

New ECC Math Business Allied Health Building

THE DAILY BREEZE, March 6, 2013

<http://photos.dailybreeze.com/2013/03/photos-new-ecc-math-business-allied-health-building/>

Torrance, Calif., -- 03-06-13 - El Camino College held a grand opening for its brand new Math Business Allied Health Building Wednesday. The \$35.1 million MBA Building is the second new instructional building on the Torrance-area campus in nearly 45 years. The Mathematical Sciences and Business divisions as well as the Nursing, Respiratory Care, and Radiologic Technology programs will be housed in the new four-level, 115,000-square-foot building. The improvements were made possible by funds from the college's 2002 Measure E facilities bond. Stephen Carr/ Los Angeles Newspaper Group







Nursing students demonstrate a new lab room during an El Camino College grand opening for its brand new Math Business Allied Health Building Wednesday. The \$35.1 million MBA Building is the second new instructional building on the Torrance-area campus in nearly 45 years. The Mathematical Sciences and Business divisions as well as the Nursing, Respiratory Care, and Radiologic Technology programs will be housed in the new four-level, 115,000-square-foot building. The improvements were made possible by funds from the college's 2002 Measure E facilities bond. Stephen Carr/ Los Angeles Newspaper Group



El Camino College President Thomas Fallo, center, cut the ribbon during a grand opening for El Camino College's brand new Math Business Allied Health Building Wednesday. The \$35.1 million MBA Building is the second new instructional building on the Torrance-area campus in nearly 45 years. The Mathematical Sciences and Business divisions as well as the Nursing, Respiratory Care, and Radiologic Technology programs will be housed in the new four-level, 115,000-square-foot building. The improvements were made possible by funds from the college's 2002 Measure E facilities bond. Stephen Carr/ Los Angeles Newspaper Group



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Torrance, Calif., -- 03-06-13 - Tours were given during an El Camino College grand opening for its brand new Math Business Allied Health Building Wednesday. The \$35.1 million MBA Building is the second new instructional building on the Torrance-area campus in nearly 45 years. The Mathematical Sciences and Business divisions as well as the Nursing, Respiratory Care, and Radiologic Technology programs will be housed in the new four-level, 115,000-square-foot building. The improvements were made possible by funds from the college's 2002 Measure E facilities bond. Stephen Carr/ Los Angeles Newspaper Group



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City College of San Francisco report tells why it should stay open

Ed Source

March 15th, 2013

By Kathryn Baron

The day of reckoning is drawing closer for City College of San Francisco. The embattled community college on Friday submitted its final report to the regional accrediting agency detailing what it has done and what it's continuing to work on to fix the fiscal, structural and governance issues that landed the campus on "show cause" status, the most severe sanction before losing accreditation.

"Our desire is that the commission looks at that report and says, 'Wow they've made a lot of progress,'" said Robert Agrella, the special trustee appointed to guide the college through the complex process of saving itself.

After reviewing the report, the accrediting commission could take the college off "show cause" and move it onto a lesser sanction – which would essentially signal the college is off the critical list for possible closure. The association could also withdraw accreditation, which would mean the college would close unless it is taken over by another community college district.

The report shows that City College has made significant headway toward addressing the fourteen recommendations from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), but isn't done yet. Agrella said the fiscal issues are under control; however, the politically delicate issue of governance remains a work in progress. Some of that is due to ongoing collective bargaining and some due to opposition by the faculty.

Two areas where there is not full agreement concern the Board of Trustees' decision to lay off all vice chancellors and deans and revamp the administration to make it more efficient, and to rewrite job descriptions for the department chairs to make it clear that they report to the deans and not the other way around.

Karen Saginor, president of the City College faculty senate, said many faculty members believe these actions went beyond the scope of the commission's recommendations.

"I have heard members of the commission say that the purpose of accreditation is to improve quality; I haven't heard them say the purpose is to question our authority," Saginor said.

Saginor said she feels good about how far the college has come in tackling the problems, but acknowledged the final decision rests with the accrediting agency, a situation she likened to studying for a test.

“Did I study enough; did I study the right things?” she explained. “This is the kind of exam where I’m not going to get an ‘A’ in this class; the question is am I going to get a ‘B’ or a ‘C’ or a ‘D’?”

The accrediting commission will send a team to City College within the next few weeks to follow up on the report, make sure everything matches and ask additional questions if necessary. City College will get a copy of the report and can request changes only if there are factual errors. College representatives will have an opportunity to go before the commission at its June meeting and the commission will post its decision by July 7.

There is no crystal ball to foretell how the commission will rule. Some students and staff have suggested that because of its size – some 85,000 students are enrolled – City College is like the banking system, too big to fail. But accrediting commission President Barbara Beno said there’s no reason size should give a college an advantage.

“There’s no reason to be more lenient,” Beno said. “If anything the larger the enrollment of a college the more students are impacted by substandard institutional performance.”

Some see adult-school funding shift as disastrous

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

March 16, 2013, 7:15 p.m.

Areli Morris was frustrated that her poor English prevented her from helping her daughter in preschool. And she was embarrassed when the 4-year-old began correcting her pronunciation.

Morris, who is from El Salvador, has vastly improved her language skills since she began attending Azusa Adult School. For nearly 60 years the campus has served as a community resource for those, like Morris, who needed English classes, dropouts seeking high school diplomas, immigrants taking citizenship classes and those pursuing career and technical training.

But this semester may be the last for the Glendora campus; the Azusa school board voted to end the program in June. It is a casualty of continuing budget problems that have affected every level of education in the state. And its students' lives are likely to be jolted by a proposed restructuring of adult programs.

Adult schools operated by K-12 districts have historically provided the majority of classes for this group of students even as the state's 112 community colleges have increased their basic-skills offerings.

Gov. Jerry Brown's budget proposal shifts all responsibility for adult schools to community colleges. Under that plan, adult programs would be funded with a new grant of about \$300 million in the 2013-14 budget.

But the governor's approach is causing great concern among many adult-education providers and college administrators and angst among many students who fear losing convenient access and affordability.

"Community college is more complicated," said Morris, 30. "There are too many rules and parking and other costs I can't afford to pay. The adult school is in the neighborhood. Nobody wants it to close."

School districts from Oakland to Long Beach say they intend to cut their adult programs or severely curtail them. The Los Angeles Unified School District cut its adult program by about 75% in the last two years, but Supt. John Deasy has recommended maintaining the current \$100 million budget next year, said Michael Romero, executive director of district's division of adult and career education.

But the financially troubled Inglewood Unified School District — which is overseen by a state-appointed administrator — approved a plan last week to cut most of its adult program.

The crisis in adult education accelerated in 2008-09 when the Legislature gave school districts temporary flexibility to shift funds earmarked for those courses to other uses.

A 2012 Little Hoover Commission report found that overall enrollment in adult-school programs fell by a third, from about 1.2 million students to nearly 777,000, from 2006 to 2010, largely due to the change in funding.

In 2007-08, a high of \$750 million was earmarked for adult programs. Under the governor's plan, the \$300 million in funding would be used for core programs such as vocational education, English as a Second Language, basic skills and citizenship. For other classes, students would be required to pay the full cost of instruction.

Community colleges would be able to contract with K-12 districts to continue to offer adult programs. And school districts could still choose to fund their own adult programs. Such a realignment would be more efficient and require cooperation, officials said.

"Right now it's a bifurcated system," said H.D. Palmer, a spokesman for the state Department of Finance. "But adult education is one of the core missions for community colleges. We don't believe that by proposing this structure the fears are going to be realized."

The plan must still be approved by the Legislature.

Some adult-education providers believe they are being led over a cliff.

"Embedded in the proposal is the idea that adult schools are dysfunctional and doing a bad job when in fact, we're doing fine," said Karen Arthur, who teaches English as a Second Language at the Oxnard Adult School. She created the Alliance for California Adult Schools to oppose Brown's consolidation plan and support the return of a dedicated funding stream for K-12 adult programs.

"Adult schools are the sacrificial lambs, but when immigration reform comes through, people are going to need our programs," she said.

The proposed shift would take effect this fall, and many colleges may not be ready, officials said.

"Our overriding concern is that we have this enormous program that impacts the lives of thousands and thousands of Californians and we frankly are worried about trying to pull off something of this magnitude between now and July," said community colleges Chancellor Brice Harris. "We've been trying to find a way to have a meaningful and careful conversation, to transition this in a reasonable period of time. It puts K-12 and us in an awkward spot. We need clarity on what the funding will be and what responsibilities are expected."

The lack of details has put many colleges in limbo.

Citrus College in Glendora offers both credit and non-credit vocational and basic skills adult courses but has no specific plan for students who had been attending the Azusa Adult School.

"We've been able to add some classes for this spring that has helped us to alleviate the previous crush," said Jim Lancaster, dean of curriculum and continuing education. "But can we absorb the 1,500 from Azusa? At this time I'd say we don't have the capacity."

Mary Ketz, director of the Azusa Adult School, fears that many of her students will feel intimidated by the environment and negotiating enrollment at a college campus.

"Here, it's convenient, classes are at a time of day or evening that's workable for them," said Ketz. "I don't know what the alternative is going to be."

The program shrank to 1,500 students from 8,000 just a few years ago, due to budget cuts. There are waiting lists for high school diploma and English classes, among others. Students in most programs pay a \$50 registration fee; some career certificate programs cost up to \$1,000.

Gabriela Medina attended Citrus College but was unable to get the classes she needed to transfer or the prerequisites needed for the nursing program. She learned about the Azusa Adult School and is on track to obtain a certified nursing assistant certificate and eligibility for licensing after only one year.

"I felt I was throwing my money away in college," said Medina, 20. "This school has provided the best opportunity."

As Their Roles Change, Some Librarians Lose Faculty Status

The Chronicle of Higher Education

March 18, 2013

By Sydni Dunn

Librarians on many campuses have long been considered faculty, but some institutions are now reclassifying the position as a staff job as they reassess the role of their research libraries more broadly.

The move to take faculty and tenure status away from librarians has generated controversy and raised questions about whether their role should be narrowed and what the future of the job should be. Some administrators say the position must shift with the changing model for university libraries. But even though their role is changing, librarians say they belong on the faculty because they continue to support their campuses through research, scholarship, and teaching.

Last month the University of Virginia announced that all future librarians will be classified as university staff. The librarians are now considered non-tenure-track faculty, and current employees will retain that status.

And East Carolina University is weighing a plan that may strip its future librarians of faculty status, their ability to earn tenure, or both.

Debates on those campuses follow similar changes enacted elsewhere in recent years. The Alamo Community College District, in San Antonio, dropped faculty rank for its librarians in 2011. That same year, Mt. Hood Community College, in Gresham, Ore., laid off its full-time faculty librarians and replaced them with library staff. Two full-time, tenure-track positions were later reinstated following negotiations with the administration.

Steven J. Bell, president of the Association of College and Research Libraries and a librarian at Temple University, said universities reclassify library employees for a number of reasons. When they do, it stirs conversation about the perception of librarians.

"We see ourselves as being closely connected to educational mission," Mr. Bell said, "yet librarians are often perceived as academic-support personnel."

This is especially true when their roles are "devalued," he said, as librarians often feel when their positions are removed from faculty ranks.

Difficult to Define

Lisa J. Hinchliffe, a former president of the library association and a professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said there are many classifications for

librarians on college campuses, and that they sometimes change. A survey she is conducting of libraries at four-year public universities asks about faculty status for their staff.

At nearly two-thirds of the roughly 1,600 institutions that responded, librarians have faculty status; 36 percent of those librarians have tenure or are on the tenure track; and 28 percent have faculty status but are off the tenure track, Ms. Hinchliffe said. The remaining third of the universities say their librarians do not have faculty status.

The University of Virginia said the difficulty of defining the role of academic librarians today was one reason behind the decision to reclassify their jobs, because it no longer made sense to call those employees faculty members. Any future librarians will be hired at one of the university's three ranks of staff: operational and administrative, managerial and professional, or executive and senior administrative.

Karin Wittenborg, head librarian, sent an e-mail to library employees in late February announcing the change. The new policy, which is effective immediately, has been discussed since last fall through meetings and question-and-answer forums.

Ms. Wittenborg said she recognizes that change is difficult, but said the university and its libraries must evolve as different skills are required.

"Research libraries are in a time of dramatic and continuing change," she wrote in an e-mail to *The Chronicle*. "Almost every aspect of the UVa Library, from collections to services to technology, has changed and will continue to change."

But many faculty didn't understand the necessity of the change in status or the timing of it, said Barbara S. Selby, a manager of the library's research-and-information services.

Ms. Selby, who has worked at Virginia for nearly 30 years, said the university restructured its staff ranks about five years ago, when the issue of whether librarians would revert to staff status was raised but rejected by the administration.

"The fact that we had had this discussion in the not-too-distant past made a lot of people question why it was back again," she said.

The university's Library Faculty Assembly conducted a survey of the librarians to gauge their response to the change, said Charlotte Morford, the library's director of communication, and two-thirds of them responded to the survey. Among the respondents, nearly all said they wanted to maintain faculty status for all librarians.

The Library Faculty Assembly sent a letter, signed by 43 librarians, urging Ms. Wittenborg to review a joint statement by the association of college research libraries and the American Association of University Professors on the faculty status of college librarians, which outlines why librarians should hold faculty rank.

Jean L. Cooper, an assistant professor in the library who signed the letter, said downgrading librarians' status casts them in a "lesser light."

"I'm proud to work at the University of Virginia," Ms. Cooper said. "I feel I contribute to the mission, and I will continue to do that, but it does make you feel bad when your role is not supported."

21st-Century Libraries

At East Carolina University, administrators are reviewing whether to revoke faculty titles for librarians and their ability to earn tenure.

The review, which began last year in an effort to find efficiencies in the library system, is not expected to be complete until the summer, said Marilyn A. Sheerer, provost and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs. Until then, the university will not hire for any tenure-track positions in the library. Any library employee hired during the "period of study" will be hired on contract, she said.

The university's two libraries—the main library and a health-sciences library—hired consultants to find the best practices for East Carolina. The goal of the evaluation, Ms. Sheerer said, is to answer the question, "What does a library of the 21st century look like?" and to revamp the university's libraries to meet that vision.

Maureen E. Sullivan, an organization-development consultant, said she began working with the university's libraries last summer to build a human-resource management system that supports the librarians' work. She has held meetings with the administration and said she is working closely with "the staff and librarians who will be affected by this change."

Months into the process, however, the university's librarians feel that their voice isn't being heard, said one tenured librarian, who asked to remain anonymous. He said that the faculty had posed questions about what people mean by the "library of the future," but that no one has been able to define it. The faculty has expressed opposition to a change in status or tenure, he said, as have both the library council and the faculty senate.

"Everybody here is of the same mind-set," he said. "We don't want this and feel like it's being forced on us."

Ms. Sullivan, who is also president of the American Library Association, said any change in title should not undermine the deep respect East Carolina has for its librarians. Universities operate on their own library models, she said, and those models regularly change to fit the institution's needs.

"It's important to remember there is a difference between the work and role of the teaching faculty," she said, "and the work and role of librarians."

Correction (3/19/2013, 6:09 p.m.): This article originally misstated the results of a survey of University of Virginia librarians. The survey drew responses from two-thirds of the librarians, and nearly all of the respondents, not two-thirds of respondents, said they wanted to maintain faculty status for librarians. The article has been updated to reflect this correction.

Solving teacher retirement system's shortfall would cost billions

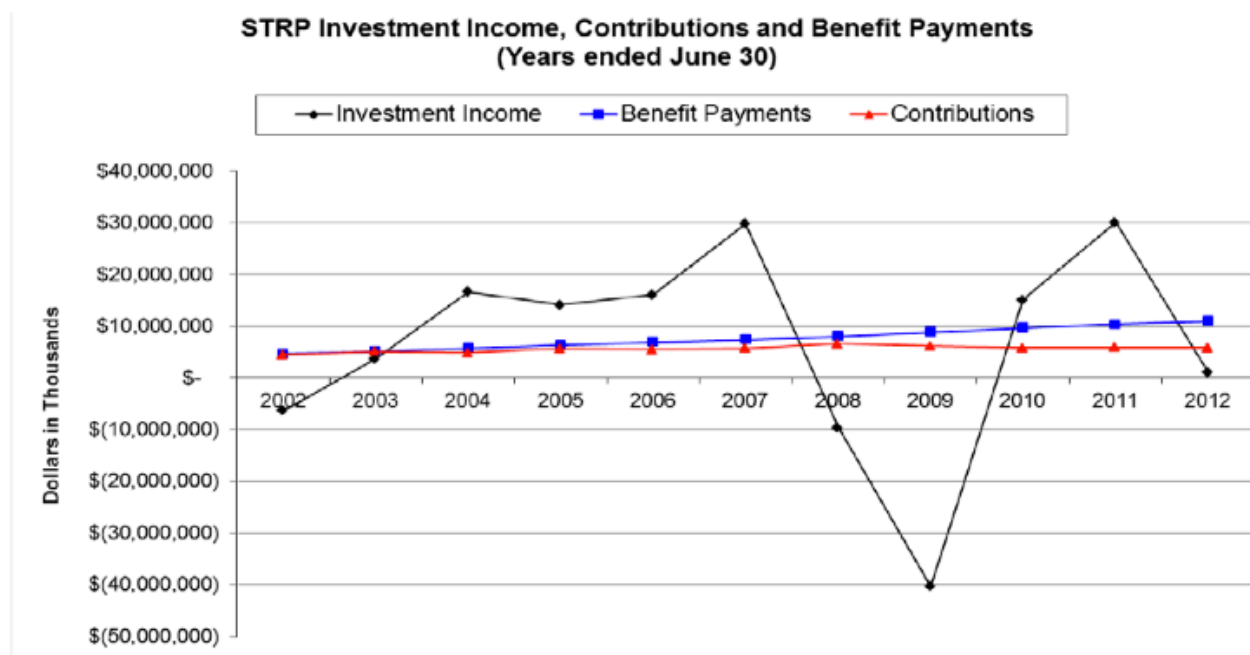
March 21st, 2013

Ed Source

By John Fensterwald

When Gov. Jerry Brown talks about paying down the state's "wall of debt," he doesn't mention the state teachers' retirement system. And yet the towering \$73 billion unfunded shortfall in the state pension fund for teachers and administrators, the California State Teachers' Retirement System, makes Brown's wall, at about \$30 billion, look like a picket fence.

On Wednesday, at a joint legislative information hearing, speakers from CalSTRS, groups representing educators, and the Legislative Analyst's Office urged the Legislature to act now to address the outstanding liability. If nothing is done, CalSTRS won't have enough money to cover the retirement benefits it promised to the teachers and administrators who will one day be drawing it down. Fully restoring the financial health of the pension fund will be tremendously expensive – requiring \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion annually in additional contributions, primarily by school districts and the state.



That amount is almost as much as the state expects to bring in from annual revenue from Prop. 30; it is more than what the state spends now for the UC and CSU systems combined. But the alternative is worse, said the speakers. Each day of failing to act to replenish the defined benefit fund increases the liability by \$17 million and moves a step closer to 2044, when the pension fund would run out of money.

The dilemma, of course, is how to come up with that magnitude of dollars when the state and school districts are recovering from cuts in education and state services, and when Gov. Jerry Brown has ambitious plans, assuming additional revenue, for reforming the state's school finance system. There will also be the challenge of how to divide the burden of higher contributions among the state, school districts that contribute as employers, and, to a lesser extent, teachers.

Even if Brown and the Legislature decide to delay or phase in additional money, it's important that legislators commit formally to action, said Ed Derman, deputy chief executive of CalSTRS. A secondary benefit is that bond rating agencies would recognize that districts and the state have a plan to remove a liability hanging over them.

"There is a big benefit of making a decision now," agreed Assemblymember Bob Wieckowski, D-Fremont, a first-term legislator who also is a bankruptcy attorney.

Legislative Analyst's Office analyst Ryan Miller suggested that the Legislature make contributions to CalSTRS a higher priority than repayment of other state bonds, which have fixed interest rates or grow more slowly than CalSTRS' unfunded liability.

Digging out of its hole

CalSTRS' defined benefit fund lost about a quarter of its value when the market plunged in 2008. Though it has largely recovered to where it was in 2008 – the market value was \$161.5 billion on Feb. 28 – it lost five years of compound growth, leaving it only 66 percent funded to pay long-term obligations as of February. To meet its commitments to retirees and current employees, CalSTRS relies 60 percent on the growth in investments and 40 percent on contributions. CalSTRS assumes a return of 7.5 percent on investments – a rate that some analysts already consider too optimistic. Investment returns would have to average 10 percent annually for 30 years to wipe out the shortfall without raising contributions.

In a report to the Legislature, CalSTRS' board of directors outlined eight options for restoring the fund, seven of which would either set a target at less than full funding or a goal of full funding in 75 years. The preference of the CalSTRS board, the non-partisan LAO and outside actuaries, as the most prudent option, is full funding in 30 years. It is also the most expensive. The other choices, Miller said, shift the responsibility for current commitments to future generations. And a lower repayment, with a goal of 80 percent funding, would leave the fund more vulnerable to another plunge in market values, the analyst said.

But a goal of 80 percent funding in 30 years would also reduce the need for additional contributions by nearly \$1 billion a year, to \$3.6 billion, down from \$4.5 billion. "The solution becomes more doable," Assemblymember Rob Bonta, D-Oakland, who led the hearing, said in an interview Thursday. Bonta, who chairs the Assembly [Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security Committee](#) and will eventually introduce a

bill on the issue, said that he believes, from discussions with employee and employer groups, that they could accept a target of less than full funding. Any action would not take effect until July 1, 2014 at the earliest, he said.

Contributions to the fund currently total \$5.7 billion. School districts' share is 8.25 percent of teachers' and administrators' pay, for \$2.2 billion; teachers contributed 8 percent of their pay, \$2.1 billion; and the state currently pays 2.7 percent of pay, \$1.4 billion. The state also pays an additional 2.5 percent into a separate inflation protection account for members.

Implementing full funding immediately would require upping the contributions by \$4.5 billion. But phasing in additional contributions over several years would raise the eventual annual increases by an additional \$500 million, to more than \$5 billion.

Dividing the increase proportionally or even-stein won't work, because courts have ruled that current employees have a vested right to their present benefits, and new employees won't be contributing enough to make a difference quickly – if the burden for the shortfall were shifted to them. The CalSTRS board did conclude that, with some complicated legal moves, the Legislature could raise the teachers' contributions a few percentage points of pay. But even that would only be about one-seventh of what's needed for full funding.

Districts will also have a legal case against making them shoulder the burden within their existing budgets. Daniel Vandekoolwyk, deputy legislative counsel for the Office of the Legislative Counsel, which provides legal advice to state government, told the committee that Proposition 98, the voter-approved funding guarantee for schools, protects districts from the state adding responsibilities without providing money for them. So the Legislature would have to fund any increases it mandates to employers' share of contributions.

With the state's General Fund then carrying the burden of the \$4.5 billion in increases, lawmakers face hard choices.

Sal Villaseñor, legislative advocate for the Association of California School Administrators, while urging legislatures to commit to full funding in 30 years, said changes in contribution rates should be incremental. He also said that the contribution formula should be reexamined every decade to see whether it should be adjusted up or down.

Bonta agreed that additional increases should be phased in "to avoid sticker shock." If current forecasts for several billion dollars in unexpected state revenue this year prove accurate, he said, it would be smart to channel a portion to pay down the CalSTRS shortfall. The sooner the Legislature acts, the less the state will owe in the long run, he said.

Dan Walters: California's economic challenge in a nutshell

By Dan Walters
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Published: Sunday, Mar. 24, 2013

Coincidentally, three otherwise unrelated events last week framed California's somewhat clouded economic situation.

One was a revelation that the state now is tied with Rhode Island for the nation's highest unemployment rate, 9.8 percent.

Although employment surged in California last year, with about a quarter-million new jobs, and the jobless rate had dropped by more than two percentage points from its high-water mark, more than 1.8 million workers are still without jobs. And outside the immediate Bay Area the picture is especially grim, with jobless rates hitting nearly 30 percent in some rural counties.

The second event was release of a study by researchers at the University of Southern California on the state's potentially huge deposits of shale oil that, they said, could spark an economic boom in the state, as it has in other states.

Exploiting shale oil could create from a half-million to more than 2 million jobs, increase personal income sharply and spark a multi-billion-dollar surge in tax revenues, the study said.

The third was release of the latest annual update of the Tax Foundation's state-by-state comparisons of tax burdens, indicating that Californians are bearing some of the nation's highest taxation loads.

We were fourth highest at 11.2 percent of personal income in 2010 and since then, we've hiked sales and income taxes that would add nearly another half a point to that rate. Yet, despite those heavy taxes, state and local governments continue to struggle with chronic budget deficits and long-term obligations for pensions, retiree health care and bonded debt.

And there it is.

After three booms (defense, technology and housing) and three busts in the last three decades, California's economy continues to sputter. Two new economic forecasts, one from UCLA's Anderson School and another from California Lutheran University, see only incremental and slow recovery from what had been the worst recession since the Great Depression, with relatively high joblessness for years to come.

Meanwhile, we're seeing a strong outflow of job-seeking Californians to other states, especially those whose economies are humming, such as Texas, thus reducing our stock of educated and high-skill workers.

It's not a pretty picture, and while Gov. Jerry Brown dismisses those who question the state's prospects as "declinists," he and other Capitol politicians pay nothing more than lip service to making the state a more attractive venue for job-creating investment.

The oil shale situation is a big test. Are we willing to exploit – albeit with appropriate environmental safeguards – our vast reserves of oil, or will we continue to cross our fingers and hope that somehow, some way, California will recapture prosperity by osmosis?

San Francisco City College fuels college accreditation controversy

Ed Source

March 26th, 2013

By Kathryn Baron

While City College of San Francisco prepares to receive a team of evaluators who will decide if the college keeps its accreditation and stays open, the impact of what's at stake has spread beyond the campus, bringing into sharper focus a push for higher standards at community colleges.

“If CCSF goes down, then accrediting issues will become a very big national debate,” said Patrick McCallum, president of the College Brain Trust, a Sacramento-based consulting firm whose clients include some of the state's largest community college districts, but does not represent City College of San Francisco. “It's going to be the shot heard around the country with enormous consequences, not just for the students and staff of City College. There are a lot of colleges we work with that are very nervous about that.”

Faced with a number of severe fiscal, structural and governance problems – some of them dating back to a 2006 accreditation review – City College was placed on “show cause” status in July by the regional accrediting commission. A “show cause” order is the most severe sanction the commission can hand out, short of yanking a college's accreditation – which is what the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) could do at its next meeting in June if it determines that City College hasn't fixed its problems. Such a move would close City College and require neighboring districts to take over management of the college and its academic programs in order to continue serving the students.

City College isn't alone on “show cause” status. At its meeting in January, the accrediting commission imposed the sanction on the College of the Sequoias and at the same time removed College of the Redwoods and Cuesta College from the “show cause” list. But with more than 90,000 students and nine campuses throughout San Francisco, City College is the largest community college in the state and is among the largest two-year colleges in the nation to face having its accreditation withdrawn.

“The impact around the state is that the other colleges would realize that all colleges, regardless of size, are subject to compliance with those standards,” said José Ortiz, chancellor of the Oakland-based Peralta Community College District. All four of the district's colleges are on a “warning” status from the commission, the least-severe sanction.

Accreditation is essentially an assurance that a campus is operating under best practices and meeting standards for high-quality instruction; providing adequate support services, such as counseling; demonstrating strong fiscal management; and employing sound

governance and decision making, all designed to provide a strong education that enables students to transfer or get good-paying jobs.

Ortiz said in the 22 years since he came to California, he's seen a significant shift in the accreditation process going from commissions being satisfied if colleges were making progress toward meeting the standards to aggressively requiring them to have met the standards. He said the push is coming from the federal government.

Pressure from above

From the Oval Office to Congress, momentum is building to raise standards for community colleges and, as EdSource Today has reported, to place regional accrediting commissions themselves under federal scrutiny for not being tough enough with colleges that are out of compliance.

In his State of the Union address last month, President Barack Obama unveiled a new college scorecard and made it clear that, with the billions of dollars in tax credits, grants and loans the federal government has put into higher education, colleges ought to be judged "based on a simple criteria: where you can get the most bang for your educational buck." Separately, the president has called for 5 million more community college graduates by 2020.

Between 2008 and 2012, in preparation for this year's scheduled reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), created the CHEA Initiative, and held dozens of meetings with colleges, regional accrediting commissions and students on recommendations for improving accreditation.

During that same time, writes CHEA President Judith Eaton, Congress began holding hearings and introducing legislation that sought to create more federal oversight on such academic issues as credit hours and credit transfer, areas that had been considered the domain of local campuses' faculty senates and administrators.

In the CHEA Initiative Final Report, published last November, Eaton wrote that through these actions the U.S. Department of Education "has asserted authority over accreditation similar to that of a ministry of education in other countries."

The report warns that these actions threaten the independence of the accreditation process and academic sovereignty of colleges and universities. "CHEA heard repeatedly, throughout the Initiative discussion, that colleges, universities and accrediting organizations were deeply concerned about this development."

Robert Agrella, the special trustee hired to oversee City College's efforts to save its accreditation, said discussions began during President George W. Bush's administration about creating national accrediting standards and that forced the regional commissions to be more vigilant.

“I don’t want to say that accrediting used to be loose, but things are looked at much more carefully now,” he said. “Accreditation is under a pretty large magnifying glass across the country and I believe it will continue to be that way.”

Agrella, who served as president of Santa Rosa Community College for 22 years, isn’t opposed to tough standards, but is concerned that the federal pressure has led the ACCJC to be more assertive in its handling of City College. “I think if it loses accreditation it lends credence to that, which would be a shame,” he said.

Some California community college leaders say the commission has already gotten more aggressive, and the numbers bear that out. In addition to “show cause,” six of the state’s 112 community colleges are on probation, the mid-level sanction, and 13 are on the least-severe warning status, including Santa Barbara City College, which earlier this month won the 2013 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

A study by the RP Group, which conducts research on behalf of California community colleges, found that 14 percent of colleges under ACCJC were given sanctions, compared to between 1 percent and 3 percent of colleges overseen by other large regional commissions.

Barbara Beno, president of the ACCJC, wouldn’t speak directly about City College, but acknowledged that the commission feels pressure from above – and below. “We go to Washington and we’re hit for being too soft and here we’re hit for being too hard,” she said.

Peer pressure

Ron Galatolo, chancellor of the San Mateo Community College District, finds that argument specious. He says the ACCJC is using the federal government as an excuse to be heavy-handed. Galatolo, whose district might be called upon to help take over management of City College if its accreditation is pulled, said the commission has been unreasonably harsh for the last few years and that its actions against CCSF are destroying the college’s reputation and diverting it from the important work of trying to improve.

“I’m not saying that City College didn’t deserve to be looked at carefully,” Galatolo said. “I’m not saying that City College doesn’t need help and doesn’t need to be picked up by its britches. But this wasn’t the way to do it.”

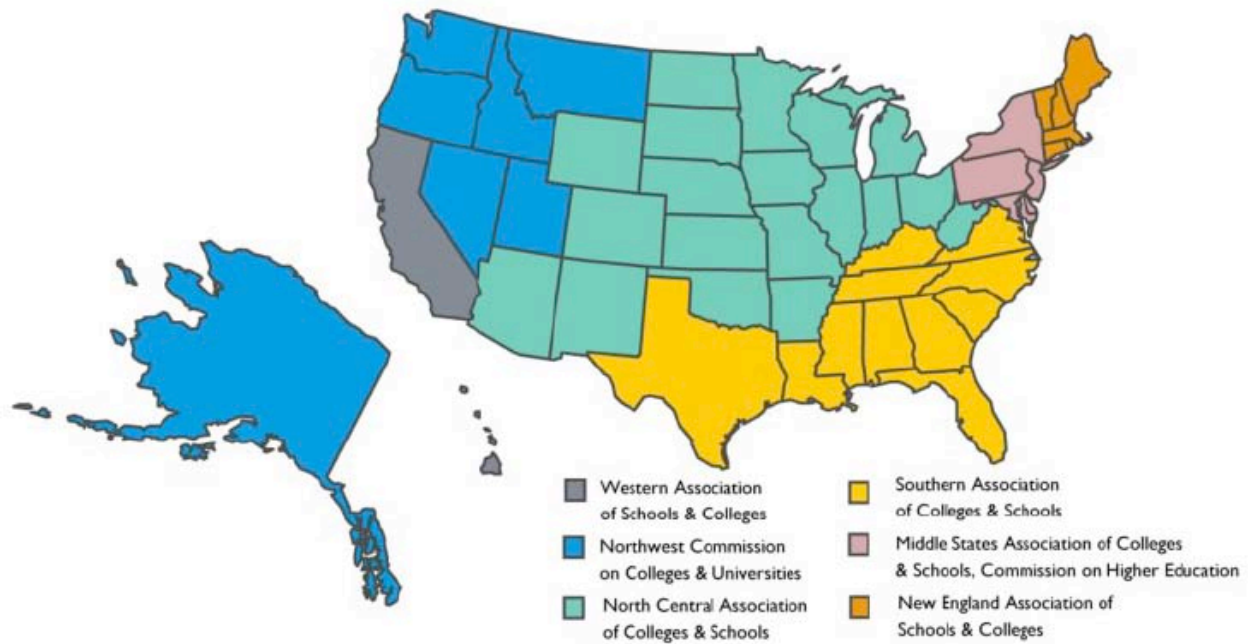
“Show cause” should be the last resort, Galatolo said. Before imposing that on a college, the accrediting commission should send in a team from model campuses to work with college administrators and faculty to help them get on track and, he said, it should be made very clear to the college that failure to accept and work with the team will land them in big trouble.

But California Community College Chancellor Brice Harris said colleges aren’t being asked to meet a set of measures handed down from outsiders; they’re developed at home.

“I think it’s really important to understand that the American system of accreditation is a peer review process,” Harris said. “So we create the standards that we have to live up to. It’s not a matter of the commission ‘cracking down.’ These are the standards you have set for yourself and you’re meeting them or you’re not.”

Still, Harris has established a task force on accreditation whose primary charge is to establish more transparency in the accreditation process and get the ACCJC and colleges to understand each others’ challenges. The task force is scheduled to report back to the chancellor in August.

Before then, City College of San Francisco will know its fate. The college submitted its final report to the accrediting commission March 15, describing what’s fixed and what still needs work. The accrediting commission will send a team to the college within the next few weeks to make sure the report matches reality. College representatives will have an opportunity to go before the commission at its June meeting and by July 7, the commission will announce its decision.



Budget cuts create unprecedented stress on community colleges

EdSource

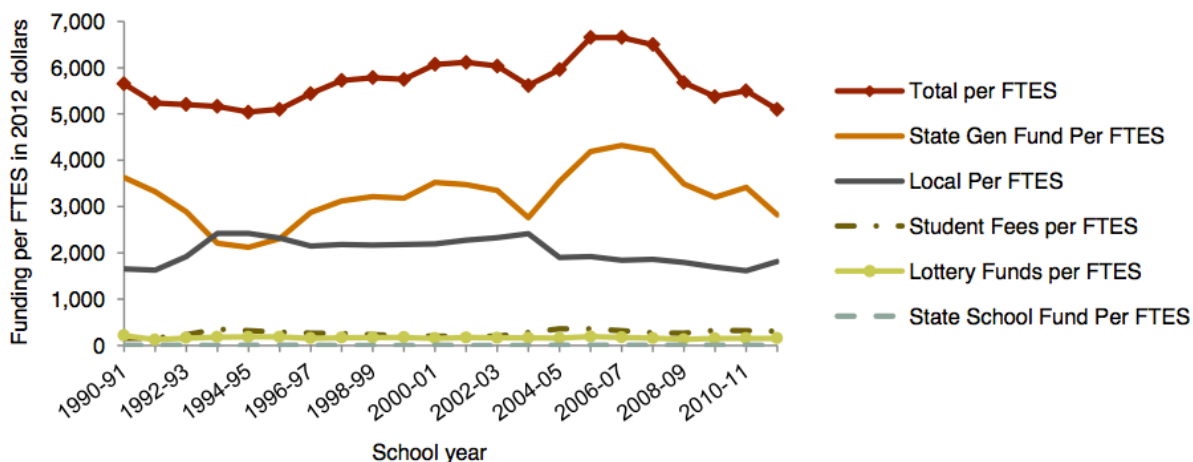
March 26th, 2013

By John Fensterwald

A decline of 24 percent in per-student funding over five years has led to a record decline in access to community colleges and has jeopardized the services to those students who are enrolled, an extensive study by the Public Policy Institute of California concluded.

FIGURE 2

California community college revenues per student, 1990-91 to 2011-12

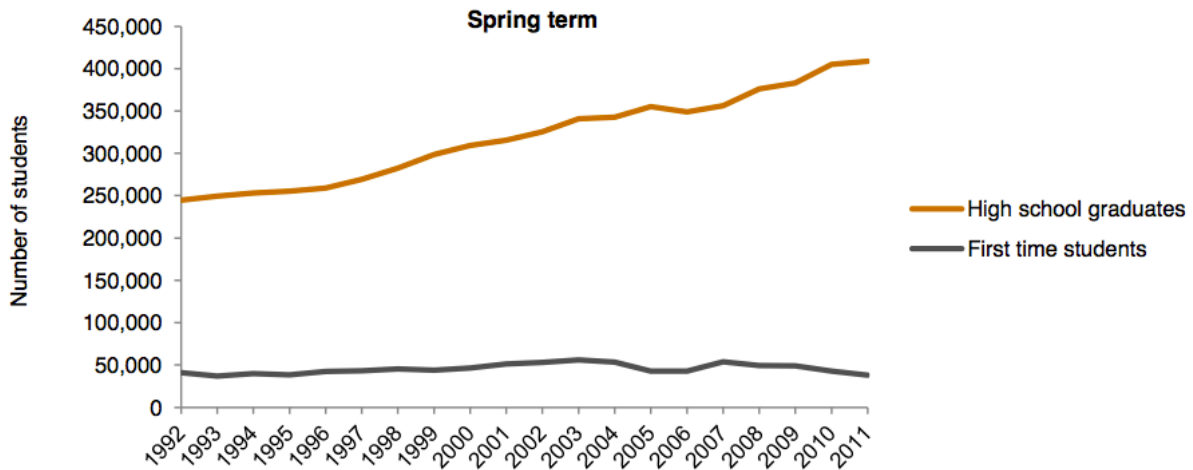


Between 2006-07 and 2011-12, total revenue per student (in FTES or full-time equivalent, since most students attend part-time) fell from \$6,700 to \$5,100. Source: Impact of Budget Cuts on the California Community Colleges.

Even though there are more potential students who should be served by community colleges, “funding shortfalls throughout the community college system have led to significant reductions in staff, considerably fewer course offerings, and severely restricted enrollment,” write the researchers of “Impact of Budget Cuts on the California Community Colleges,” which was released on Monday.

Although, the state’s 112 community colleges were protected more than four-year universities from cuts as a percentage of their budgets, they are more dependent on state revenue because fees comprise a tiny piece of their budgets, leaving them less well-positioned to weather cuts, the report said. The colleges responded by cutting back on non-credit courses, but they comprise only 10 percent of courses. As a result, the total number of sections overall plummeted 21 percent to a 15-year low, the study found. Enrollment declined by a half-million students from 2008-09 to 2011-12, even as the college-age population grew. Had the enrollment rate of 2008-09 continued, community colleges would have served 600,000 more students, the report said.

Given the need for triage, community colleges made the rational decision to give priority to continuing students, those enrolled the previous semester, since they had the best odds of completing a vocational certificate or an Associate’s degree and transferring to a CSU or UC school. As a result, enrollments of first-time students and returning students (those who had not taken a course for at least a semester) plummeted by 25 percent, compared with a 10 percent total enrollment decline.



Enrollment of first-time students remained flat even as numbers of high school graduates continued to increase. Source: Impact of Budget Cuts on the California Community Colleges.

Despite larger classes and cutbacks in sections and funding, the rates of course completion and transfer rates have slightly increased since the recession, although researchers could not pinpoint why. This could reflect that enrollment cuts at CSU and UC forced better prepared students to enroll in community colleges, or it could reflect community colleges’ narrowed focus on degree completion. The Community College Student Task Force, whose recommendations became law last fall with the passage of SB 1456, also emphasized improving student outcomes over expanding access. Given that a shortage of resources will continue, notwithstanding the availability of additional revenue with the passage of Proposition 30, the system will face severe challenges to meet its larger mission of producing an increasingly educated labor force, the report concluded.

Dan Walters: Stockton bankruptcy trial has big stakes

By Dan Walters
dwalters@sacbee.com

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Ostensibly, the trial that opened Monday in a federal courtroom was about whether Stockton is eligible to file for bankruptcy.

But the real issue - what one attorney called "the 800-pound gorilla in the room" - is whether public employees' pensions, long thought to be legally untouchable, could be reduced via bankruptcy.

Stockton doesn't want to touch its pension liabilities under bankruptcy - a position vociferously supported by the California Public Employees' Retirement System, the nation's largest pension fund.

But the holders of hundreds of millions of dollars in city bonds, who are objecting to the city's bankruptcy petition, claim that exempting pensions makes them take too big a hit and want Judge Christopher Klein to reject the petition. Rejection presumably would force the city to raise taxes, cut spending further or reduce its pension liabilities.

"This is much like a qualifying heat in a race," Klein observed.

CalPERS dispatched a couple of lawyers to the trial, and one of them told Klein it was to guard against "misinformation." But the judge denied him an opportunity to address the court.

Bondholder attorneys contend that the city's pension obligation is its largest debt, but CalPERS adamantly insists that it's not a debt at all and that payments should be exempt.

While CalPERS backs Stockton, it adamantly opposes San Bernardino's bankruptcy petition because that city stopped making pension fund payments.

The trial's timing is exquisitely ironic, to wit:

It began just two days after the city of Sacramento announced a deal to build a downtown arena for the Kings basketball team by pledging parking revenue for construction bonds. A factor in Stockton's insolvency is that it borrowed and spent heavily on a sports arena and a baseball park that proved to be financial drains. Other cities, such as Fresno, have found themselves in distress for similar reasons.

A Stockton attorney told Klein that the city's insolvency resulted from "years of bad decisions and bad management," but an opposing attorney noted that Stockton continues to pay its employees more than most other local governments, despite its financial woes.

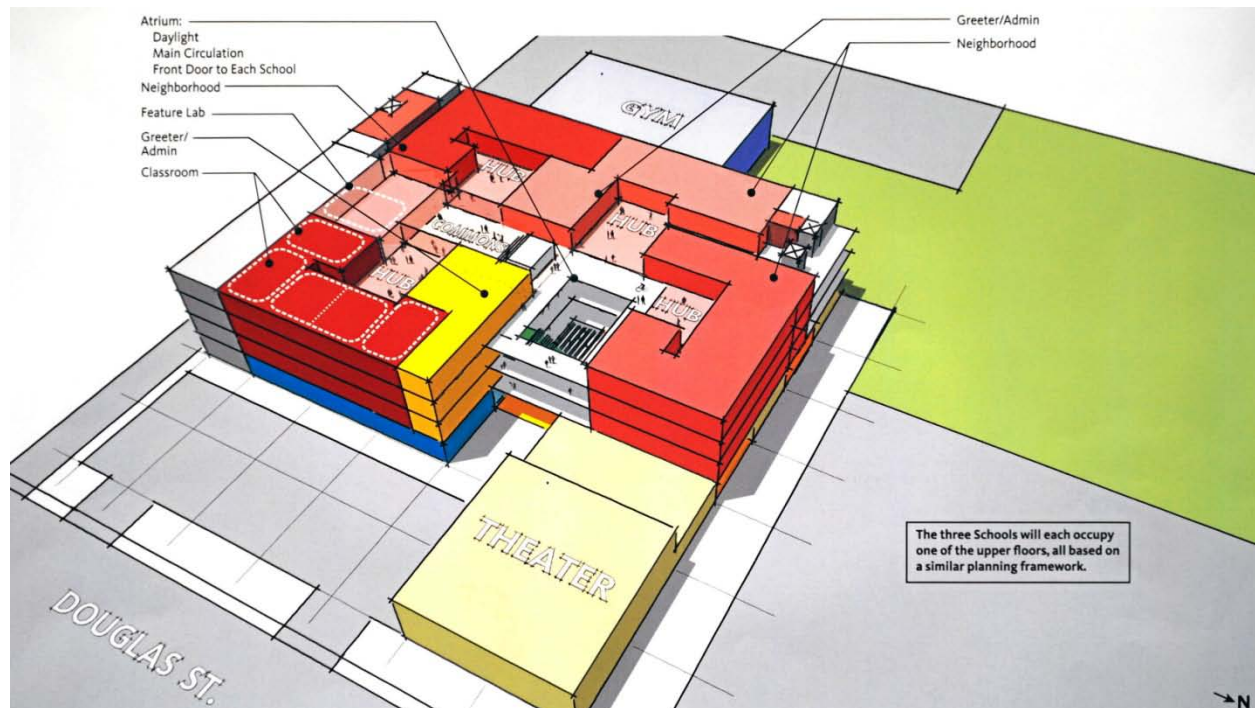
And the trial began on the same day that Bay Area news media revealed that Alameda County supervisors had guaranteed the county's top administrator a lifetime income of \$423,664 a year.

The trial began just a few days after CalPERS' board tentatively decided to incrementally increase mandatory payments from state and local governments by 50 percent to offset the heavy losses it suffered from losing investments in stocks and real estate, and just days after the California State Teachers' Retirement System, the state's other big pension fund, said it needed \$4.5 billion a year more to remain solvent.

Wiseburn district eyes wow factor in creating new comprehensive high school

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

Posted: 03/29/2013



The Wiseburn school board has found a new site for its future Wiseburn High School. The district plans to renovate the El Segundo location that was recently vacated by Northrop Grumman. As is, the four-story building is so huge you could put one-and-a-half soccer fields on every floor.

Just a few months ago, the four-story monolith located in the heart - or shall we say brain - of El Segundo's aerospace corridor was most assuredly a place where the highest-ranking U.S. military officials held secret meetings about espionage and other sensitive intelligence.

But if the Wiseburn school district has its way, the building formerly leased by Northrop Grumman will, in just three years time, become a comprehensive high school complete with bustling hallways, college-prep classes, athletic events, prom, school plays, cliquy squabbles and all the other trappings of the American tradition.

Regardless of where the school is ultimately situated, Wiseburn High School will be the South Bay's first newly minted comprehensive high school to come online in half a century. (The most recent addition was Rolling Hills High, built on the Palos Verdes Peninsula in 1964 and renamed Peninsula High in 1991.)

Last week, the Wiseburn school board took a major step toward converting the office building into a school by approving the environmental studies and closing escrow on the \$46 million sale of the property at 201 N. Douglas St. near El Segundo Boulevard.

"When this process is done, we will have one of the best high schools in the nation," asserted Wiseburn school board member Susan Andriacchi. "I've been in this community for 17 years and this has been a topic of conversation since I came, and before, I'm sure. "

But the Wiseburn school district might still be one fight away from the finish line.

The city of El Segundo, which stands to lose a significant chunk of tax revenue over the deal, is raising stiff objections, and could very well file a lawsuit. The city has 30 days from Wiseburn's March 21 approval of the project to do so. El Segundo City Manager Greg Carpenter, who submitted a letter of opposition, didn't return multiple calls for comment.

If the Wiseburn school district prevails in occupying the building, which is across the street from the Los Angeles Air Force Base, the resulting wow factor is expected to be significant.

For starters, the edifice is large enough to fit one and a half soccer fields on each of its four floors. The school district would use only about two-thirds of the building and lop off the rest, although it would add a separate auditorium and a gymnasium.

Preliminary renderings of Wiseburn High depict a futuristic building with plenty of natural lighting, an abundance of glass and a square atrium cutting down the middle of all four floors.

"You might have a private conference - nobody is going to be able to hear you, but they are going to see you," said Tom Johnstone, the school district's superintendent. The school will be designed by Gensler, one of the largest architecture firms in the United States. Gensler's credits include the Shanghai Tower in China - which, when completed, will be the second tallest skyscraper in the world. Gensler also has been selected to design Farmers Field, the proposed football stadium in downtown Los Angeles.

Johnstone said Gensler's own downtown Los Angeles headquarters, with its open layout, glassy interior and ample natural lighting, offers a glimpse of the spirit in which Wiseburn High will be built.

"You can see exactly what everybody is working on," he said. "It creates its own synergy and energy. "

Since its inception in 1896, the Wiseburn School District has been a K-8 entity located in the Hawthorne neighborhood of Holly Glen and unincorporated Los Angeles County neighborhoods of Del Aire and Wiseburn. The district also extends into the aerospace and

commercial district of El Segundo, which has zero residents but is prized by government entities for its extremely lucrative tax base and bonding capacity.

For decades, Wiseburn residents have been keen on converting their school system into a K-12 unified school district with a comprehensive high school.

The district is already home to a twin pair of charter high schools - Da Vinci Science and Da Vinci Design - but these are specialized learning centers that do not offer all of the features of a traditional high school experience. (Both schools will relocate to the new school.) Wiseburn High, by contrast, will have performing arts extracurriculars and sports teams that will compete in California Interscholastic Federation leagues, better known as CIF.

And, Wiseburn officials say, the new school would keep students from scattering to the wind after and before junior high school.

This dissipation happens because Wiseburn families tend to avoid the two comprehensive high schools to which they are assigned - Hawthorne and Lawndale - in the Centinela Valley Union High School District.

"Centinela Valley hasn't provided the education we're looking for for our kids," said Wiseburn school board member Israel Mora. "Since the 1980s, their quality of education has dropped tremendously. They are trying to bring it back up, but it's a struggle for them. "

As for the objections lodged by the city of El Segundo, they have centered on the usual technical quibbles over parking, noise and traffic. But Johnstone said it's largely about lost tax revenue.

"It basically takes 13.71 acres off their tax rolls," he said. "They aren't loving that. "

He added: "From our perspective, we really want to work things out with the city; we want to get a win-win. "

Tax records show that the property owners paid \$482,000 in taxes last year; it's unclear how much of that went to the city of El Segundo. Because schools, churches and parks do not pay property taxes in California, if the sale to the Wiseburn school district goes through, the amount will shrink to zero.

To Wiseburn officials, the property is a perfect fit. The multifloor building is stacked on a 2-acre footprint, leaving ample room for parking and athletic fields. Its proximity to aerospace companies will smooth the relationship the district already enjoys with aerospace engineers who volunteer as tutors.

But the city of El Segundo isn't Wiseburn's only obstacle. The site also harbors an underground plume of methane gas that is trapped beneath the parking lot, probably the result of an underground Chevron oil field. Even though the plume is about 100 yards from the structure, the gas - whose concentration exceeds the acceptable limits in one area - needs to be diluted via a venting system in order for the district to appease the state Department of Toxic Substances Control.

Given its history, the building itself exudes a certain intrigue. Johnstone said it contained several rooms that existed primarily to host classified meetings - "top secret type stuff."

With the building's handy proximity to not only the Los Angeles Air Force Base but also the base's research-and-development arm, the nonprofit Aerospace Corp., it's easy to imagine high-level, closed-door meetings about drone strikes or missile systems.

"It's exciting to be on Douglas Street," Johnstone said. "That's where it all started."

The building was leased by Northrop until January, when the roughly 1,000 employees packed up and moved into another space owned by the company in Redondo Beach.

"The whole sequestration thing was probably weighing on their head," Johnstone surmised, referring to the automatic federal spending cuts that took effect March 1.

Also mysterious is the owner of the building. On Jan. 13, it changed hands twice in one day, from the opaquely named Douglas Property Holdings Co., LLC to Continental Development Corp. "" owned by Richard Lundquist, one of the wealthiest landowners in El Segundo - to Wiseburn. Even Johnstone doesn't know exactly why the transaction took place in this fashion, or who "Douglas Property Holders" really is.

In any case, the \$46 million to purchase the site and the estimated \$32 million it will take to build the school both come from an \$87 million construction bond approved overwhelmingly by Wiseburn voters in 2010. A good 80 percent of that money comes not from residents but the businesses in the El Segundo commercial district - a section that includes, in addition to aerospace companies, other corporate behemoths like Mattel, Xerox and AIG.

This corporate corridor is the chief reason all four of the district's schools are nearly brand new.

"We've been abundantly blessed, and we know it," Johnstone said. "We want to develop the next generation of engineers. "

Johnstone is hoping the school will open in the spring of 2016. That means today's high school freshmen stand a chance to spend their last couple months of high school in a brand new school.

"We just think it would be an added bonus and a wonderful parting gift - to be in a brand-new, world-class high school for the last part of their senior year," he said.



The Wiseburn school district plans to renovate the El Segundo site that recently was vacated by Northrop Grumman.



The Wiseburn school board has found a new site for its future Wiseburn High School. The district plans to renovate the El Segundo location that was recently vacated by Northrop Grumman.

Legally blind photographer Kurt Weston sees world like impressionist painting

By Rob Kuznia, Daily Breeze Staff Writer

Posted: 03/30/2013



Photographer Kurt Weston spoke to students Wednesday at El Camino College about his work and life. Weston, a former fashion photographer, lost most of his eye sight due to AIDS complications, but still produces photographic work.

Kurt Weston's photography career was taking off in the early 1990s when he was diagnosed with AIDS - a disease that eventually left him legally blind. His condition left him totally blind in one eye, and with limited peripheral vision in the other.

"It permits me to see the world like an impressionist painting," Weston said last week during a presentation to photography students at El Camino College near Torrance. "When I look at somebody's face, I don't see eyes or nose or mouth - I just see flesh tone."

Weston didn't allow the loss of his sight to derail his ambitions. Prior to the diagnosis, Weston worked primarily in the fashion industry. But in the mid-1990s he adopted a more artistic style.

His body of work includes a photo called "A Modern Crucifixion" that was purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. The photo depicts a haunting profile of a man

clutching a crucifix. The man is wearing the mesh mask meant to protect his head during treatments for brain cancer.

In 2010, Weston won first place for outstanding achievement in the amateur-fashion division of the Black and White Spider Awards. Titled "The Runway," the photo depicts the legs and flouncy dress of a fashion model taking a brisk walk down the runway. Weston said he'd taken the shot many years before, and advised students not to discount the photos they are taking for class.

"Don't think that because it's a class assignment that it's invalid," he said. "You never know when it is going to go big."