origin of ancient Egyptian civilization, particularly correcting the misrepresentation of King Tut. “He was Black. He should look Black. They were all Black,” Clegg asserts.

Clegg said he will “zealously” pursue his passion for African history during his retirement. “People don’t know that Africans are the parents of the human race and they laid down the foundation of civilization,” Clegg said.

“People don’t know the contributions Blacks have made because they are either ignored or suppressed. Part of our children’s failure to perform academically is because they don’t know about the ancient and glorious heritage, and I intend to devote the rest of my life to revealing it, going all the way back to ancient Mesoamerica to Olmec civilization, 2000 B.C., which was headed by Black kings.”

September 17, 2008

In California, Uncertainty on Immigrant Student Tuition

In reinstating a lawsuit challenging tuition policy Monday, a California appeals court unanimously found that a state statute extending lower in-state tuition rates to illegal immigrants conflicts with federal law and “thwarts the will of Congress.”

California is one of 10 states that makes undocumented students eligible for in-state tuition rates. In California’s case, students can be exempt from paying nonresident rates if they graduated from and attended a California high school for three or more years and, in the case of undocumented students, if they file an affidavit stating intent to legalize their status if they become eligible to do so.

On a federal level, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit [dismissed](#) a challenge to a similar law in Kansas [in 2007](#) because the plaintiffs were found to lack standing.

In the appeal court’s [ruling](#) in *Martinez v. Regents of the University of California*, which had earlier been dismissed by a trial court, the panel of three judges defined the central question at hand as whether the state’s authorization of in-state tuition rates for illegal immigrants violates federal law, which maintains: “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a state (or a political subdivision) for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit (in no less an amount, duration, and scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident.”

The defendants — spanning all three of California’s public university and college systems — held that the state statute does not conflict with federal law because (1) in-state tuition is not a “benefit,” as it’s defined under federal law, and because (2) rather than being extended “on the basis of residence within a state,” lower tuition rates for illegal immigrants are conditioned on California high school attendance and graduation.

The appellate court rejected the colleges’ arguments on both counts, finding, on the first point, that significantly cheaper in-state tuition is in fact a “benefit.” Furthermore, the judges write, “the three-year attendance requirement at a California high school is a surrogate residence requirement.”

The section of California’s education code at issue here “falls within the principle of implied preemption in that it stands as an obstacle to the accomplishment and execution of the full

purposes and objectives of Congress,” the appeals court found. The judges returned the case for consideration at the lower trial court level.

“I think it’s going to be very difficult for the defendants to defend this policy, in that the higher court, the appellate court, has already decided that ...this one section of the education code is preempted by federal law,” said Ralph W. Kasarda, a staff attorney for the Sacramento-based Pacific Legal Foundation, which filed a brief in support of the plaintiffs.

Filed as a class action suit, the plaintiffs are a group of U.S. citizen students (or tuition-paying parents). The students are from other states but are enrolled at California public colleges at nonresident tuition rates. They argue that the high school attendance requirement “illegally discriminates” against them “by denying them a benefit provided to illegal aliens.”

“The State of California here tried to claim that they carefully chose their words in the statute in such a way to evade Congress’ intent and find a loophole in the statute. And what the court said was, ‘No, no such loophole exists,’ ” said Kris W. Kobach, a professor of law at University of Missouri at Kansas City who is one of two lead lawyers for the plaintiffs.

While the California appeals court decision is not binding in other states, it will likely have an impact beyond the state’s borders, Kobach said. “Frequently you will hear of states considering nearly identical statutes as the California law, and one of the arguments that is made is, ‘California’s law has never been struck down. None of these other laws have been struck down or held to be in violation of federal law, why don’t we go ahead and do it?’ Now every state legislature in the country will be put on notice.”

“It should serve as a shot across the bow to the other nine states that they are potentially exposed to liability because of their statutes,” Kobach continued.

Christopher M. Patti, university counsel for the UC System, said that while lawyers are still analyzing the opinion, “We are considering the possibility of a petition for review in the California Supreme Court.”

“I think that in any appeal the major focus would likely be on this issue of whether this is a residency-based requirement,” said Patti. “The legislature thought about that issue and tried to fashion a bill that complied with federal law, and we think they did that successfully. So that’s something that if there’s an appeal, the Supreme Court is going to have to grapple with.”

As of now, however, “the law is still in full effect, and [the decision] should not have any immediate impact on the colleges,” said Steven Bruckman, executive vice chancellor and general counsel for the California Community College System. He estimated that about 20,000 community college students, most of whom are undocumented immigrants, would lose their eligibility for cheaper resident tuition if the law were ultimately declared invalid.

“Our mission is to provide broad access to education. A court ruling that would limit access to students is disappointing to us,” he said.

“We will fight it as long as it is necessary to clarify this,” said Michael A. Olivas, a professor and expert on higher education and immigration law at the University of Houston. He faulted the California appeals court for misreading laws relative to residency. “What federal law requires is that people who have access to this status of being a resident may not be given any more advantage if they’re undocumented than if they’re a citizen. I say that’s fine. California still requires that you have been there 12 months [to declare residency]. The undocumented don’t get it by 11 months.”

Olivas disagreed with the assertion that the decision is relevant in other states, although he acknowledges it is being watched widely. “No other state is bound by what one state does, and they’re particularly not bound by it when the state got it wrong. They weren’t bound by it when the trial court in effect got it right.”

— Elizabeth Redden

Yahoo News

California's In-State Tuition Policy for Illegal Aliens Is Unconstitutional, Rules State Appeals Court

September 16, 2008

To: NATIONAL EDITORS

Contact: Michael Hethmon of Immigration Reform Law Institute, +1-202-232-5590, mhethmon@fairus.org

Precedent Setting Ruling May Be Used to Challenge Many State Benefits for Illegal Aliens, Says Immigration Reform Law Institute

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A three judge panel of the California Court of Appeals unanimously ruled Monday that a California law intended to permit illegal aliens to attend public colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates is unconstitutional because it conflicts with federal law, and violates both the equal protection clause and privileges and immunity clause of the constitution. Ruling in the case of Martinez et al. v. Regents of the University of California, brought by the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI) on behalf of some 80,000 nonresident American students who were denied in-state tuition benefits, the Appeals Court agreed that California policy violates expressed provisions of both the Immigration Act and the Welfare Reform Act of 1996.

The 1996 Immigration Act states that "an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a State...for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit..." In their ruling, the judges concluded that a California law that recognizes illegal aliens as residents for the purpose of attending public colleges and universities at taxpayer subsidized tuition rates, "does, and was intended to, benefit illegal aliens" - a benefit that the state fails to provide to U.S. citizens from other states. The court also granted injunctive relief to nonresident American students, meaning that they must be permitted to pay in-state tuition. Students who have already paid out-of-state tuition rates must be reimbursed.

The California Appeals Court ruling is the first to decide a challenge to in-state tuition policies on the merits. A challenge in federal court to a similar policy in Kansas, also brought by IRLI, was dismissed when the judge denied standing to the plaintiffs.

"We believe that Monday's ruling by the California Court of Appeals is unambiguous and precedent setting," stated Michael Hethmon, general counsel for IRLI. "In their ruling, the judges indicated that federal law preempts not only California's in-state tuition law, but all such laws across the country." Currently, nine other states offer in-state tuition benefits to illegal aliens.

Monday's ruling will also affect many other state and local benefits currently being offered to illegal aliens. "The decision also makes it clear that federal law preempts many benefits that are being dispensed to illegal aliens that are expressly prohibited under the Welfare Reform Act," said Kris Kobach, senior counsel to IRLI. "In the court's opinion, citizens have the right to go to court and sue to prevent illegal aliens from benefiting from a whole range of government programs."

"Law-abiding citizens and taxpayers were the real winners in this decision. This opinion strikes a blow for the rule of law, commonsense, and protection of public resources, and the legal precedence it sets will be felt all across the nation," Hethmon concluded. The full decision can be read at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/opinions/>.

SOURCE Immigration Reform Law Institute

Trustee Romances Raise Tensions

Oh, the things we do for love.

After 28 years as a board member at Greenville Technical College, George Bomar resigned from his post last week, accepting that his 2005 marriage to a high-level administrator violated the college's nepotism policy. But a committee of Bomar's fellow board members deliberated on the issue for nearly a year before they signaled him to bow out, highlighting the sensitivity – and perhaps reluctance – they felt while exploring the implications of their colleagues' campus romance.

“We realized we had to get this thing resolved, because it was a black cloud hanging over our head,” said Paul Batson, chairman of the Greenville County Commission for Technical Education, which oversees the South Carolina college. “We knew it was a festering problem we had to work out.”

A similar issue has arisen at Southwestern College near San Diego, Calif., where a university trustee's relationship with an administrator has raised concerns.

While the cases at Greenville and Southwestern have prompted much debate, there's little question that any romance between a trustee and a college employee presents obvious problems, according to Susan Johnston, executive vice president of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

“It opens up the question of honesty, integrity and ethics,” she said. “And the appearance is a critical one when trustees need to be operating in a completely transparent and accountable way.”

The rather lengthy history of Greenville's nepotism debate began in 2005, when Bomar became engaged to Barbara Lassiter, vice president for planning and technology. At the time, Bomar sought an opinion from the State Ethics Commission about possible conflict of interest issues, and the commission found no violations of state nepotism laws. But questions about the relationship persisted, and – under pressure from local government officials – the board formed its own nepotism committee in October of 2007. They also sought yet another ethics commission review, and this time the commission found that the college was obligated to follow its own policy, which was more stringent than state law. Under the policy, board members cannot have “significant influence or control” over anyone related by “blood or marriage.”

Last Wednesday, 11 months after its formation, the nepotism committee issued a resolution stating that Bomar violated the policy by continuing to serve on the board after marrying an

administrator. The ruling gave the veteran board member little choice but to resign, and Bomar did just that.

“Finally, the board said ‘we just don’t think this is appropriate, that it sends a message out that we really don’t want to have sent, and we don’t want any suggestion of a potential conflict of interest to the college,’” Batson said. “And therefore, with great pain, the committee made its report.”

After his resignation, Bomar cited his past efforts to insure the marriage didn’t violate state ethics rules, noting that “We were assured by all there was no problem,” *The Greenville News* reported.

The newspaper described Bomar’s resignation as an emotional scene, in which Bomar “broke down” while announcing he’d step down Oct. 1. Upon leaving an hour-long executive session that preceded the announcement, “grim and red-eyed” board members hugged each other, the paper reported.

Bomar declined an interview request from *Inside Higher Ed*, and Lassiter did not respond to telephone messages Thursday and Friday.

The board plans to revise – but not weaken – the college’s nepotism policy in order to remove ambiguity, Batson said.

California Policy Doesn’t Ban Dating

A trustee’s relationship with an administrator at Southwestern College has also raised questions about the strength and clarity of nepotism policies. The college forbids the employment of a trustee’s “immediate family” member, but the policy expresses no such limits for people who are romantically involved or even for domestic partners.

As the Southwestern College policy is written, there appears to be sufficient wiggle room for the relationship between Yolanda Salcido, a trustee, and John Wilson, the college’s director of business services. The two have been openly dating for years.

Wilson acknowledged that, given his relationship with Salcido, “there might be a perception of ethical issues.” That said, Wilson noted that there is no policy in place that would forbid him from dating a trustee who, according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, voted on raises for Wilson and cleared the way for building projects he oversees.

Even if Salcido could be considered a neutral party when voting on college-related matters, Southwestern’s own legal counsel noted in a 2004 legal opinion that “public relations” problems could be “negated to some degree” if she recused herself from votes that directly affected Wilson.

Given the complexity and interconnectivity of colleges and universities, however, it's hard to imagine how a trustee could recuse herself from all the votes that might potentially impact her boyfriend, according to Johnston, who serves the Association of Governing Boards.

"In the case of marriage between a board member and staff member, it seems pretty clear to me that it's a conflict that cannot be set aside or worked around," she said.

Salcido and David Agosto, the board's president, could not be reached for comment.

The relationship between Salcido and Wilson has raised enough concerns that at least one administrator says she resigned because of it. For some faculty, the relationship is seen as one symptom of larger leadership problems at the college, which saw four different presidents in the space of two years.

"Do I think it's unethical? Yeah, because I think there are situations that are a conflict of interest, [or] that could be looked at or perceived as a conflict of interest," said Valerie Goodwin-Colbert, president of the college's Academic Senate. "I think that's how many faculty feel."

Yet, there's little faculty can do to change the policy that appears to permit trustee/administrator relationships as long as there's no marriage, Goodwin-Colbert said.

"[The policy] doesn't go into detail about girlfriend/boyfriend [relationships]," Goodwin-Colbert said. "So nepotism, at least in this policy, is generally in regard to marriage or family. John's right in saying 'the nepotism policy doesn't really apply to me.'"

But the absence of a written policy against such relationships at a college doesn't make them any more appropriate, according to Johnette McKown, executive vice president at McLennan Community College in Waco, Texas. McLennan's nepotism policy doesn't specifically forbid relationships between trustees and college employees, but McKown said she thinks the board's own ethics policies could be interpreted to preclude such relationships.

"I think it's the safest position not to have a romantic relationship with someone over whose employment you have some responsibility," said McKown, who has a background in human resources.

Problems of Perception

While much of the focus of nepotism cases concerns favoritism, trustee relationships raise other potential issues, McKown said. If a college employee is dating a trustee, the employee might be insulated from reprimand or dismissal, even if the employee were underperforming, she said.

"That would make it very difficult for the [supervisor] to terminate that person, because they might be fearful of what a board of trustees member would feel about that," McKown said.

Those interviewed for this story invariably cited problems with the "perception" of conflicts of interest engendered by trustee/administrator relationships, even if such conflicts never arise. At

Greenville Technical College, there was a growing perception in the community that George Bomar's marriage might affect his impartiality as a trustee, according to Butch Kirven, chairman of the Greenville County Council.

Driven by complaints from constituents, the Greenville council took an unusual action, passing a resolution that condemned Bomar's continued service on the board in light of his marriage to an administrator at the college. The council has no oversight authority over the board, but its nonbinding resolution prompted the quick formation of the board's nepotism committee and, by extension, Bomar's resignation.

Kirven, the council's chairman, said he was less concerned with whether a policy had been violated, and more concerned with what he perceived as a clear conflict of interest.

"I didn't think the situation was a good management practice, regardless of the nepotism policies," he said. "I didn't think the same situation would be acceptable in the corporate world or other large organizations, and I didn't see why we needed to make an exception here."

— Jack Stripling

LATimes.com

Blame all the players for the gimmicky budget

Republicans and Democrats wreaked havoc across the state in the protracted negotiations. Democratic state Treasurer Bill Lockyer likens the budgeting process to 'banana republic financing.'

George Skelton, Capitol Journal

September 22, 2008

SACRAMENTO -- Give Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger some credit. The big guy flexed and the Democrats blinked.

Give Democrats credit. They realized that what the governor demanded last week wasn't worth fighting about.

Let him have it: a bigger, more secure "rainy-day" fund that won't have any impact for years and, besides, may be a good idea. Moreover, it still must be approved by the voters.

Give Republican leaders credit. They held firm and were prepared to deliver enough votes to override the Republican governor's threatened veto of the budget bill.

But Schwarzenegger made some smart moves -- saying he would veto hundreds of unrelated bills and stomping on the Achilles' heel of the Legislature's budget package: a separate "trailer" bill that accelerated income-tax withholding. Republicans would not override his veto of that.

The governor had the Legislature in check. Democrats caved on the rainy-day fund and dumped the withholding idea, which initially had come from the Schwarzenegger administration.

But enough of these positives.

Blame them all for another atrocious, short-sighted, gimmicky budget that set a record for procrastination. They wreaked havoc all across California among small business vendors, healthcare centers and nursing homes that couldn't be paid by the state until a budget was enacted.

The spending plan "gives gimmicks a bad name. I'd have to call it banana republic financing," asserted state Treasurer Bill Lockyer, a former attorney general and legislative leader.

Lockyer complained about "phony inflated estimates of revenue." But the Democrat was especially incensed about the "fiscal folly" of providing "a massive corporate boondoggle" for big business with permanent tax breaks after three years.

"I understand why Republicans would do that," he told me. "But I don't understand why Democrats would. Past tax cuts have contributed to the budget deficit. And they want to add more and have bigger deficits? . . . If we have to pass tax cuts in order to enact a budget, there'll be no revenue left."

Sadly, it was the best they could do. The economy is tanking. Republicans refused to vote for a general tax increase. Democrats wouldn't cut any more education or healthcare programs. And there was the mountainous hurdle of a two-thirds majority vote requirement.

One bright spot was passage of the stronger spending controls that Schwarzenegger wanted: The enhanced rainy-day fund and some minimal power for a governor to cut spending unilaterally in midyear if a deficit looms.

If voters approve the governor's "budget reform" in a special election next year, it will be fully implemented starting July 1, 2010. But it will be of no help for the next fiscal year, 2009-10, when the state could be in even worse shape financially.

Schwarzenegger seems addicted to over-promising and hyperbole. And his words could be thrown back at him -- as they often are -- if he and the Legislature become bogged in another budget quagmire.

In threatening to veto the budget, Schwarzenegger said it would "guarantee that we will have to make huge cuts in education next year or we will have huge tax increases" -- implying that some tweaking could avoid those horrible fates. That was disingenuous.

"Nothing is more important than getting our fiscal house in order," the governor continued. "Fix the system once and for all."

The budget the governor finally signed off on did little if anything to correct the multibillion-dollar "structural deficit" -- the amount of outflow over inflow -- and the state's fiscal house definitely was not put in order.

The governor's budget reform was a good step, but many more will be needed to "fix the system."

For example:

* Some outfit should take a hard, thorough look at state government in search of the proverbial waste, fraud and abuse. Five years ago, Schwarzenegger promised to and failed.

He appointed a huge commission of bureaucrats that produced a tall stack of reports but little action.

"Everybody thinks about the \$400 toilet seat, but it doesn't exist," says the governor's former communications director, Rob Stutzman. "Voters instinctively know there's a lot of waste, but it's hard to find and root out."

* Restructure the tax system. Stop the fiscal roller coaster. Broaden the tax base to make it less volatile in good times and bad. Don't lean so heavily on the rich. Extend the sales tax to services. Make it easier for local governments to raise taxes.

Both Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) and incoming Senate leader Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) are eager to move on this. Schwarzenegger says he is too.

* Enact two-year budgets. Plan beyond one year. Review the plan every quarter, watching for revenue declines or overspending. Act before the deficit gets out of control.

"Bring the budget process into the 21st century," says Bill Hauck, president of the California Business Round Table, and a former top aide of legislative leaders and governors. "Do all the things done in large organizations, public and private."

* Rid ourselves of that gridlock-creating two-thirds vote requirement for a budget. Only two other states have it. I'd also allow a majority vote for tax hikes. Let the majority party rule and be held accountable.

Bass and Steinberg hope to place a majority-vote initiative on next year's special election ballot.

* Reform the initiative system to control ballot box budgeting.

Capitol politicians are vowing to "reform" the budgeting process. It's an annual ritual and an easy promise -- like a hung-over reveler swearing off booze on New Year's Day.

But let's be positive. Maybe this was their last summer binge.

SFGate.com

Status quo for UC and CSU budgets

Nanette Asimov

Saturday, September 20, 2008

PROPOSAL: The state will give the University of California and California State University essentially the same money as last year: nearly \$3.3 billion for UC, and nearly \$3 billion for CSU. The California Community College system will get a small increase to \$6.4 billion, up from \$6.1 billion. Each allocation is less than the state's estimate of what it costs to maintain the same level of service as last year. There are no cost-of-living increases or money for enrollment growth.

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU: The 10 UC campuses will have to cut about \$100 million, even as enrollment rises. Eligible students won't be turned away, so classes are likely to become more crowded. Student tuition and fees, set in May, are up 7.4 percent over last year. At CSU, where tuition and fees are up 10 percent, thousands of students will be turned away. Raises are unlikely. The community college system, where enrollment is way up, won't offer some classes.

REACTION: Educators expressed fear that problems will grow even worse if the governor exercises new power to make midyear budget cuts. "The California budget process is deeply fractured and completely dysfunctional," said Peter Goldstein, vice chancellor for finance at San Francisco City College. UC spokesman Brad Hayward called the budget "the best we could have done," but added, "You can't have a lot of years like this."

SFGate.com

Budget problems expected again next summer

Matthew Yi, Michael Cabanatuan, Chronicle Staff Writers

Monday, September 22, 2008

(09-21) 16:55 PDT -- Even as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signs a spending bill this week to end the state's record-long budget impasse, officials say a crisis of equal magnitude looms next year because of the weakened economy, uncertainties about the use of future lottery revenue and political gridlock among state legislators.

California lawmakers and their budget advisers estimate that the Legislature, which on Friday approved a \$104 billion general fund budget that plugged a \$17 billion gap 81 days into the current fiscal year, will be looking at a deficit of at least \$1.6 billion nine months from now.

But that number could easily balloon to \$7 billion or more, according to Capitol observers and experts on the state budget, particularly given uncertainty over whether voters will approve Schwarzenegger's plan to borrow against future state lottery sales to generate \$5 billion next year and the same amount the year after that. The issue will probably go to voters in a special election next year.

Another big question is the state of the economy. Last week's meltdown on Wall Street caught the attention of budget advisers and lawmakers who say the slowing economy, which already has taken a toll on the state's coffers, may create more havoc before revenue begins to turn around.

"All these (projected deficit) numbers will be dwarfed if in fact we are heading into a serious recession because with what's happening nationally - the credit crunch, people spending less money - projections of state revenues will go into the toilet," said John Ellwood, a professor at the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley.

And like this year, finding a compromise in Sacramento won't be easy under the state constitutional requirement that two-thirds of the Assembly and Senate pass the budget. That means Democrats - who hold the majority in both houses, but not the supermajority needed to approve a spending plan - again will need to recruit some Republican support.

This year, Republicans succeeded in holding the line on no new taxes, Democrats were able to rebuff GOP lawmakers' demand for a spending cap - and Schwarzenegger was criticized for losing his political influence over legislators in both parties.

Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, has called the Republican governor a "leader without followers" in recent weeks as GOP lawmakers derided Schwarzenegger for siding with the Democrats with his proposal to raise sales taxes temporarily by 1 cent.

One-time fixes

For several years, such differences have scuttled long-term structural changes in the budget, with lawmakers and the governor forced to use borrowing, accounting gimmicks and fiscal maneuvering to make one-time fixes to budget deficits.

This year is no exception. The compromise budget includes an estimated \$6 billion worth of new revenue by collecting some taxes earlier, removing some tax deductions for corporations and increasing penalties on companies that underpay taxes.

Next year, those sources are expected to bring in just \$1.5 billion because much of the additional revenue this year comes from one-time sources. Early collection of some taxes this year, for example, means less of those taxes to be collected next fiscal year.

Schwarzenegger told reporters on Friday that the system needs a fix.

"We know that the system itself is not working, that it's flawed and therefore we should revisit it and come up with ways so that we can speed up this (budgeting) process and that when we say that there should be a budget ... that there is one," he said.

Some lawmakers agree that budget reforms are needed but there is no consensus on specific changes. Assembly Republican leader Mike Villines of Clovis (Fresno County) says a spending cap based on inflation and population growth is the fix.

But Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, D-Baldwin Vista (Los Angeles County), has said repeatedly it's time to get rid of the two-thirds majority vote on the budget. California, Rhode Island and Arkansas are the only states with such a supermajority requirement.

Constitutional convention

This year's record budget impasse has prompted a Bay Area business group to call a state constitutional convention to examine and overhaul state government, including the budget process.

The Bay Area Council, which represents the region's largest employers, wants the Legislature to call the state's first constitutional convention since 1878 - an action that would require a two-thirds vote. If lawmakers don't achieve that, leaders of the business group say they may ask voters to call the convention.

Council President Jim Wunderman, who issued a call for the convention in an opinion piece in *The Chronicle* last month, said the proposed convention could consider issues such as reducing the two-thirds requirement to pass a budget, shifting to a two-year budget, making state offices nonpartisan, guaranteeing stable funding for infrastructure and increasing education funding.

"Let's get the best people to the table, let's look at the Constitution, let's decide what changes should be put before the voters," he said.

Wunderman said the council would like to see the question of assembling a constitutional convention go before voters on the next scheduled state ballot in 2010, or sooner if a statewide special election is called.

Governor to sign spending plan

What's next: Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is expected to sign a \$104 billion general fund budget early this week for the 2008-09 fiscal year, which began July 1.

What it means: Billions of overdue dollars will start flowing soon to state workers, hospitals, schools and other state programs.

More budget coverage: Go to *sfgate.com*.

Relationship at college scrutinized

CHULA VISTA – A legal opinion for Southwestern College states that a trustee dating a high-level administrator could create a public image problem but one that could be “negated to some degree” if the trustee recused herself from voting on issues affecting the administrator.

The trustee, Yolanda Salcido, hasn't.

The entire governing board has long known that Salcido and director of business services John Wilson are dating, board President David Agosto recently said, but no one has specifically asked her to recuse herself.

Salcido and Wilson's relationship has generated a legal claim from former college vice president Debra Fitzsimons. She alleges that she was driven to resign last year by Salcido after raising concerns about the relationship with Wilson. Fitzsimons is now a vice chancellor at the University of Hawaii's Hilo campus.

Salcido said: “It would be inappropriate for me to comment on anything that is pending. I welcome the opportunity to go ahead and set the record straight in its due time, not through the media.”

Wilson did not return a phone call or an e-mail.

Bob Fellmeth, executive director of the Center for Public Interest Law at the University of San Diego School of Law, said that if he were on the board, he would ask Salcido to recuse herself. He doesn't fault the board for its inaction because dating doesn't constitute a clear-cut conflict.

“The easy bright line,” after which Salcido's votes could clearly benefit her financially, “has not been passed,” Fellmeth said.

Salcido has continued to vote on raises for Wilson and on the extensive building projects he oversees. Next week, the board is scheduled to consider putting a property tax increase on South County's November ballot to fund \$389 million in college construction projects based on work led by Wilson.

The legal opinion has been kept under wraps for four years by the college's attorneys, who denied *The San Diego Union-Tribune's* request for a copy last year. A founding partner of the firm that denied the request also is treasurer for a political action committee that made more than \$23,000 in independent expenditures on Salcido's behalf for her 2006 re-election.

The board voted last month to release the opinion. Trustees David Agosto, Jorge Dominguez and Jean Roesch voted in favor of releasing the opinion, with trustee Terri Valladolid opposed. Salcido abstained.

The legal opinion states that the relationship does not violate conflict-of-interest laws so long as Salcido and Wilson do not share expenses or living arrangements.

Salcido drives a car of which Wilson is the registered owner, but they have separate residences.

“In this instance, it (perception of conflict of interest) could be negated to some degree by the board member abstaining on issues that relate to the director,” the legal opinion states.

In June, Fitzsimons filed her claim, generally the precursor to a lawsuit, that does not specifically name Salcido or Wilson but refers to a trustee and the director of business services.

The board unanimously rejected the claim last month.

Fitzsimons states in the claim that Wilson disclosed to her that he was “having an affair” with a trustee. Fitzsimons said she told Wilson that the trustee should recuse herself from votes that posed a conflict of interest and that Wilson should not discuss business matters with Salcido.

Fitzsimons alleges in the claim that at one meeting, Salcido pointed at her and said, “I’ll have you taken care of.”

Southwestern College developments

Legal opinion: Southwestern College's governing board voted to release a legal opinion stating that while trustee Yolanda Salcido can date business director John Wilson, perceptions of favoritism could be dispelled if she recuses herself from votes affecting him. *The San Diego Union-Tribune* was denied the opinion by college attorneys last year.

Possible lawsuit: The college's former vice president of administrative affairs filed a claim, generally the precursor to a lawsuit, against the college saying that Salcido drove her to resign after she raised conflict-of-interest issues and questioned the college's business practices.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

September 22, 2008

U. of California Report Offers New Push and Gauges for Accountability

By JOSH KELLER

The University of California plans to release a draft report today that provides information about how the 10-campus system is faring on measures of access, affordability, enrollment, and spending.

The 211-page report is the first part of an effort by the system's new president, Mark G. Yudof, to provide greater accountability at the institution after several years of criticism by lawmakers and others who viewed the president's office as bloated and unresponsive. The report, which officials expect to update each year, emulates annual accountability frameworks published by state university systems in Illinois, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Mr. Yudof's focus on accountability also marks a change in direction for the University of California, which in the past few years had resisted some voluntary methods of accountability even as a sister system in the state, California State University, aggressively pursued them. In an interview, Mr. Yudof said the University of California was "behind the curve" on the issue and needed to act immediately.

"The American people have made it quite clear that they want a visible accountability that they can see of their larger institutions," Mr. Yudof said. "It doesn't really matter whether you want to do it—you're going to have to do it."

Measures of Performance

The framework provides about 100 indicators of university performance, including graduation rates, enrollments, and faculty salaries, broken down by campus and compared with eight peer institutions, including the Universities of Michigan and Virginia, and Harvard and Yale Universities. University officials expect to get feedback on the framework from the system's Board of Regents and from the public, and to release a final version next spring.

State lawmakers have attacked the institution for not being accountable or open enough since a scandal erupted, in 2005, over undisclosed compensation to top university officials (*The Chronicle*, November 18, 2005). The release of the report comes as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, considers whether to sign a bill that would establish a statewide accountability system for higher education. The measure has received the support of the state's three higher-education systems.

Mr. Yudof said the university's efforts on accountability would soon expand to include a discussion of how it might use testing to assess students' learning, a method he helped to institute as chancellor of the University of Texas System. That aspect of accountability may

prove more controversial in California: Last year it was resisted by many faculty members and by Mr. Yudof's predecessor, Robert C. Dynes.

Mr. Yudof said he supported establishing a student-assessment test at the University of California, although he said he was not sure yet what form it should take.

"To me, accountability is very closely tied to what outcomes are," he said.

Catching Up With Other States

Mr. Yudof said he supported the legislation to establish statewide education goals and track data annually from the state's three systems to evaluate whether those goals are being met. The measure, SB 325, which was written by Sen. Jack Scott, a Democrat and chairman of the Senate Education Committee, passed the Legislature last month.

Supporters of the bill said it would prompt more-informed discussions about higher education in the state. California is one of the only states without a comprehensive statewide accountability system for higher education, said Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

The legislation "kind of moves California in the direction of much of what the rest of the country is doing, in terms of redefining accountability more in terms of the needs of the state," said Mr. Callan, who consulted with Mr. Scott on the bill.

The bill would track about 25 indicators, including income distributions, graduation rates, and average student-loan burdens. Some of those indicators are the same ones the University of California tracks in its report.

Mr. Scott, who will become chancellor of the state's community-college system in January, said it was important to be able to compare the data from the state's colleges and universities in order to better evaluate state priorities.

"I applaud the accountability that's already being done," Mr. Scott said, "but it's not always easily translatable from one system to another, and it ought to be more uniform among the three systems of higher education."

KTLA.com

Security Increased at Washington Prep Following Shooting

September 22, 2008

LOS ANGELES -- Security is being increased this week at Washington Preparatory High School following a gang-related shooting that wounded a 19-year-old former football player and a 12-year-old girl, authorities said.

The two victims were shot multiple times around 5:45 p.m. Friday in a parking lot next to the gymnasium on the campus at Normandie Avenue and 108th Street, after a football game against University High, a sheriff's deputy said.

The 19-year-old, who is now a football player at El Camino College, was shot in his pelvis, buttocks and lower body, deputies said. At least one member of a group that confronted him may have said something about a gang before the shooting, deputies said. The girl, who may have been shot inadvertently, was wounded in her chest and leg.

Both victims were in stable condition at Harbor UCLA Medical Center. Their identities were not released.

Four suspects were arrested Saturday.

In May, a student was fatally stabbed in the same parking lot, a school district employee told The Times.

Security at the school had already been heightened for Friday's game because of rising gang tensions in the neighborhood.

Audubon Middle School, which the 12-year-old attended, was also expected to have extra security this week.

Contra Costa Times

September 24, 2008

Colleges eager to receive state funds

By Nguyen Huy Vu, Staff Writer

It's been a busy summer for Jonathan McDonald. The El Camino College freshman walked dogs, cleared out backyards and did house chores to help pay for school.

McDonald spent Tuesday morning anxiously in line at the campus financial aid office to find out when he will receive state funding he needs for books and supplies.

"The money's there, but I don't know how to access it," he said.

It should come sooner to McDonald and the state's estimated 86,000 community college students now that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a \$144.5 billion spending plan Tuesday.

The action ended a nearly three-month stalemate brought on by lawmakers battling over how to erase a \$15.2 billion deficit.

State Controller John Chiang plans to release more than \$1.4 billion to the state's 110 community colleges in the next few weeks. Spokeswoman Hallye Jordan said once a request is made by campus administrators, the Controller's Office will process and send the money in seven to 10 days.

"We're bringing people in and reassigning staff to that position so we can expedite the claims and get them out the door as quickly as possible," Jordan said.

Los Angeles Harbor College financial aid director Sheila Millman said the money comes just weeks before the students receive their first check.

"We normally don't disburse Cal Grants until early October but it was getting pretty close and there are many students here that depend on those funds," she said.

Millman said her office had been inundated by students for months waiting to hear about the status of their state aid.

About 40 percent of Harbor College students rely on the state to pay for classes, which forced the school to dip into its reserves during the budget impasse. The Wilmington school also awards about \$500,000 in state aid each year.

"There has not been any state funds to run this place, so the L.A. Community College District had reserves, thank goodness, to pay our salaries and to pay the utility bills and all the other things for a while," Millman said.

"I don't know how long that would have lasted, but I am really pleased we don't have to worry about that anymore."

El Camino College financial aid director Hortense Cooper is also relieved the budget deal is done because officials were forced to use general funds to help hundreds of students.

Cooper expects the Torrance-area school will receive more than \$1 million in student aid, which the school will use mostly to pay itself back.

She and Millman said the best news was finding out that a competitive grant program thought to be lost will still be around this year for needy students.

The budget deal is also good news for Jonathan Long, an El Camino College sophomore planning to major in anthropology. The 26-year-old applied in July for about \$2,000 in state aid and said a delay would be difficult to handle.

"I need it," said Long, who works two jobs to make ends meet. "Everything is expensive."

Press Telegram

Shirley Wild: It's a lovely event for the arts guild

Article Launched: 09/22/2008 04:15:17 PM PDT

The Long Beach Yacht Club was the beautiful setting Sept. 9 for the first meeting of the year for the Dramatic Allied Arts Guild (DAAG). The only thing more beautiful than the LBYC setting were the 70 lovely ladies who were so beautifully outfitted with many adorned with becoming hats.

Ellie LaBeau, the new president, welcomed all and introduced the new year's board.

She also introduced the new Provisionals: Shenette Alexander, Margaret Dineen-Kern, Donna Estrin, Susan Cross, AnneMarie Forster, Patricia Randolph and Jann Whisenant.

It was interesting to note that a few past members have decided to reinstate their membership.

Having attached blue ribbons to each cup saying "Delight in the day It is a gift," Mari Hooper gave a beautiful thought of the day inspiring everyone to gift others with a smile and attach our ribbons near our hearts with the intent to pass it on. President LaBeau announced her theme for the new year as Drawing on Ability, Action (and) Greatness.

The tables were colorful with the DAAG colors of pink and black. Terri Craig and Diana Williams had spent some time this summer sewing tote bags in either pink or black with feathers and jeweled trim. They were centered and sitting in a bed of pink and black boas.

Inasmuch as DAAG's major objective is to raise funds for scholarships, the hottest item on the agenda was the discussion of the upcoming annual fundraiser, the Fashion Show. Leslee Martin, Ways and Means chairperson, announced the date to be Nov. 18 for the event showcasing not only seasonal fashions but also a boutique offering holiday and year-round items.

A silent auction as well as a few very special live auction items will be available for bid. This event will take place at The Grand in Long Beach.

After the ladies dined on a delicious warm chicken salad and strawberries and cream for dessert (not to mention the most sought after LBYC sourdough rolls), they were entertained by one of last year's scholarship recipients, Chika Emori.

Emori is an outstanding violinist, having played the violin since she was 4 years old. She is a senior at CSULB and has been invited to perform Telemann Viola Concerto in G Major with a chamber orchestra in Russia next spring.

This young lady is exceptionally talented and all thoroughly enjoyed her beautiful music. Everyone agreed that her selection last spring was truly a winner. Her accompanist, Manuel Arellano, is a student at El Camino College and will attend CSULB next fall. "Chika could truly make that violin `talk,'" related Nancy Koblensky.

An interesting item about DAAG's new president is that she recently purchased a home in Indiana to be closer to family. Because of her love of this very special group, she will be traveling back and forth and deeply wanted to fulfill her commitment. She says so many on the board were so eager and willing to help her, she could not let this opportunity go by.

FYI: DAAG established its scholarships for students in the arts fields at both Long Beach City College and Cal State Long Beach in 1964. To help, call 562-425-2255.

Seen at the Scene: incoming board members: Kay Berg, Jackey Grey, Lesley Scheller, Sandy Hollandsworth, Nancy Fuhrman, Irena Kohn, Nancy Koblensky, Terri Craig, Diana Williams, Char Gam, Barbara Hall, Marilyn Hauser, Marlene Temple, Kathleen Morton, Priscilla Lane, Liz Minor, Rosemary Scott, Noreen Wood, Leslee Martin, Margie Weiss and Louise Shea.

News of social events with charitable purposes may be sent to Shirley Wild at spwild@verizon.net or by fax to 562-594-9668. Please include a brief FYI about your organization, including a contact phone number. Send high-resolution JPEG photos to spwild@verizon.net and include group name and identification of individuals from left. Call Shirley at 562-594-9468 for information.

The Daily Breeze

Enrollment up, funds down

By Janna Brancolini, Staff Writer

Article Launched: 09/22/2008 10:47:07 PM PDT

With more adults returning to school this fall to change careers in the wake of the struggling economy, local community colleges are faced with funding problems as their enrollments jump and budgets stay the same.

At Los Angeles Harbor College in Wilmington, enrollment is up 10 percent, President Linda Spink said. That kind of spike is difficult to swallow.

"We can't afford to be up 10 percent," she said.

The state budget allows funding for only 2 percent growth, but most colleges probably won't even receive that, Spink explained.

"The state assumes that not all colleges will get growth, and what I'm hearing is everybody's growing," she said.

It's typical for enrollment to surge when the economy is weak, and Harbor College has seen more adult students and recent high school graduates, Spink said.

At \$20 a unit, community colleges are much more affordable than California State University schools, where students pay \$1,524 a semester plus additional fees. But the unit price set by the state Legislature isn't enough to cover the cost of a student's education, Spink said, which means a larger student body would require a larger per-unit subsidy.

To account for the increase in students and resulting budget shortfall, Harbor College has made cuts across the board, Spink said. Every budget line has been reviewed, and the college has scaled back on overtime and hiring.

Even courses with low enrollment -- typically the advanced classes that have prerequisites -- have been canceled.

However, more general education math and science classes have been added to accommodate the additional students.

"It's difficult for a campus to know our mission is to serve students and not be able to accommodate everyone," Spink said. "It eats at the core of who we are, as people and educators."

El Camino College near Torrance has experienced about half the growth as Harbor College, but is still reducing budgets in every department, said Ann Garten, director of community relations.

"Each department cut its budget by 5 percent," Garten said. "There are certain fixed costs, like paying for lighting and other utilities, that are the same no matter how many students you have. More students to help cover those costs means we can have more programs."

Instead of reducing the number of classes offered, El Camino, with its 4.7 percent enrollment increase, has been able to add more popular math and science classes -- particularly ones that are transfer courses.

Most of the budget cuts have been administrative, Garten said. Some managerial positions are filled by temporary faculty who don't qualify for the same benefits, such as paid vacation and sick days, as permanent staff members.

"It is a tough balancing act," she said.

Harbor College students said they noticed longer lines and more returning students when they registered for classes this semester.

"(The classes) are still packed," said Vanessa Ceja, a second-year student. "They get smaller towards the end of the semester as people drop out."

Carlos Rubio, also a second-year student, said he has seen a change in the student demographics.

"I actually have noticed a lot of older students," he said.

Students who have online classes also are feeling the effects of increased enrollment.

"I noticed my online classes were full months in advance," said Lora Lane, a Harbor College computer information sciences professor. The one class she teaches on campus also has more students than normal, she said. "Every class is wait-listed. Late-start classes, which begin in October, were full at the same time as regular classes."

In the past, students on the first day have been able to add a class but now it's important to enroll early, Lane said.

"Students need to think months ahead," she said. "I get desperate e-mails from people who just need one more class to complete their transfer credits, but it's too late."

Inglewood Today

Foreclosures, Budget Impasse Hinders Education

WRITTEN BY ADMINISTRATOR

FRIDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2008

The current credit and liquidity crisis in the United States and in world financial markets due to the mortgage meltdown has caused student loan resources to virtually dry up. Along with the massive number of home foreclosures, students are finding it increasingly more difficult to pay for college.

Since Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a \$144.5 billion spending plan on Tuesday, however, the state's estimated 86,000 community college students are breathing a sigh of relief. The very late budget ends three months of uncertainty, prompted by a stalemate between state lawmakers over how to settle a \$15.2 billion deficit. State Controller John Chiang will release more than \$1.4 billion to the state's 110 community colleges in the next few weeks.

Torrance-based El Camino College is expected to receive more than \$1 million in student aid, which the school will use mostly to pay itself back. Harbor College in Wilmington, which was also forced to tap reserves, awards about \$500,000 in state aid each year.

In addition to problems caused by the budget impasse, college students are also victims of the foreclosure crisis. Fewer homeowners equal less property taxes and less money to fund schools.

In June, Assemblymember Pedro Nava, Chair of the Assembly Banking & Finance Committee, along with the Assembly Higher Education Committee, heard testimony at an informational hearing regarding the current crisis in the student loan markets and its impacts on access to higher education for California students.

"Today's hearing was a wake-up call for all of us. We must do everything we can to keep the doors to higher education open to all students," Nava said.

"Not only is the sub-prime mortgage crisis and the credit crisis reverberating across all sectors of our state and country, but is impacting our students as well. The economic well-being of our state and nation is dependent upon an educated workforce and something must be done. This is why I am asking the 103 lending institutions that have suspended loans to college students to reconsider their positions." education today,

students are becoming more and more dependent on loans," said Louise Hendrickson, University of California Student Association President. "Decreased availability of affordable loans with manageable terms is a crisis that will turn many students away from higher education."

Press Telegram

Compton replaces Brown

JC FOOTBALL: Head coach fired after three games.

By David Felton, Staff Writer

Article Launched: 09/29/2008 10:58:30 PM PDT

Jason Brown has been fired at El Camino College Compton Center after just three games as head football coach at his alma mater.

Brown and ECC Compton athletic director Albert "Lefty" Olguin confirmed Monday that Brown was replaced as head coach by defensive backs coach Sean Fernandes last week, although neither would discuss the reason.

"I can't comment on it," Brown said Monday afternoon. "I'm no longer the coach. They let me go."

Olguin cited confidentiality rules and only confirmed that Fernandes is now in charge.

"He is running the program," Olguin said.

Brown said defensive coordinator Keith Donerson was fired as well.

Brown, a former star quarterback for the Tartars, was hired in January to replace Angelo Jackson. Compton had a 1-2 record under Brown, including a 42-34 victory over Pasadena City. Compton's losses under him were to Fullerton and El Camino, both of which are ranked in the state's top 10.

Fernandes took over the program late last week and led the team in Saturday's 52-40 loss to Southwestern.

"I was just a little surprised," Fernandes said Monday of the change. "I'm lost for words. I don't know exactly what's going on or what happened."

Fernandes has coached at the prep and college levels in Southern California for about 19 years. He has coached prep football at Compton, Dominguez, Lynwood and Rancho Verde, and coached two stints at the University of La Verne. He also was defensive coordinator at Compton under former coach Cornell Ward. Fernandes said Brown's firing was a "big shock" to the players and compared last week's effort against Southwestern to an "up-and-down roller coaster."