

What if CCSF loses its accreditation?

San Francisco Chronicle

By [Nanette Asimov](#)

April 1, 2013

Tens of thousands of students expect to enroll at City College of San Francisco next fall and are counting on the idea that its accreditation won't be revoked this summer.

But what if it is?

"In the unfortunate event their accreditation is revoked, there is a real possibility that City College would be a shell," said Erik Skinner, executive vice chancellor for the state's community college system.

"If some neighboring college districts opened centers or leased space on the property of City College, that's another potential outcome," he said. "But it would no longer be City College of San Francisco."

It's not that Skinner or other education officials believe that will happen. But they know it could.

When not shrouded in fog, the main campus on Ocean and Phelan avenues offers vistas as far as the Pacific. Hawks soar among the eucalyptus, and Diego Rivera murals are visible here and there like gems stuck in concrete. City College also shows up in dozens of places around the city, from a gleaming Chinatown high-rise to workshops at San Francisco International Airport. Some 85,000 students are enrolled. More than 2,600 people work there.

Deficiencies remain

Employees have worked hard since July to transform the school's finances, governance and quality controls. But they haven't fixed all 14 major deficiencies, as required for accreditation. College administrators hope the report they submitted on March 15 will show the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges that they are able to serve students well into the future.

"The work the college has done is very impressive," Skinner said. "That said, there are still deficiencies."

Nor is the thick report sufficient proof that the college has turned around. An accrediting team will visit City College for several days in early April to verify that its claims are accurate - no sure bet.

"It's fair to say that City College has an issue of credibility," Skinner said. When the team visited a year ago, it found that City College had made numerous claims of quality that it couldn't back up. Three months later, the accrediting commission zapped the college with its harshest sanction, "show cause," and ordered it to prove by March 15 that everything had been repaired.

Now, if the school can't provide evidence to the skeptical inspectors, City College could be another step closer to losing its right to stay open and accredited.

That's what happened in 2006 to Compton College, the state's only public college to have its accreditation revoked.

Unlike City College, Compton's troubles included corruption, and a former board member pleaded guilty to stealing more than \$1 million in public funds. When the accreditation verdict came out, Tom Henry was the state-appointed "special trustee" overseeing the troubled college in working-class Compton, the Los Angeles County hometown of entertainers Mort Sahl and Ice Cube.

"There was no cookbook" telling him what to do, Henry said. But he wanted Compton's students to continue attending school there and to avoid turning its campus into an empty shell.

"I went out and begged," Henry said. He visited college chancellors, presidents and trustees to make the case that they should adopt Compton as their satellite campus. "I pleaded for an institution to step up."

Shifting strategy

No one did. Then, he said, he got smart.

Henry issued a formal "request for proposal," dangling Compton as a juicy tidbit worth competing for.

"I got one application," he said. It came from the El Camino College District, just 6 miles away.

The plan was for the Compton college district to remain intact as a business entity, as would City College if it closed. The state - in better fiscal shape than in recent years - would provide a \$30 million loan and let El Camino offer courses in Compton's buildings under El Camino's accreditation.

The result was the El Camino College Compton Center with some faculty from the old college, but not the old administration, and run by President Thomas Fallo of El Camino and a state-appointed special trustee.

If City College's accreditation is revoked, it might seem natural to follow Compton's lead. But that would be wrong, state officials say.

"It's a very problematic approach and unlikely to be repeated," Skinner said.

Disagreements arose between the Compton district, which had a new special trustee, and the El Camino district, which had to approve its expenditures. Things got so bad that in 2011 Fallo drew up a termination letter to end the partnership.

Cue alarm bells here. Some things had been going right with Compton - including enrollment back above 10,000 from its nadir of 6,700 - and the state didn't want to risk losing that. So Jack Scott, then the state's chancellor for community colleges, asked Henry to return as special trustee. Fallo rescinded his letter, and things settled down.

Yet, it will take another six to 10 years before Compton can expect to regain accreditation and become independent again.

Planning for the worst

City College's own "closure report," required by the accrediting commission, describes how it would help thousands of students transfer to other colleges and dispose of its assets. It says nothing about partnering with another college.

Interim Chancellor Thelma Scott-Skillman has declined to speak publicly about the college. But her spokesman, Larry Kamer, said she has "reached out to other colleges in the state about what a relationship with them might look like if City College were to close.

"Hopefully we never have to go there."

## Investments in Education May Be Misdirected

New York Times

By EDUARDO PORTER

Published: April 2, 2013

James Heckman is one of the nation's top economists studying human development. Thirteen years ago, he shared the Nobel for economics. In February, he stood before the annual meeting of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry, showed the assembled business executives a chart, and demolished the United States' entire approach to education.

The chart showed the results of cognitive tests that were first performed in the 1980s on several hundred low-birthweight 3-year-olds, who were then retested at ages 5, 8 and 18.

Children of mothers who had graduated from college scored much higher at age 3 than those whose mothers had dropped out of high school, proof of the advantage for young children of living in rich, stimulating environments.

More surprising is that the difference in cognitive performance was just as big at age 18 as it had been at age 3.

“The gap is there before kids walk into kindergarten,” Mr. Heckman told me. “School neither increases nor reduces it.”

If education is supposed to help redress inequities at birth and improve the lot of disadvantaged children as they grow up, it is not doing its job.

It is not an isolated finding. Another study by Mr. Heckman and Flavio Cunha of the University of Pennsylvania found that the gap in math abilities between rich and poor children was not much different at age 12 than it was at age 6.

The gap is enormous, one of the widest among the 65 countries taking part in the Program for International Student Achievement run by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

American students from prosperous backgrounds scored on average 110 points higher on reading tests than disadvantaged students, about the same disparity that exists between the average scores in the United States and Tunisia. It is perhaps the main reason income inequality in the United States is passed down the generations at a much higher rate than in most advanced nations.

That's a scandal, considering how much the government spends on education: about 5.5 percent of the nation's economic output in total, from preschool through college.

And it suggests that the angry, worried debate over how to improve the nation's mediocre education — pitting the teachers' unions and the advocates of more money for public schools against the champions of school vouchers and standardized tests — is missing the most important part: infants and toddlers.

Research by Mr. Heckman and others confirms that investment in the early education of disadvantaged children pays extremely high returns down the road. It improves not only their cognitive abilities but also crucial behavioral traits like sociability, motivation and self-esteem.

Studies that have followed children through their adult lives confirm enormous payoffs for these investments, whether measured in improved success in college, higher income or even lower incarceration rates.

The costs of not making these investments are also clear. Julia Isaacs, an expert in child policy at the Urban Institute in Washington, finds that more than half of poor 5-year-olds don't have the math, reading or behavioral skills needed to profitably start kindergarten. If children keep arriving in school with these deficits, no amount of money or teacher evaluations may be enough to improve their lot later in life.

Much attention has focused lately on access to higher education.

A typical worker with a bachelor's degree earns 80 percent more than a high school graduate. That's a premium of more than \$500 a week, a not insubstantial incentive to stay in school. It is bigger than ever before. Yet the growth of college graduation rates has slowed for women and completely stalled for men.

The Economic Report of the President released last month bemoaned how the nation's college completion rate had tumbled down the international rankings, where it now sits in 14th place among O.E.C.D. countries.

The report restated the president's vow to increase the number of college graduates by 50 percent by 2020, and laid out how the federal government has spent billions in grants and tax breaks to help ease the effects of rising tuition and fees. Last year the government spent almost \$40 billion on Pell grants, more than twice as much as when President Obama came to office.

Mr. Heckman's chart suggests that by the time most 5-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds reach college age, Pell grants are going to do them little good.

“Augmenting family income or reducing college tuition at the stage of the life cycle when a child goes to college does not go far in compensating for low levels of previous investment,” Mr. Heckman and Mr. Cunha wrote.

Mr. Heckman and Mr. Cunha estimated that raising high school graduation rates of the most disadvantaged children to 64 percent from 41 percent would cost 35 to 50 percent more if the assistance arrived in their teens rather than before they turned 6.

Erick Hanushek, an expert on the economics of education at Stanford, put it more directly: “We are subsidizing the wrong people and the wrong way.”

To its credit, the Obama administration understands the importance of early investments in children. The president has glowingly cited Mr. Heckman’s research. In his State of the Union address, the president called for universal preschool education.

“Study after study shows that the earlier a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road,” Mr. Obama said at a speech in Decatur, Ga., in February.

But the fresh attention has not translated into money or a shift in priorities. Public spending on higher education is more than three times as large as spending on preschool, according to O.E.C.D. data from 2009. A study by Ms. Isaacs found that in 2008 federal and state governments spent somewhat more than \$10,000 per child in kindergarten through 12th grade. By contrast, 3- to 5-year-olds got less than \$5,000 for their education and care. Children under 3 got \$300.

Mr. Heckman’s proposals are not without critics. They argue that his conclusions about the stupendous returns to early education are mostly based on a limited number of expensive experiments in the 1960s and 1970s that provided rich early education and care to limited numbers of disadvantaged children. They were much more intensive endeavors than universal preschool. It may be overoptimistic to assume these programs could be ratcheted up effectively to a national scale at a reasonable cost.

Yet the critique appears overly harsh in light of the meager improvements bought by the nation’s investments in education today. A study by Mr. Hanushek found that scores in math tests improved only marginally from 1970 to 2000, even after spending per pupil doubled. Scores in reading and science declined.

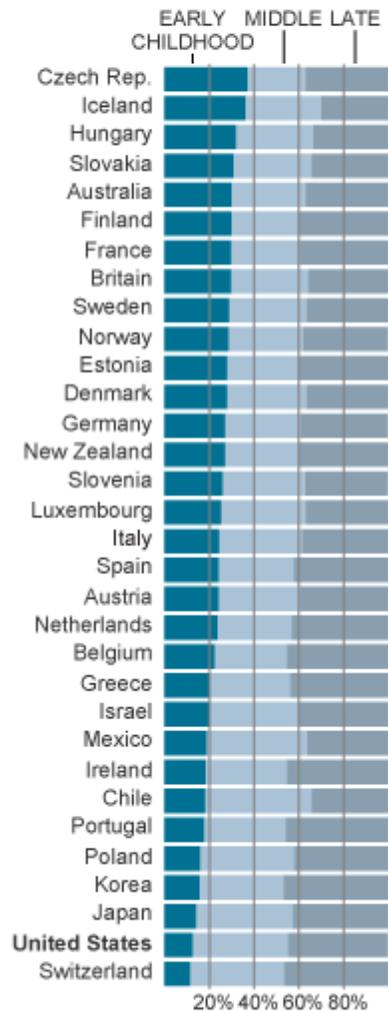
“Early education is an essential piece if we are going to have a better education system,” Barbara Bowman, an expert on early childhood education in Chicago who has advised the Education Department. “We’re inching in that direction.”

Education is always portrayed in the American narrative as the great leveler. But it can’t do its job if it leaves so many behind so early.

## Starting Too Late?

Studies show that disadvantaged children gain the most from preschool attention. But government spending on the very young is much lower in the United States than in most other industrial nations.

### Share of government spending on children



Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Few finishing community college courses on time

Press Telegram

By Kelly Puente, Staff Writer

Posted: 04/06/2013

Long Beach City College student Katherine Hamilton graduated from high school at age 16 with the hopes of finishing college early and starting a career.

Four years later, Hamilton, 20, said she's still stuck in community college unable to get the classes she needs to transfer to a four-year university. Hamilton, who plans on majoring in international business and marketing, said the business classes she needs are hard to get into.

"I thought I'd be almost done by now, but I'm barely halfway through," she said. "Hopefully I can transfer next year. "

Community colleges have long been called "two-year" institutions, but for many of the 2.4 million students in California's community college system, the largest in the nation, the traditional two-year stint has ballooned into six years and beyond as they struggle to transfer and graduate.

In Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties, fewer than half of the community college students tracked over a six-year period transferred, graduated or earned a degree, according to data provided by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. The problem is compounded by what some leaders have called a "perfect storm" of challenges - the state's economic crisis, soaring tuition and enrollment cuts at public universities, record numbers of high school graduates and a flood of unemployed people hoping to enroll in college courses while they search for work.

And most are coming ill-prepared for college-level work. About 85 percent of students need remedial math, while 70 percent are placed in remedial English, putting a strain on an already bottle necked system.

"It's a very challenging time," said California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice Harris, who oversees the state's 112 community colleges.

"We're seeing students unprepared to go to college in the first place," he said. "At the same time, we've cut back on enormous numbers of courses in the last four years and this has slowed down the pathway to success even more, and we are working hard to change that. "

California's community colleges have lost nearly \$1 billion in state funding since 2008, forcing the system to reduce course sections by nearly a quarter and turn away 500,000 potential students.

Last fall, more than 470,000 students were placed on waiting lists for courses. Many students, like Long Beach City College student Benny Lopez, were simply out of luck.

"I tried to get into an English class last semester but the waiting list was too long, I didn't stand a chance," said Lopez, 19. "Most of my friends got put on waiting lists too. "

As a solution, some colleges, like Long Beach City, have cut arts and career technical courses in favor of beefing up their math, English and science departments.

The changes at Long Beach City reflect a larger push for sweeping reforms meant to concentrate resources, streamline courses and improve college success rates.

"The constant budget cutting has seriously eroded our ability to offer the kinds of courses students need," said Dennis Frisch, president of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges and a faculty member at Santa Monica City College. "Our biggest challenge is going to be the way in which we begin to recover from this crisis. "

Robert Shireman of California Competes, an Oakland-based organization that works to improve policies and practices in higher education, said colleges, for one, need to boost the number of counselors.

"We're seeing a major lack of guidance and counseling at the very start of the process," he said. "Some students know exactly what they want, but others are unsure and really need help. That lack of advising means that a lot of students end up in classes that don't fit their interest and don't fit their skill levels. "

With the help of stabilized funding from Proposition 30, Gov. Jerry Brown's tax measure that passed in November, many colleges are now working to add more counselors and improve student support, but process has been slow, Harris said.

"We have a ratio of about 2,000-to-1 (student-to-counselor) and we know that those levels are not a chemistry for success," the chancellor said. "We're trying to drive more resources into counseling and advising students and supporting small programs that we know are successful. The problem is scaling that up to 2.4 million students when there's inadequate resources and insufficient funding. "

While increasing the number of counselors is one solution, Harris said the system is working on other major reforms intended to dramatically improve the time it takes to earn a degree.

Under the Associate of Arts Degree for Transfer program, launched in fall 2011, community colleges and the Cal State University system have joined forces to create a more streamlined degree path that will simplify the transfer process and open doors for

thousands more students. About 50,000 community college students transfer to the CSU each year.

As part of the program, the state has identified 25 common majors that capture about 80 percent of the students who transfer. The Chancellor's Office has set a goal of developing special associate transfer degrees for 20 of the top 25 majors by December.

Students trying to decide which college is right for them could benefit from the new California Community Colleges Scorecard. Set to roll out by the end of April, the scorecard will allow anyone to check how well each institution is faring. The scorecard has data measuring completion rates, retention rates, remedial progress, career technical education rates and an overall demographic profile.

Harris said the scorecard will hold colleges accountable with a detailed look at student achievement.

"The scorecard will make our system the most transparent and accountable in the country," he said.

Walter Bumphus, president of the American Association of Community Colleges, said efforts like the transfer degree program and scorecard are moving California's community colleges in the right direction.

"For decades California had the strongest community college system in the country, but they've certainly taken a big hit with their funding losses," he said. "Overall, I think our country's community college system has never been stronger, and 10 years from now I think we'll see some remarkable transformations. The future looks bright for California. "

**El Camino College urges South Bay high school grads to register early**

## **THE DAILY BREEZE, April 6, 2013**

[www.dailybreeze.com/news/ci\\_22970774/el-camino-college-urges-south-bay-high-school](http://www.dailybreeze.com/news/ci_22970774/el-camino-college-urges-south-bay-high-school)

Rob Kuznia

South Bay households with at least one graduating high school senior will soon be getting a postcard from El Camino College that shouldn't be discounted as junk mail.

The postcards -- which will land in mailboxes over the next couple of weeks -- are part of a campaign to inform local high school seniors of a new policy that grants them a head start on registering for classes at the Torrance-area community college.

The change is El Camino's customized effort to ease the squeeze on younger students seeking classes that count toward a timely acquisition of an associate degree or transfer to a four-year college. Graduating seniors who follow the necessary steps will be able to register on June 4, a few days before the rest of the pack.

"If students wake up on Aug. 15 and say, 'Gee, I think I'll register for classes at El Camino,' they are not going to get any classes," El Camino spokesperson Ann Garten said.

Thanks to three long years of unforgiving budget cuts that led to a mass evaporation of course offerings, registering for classes at El Camino College in recent years has resembled a game of musical chairs, with record numbers of students losing out and winding up on waiting lists. Heightened student demand has only exacerbated the crunch, due to the parallel budget woes limiting seats at four-year universities, not to mention the droves of the newly laid off in need of new skills.

El Camino officials eventually came to notice that graduating high school seniors were getting the rawest deal, because continuing students - meaning students who have already taken El Camino classes -- were given first dibs.

The policy shift granting higher priority to graduating seniors actually began last year, but college officials have only recently started to ratchet up the campaign to get the word out.

"We are really focusing on those high school seniors to make sure they understand: If you do this, you are going to be able to register at the beginning, in front of a whole group of other people," Garten said.

El Camino officials are hoping registration for upcoming fall classes will be smoother for all students no matter their age, in part due to the recent passage of a statewide tax increase that finally stops the bleeding - and allows the college to add more sections.

But the bump from that initiative, Proposition 30, won't be enough to make up for the massive loss over three years.

Granting graduating seniors earlier access is an attempt to further ease the bottleneck, in part by promoting the virtue of being on the ball.

The move affords first-time, college-goers a leg up over older students who have already gotten started on their post-secondary education, some of whom might be taking a slower approach. It also gives preferential treatment to those students whose families live in the area, which essentially includes every high school in the South Bay except for the pair on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Students from those two high schools, as well as their peers from schools in the Harbor Area, feed into the Los Angeles Community College District. Calls to Harbor College for comment went unreturned.

Tweaking the priority list at El Camino is bound to affect a good number of students. El Camino serves a younger population than the average community college in California, Garten said. About a third of its students are 19 or younger.

It is a popular choice for graduating seniors. The number of graduates from South Bay high schools that go straight to El Camino is considerable, accounting for about 40 percent of all recent graduates of high schools in the Torrance and Redondo Beach school districts, according to the latest data from El Camino, ending in 2011.

El Camino's campaign to get the word out to seniors doesn't stop at the postcards.

Garten said college representatives have touted the new rules at high school college fairs, in high school classrooms and in high school gymnasiums for student assemblies.

The effort hasn't gone unnoticed by high school counselors.

"They sent us an email a few weeks ago requesting the mailing addresses of our seniors so they can send a postcard," said Christine MacInnis, a counselor at North High in Torrance. "It's definitely a step in the right direction."

Just because graduating seniors have priority doesn't mean they can just show up to El Camino on June 4 and expect to register if they haven't already jumped through a few hoops. Before selecting courses, they must fill out an application, meet with a counselor and take an assessment to learn the level of math and English courses they should be taking.

College officials are also encouraging students to go through an orientation -- online or in person -- to familiarize themselves with the college and its basic resources.

That step is currently optional, but it won't be next year for students who want to register early at community colleges across California. This will include creating an education plan that better enables students to map out their goals.

At El Camino, graduating seniors are moving up in line, but they aren't at the front. By state decree, veterans, the economically disadvantaged, foster youth and students with disabilities get to go first. And still ahead of the bulk of graduating seniors at El Camino are the local honors transfer students -- that is, recent high school grads who have met certain academic benchmarks, such as a minimum GPA of 3.1, completion of an essay and achievement of a certain level on an English test.

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## **El Camino College receives record \$2 million donation**

### **THE DAILY BREEZE, April 8, 2013**

[www.dailybreeze.com/news/ci\\_22980689/el-camino-college-receives-record-2-million-donation](http://www.dailybreeze.com/news/ci_22980689/el-camino-college-receives-record-2-million-donation)

By Rob Kuznia, Staff Writer

Hermosa Beach philanthropist Elizabeth Noble has pledged El Camino College a \$2 million donation - the single largest gift in the 66-year history of the college.

Noble's contribution will be used to start an endowment that will permanently fund a teaching position in the college's business division. Called the Noble Endowed Chair for Business, it will be the first such endowed chair at the college, and just one of two of its kind at community colleges in California.

"We are privileged to receive Mrs. Noble's historic contribution, which will benefit El Camino College students for many years," El Camino College President Thomas Fallo said. "We thank her for this substantial gift, which serves as a model for community colleges throughout the state. "

Noble made the donation - which will be distributed upon her death - in honor of her late husband, Joe Boyd Noble, who grew up in Redondo Beach and eventually started a successful real-estate company in Manhattan Beach.

Today, the family name is imprinted on all manner of South Bay landmarks: Noble Park in Hermosa Beach, Noble Plaza at Redondo Union High School and Noble Walk at Little Company of Mary Hospital in Torrance.

"He was brought up in a very poor household, and decided that when he got a little money, he would give it away," Noble said of her husband of 49 years, who died in 1998 at age 72. "That was the way he felt."

Joe Boyd Noble was raised by his mother, a housekeeper, after his father died at a young age. He was born in Arkansas but moved to Redondo Beach at age 11. After serving in the U.S. Navy in World War II, he attended USC on a GI bill scholarship. That's where he met Elizabeth, who grew up in San Pedro. He studied teaching; she studied business. Their paths first crossed when his fraternity came to an open house hosted by her sorority in the 1940s.

"It was an open house, and he walked in the front door and that was the end of him," she quipped.

He graduated from Redondo Union High School in 1943 and from El Camino College in 1948.

"He loved El Camino," Elizabeth Noble said. "He had the best time in the world there. "

In 1997, he was named one of El Camino's 50 Distinguished Alumni during the college's 50th anniversary.

After college, the couple spent five years in Germany, which was under reconstruction due to the devastation wrought by World War II. There, he worked as a teacher and she worked as the secretary to a commanding officer of counter-intelligence.

"There was a lot of rubble still around," remembers Noble, who recently turned 86.

They returned to the South Bay in the 1950s with two babies, sons Cameron and Bradley. Although Joe studied teaching, upon his arrival he was quick to note the promise of real estate in sunny California amid the Baby-Boomer explosion.

"He started buying and selling; he said 'this is the business to be in,'" Noble said.

In 1961, Joe founded Noble Realty Company in Manhattan Beach. Elizabeth Noble had her real-estate license, but worked in his office in more of an administrative capacity. He was president of the South Bay Board of Realtors in 1972. The City of Hermosa Beach named him Man of the Year in 1971 and he served on the city's Planning Commission for 11 years.

In 1982, he was given USC's Tommy Award for distinguished alumni. In 1995, the Nobles donated a 1928 Model A Ford convertible pickup to the USC Athletic Department, which raffled it off at that year's USC-UCLA football game, raising more than \$19,000 and purchasing a new 15-passenger van for the department.

Elizabeth Noble, meanwhile, still owns many commercial properties on Pier Avenue in Hermosa Beach, as well as a good number of residential dwellings in all three beach cities.

About five years ago, she volunteered as an after-school instructor, teaching an etiquette class at Redondo Union High School.

She said she agreed to the latest donation in response to a call placed by a representative from the El Camino College Foundation, which will administer the restricted account.

In addition to establishing the ECC Noble Endowed Chair for Business, Elizabeth Noble has supported El Camino College for many years, offering a significant donation toward the remodel of the woodworking and cabinetry shop and by creating the Joe Boyd Noble Memorial Scholarship, which awards \$2,000 to a deserving student annually.

Noble said she appreciates the recognition El Camino is devoting to her donation, but when contacted Monday she expressed some concern.

"I hope it doesn't look like flaunting," she said.

[rob.kuznia@dailybreeze.com](mailto:rob.kuznia@dailybreeze.com) @robkuznia on Twitter

## A Faculty Refuge Becomes an Accreditor's Target

The Chronicle of Higher Education

April 1, 2013

By Peter Schmidt

San Francisco

This city's community college has much that instructors elsewhere complain about missing.

Its administration is lean, and its shared-governance system gives its faculty a lot of say. Full-timers account for about 45 percent of its faculty, a proportion about half again as large as at most other California community colleges. Its part-time instructors have good access to health benefits and earn nearly as much per hour as full-timers.

The college gives its academic departments substantial leeway to tailor programs to the needs of its 85,000 students, who include large numbers of immigrants needing English-language instruction, older adults seeking training for emerging local industries, and low-income, first-generation college students who see the institution as their best hope for upward mobility. It operates at more than 100 sites.

Now, however, the City College of San Francisco might pay a heavy price for its faculty-oriented ethos: being shut down.

The college has been warned that it faces imminent loss of accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Many of the college's strengths in the eyes of its faculty are viewed by its accreditor as flaws. The commission's evaluation of the college concluded, for example, that it had long devoted too large a share of its annual budget—more than 92 percent—to salaries and benefits, causing it to spend well beyond its means. And the commission called the college's governance structure, under which 43 separate committees with employee representation advised the Board of Trustees, far too complex to allow for timely decision-making.

In its scramble to satisfy the commission, the college has met resistance from its employee unions, its Academic Senate, and many of its students. The tensions have exposed a fault line between faculty members' vision of how a community college should operate and an accreditor's standards for judging such institutions in a time of limited resources and increased demands for accountability.

Top officials here characterize many of the steps they have taken to retain accreditation as concessions to reality. Thelma Scott-Skillman, who took over as interim chancellor last fall, says the college simply can no longer be "all things to all people at all times."

But the Save CCSF coalition—a group of faculty, staff, and students—argues that the college exemplifies how such institutions should operate. It is the accreditation process, the group has said, and not the college, that needs to be overhauled.

### Pointing Fingers

The accreditor's critique of the college focused on its financial troubles, which last fiscal year put the institution in the red by about \$2-million out a budget of \$191-million, and have left it with just \$4.5-million in reserve funds. Similar conclusions were reached last year in a state financial review, which concluded that the college was in "a perilous financial position."

The state review said the college employed twice as many full-time faculty per 1,000 full-time-equivalent students as comparable community colleges did. One reason is that the more than 60 faculty members who chair the college's academic departments have more administrative responsibilities than department heads elsewhere. Those faculty leaders also have their own collective-bargaining unit, the Department Chair Council, which negotiates their contracts to perform such work.

The accreditor's evaluation characterized many of the college's problems as the product of an elaborate governance model, which, it said, poorly defined responsibilities and bred both distrust among key players and resistance to the board and administration's authority. The college received the commission's toughest sanction partly for its failure to fully respond to recommendations made by the accreditor in a previous evaluation, in 2006.

Steve Ngo, a member of the college's Board of Trustees, argues that the institution's governance system was "upside down," with faculty members' needs dictating institutional priorities and academic concerns trumping financial considerations. Classes with low enrollments went uncanceled, he says, so that the part-timers who taught them could keep their health benefits. Administrators' performance evaluations gave less weight to the chancellor's opinion than to the results of anonymous surveys of the faculty as a whole.

"People here don't think they have a boss," Mr. Ngo says.

The institution's troubles have led it to factor prominently in a broader debate over the governance of California's 112 community colleges, 27 of which have been given sanctions or warnings by their regional accreditor. California Competes, a nonprofit group of business and civic leaders, has blamed the community colleges' accreditation troubles largely on state regulations that, it says, must be changed because they give excessive power to the institutions' academic senates.

Brice W. Harris, chancellor of the state's community-college system, argues that California Compete's analysis exaggerates the power of academic senates. He says the

sanctioned colleges have deeper problems, such as fiscal woes resulting from cuts in their state appropriations.

In the case of City College, a similar assessment is offered by Robert Agrella a special trustee appointed by the college's board, under state pressure, to guide the institution back into its accreditor's good graces. He says it is "a stretch" to blame City College's many problems on its Academic Senate, especially considering how many of the college's councils and committees have asserted powers that the senate never gave them.

### Tough Spot, Tough Talk

The breakdown in communication at City College was evident on its main campus in February, during a rally of about 300 students, faculty members, and community activists staged by the Save CCSF coalition. "This is a school for the community, right?" Shanell Williams, president of the college's student council, exclaimed in rousing the crowd.

The organizers' plan was to march on the administration's headquarters and present the interim chancellor with a list of demands that included calls for her to speak out against the accreditor and tell the board "to reverse all cuts to classes, services, staff, and faculty." They also planned to demand that the college, which has experienced sharp reductions in its state support in response to shrinking enrollment and California's economic woes, spend revenue from a special local property tax passed in November on preserving educational offerings rather than on financing pensions and shoring up the college's reserves.

Upon arriving at the administration building, however, the protesters were told that Ms. Scott-Skillman was out of town at a state conference, away on the very day that marked the college's deadline for public input on its plans for retaining accreditation.

A banner at the rally said, "Save City College of SF from the 1%." The coalition and some faculty leaders have promoted the idea that the accreditor has ulterior motives, like a desire to bust unions or downsize public colleges to benefit private education providers or wealthy people who want low taxes. Such theories, offered without solid evidence, have helped generate much more opposition to the accreditor here than in other California cities with sanctioned colleges.

Barbara A. Beno, the commission's president, says "there is no agenda other than to provide quality education."

The changes the college plans to make to retain accreditation are especially threatening to its Department Chair Council, the unusual collective-bargaining unit that represents the more than 60 faculty members who head its academic departments. Mr. Agrella wants the college to cut the chairs' pay and eliminate more than half of their positions, partly to free up money to replace administrators whose positions went unfilled after recent retirements. The college's representatives have declared an impasse in negotiations because the chairs' union has refused to go along.

"This does not feel like collective bargaining to me," says Madeline Mueller, head of the college's music department and a member of the chairs' bargaining team. "It feels like union busting."

American Federation of Teachers Local 2121, which represents both full- and part-time faculty members at the college, similarly opposes plans to cut full-timers' pay by 5 percent more than it has already been cut and to cut part-timers' pay by 10 percent. It has filed an unfair-labor-practices complaint accusing the college administration of imposing pay cuts unilaterally.

"I don't think anyone disagrees that folks are in a tough spot," says Alisa Messer, the union local's president. "But we have been disappointed not to see more willingness to work together."

### Unfinished Business

The "show cause" sanction that the accreditor gave the college last July provided it until March 15 to shore up its finances, overhaul its governance and operations, and make plans for its own closure in the event its efforts are deemed insufficient.

The college responded just before the deadline with a report describing how it had made many of the demanded changes but had managed only to plan others. It blamed some of the lack of progress on "substantial opposition" from employee groups.

The steps the college has taken include revising its mission statement to get out of the business of providing citizenship education and lifelong learning; establishing a comprehensive, centralized system to track how well its students are learning; and overhauling how it maintains facilities and technology.

To make its decision-making processes more efficient, the college has consolidated or scrapped many committees that had advised its board and has put the board through training to discourage infighting and micromanagement of the administration. It has also established 12 new dean positions to handle some responsibilities now held by department chairs, many of whom could see their administrative positions eliminated.

As part of its efforts to reduce spending and build up its reserves, the college has laid off 34 of about 690 classified staff members and stopped offering classes at a few small sites. It cut employee wages by about 3 to 5 percent, depending on job category, this fiscal year.

"We have done a lot of work—good work," says Mr. Agrella, the special trustee. He describes himself as cautiously optimistic that the commission will vote in June to spare the college, which, he says, could not possibly have met all of the accreditor's demands in the nine months given.

As special trustee, Mr. Agrella has the power to veto decisions by the college's board. He says he has had a good relationship with top college officials in pushing for change, But

faculty leaders say the result has been a top-down power dynamic that has destroyed shared governance and left only its facade.

"We have a very small voice in what is happening," says Karen Saginor, the Academic Senate's president. It is the administration, she says, that is "calling the shots."

## Are Student Loans Destroying the Economy?

<http://m.theatlantic.com>

DEREK THOMPSON

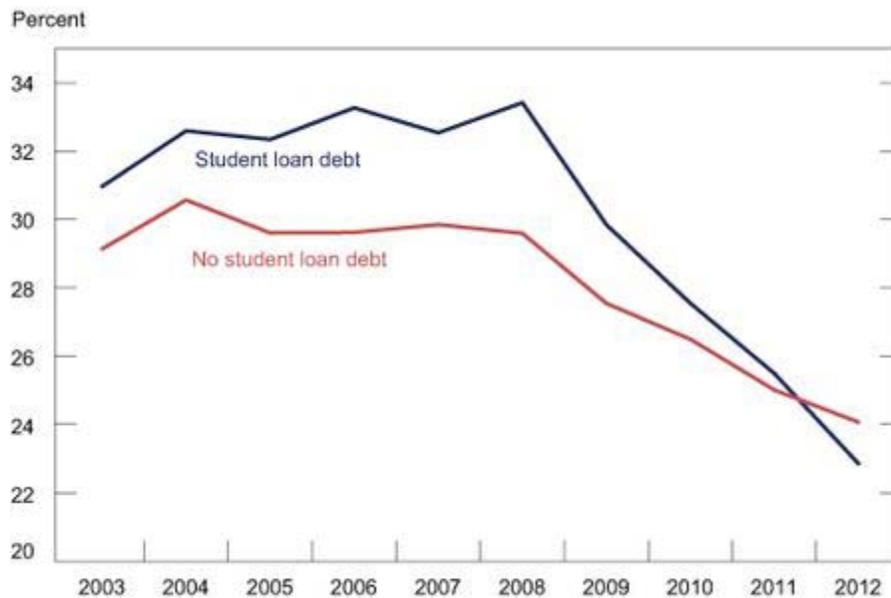
APR 22 2013

Recoveries are powered by two things. Houses and cars. And young people aren't buying either.

That's the conclusion from a new study out of the New York Fed, via Brad Plumer, that can be easily read as blaming student debt for holding back the recovery by squashing home and auto sales.

The share of 30-year-olds with student debt who have taken out a mortgage has collapsed since the recession struck (ditto those without student debt).

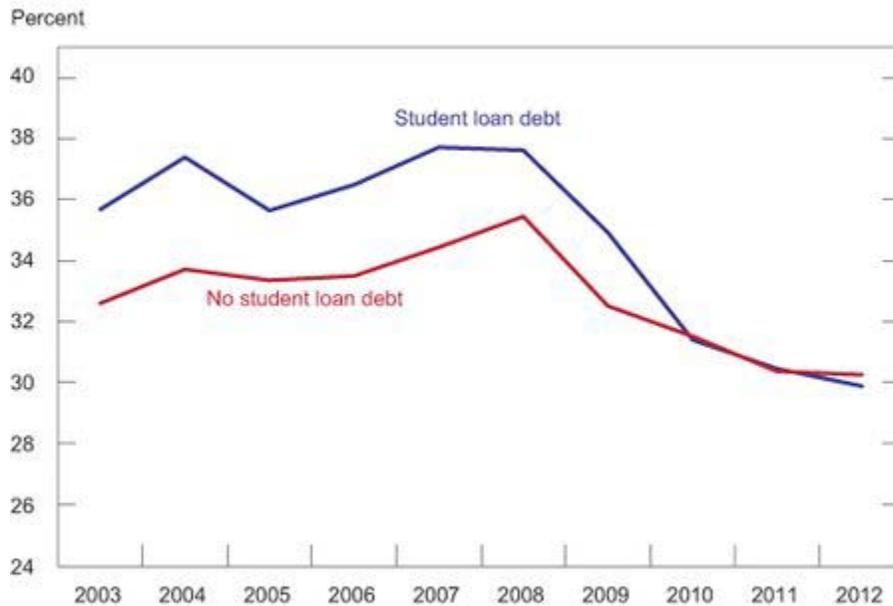
Proportion of Borrowers with Home-secured Debt at Age 30



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Consumer Credit Panel/Equifax.

And the share of 25-year-olds with student debt who also have an auto loan has fallen since the crash, as well (ditto again those without student debt).

## Proportion of Borrowers with Auto Debt at Age 25



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Consumer Credit Panel/Equifax.

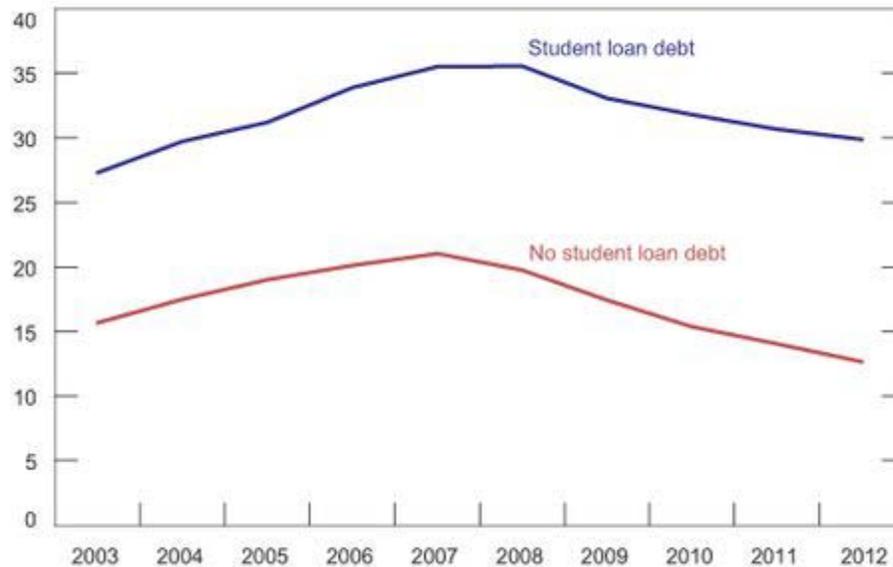
This study seems to feed into a familiarly scary story about student debt as a dangerous bubble that is piling unprecedented levels of debt on young people, and is wrecking the economy by preventing them from starting their lives.

There's two problems with that story. First, as Jordan Weissmann and I wrote for *The Atlantic*, there are so many reasons that cars and houses are falling out of favor with young people beyond student loans (and even beyond the miserable economy) that it's impossible to pick a single culprit. For example, companies like Ford are vocally worried that smartphones are replacing cars as symbols of grown-up sociability, and young people are bunching in urban and urban-lite areas with many apartments and good public transit.

Second, it's a myth that college graduates have more debt than they used to. In fact, they have less. Total debt for 20-somethings has fallen since its peak in 2008, as it has for every age group in this period of deleveraging. Families that feasted on credit in the last decade have spent the last few years paying back what they owe and cutting back their excessive spending. Young people, with and without student loans, have done the very same.

## Average Total Debt of Borrowers at Age 25

Thousands of U.S. dollars



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Consumer Credit Panel/Equifax.

Average debt among twentysomethings is at its lowest since 1995, according to a [recent Pew Research Center report](#). More than a fifth of young households in 2010 didn't have any debt at all -- the lowest in 30 years.

What's really changed is what kind of debt they have. Young people have swapped student loans for mortgage and auto loans. They've traded cars for college and homes for homework.

And that's okay! Compared to cars and houses, higher education is a much safer investment. For all the media criticism about college losing its luster, you could make a good argument that it's never been more important. While the returns to college have flattened recently, wage growth has been even weaker (or negative) among non-college grads. As a result, the "bonus" that young workers get from going to college, which economists call, the "college premium," has tripled in the last 30 years. Today, the share of the 18-24-year-old population enrolled in school is at an all-time high 45 percent today.

I tend to regard the most educated generation in American history as good news, but even good news has its downsides. The downside here is that millions of young people invested in their human capital during a period of overall deleveraging. Little was left over for cars and houses. And the twin engines of the consumer economy were starved for fresh fuel.

Meta Brown and Sydnee Caldwell, the authors of [the New York Fed study](#), end on a pessimistic note ...

While highly skilled young workers have traditionally provided a vital influx of new, affluent consumers to U.S. housing and auto markets, unprecedented student debt may dampen their influence in today's marketplace.

... but here's a more optimistic read. With youth unemployment kissing 18 percent through 2010, more young American realized that the opportunity cost of leaving the labor force to go to school had never been lower. They wouldn't have bought homes, anyway. They wouldn't have bought cars, anyway. The economy was too rotten. So for many of them, the choice wasn't been a four-bedroom house and four more years of school. It was between school and underemployment. They chose wisely.

So, optimistically, today's debt swap could work like a reverse-stimulus, sucking energy from the economy in the short-term but empowering our labor force in the long-term when, eventually, some of these students will get married, buy a house, and put some wheels in their garage, having invested in their education before they took out their first car loan.

Time for public employee unions to pick up the tab

LA Times

By Steve Lopez

April 23, 2013,

For more than half of my 38 years in the news business, I've been a member of a union, though I'm not currently. And my late father was a proud Teamster for decades.

So I appreciate the goods that unions deliver to nearly 15 million members in the United States: living wages and good benefits. Workplace safety. A measure of job security. And protection against management abuse.

In other words, don't count me among those who vilify organized labor, which in many parts of the country offers the best hope for hanging on to a place in the middle class. And when it comes to public employee unions, no, they shouldn't have to trade pensions for 401(k)s, though a hybrid wouldn't be so bad. We're going to have enough of a disaster on our hands when non-union retirees end up flat broke and on the dole, especially if Social Security gets trimmed.

If you were waiting for a "but," here it comes.

It's time for public employee unions to wake up and take a look around. Government services are shrinking, cities are crumbling, and they're enjoying pay and benefit packages that many in the private sector would kill for. They need to give a little back. Yeah, I know, some of them already have. But it's time for a little more.

On healthcare contributions. On raises. On pensions. On retirement ages.

Why?

Because up and down the state of California, and beyond, public officials foolishly negotiated contracts they can't pay for without taking a cleaver to basic services, including police and fire protection, park maintenance, street repair. It's not just the fault of those contracts. There's also the economic dip and the housing crash, which put a squeeze on revenue. But that perfect storm has led to big trouble in San Jose and Stockton and Fresno and San Diego.

And of course in Los Angeles.

On Monday, Mayor Villaraigosa gave us a budget that looks OK this year — though you can never trust his numbers. Just a few months ago he was telling us he had to have a half-cent sales tax hike or it'd be Mad Max around here. The tax was rejected, and now the mayor who threatened chaos is announcing restored services.

He added, however, that if the next mayor doesn't negotiate some givebacks, we're in trouble.

He's slick, isn't he? Villaraigosa will be sipping a cocktail on a beach somewhere in a couple of years, or running for who knows what, telling everyone that services were being restored when he left office thanks to all the tough choices he made. And yes, he did take on his union brethren. But he's only begun to clean up the mess he made after giving away the store in 2007 (along with mayoral candidates Wendy Greuel and Eric Garcetti), promising 25% raises over several years.

"If labor concessions and police overtime controls are not achieved," says a report from Miguel Santana, the city's chief administrative officer, "the deficit for 2014-15 balloons to \$267 million and the outlook will no longer show a surplus in 2017-18 but a deficit of \$93 million."

Santana told me that in order for the city to avoid deficits, 60% of the civilian workforce is going to have to forgo 5.5% raises set for Jan. 1. That's a lousy Christmas present, for sure, but Santa has been good in recent years.

"Even those who received no raises for four years" will have had 17.25% in total raises since 2006, Santana said.

Under Villaraigosa's plan, those who already got a 5.5% raise this year would have to give it back, and there would be no raises until July 2017.

The unions are sure to fight to the death on any such sacrifice. And they'll say no, as well, to another budget-balancing concession Santana is pushing.

If every city employee were to contribute 10% of the cost of his or her health insurance, there'd be a savings of about \$51 million a year. Currently, about 70% of the city's workforce pays nothing for healthcare premiums.

Did you just spit on yourself?

You read correctly. They pay nothing, and who wouldn't love that deal?

You won't hear L.A.'s labor bosses talking about givebacks, other than to remind everyone that they've already agreed to some, particularly on deals for future employees. Brian D'Arcy, head of the IBEW local that has 8,600 DWP employees and has plowed a few million dollars into campaign spending on Greuel's behalf, told me he's expecting cost-of-living increases.

And he's not kidding, even though his employees make as much as 40% more than counterparts in other city departments and 20% more than employees at 13 comparable utilities, according to a report by the ratepayer advocate.

"I have labor blood in me," said Jaime Regalado, former head of the Pat Brown Institute of Public Affairs at Cal State L.A., who says he abhors attacks on unions. But he added that he believes public employees "are going to have to give back until we have a different kind of economy, and I'm not holding my breath on that."

Regalado said he believes that for labor, it will come down to a question of givebacks or furloughs, and possibly even layoffs.

Garcetti has already negotiated some concessions, and Greuel says she'll ask for more, despite being bankrolled by the very people she'll need to crack down on. But they're both pro-labor in a big way, so who knows if they'll be pit bulls or lap dogs.

Labor leaders, meanwhile, should ask themselves this:

If a few reasonable tweaks can save jobs, maintain services and silence a few critics, would that be such a bad deal?

## Torrance Councilwoman Susan Rhilinger to resign

# THE DAILY BREEZE, April 23, 2013

### [Torrance Councilwoman Susan Rhilinger to resign](#)

By Nick Green Staff Writer



*Torrance Councilwoman Susan Rhilinger*

Torrance Councilwoman Susan Rhilinger, who continues to battle medical problems, announced Tuesday that she intends to resign June 30 and move to Cape Cod in search of a slower pace of life.

During the same City Council meeting where Rhilinger revealed her plans, Councilman Cliff Numark also announced he will run this November for a spot on the five-member El Camino College District Board of Trustees, meaning he, too, would step down if he wins election.

Rhilinger and Numark both have three years left on their terms.

Rhilinger, a former Torrance Police Department captain, was seen as a potential successor to Mayor Frank Scotto when his term ends next year. Three City Council seats are also up for grabs in June 2014.

In October 2011, Rhilinger announced she would not seek re-election to the City Council the following year because of ill health. She later rescinded her announcement and won a second term by acclamation after the 2012 election was canceled when the incumbents faced no challengers.

This time, however, it appears Rhilinger will not rethink her resignation.

"I am heeding medical advice to reduce the level of stress in my life," she said in a prepared statement. "I will be relocating, at least for the next year, to a small town on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where I spent many restorative vacations during my police career.

"I am hoping that the slower pace of life there will help me focus more on my personal needs and allow me to bring my life back into balance."

Rhilinger added that leaving at the end of the fiscal year will allow her to see the budget process for 2013-14 to its conclusion.

"So shocked to find out that my colleague Susan Rhilinger will be resigning her seat on the City Council," tweeted Councilman Pat Furey, who also was elected in 2008. "She has truly been like a sister to me, and Torrance will surely miss her leadership in the coming years."

Rhilinger was the top vote-getter in the 2008 election. Only Councilman Bill Sutherland has formally announced his candidacy for the mayoral post.

Numark, who works for the American Red Cross, was similarly first elected in 2008.

The El Camino trustee election this fall will be the first where voters will cast ballots for candidates in their geographic area rather than at large.

The redrawn boundaries will affect Trustee Maureen O'Donnell, a former Torrance councilwoman who will be effectively pushed out of office by the move unless she moves to another part of town.

The new boundaries were approved by the board last year.

Articles sent since the last Board meeting:

1. Are Student Loans Destroying the Economy? (4-22-13)
2. Time for public employee unions to pick up the tab. (4-23-13)
3. Torrance Councilwoman Susan Rhilinger to resign. (4-23-13)