
Higher Ed News Weekly

from the Illinois Board of Higher Education

June 6, 2008

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Daily Herald, June 2, 2008

Dean of SIUC law school to resign

Associated Press

Published: 6/2/2008 3:36 PM

CARBONDALE -- Southern Illinois University School of Law dean and professor Peter Alexander has confirmed that he will resign his dean's position at the end of the coming academic year.

Alexander told the (Carbondale) Southern Illinoisan on Sunday that he had made the announcement to the faculty and staff at the law school, but he directed further inquiries to the SIUC provost office.

Law school spokeswoman Alicia Ruiz said Alexander told her in March he was resigning at the end of the upcoming academic year. He's been dean since 2003.

The SIUC chancellor's office says no search has begun yet for an interim or permanent law school dean.

Crain's Chicago Business, June 2, 2008

Library chief Dempsey heads DePaul board

By Steven R. Strahler
June 02, 2008

(Crain's) — Chicago Public Library Commissioner Mary Dempsey was elected chairman of the DePaul University board of trustees — the first woman selected for the post at the 110-year-old school, the nation's largest Catholic university.

The well-connected lawyer (a 1982 grad of DePaul's law school) is scheduled to take the job this fall, just as her alma mater moves to raise academic standards, increase enrollment and launch a fundraising campaign to pay for the expansion.

Ms. Dempsey, 55, also will focus on recruiting replacement trustees to the 40-member board, which DePaul's president, the Rev. Dennis Holtschneider, says is confronted with generational turnover. A trustee for a decade, she led the board's search committee that brought Rev. Holtschneider to DePaul four years ago from Niagara University in Buffalo, he says.

Ms. Dempsey, who has served five years as the board's vice-chair, says increasing scholarship aid is an important component of DePaul's strategic plan.

"It is imperative that we continue to make DePaul financially accessible to first-generation students," she says. "These tend to be people who stay in Chicago, build their businesses in Chicago . . . and I think we will continue in that role."

She has been library commissioner since 1994, rejecting a City Hall offer in 2001 to become CEO of Chicago Public Schools. In 2005, she served as the city's interim chief procurement officer in the wake of hired-truck and other contracting scandals. Her husband is the prominent personal injury attorney Philip Corboy Sr.

Rev. Holtschneider says Ms. Dempsey pours a lot of passion into her civic and charitable commitments. "She selects them with her heart," he says. "But when she's in them, she's a no-nonsense manager. She can run a meeting. She can run an organization."

Reached during a one-day fundraising trip to Florida, he wouldn't say how much money DePaul ultimately wants to draw. "We're doing the testing now. A year from now we'll be in full fundraising mode."

Quincy Herald-Whig, June 3, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

New JWCC president receives standing ovation during first appearance

By KELLY WILSON
Herald-Whig Staff Writer

Tom Klincar walked into John Wood Community College's board room on Monday and immediately felt at home.

"I almost feel like I'm among friends," he said as he shook hands with a couple of employees before his formal introduction as the college's next president.

Klincar, 49, was in Quincy for the first time since trustees announced May 21 that he would succeed Bill Simpson, who is retiring after more than 11 years as the college's president.

He received a standing ovation from faculty, staff, trustees, search committee members and others in the community, including Quincy Mayor John Spring.

"Let's hope that same applause is as warm and welcoming in one year," Klincar said with a smile.

Klincar, a colonel in the U.S. Air Force, is commander (chancellor) of the College for Enlisted Professional Military Education at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base in Alabama.

His retirement from the military will be effective on Aug. 1, the same day he starts his duties at JWCC.

Klincar and his wife, Debbie, are both excited to get back to Illinois, the state they call home. He grew up in Belleville; she in Okawville. They've lived in various places and have traveled extensively.

"There is no place on earth we feel more comfortable," Klincar said of Quincy. "We look forward to a long tenure. This is where we hope to spend the rest of our lives."

Klincar has been a finalist for presidencies of at least three other colleges -- in Chicago Heights, Texas and Indiana, based on a Google search.

"There were more colleges and more money, but not the community," he said. "The Midwestern hospitality is alive and well (in Quincy). It's a wonderful community."

Debbie Klincar, in an interview with The Herald-Whig, said the JWCC job was her top choice.

"As soon as we drove here, everyone was so friendly. It felt like home," she said. "It was definitely 'it.' I connected here right away."

The Klincars plan to be in Quincy through Wednesday to search for a house. Debbie Klincar said it's nice to know that their new home will be one where they'll stay for a while.

"I'm excited about that," she said.

Klincar said he looks forward to getting settled into his new job, but has no plans to shake things up.

Quincy Herald-Whig, June 3, 2008 (Page 2 of 2)

"I'm going to spend most of my time listening," he said, adding that Simpson is leaving the college in a strong position.

Jerry Hagmeier, chairman of the board of trustees, said Klincar was the board's unanimous choice to serve as the college's next president and hopes he can build upon Simpson's success as the college's leader.

"Under Dr. Simpson's leadership, the college has made tremendous strides. We've watched our enrollment grow, we've built a new campus and we've built some very strong friendships and collaborative relationships in the community," Hagmeier said. "We eagerly look forward to (Klincar) taking us into the next phase of our growth."

Chicago Sun-Times, June 3, 2008

Wrote 'Don't Ask' rule for gays

NU PROFESSOR | Concerned about effect of policy on homosexual troops

June 3, 2008

BY RUMMANA HUSSAIN Staff Reporter rhussain@suntimes.com

Charlie Moskos, the military sociologist and Northwestern University professor who authored former President Bill Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on gays in the military, has died.

Mr. Moskos died Saturday at his home in Santa Monica, Calif., as a result of complications related to prostate cancer, according to Northwestern. He was 74.

Under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, passed by Congress in 1993, gays are allowed to serve in the military as long as they do not engage in homosexual activity and keep their sexual orientation private.

While many gay rights groups viewed the policy as imperfect, they were encouraged by Mr. Moskos' ability to criticize it.

"Charlie consistently defended the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy but was also concerned about the effect it was having on gay and lesbian troops," said Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

U.S. Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said of Mr. Moskos: "Charles was a remarkable man, a renowned scholar who repeatedly offered thoughtful advice and thought-provoking ideas on the challenges with which we have grappled over the years."

After graduating from Princeton, Mr. Moskos was drafted into the Army in 1956 and served two years, according to Northwestern.

Mr. Moskos earned graduate degrees at UCLA and came to Northwestern in 1966 from the University of Michigan.

He retired in 2003 but still taught courses during the fall quarter, according to Northwestern.

Mr. Moskos often consulted military leaders around the world and published numerous articles on military issues.

Mr. Moskos is survived by his wife, Ilca, and two sons, Andrew and Peter. A wake is scheduled from 4 to 9 p.m. Thursday at Smith-Corcoran Funeral Home, 6150 N. Cicero.

Funeral services will be at 10 a.m. Friday at St. Andrew's Greek Orthodox Church, 5649 N. Sheridan.

Rockford Register Star, May 31, 2008

Defeated capital plan leaves NIU in limbo

By Sean F. Driscoll and Aaron Chambers

RRSTAR.COM

Posted May 31, 2008 @ 10:14 PM

SPRINGFIELD — Northern Illinois University would have received \$7.7 million to renovate Cole Hall, the site of deadly Feb. 14 shootings, under a capital construction plan that House lawmakers defeated on Saturday.

NIU President John Peters sought the state funding after the shootings in which a former student killed five students during a class and wounded 16 others before taking his own life.

The proposed work involves changing the outward and inward look and feel of the centrally located lecture hall, but keeping the building.

The plan also requires the university to build a new 400-seat lecture space to replace the half of Cole Hall where the shooting took place that no longer would be used for teaching.

An earlier plan, announced two weeks after the shootings, called for \$40 million to bulldoze Cole Hall and replace it with a new building.

Peters said he couldn't ask students to return to the scene of the horrific crime and that the building was antiquated and needed to be replaced anyway.

The plan was criticized as being too costly, and university officials dropped it. More than 5,000 faculty, students and staff responded to an unscientific survey, with 71 percent supporting renovation plans.

In the meantime, Cole Hall is closed. The basement, used mainly for storage and some lab space, will reopen this summer. The two 500-seat lecture halls on the building's main floor will remain closed.

Daily Herald, June 1, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

Harper, Northern Illinois to discuss bachelor's degree program

NIU, Palatine school to discuss new offerings

By Emily Krone and Kimberly Pohl | Daily Herald Staff

Published: 6/1/2008 12:08 AM

Northern Illinois University and Harper College have agreed to negotiations that could end the Palatine school's controversial four-year quest to offer bachelor's degrees.

In a May 16 letter, NIU officials indicated they would be willing to discuss offering baccalaureate degrees in public safety and technology management on the Harper campus.

The concession by NIU aims to address work-force needs that Harper identified in justifying its proposed baccalaureate programs -- and ends the political tug of war that has pitted Harper against the state's public and private four-year schools.

Both sides have mounted substantial lobbying campaigns designed to influence state lawmakers, who would have to approve Harper's plan.

Harper officials have long said they would pursue only baccalaureate degree programs that nearby four-year schools are unwilling or unable to offer.

Indeed, Harper previously scrapped a proposed baccalaureate program in nursing after NIU agreed to offer the program on the Palatine campus.

A proposal in the state House that would have given Harper the authority to offer baccalaureate degrees in public safety and technology management stipulated that four-year schools would have the right of first refusal to offer the programs locally.

Although approved by the House, the proposed law was rejected by a Senate committee on a 5-4 vote.

Because of fierce opposition by four-year institutions, the proposal never has made it to the Senate floor for a vote.

Harper officials say the 5-4 vote -- and the likelihood that Harper officials could swing at least one and possibly two votes their way -- scared NIU into sending the letter indicating their willingness to negotiate.

NIU officials were not immediately available to comment on the details of -- or reasoning behind -- their decision to negotiate. In a prepared statement, NIU Vice President for Administration and Outreach Ann Kaplan said, "Our position all along has been that the universities and community colleges need to work out these issues in ways that work best for everyone.

"These are serious regional work force issues, and they're important to all of us. It's entirely appropriate that regional legislators expect us to make this work, and we will."

Harper and NIU began preliminary negotiations last year, Harper President Robert Breuder said, but

Daily Herald, June 1, 2008 (Page 2 of 2)

those early talks broke down because NIU argued it already offered similar programs at its Hoffman Estates campus.

Recent letters between Breuder and NIU President John Peters indicate the two sides still have important issues to hash out before an agreement can be reached.

Breuder insists at least 90 percent of both programs must be held face-to-face, rather than online or over video conferencing. Those parameters would significantly increase the cost to NIU.

Peters said in a letter to Breuder that the conditions "must be fully discussed by our academic teams." He added, "That being said, I look forward to NIU offering the courses which meet the needs of the students and professionals in the region we jointly serve."

Breuder said of the correspondence from Peters, "It's mushy. He doesn't come out and definitively say, 'We want to do this.' "

State Sen. Matt Murphy, a Palatine Republican who sponsored the House proposal and a former Harper trustee, called the correspondence between Harper and NIU a "positive development."

"The four-year programs were supposed to be a last resort on Harper's end," Murphy said.

But Breuder said even if this work-force need is satisfied, another likely will arise that will re-ignite Harper's push to offer baccalaureate degrees.

"We're always delighted to work with them or anyone else, and if they want to do it, then, great. Come and do it," he said. "But at some point in time, (NIU) can't plug every hole. And what happens when we come up with another one? Because we will, if we're listening to the community."

The News-Gazette, June 3, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

UI in top 5 of schools sending grads to Teach for America

**By Crystal Ligon
Tuesday June 3, 2008**

SAVOY – When she graduated with a bachelor's degree in kinesiology last month with a 4.0 grade-point average and Bronze Tablet, Chelsey Kallembach of Savoy had her pick of graduate schools.

But Kallembach, 23, doesn't want just to make the grade; she wants to change the world in a greater way.

So Kallembach set aside her graduate-school acceptance letters and applied for the nonprofit organization Teach for America. It aims to address educational inequality by recruiting top-of-their-class, recent college graduates to teach in low-income schools around the nation.

From the University of Illinois alone, more than 60 graduates joined the group this year. According to spokeswoman Eva Boster, that puts the UI in the top five of the more than 400 colleges sending students to the organization.

Kallembach said the organization "plays into that sense of competition that we've all been raised into. I felt it in high school," she said. "You have to get the highest ACT score; you have to be involved in the most clubs; you have to get the best grades. And then you do the same thing in college for internships, for jobs, for grad school. So, I think that's definitely a huge part of" the reason why people are applying.

She said a second reason is more in tune with people wanting to help other people. "I feel like a lot of us are idealistic," she said. "It plays into that wanting to really help people, wanting to really effect change and wanting to really make a difference in someone else's life."

But Teach for America wasn't always Kallembach's goal.

She said she had never heard of it before last fall when she received a random e-mail from a girl she didn't know, asking if she'd like to sit down with a recruiter to learn more about Teach for America.

"I remember leaving that day we met ... thinking, 'I'm going to be teaching for the next two years,'" Kallembach said. "The more I learned, the more I liked. The more I liked, the more confident I got about making the decision to apply. There was just something that hit me so hard."

Perhaps the thing that hit Kallembach most was that there were children and teenagers who weren't receiving the same education she received.

"I got a fantastic education," she said. "Giving that back to someone is a huge part of my motivation to do this."

Kallembach will be placed in a low-income school to teach high school science, most likely biology, in the eastern North Carolina region. She's not sure which town or school she will be placed in yet. But she was to spend this week in North Carolina, then go to Atlanta for training and to teach in the public schools' summer session for five weeks there.

In the afternoons, Teach for America will hold classes that will go toward Kallembach's certification to be

The News-Gazette, June 3, 2008 (Page 2 of 2)

a teacher in North Carolina. Kallembach will also receive a week of specialized training in writing science lesson plans in Houston. Kallembach will also have to complete classes at East Carolina University throughout her first year of teaching. The university has designed a program specifically for Teach for America corps members to get their certification quickly.

Kallembach said the students in the school are sometimes two to three grade levels behind their counterparts at middle- to higher-income schools.

"What I'm going to try my hardest to do is to make up that difference – to bring them up to where they're supposed to be," she said. "Thinking about making up three years in a year seems like a really daunting task. ... I absolutely have to do this. And I'm going to do it in whatever way I can. This is going to be my life."

Kallembach added that while the classroom is an important part of bridging the inequality gap, carrying the vision to other parts of society is crucial.

"It's going to take a more fundamental, systemic kind of change to really change what these kids are dealing with," she said.

A little more about Teach for America:

The program allows corps members to list their preferences of locations in the United States. The organization looks for diverse members of society, who are recent college graduates and professionals with leadership skills. More than 12,000 people have participated in the program, reaching nearly 3 million students.

Teach for America's corps members generally have an average GPA of 3.6, and 95 percent held leadership positions on their college campuses.

In the 2008-09 school year, Teach for America will place its corps members in 29 urban and rural regions in more than 100 school districts in 23 states and the District of Columbia. The school districts pay the Teach for America participants for their teaching.

On the Web: www.teachforamerica.org.

Chicago Sun-Times, June 5, 2008

Colleges may get power to lock students out of private dorms

COLLEGE | Critic says measure makes it too easy to evict

June 5, 2008

BY FRAN SPIELMAN City Hall Reporter/fspielman@suntimes.com

College students who live in the University Center and other dormitories built by private developers or non-profits would no longer be protected by Chicago's Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance, under an amendment advanced today that could trigger more student lock-outs.

Peter Zelchenko, former director of the West Town Tenants Union, noted that the 1980's ordinance "penalizes an institution for locking someone out of their home, except under very limited circumstances."

Students would no longer enjoy those safeguards if, as expected, the ordinance approved by the Housing Committee gets full Council approval.

"It's gonna give universities additional impunity to force evictions and lock-outs. This gives universities the power, essentially, to revoke a key from a resident and not allow them into their home unless they do something like pay a fee or otherwise accede to the university's demands -- whatever they may be. It's terribly open-ended," Zelchenko said.

He added, "Universities already have remedies in the criminal code and elsewhere that give them power over legitimate concerns when dealing with clearly reckless students."

The ordinance was co-sponsored by Aldermen Bob Fioretti (2nd) and Vi Daley (43rd) at the behest of Columbia College and DePaul University.

Representing Columbia at today's hearing was Ed Kus, the city's former zoning administrator.

Kus noted that dorms "owned and operated by institutions of higher learning" were exempt from the Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance. Since then, the model for building and managing student housing has changed.

In some cases, universities sign a "master lease" with a private building owner. Other dorms are run through "foundations affiliated with the university," Kus said.

"This amendment is very important to the universities in order to provide them with the flexibility necessary to ensure student safety and security," Kus said.

Fioretti is a former president of the alumni association at Northern Illinois University, where former student Steven Kazmierczak walked into a crowded lecture hall on Valentine's Day, opened fire and killed five students, then himself.

Fioretti pointed to the NIU and Virginia Tech massacres as proof that colleges need sweeping powers over university-affiliated housing.

"Let's say a student is expelled because of disruptive conduct. He or she will be given a short notice, then evicted from this type of student housing," Fioretti said.

"With this growing problem that we're having at universities, we need to deal in a quick manner with problem students. ... That's what the thrust of this ordinance is."

The Chicago Tribune, June 5, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

NIU faces summer without cash to renovate killings site

BY NGUYEN HUY VU
Associated Press Writer
SPRINGFIELD, Ill.

Northern Illinois University officials hope they'll get another chance at state money to remodel the lecture hall where five students were gunned down during a Valentine's Day shooting spree.

They wanted to begin construction this year and have Cole Hall reopened by 2010, but that's unlikely without a new capital construction program. State lawmakers are gridlocked on a capital program and left town Saturday without approving one.

School officials said they are optimistic funding will come later this year after receiving assurances from top lawmakers that they'll try to get a capital agreement -- with Cole Hall funding -- approved by the fall.

Until then, the school hopes to get \$2.6 million in federal grants to offset some of the mounting costs related to the shooting -- a price tag estimated at between \$8 million and \$10 million.

The money will help pay for things like classroom upgrades, mental health services and emergency planning, said Harold Kafer, a dean at the school working on recovery efforts. NIU could get about \$500,000 in August and is still applying for the other \$2.1 million.

"It won't pay for everything but anything is going to help," Kafer said. "We will recover as many of those costs from federal and state aid as we can, and then we will have the difficult challenge internally of absorbing the rest of the costs."

Cole Hall has been empty since Feb. 14, when Steven Kazmierczak fatally shot five students and wounded 18 others before killing himself.

The shooting has forced campus planners to figure out where to move students. The brick building was the backbone of the campus and served 12,000 students a year. Officials have reshuffled space and upgraded classrooms with computers and audio and video equipment.

School officials initially wanted to tear down Cole Hall, create a memorial in its place and build a new \$40 million structure. But that proved so unpopular they returned with a trimmed down proposal.

The new \$7.73 million plan calls for an updated facade of Cole Hall and to change the use of the classroom auditorium where the killings took place. It also includes a new 7,800-square-foot, 400-seat auditorium in the center campus area.

Lawmakers tried to include NIU's plan in the construction program they've been negotiating for years. But the latest effort died when the House blocked the gambling expansion to pay for the program.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich is trying again to reach a capital agreement but it's unclear if he can work that out with lawmakers over the next few months.

Rep. Robert Pritchard said he'll continue pushing for money to remodel Cole Hall through other construction dollars if no one budges on the capital program.

The Chicago Tribune, June 5, 2008 (Page 2 of 2)

"That's something the governor could do if he wanted to, almost immediately," said the Hinkley Republican. "That money is out there and we ought to continue to try and work for it."

Spokeswoman Abby Ottenhoff wouldn't say if Blagojevich would support providing money out of other funds.

"Our focus right now is on getting that (capital) bill passed," she said.

On the Net: www.niu.edu

The Southern Illinoisan, June 5, 2008

Rend Lake offers text, e-mail alerts

BY BECKY MALKOVICH, THE SOUTHERN

Thursday, June 5, 2008 9:30 AM CDT

INA - A new emergency notification system at Rend Lake College will save time and potential trouble for those who use it.

The college's new Wireless Emergency Notification System offers emergency text and e-mail notifications to RLC students, faculty, staff, administration and others and went online earlier this week.

The system is the same used by many other colleges and universities including Southern Illinois University, RLC Vice President of Information Technology Salah Shakir said.

The free "RLC Alert" service will notify users of emergencies at the college's main campus in Ina, or at satellite campuses in Mount Vernon and Pinckneyville.

RLC Alerts will be sent during emergencies that threaten life, safety, or property and/or severely impacts normal campus/college operations.

Users will also receive warnings of flash flood, severe thunderstorm, winter storm and tornado warnings.

"This is just another way we can notify people in case of an emergency," RLC Vice President of Student Services said. "Our intent is to use it as little as possible because we don't want to desensitize people to the alerts. We will use it for severe weather, campus closings or emergency situations, but not for things like sales at the bookstore or for sporting events."

The college will pay \$4,100 annually for the service that will send the notifications to an unlimited number of recipients, something Shakir said was important because "We want everyone who wants to be on the system to have the opportunity."

Shakir said recent violence on college campuses in Illinois and elsewhere more than justify the expense of the service, as does the convenience the notification system will provide for those who commute to any of the campuses.

"This winter we had several closings because of the weather. Some of our students traveled 50 minutes or more to campus only to find it closed or classes cancelled. The system will save us lots of time and trouble," he said.

Those interested in signing up for RLC Alerts can do so on the RLC Web site.

Pantagraph, May 31, 2008

House approves proposal to require university campus security plans

Saturday, May 31, 2008 9:47 AM CDT

By Kenneth Lowe
kenneth.lowe@lee.net

SPRINGFIELD — The House approved a proposal Friday that would require universities and community colleges to form campus security plans in concert with local emergency and law enforcement officials.

Sponsored in the House by state Rep. Bob Pritchard, R-Hinckley, the proposal carries out the recommendations of the Illinois Campus Security Task Force. The governor formed the task force in 2007 following the shootings at Virginia Tech.

The House passed the proposal on a vote of 111-0. The proposal cleared the Senate unanimously earlier in May.

Pritchard's district includes DeKalb, home of Northern Illinois University. On Feb. 14, former NIU student Steven Kazmierczak fired a shotgun and two handguns at students in a lecture hall in Cole Hall, killing five students and wounding 18 others before killing himself. Hundreds fled.

NIU already had a plan in place for such an emergency, Pritchard said.

"When the tragedy hit in February, they already had those exercises in place and their response was immediate," Pritchard said. "Those kind of practices really reinforce what the task force is recommending and what we're implementing through this act."

The proposal requires all public and private universities and community colleges to coordinate with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and local emergency response agencies to form emergency action plans and train personnel to respond.

State Rep. Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet, who supported the proposal, said it requires colleges to assess their security and evacuation plans.

"You'll hopefully get a well-integrated document that addresses security on multiple platforms," Rose said.

The proposal does not include any funding for the mandates.

"I think after we've experienced the kind of tragedy we did at Northern Illinois University, we don't want others to be unprepared for that same situation," Pritchard said.

The proposal moves on for the governor's signature to become law.

The legislation is Senate Bill 2691.

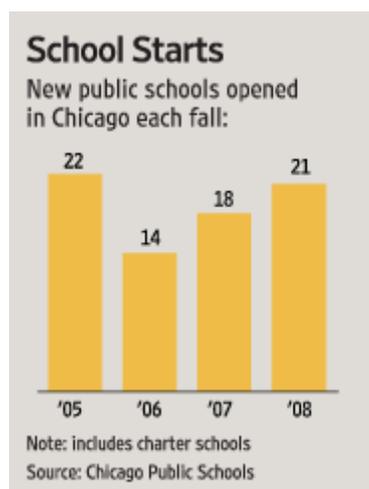
The Wall Street Journal, June 5, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

Transforming inner-city schools to train tomorrow's work force

By **JOE BARRETT**
June 5, 2008; Page A14

CHICAGO -- One day in August 2005, Dan Swinney went to the Chicago public schools for help in his crusade to revive manufacturing here. Instead, Mr. Swinney left his meeting with some homework: design a new high school to train the workers needed to make that revival happen.

This past fall, the school, Austin Polytechnical Academy, opened inside a building that had once housed a mammoth, violence-prone high school on the city's struggling West Side. Now, Mr. Swinney, chairman of the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council, has plans to open two more high schools and an elementary school in other areas of the city.



Mr. Swinney says American manufacturing is adapting to globalization by shifting to higher-value products. But with the baby boomers' looming retirement, the education system isn't producing the workers and managers needed to take over the highly skilled jobs that are most in demand.

"There's a window that's open that will allow us to sustain and expand our competitive advantage, but it's only open for a few years," Mr. Swinney says. Training poor students to fill these positions can "address deep social problems," while giving industry the work force it needs.

Inner-city school systems throughout the country are moving fast to open legions of small, experimental schools, in many cases replacing bigger institutions that were becoming unmanageable. The new schools take a variety of approaches, from literature-focused, to character-based to vocational.

New York City has opened 241 such schools since 2002 and has plans for 53 more this fall. Cleveland, Oakland, Calif., and Boston have also opened similar schools. Much of the proliferation is fueled by private groups, most notably the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has spent more than \$1 billion since 2001 to back the small-school movement.

The drive has been criticized at times for forcing some students to travel far from home for a general education or crowding them into facilities that then take on some of the problems associated with the schools that were closed down.

So far, Chicago has opened 55 schools under Mayor Richard M. Daley's Renaissance 2010 plan, with an additional 21 slated for the fall. Some, such as Austin, focus on job skills. Others admit only girls, concentrate on the Great Books or take an African-centered approach to learning. Eventually, Chicago will have more than 100 new schools, serving about 20% of the roughly 415,000 students in the district.

The goal is to create attractive options for students of every background across the city "and let them choose a program that works for them," says Arne Duncan, chief executive of the city's schools. "The large, one-size-fits-all high school doesn't fit anybody."

The Wall Street Journal, June 5, 2008 (Page 2 of 2)

At Austin Polytech, the mostly poor, predominately black freshman class of 129 takes up less than half of the second floor of the former Austin High School -- a neighborhood giant with three gyms and a swimming pool. That school was closed a year ago. Two more schools will eventually occupy the third and fourth floors.

The Polytech students take double periods of English and math -- designed to quickly bring up the many students with below-grade-level skills -- and heavy doses of science and computer training. Before graduating, the students will complete four years of pre-engineering and have the chance to be certified in metalworking skills and complete internships at the school's dozens of manufacturing-firm partners. Austin graduates would be expected to find jobs paying as much as \$35,000 including overtime, with the chance of doubling that in three or four years, Mr. Swinney says.

Robert Hayes, 15 years old, looks up from his wireless laptop during English class and says he has had a pretty good first year. "I like some of the jobs they are talking about," he says.

Researchers have generally found that the smaller schools bolster test scores and graduation rates. One reason, says Tracy Huebner, a senior researcher at WestEd, a nonprofit educational-research firm, is personal connections between students and staff members. "Somebody will be knowing if Mark is having a good day or a bad day," she says.

Mr. Swinney, 63, a former metalworker, set up the Center for Labor and Community Research in 1982 to study why manufacturing jobs were in decline and explore approaches to fighting against the tide. In one study, the group found that Chicago-area manufacturers have 10,500 openings each year, but the educational system is providing only about 5,000 people qualified to fill them.

By 2005, when he entered Mr. Duncan's office, Mr. Swinney had launched the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council, which brought together the Illinois Manufacturers Association, the state AFL-CIO branch and city officials.

Mr. Duncan, the schools chief, was happy to join the group, but he also thought Mr. Swinney could help him improve the school system.

One recent day, engineering teacher Anthony Speller stood on top of a table. An electrical engineer who used to work for General Electric Co., he instructed two groups of students to hold hands in a circle, then gradually tie themselves in knots by changing whom they held hands with. One group quickly disentangled themselves. The other struggled.

Mr. Speller told the latter group: "You all started talking instead of listening to the problem -- like American manufacturers back in the day."

Batavia Sun, June 6, 2008

State: How do we keep State Scholars here?

By Elisabeth Kilpatrick ekilpatrick@scn1.com

When it comes to its top high school students, Illinois wants to reap what it sows.

A new bill aimed at keeping more of Illinois' State Scholars in the state for college is now waiting for the governor's approval after passing unanimously in both houses.

"We're definitely losing students to out-of-state schools, which is the last thing we want to be doing," said Sen. Linda Holmes, D-Aurora, the bill's chief Senate sponsor. "We're losing qualified people that could be in our work force."

The bill would require the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to conduct a study on the number of State Scholars who applied to in-state public colleges and universities in 2008 and 2009, as well as which schools denied admittance to the students. State Scholars are culled from the top 10 percent of the state's high school seniors, and selection is based on class rank and standardized test scores. Around Illinois, 18,178 State Scholars were selected for 2008.

The cost of the study should be minimal, ISAC spokesman Claude Walker said, since researchers already employed by the agency would do the work. The study would be completed by Jan. 1, 2010, at which point ISAC would make a presentation on how to keep more students in-state.

Still, Walker said that it may be difficult to hang on to students who are lured by specialized programs and full scholarships at schools across the country. State Scholars don't receive scholarship money right now, although a bill that would award each winner a \$1,000 scholarship has been approved and is awaiting funding, Walker said.

"These are highly competitive students who are being sought-after by the best schools in the nation," he said.

Around the Fox Valley, many high schools have found their State Scholars for this year are looking to stick around. At Kaneland High School, only three of the school's 30 State Scholars had plans to go out of state for college, counselor Cynthia Violett said.

Of the 41 State Scholars at West Aurora High School who announced their college plans, 25 planned to stay in-state, spokesman Mike Chapin said. He pointed to the affordability of in-state tuition as a major factor in keeping even the best students here.

"I think a number of our college-bound students stay close to home because college costs are a real issue for their families," he said.

The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 2, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

Bill to broaden disabilities act concerns some colleges

By JJ HERMES

Although it has been stalled in Congress for several months, legislation that would broaden coverage under the Americans With Disabilities Act has recently been on the radar of some college officials and the associations that represent them.

Their concern: that expanding the definition of a disability could overwhelm offices that work to accommodate such students on university campuses.

Several higher-education associations have met recently about the bill, both with one another and with key Congressional staff members. Though the bill faces opposition from the Bush administration, its key sponsor hopes to get a modified form to the floor by this summer.

Most universities voluntarily go beyond the letter of the law in accommodating students on their campuses. But broadening the definition of a disability could add even more demand for campus offices that already work with hundreds, if not thousands, of students.

"There is a concern that having too many more students coming forward looking for accommodations would cause the resources of the disability offices to be extremely stretched," said Ada Meloy, general counsel for the American Council on Education.

No Longer 'Significant'

Introduced last July, the ADA Restoration Act seeks to reverse several Supreme Court decisions that have narrowed the interpretation of the ADA, which was signed into law in 1990.

As it stands, a person's disability must "substantially limit" a "major life activity" to be considered for coverage under the law. Early drafts of the new legislation, HR 3195 in the House and S 1881 in the Senate, would essentially lift that requirement.

The legislation was stalled this January by opposition from conservative groups and organizations that advocate for employers. A day before a Congressional hearing on the legislation at the end of January, Brian A. Benczkowski, the principal deputy assistant U.S. attorney general, sent a letter to select members of Congress saying the Justice Department "strongly opposed" the proposed bill and worried that it would "dramatically increase unnecessary litigation" and create uncertainty in the workplace.

The bill already has 245 cosponsors in the House, guaranteeing passage with at least a 56-percent majority if those members stand by the legislation. Conversely, the Senate bill, which has nearly identical language, has just three cosponsors.

Stephanie L. Lundberg, press secretary for the House majority leader, Steny H. Hoyer, a Democrat from Maryland who introduced the bill, said Representative Hoyer and others were in the process of modifying the bill and hoped to bring it to the floor sometime late this spring or this summer.

Fearing a Crunch

College disability-resource centers offer myriad services for students, such as arranging priority registration and extended time on exams, providing assistive technology and accessible desks in the

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classroom, and paying for note takers and books on tape.

Most of those resources go to students with permanent disabilities. But because the proposed legislation is so broadly worded, those offices may have to accommodate a wider range of students.

"This would be an unfunded mandate," said Bea Awoniyi, assistant dean of students and director of the Student Disability Resource Center at Florida State University. She added that money for her office comes from state appropriations, which would not necessarily increase even if the office must accommodate more students.

She said her office already accommodated more than 1,900 students. Colleges cannot request compensation for providing these services.

"It would limit the types of services we could provide for those who legitimately need it," added Ms. Awoniyi.

However, many resource centers already go beyond the letter of the law in accommodating students, and some administrators don't think an expanded definition of a disability would cause students to flood their offices.

"We're not necessarily looking at the law when we're providing services," said Jacob L. Karnes Jr., assistant dean of students and director of the Disability Resource Center at the University of Kentucky. "Obviously we're looking at the law in terms of compliance, but we're also looking at what the student need is."

Mr. Karnes said his office accommodated nearly 3 percent of students at the university, doing anything from providing note takers for students with permanent disabilities to loaning wheelchairs to students with sprained ankles.

Still, accommodations vary from one institution to another, and some colleges provide services only to students with permanent disabilities. A broadened definition of a disability would have a greater impact on those offices.

"Universities have different ways of interpreting what is a significant impairment of a major life function, which is part of the definition currently in effect," said Ms. Meloy. "To change the definition so that it's anyone with an impairment is a change that would increase the number of people who would appear to require accommodation."

The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 4, 2008

Report details latest data on graduation rates and student aid

By JEAN EVANGELAUF
Washington

Thirty-six percent of first-time, full-time undergraduates at four-year colleges who intend to earn a bachelor's degree attain their goal within four years, and 58 percent achieve it within six years, the U.S. Education Department said in a report released on Tuesday.

The data are part of a "First Look" report published by the National Center for Education Statistics, the department's statistical arm. The report also features highlights from federal surveys covering enrollment, student aid, and college finances.

Graduation rates varied widely among students who entered four-year colleges in 2000-1, according to the report. For example, 40 percent of women earned bachelor's degrees within four years, compared with 31 percent of men.

By type of institution, 50 percent of students at private nonprofit colleges had degrees in hand in four years, compared with 29 percent of those at public colleges and 26 percent of those at private for-profit institutions.

Graduation rates varied by racial group as well. Asian-American students had the highest six-year rate, at 66 percent, followed by white students, at 59 percent; Hispanic students, at 48 percent; black students, at 41 percent; and American Indian students, at 39 percent.

Reliance on Student Aid

The Education Department said that in 2005-6, 75 percent of full-time, first-time undergraduates received one or more types of financial aid. Some 37 percent had federal grants, 28 percent had state or local grants, 29 percent had institutional grants, and 46 percent had taken out loans.

The pattern of aid differed depending on the sector of education. For example, 60 percent of undergraduates at private nonprofit four-year colleges took out loans in 2005-6, and 75 percent received institutional grants. At public four-year colleges, 44 percent borrowed, and 34 percent got institutional grants. At public two-year colleges, only 18 percent borrowed, and 11 percent got grants from their colleges.

Borrowing was highest at for-profit colleges, where 67 percent of undergraduates at four-year institutions and 73 percent of those at two-year institutions took out loans.

Total enrollment in postsecondary institutions stood at 18.2 million in the fall of 2006, up 1.6 percent from the previous year. Some 17.8 million students were enrolled at the nation's 4,329 degree-granting colleges and universities, and nearly 447,000 were enrolled at 2,285 postsecondary schools that do not award degrees.

The figures are drawn from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, or Iped, which compiles information from surveys that postsecondary institutions that receive federal funds are required to complete.

The report, "Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2006; Graduation Rates, 2000 and 2003 Cohorts; and Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2006," is available online.

Inside Higher Ed, June 5, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

‘Last bite at the apple’ on accreditation?

A year after Education Secretary Margaret Spellings abandoned plans to propose new federal rules governing higher education accreditation, under heavy pressure from members of Congress, the Education Department is reportedly contemplating issuing such regulations when legislation to renew the Higher Education Act becomes law. That possibility is being met with astonishment by college leaders and many on Capitol Hill, who describe it as both practically difficult and politically foolhardy.

Last spring, in the face of strong opposition by several key U.S. senators, who (cheered by college leaders) argued that the department was overstepping its bounds, Spellings grudgingly agreed not to publish regulations to toughen the government’s oversight of the activities of accrediting agencies, the product of contested negotiations among accreditors, college administrators and U.S. officials. In a June 2007 letter to Sen. Lamar Alexander, who had warned the department not to release new regulations until after Congress finished its work on legislation to renew the Higher Education Act, Spellings said she would not publish such rules “at this time as we work to finalize statutory language around accreditation issues.”

Congress went on, in a measure allocating funds for the Education Department for 2008, to include a provision that specifically barred the department from promulgating rules on accreditation.

Ever since, Spellings and her top aides, including Sara Martinez Tucker, the under secretary for education who last week took on the added responsibility for federal higher education policy, have made clear in various venues (including interviews with *Inside Higher Ed* and sharply worded op-eds in publications like *Politico*) their frustration at having their hands tied. Department officials had viewed changes in the accreditation system as a major tool for bringing about some of the changes in higher education called for in Spellings’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, including prodding them to more aggressively measure and improve the quality of student learning. By barring the department from imposing the accreditation regulations, Spellings wrote in her fiery op-ed, Congress was “digging a moat around the ‘ivory tower’ instead of knocking down the very barriers that block access to an affordable postsecondary education and to information that can guide a student’s decision-making process.”

“Would the American people let powerful lobbying forces persuade Congress to handcuff the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission from carrying out its responsibility for ensuring that consumers have the data they need to make informed decisions about their investments, whether saving for a home, their retirement or their children’s education? Of course not! Then why has Congress been persuaded to block the U.S. Department of Education from overseeing the quality of institutions of higher education by special interest forces determined to keep the accreditation process insular, clubby and accountable to no one but themselves?”

With the clock ticking on the Bush administration’s time in office, many higher education officials have wondered whether (and in some cases feared that) Spellings and her aides might make a final push to institute policies that might instigate change in higher education — to take “one more bite at the apple,” as one Congressional aide put it.

So many college lobbyists were understandably gripped when word circulated in recent days that when Congress finally finishes its work on the Higher Education Act legislation (most have stopped saying “if,” although after five full years, passage of the law still seems like it may never happen), the department would formally propose (possibly as a place holder for new rules that the Higher Education Act would mandate) the accreditation regulations that Spellings abandoned a year ago.

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A spokeswoman for the department, Samara Yudof, said this week that department officials “did not have any plans at this time” to reintroduce the accreditation rules that emerged from the 2007 negotiated rule making sessions. “We continue to work closely with Congress and at such time a bill is signed in to law, we would begin a new [negotiated rule making] process,” Yudof said. Asked specifically if the proposed rules from last year are “dead, or is there a chance that they will be implemented (perhaps as a placeholder?) once the Higher Education Act legislation is signed by the president?” Yudof said department officials were unwilling to speculate about hypothetical situations.

College lobbyists and some Congressional aides said they were stunned that department officials would consider such a tack. Some said they suspected that the department might be on at least defensible legal ground in putting forward such regulations, since Spellings had committed only to withholding such regulations until after Congress renewed the Higher Education Act, which aides to members of the Senate and the House are working feverishly to finish with the stated goal of polishing it off by the July 4 recess. And while the Higher Education Act measure currently has language that would appear to restrict the department from issuing regulations that deal with accreditors’ oversight of colleges’ student learning outcomes, department officials might be able to argue, some college officials speculate, that the withheld regulations were drafted under existing Higher Education Act language, and therefore fall outside that restriction.

But even if there might be a passable legal justification for issuing the accreditation regulations, most higher education lobbyists and Congressional aides say, the department might be on shaky political ground in coming forward at this point with rules that have been widely opposed by many on Capitol Hill.

“If it’s true, they’re nuts,” said Victor Klatt, a former top aide to Rep. Howard P (Buck) McKeon (R-Calif.) who has now returned to work on education issues at Van Scoyoc Associates, a Washington lobbying firm. “It’s not that we don’t have a little bit of an understanding of where they’re coming from [in seeking to prod accreditors and colleges], but they have to know it’s not feasible at this time to do it. It makes no sense to do it at the end of an administration when either Congress will overrule them or the incoming administration will overrule them.”

Klatt and others speculated that introducing the regulations now could infuriate key legislators, notably Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), on whom the department may depend to achieve important goals in its final months, including making desired changes in the No Child Left Behind law.

— Doug Lederman

The News-Gazette, June 1, 2008

UI would get 2.8% increase in funding

By Julie Wurth
Sunday June 1, 2008

SPRINGFIELD – The state budget sent to Gov. Rod Blagojevich would give the University of Illinois \$19.9 million more in operating funds next year, or a 2.8 percent increase.

That would help the university plug a \$17 million gap in the \$4.1 billion preliminary 2008-09 budget approved by UI trustees in late May. That budget, based on no additional state funding, showed \$51 million in new income next year – mostly from tuition – but about \$68 million in new costs.

"This is a little larger increase than last year. This certainly will be helpful to the university, there's no question about that," said Rick Schoell, UI executive director of governmental relations, trying to sort out budget details Saturday night.

Overall, the UI's funding would rise by \$37.7 million in fiscal 2009, a 5.3 percent increase, said state Sen. Mike Frerichs. But that includes \$15.8 million transferred to the UI for the four state scientific surveys, which will move under the UI's control next year.

Another \$3.75 million will go to the university for special projects added on by legislators, mostly at the Chicago campus, said Randall Kangas, UI assistant vice president for planning and budgeting. It includes \$1.8 million for two minority-recruitment programs, \$350,000 for the College of Dentistry, \$1.25 million for a new public policy institute and \$350,000 for the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center.

Legislators also restored \$9.5 million in matching funds for federal research grants at Illinois colleges and universities, including about \$4 million for the UI, Kangas said.

The proposed state budget would increase Extension funding throughout the state by \$1.5 million, which would fully fund the county board match program, the basis for most Extension funding, Frerichs said.

"This has been a nice reversal," he said in a news release. "A few months ago we were fighting to keep the Extension program running."

The budget also would increase Monetary Award Program grants for college students by \$18 million.

For primary and secondary schools, funding would rise by \$516 million to \$7.6 billion. The general state aid funding formula would increase by \$225 to \$5,959 per pupil. Agricultural education funding would get a \$500,000 boost.

The budget would increase funding for downstate transit assistance by \$48 million, community water testing by \$436,000 and clean-air activities by \$4.4 million, Frerichs said.

"I think more people will utilize mass transit in our more urbanized areas, such as Champaign-Urbana and Danville, as gas prices rise," Frerichs said. "We need these funds to adapt to the changing times."

The Senate also approved a statewide construction program pushed by the governor, but the House blocked action on it Saturday night. The capital program included millions of dollars for UI projects, including the petascale computing project, Lincoln Hall renovation and a new electrical and computer engineering building.

The New York Times, June 2, 2008 (Page 1 of 3)

Student loans start to bypass 2-year colleges

By JONATHAN D. GLATER

June 2, 2008

Some of the nation's biggest banks have closed their doors to students at community colleges, for-profit universities and other less competitive institutions, even as they continue to extend federally backed loans to students at the nation's top universities.

Citibank has been among the most aggressive in paring the list of colleges it serves. JPMorgan Chase, PNC and SunTrust say they have not dropped whole categories, but are cutting colleges as well. Some less-selective four-year colleges, like Eastern Oregon University and William Jessup University in Rocklin, Calif., say they have been summarily dropped by some lenders.

The practice suggests that if the credit crisis and the ensuing turmoil in the student loan business persist, some of the nation's neediest students will be hurt the most. The difficulty borrowing may deter them from attending school or prompt them to take a semester off. When they get student loans, they will wind up with less attractive terms and may run a greater risk of default if they have to switch lenders in the middle of their college years.

Tuition and loan amounts can be quite small at community colleges. But these institutions, which are a stepping stone to other educational programs or to better jobs, often draw students from the lower rungs of the economic ladder. More than 6.2 million of the nation's 14.8 million undergraduates — over 40 percent — attend community colleges. According to the most recent data from the College Board, about a third of their graduates took out loans, a majority of them federally guaranteed.

"If we put too many hurdles in their way to get a loan, they'll take a third job or use a credit card," said Jacqueline K. Bradley, assistant dean for financial aid at Mendocino College in California. "That almost guarantees that they won't be as successful in their college career."

So far, financial aid administrators say they have been able to find fallback lenders that students can switch to, but the hurdles are costly to students — in money and time. The maximum interest rate on federal loans, now at 6.8 percent on the most commonly used loans, is set by Congress, but lenders are scrapping benefits, like rate cuts for borrowers who make their payments on time or allow direct withdrawals from bank accounts.

Some loan companies have exited the student loan business entirely, viewing it as unprofitable in the current environment. By splitting out community colleges and less-selective four-year institutions, some remaining lenders seem to be breaking the marketplace into tiers. Students attending elite, expensive, public and private four-year universities can expect loans to remain plentiful. The banks generally say these loans are bigger, more profitable and less risky, in part perhaps because the banks expect the universities' graduates to earn more.

Lenders will not say how many colleges they have dropped, making it hard to determine just how many institutions have been affected. Although financial aid administrators say the trend is widespread, they are often reluctant to identify which lenders have stopped serving their colleges, for fear that it will complicate matters for current students who have taken out loans from those lenders and still need to deal with them.

Michelle McClain, 40, who is studying to become a teacher, learned on Friday that she would have to find a new lender after Citibank dropped William Jessup University. The news angered her.

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"The loan is between me and the lender," Ms. McClain said. "I'm the one that's taking out the loan, I'm the one whose credit is in jeopardy if I don't pay it, I am the one totally responsible for the loan, and as long as I'm going to an accredited college, I don't understand why it would make one iota of difference where I am going to college."

The government has been taking additional steps to keep the student loan market operating smoothly. And some lenders' doors remain wide open. Sallie Mae and Nelnet recently reaffirmed their commitment to federal loans regardless of the institution a student attends. Kristin Shear, director of student financial services at Santa Rosa Junior College, said that days after the school was dropped by Citibank, Wells Fargo called to say it was eager to lend to students there.

The banks that are pulling out say their decisions are based on an analysis of which colleges have higher default rates, low numbers of borrowers and small loan amounts that make the business less profitable. (The average amount borrowed by community college students is about \$3,200 a year, according to the College Board.) Still, the cherry-picking strikes some as peculiar; after all, the government is guaranteeing 95 percent of the value of these loans.

Mark C. Rodgers, a spokesman for Citibank, which lends through its Student Loan Corporation unit, said the bank had "temporarily suspended lending at schools which tend to have loans with lower balances and shorter periods over which we earn interest. And, in general, we are suspending lending at certain schools where we anticipate processing minimal loan volume."

Financial aid officials in California said that Citibank had stopped making loans to students at all community colleges in the state. Mr. Rodgers said the bank would not provide details about which schools were affected.

The financial aid director at William Jessup, Corey Compaan, said he did not understand the bank's explanation.

"The logic is so flawed, that for us to have volume with them in the future, we have to have had volume with them in the past," Mr. Compaan said. Simply to cut off students at a college, he continued, "I find it totally and completely unethical."

The government sets the criteria for college participation in federal loan programs, requiring that colleges be accredited and have low default rates to participate, for example. Now lenders are being more selective than the government.

"There's been a certain amount of market segmentation going on, but this is the first time we've seen a lender, especially as large as Citibank, saying, 'We don't want to do business with you,'" said Samuel F. Collie, director of financial aid at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, Ore.

"There's a fundamental issue of fairness and equity that's certainly not being addressed in this," Mr. Collie said. "But short of completely revamping the way that financial aid, especially loans, is being delivered to students in this country, I don't know that we have any easy answers."

The credit crisis, which has made it harder for some lenders to raise money, and a reduction in the government's subsidy to lenders have contributed to the reevaluations by the lenders.

"This is one of those perfect storm situations," said Susan L. Mead, director of financial aid at Dutchess Community College in New York. She said her institution had been dropped by no less than six lenders: HSBC, Citibank, M&T, Chase, Citizens Bank and Student Loan Xpress.

The New York Times, June 2, 2008 (Page 3 of 3)

Christine Holevas, a spokeswoman for Chase, said that the bank considered several factors in deciding whether to lend to a particular college's students. "The repayment rate, you look at the size and length of the loan," she said. "We have tightened credit standards, yes, but we haven't cut off any category of school."

Hugh Suhr, a spokesman for SunTrust, said it was "stepping away from some relationships" with universities, but that this was "not based on any particular type of school." Mr. Suhr said the bank continued to lend to students at a range of institutions.

Another danger for students is that as they are forced to find and switch to replacement lenders, they may lose track of some debt obligations and miss a few payments.

"It might put them in default," said Claudia Martin, director of financial aid at Monterey Peninsula College, a community college in California that was dropped by Citibank and two other lenders. "We always recommend that a student stay with the same lender all through school."

Commercial colleges, among the first to suffer when lenders withdrew from the market, have been openly critical of the new differentiation.

"From what I can tell from our lawyers, it's not technically illegal for them to reject schools," said Harris N. Miller, the president of the Career College Association in Washington, a trade group for commercial colleges. "I just think that's very objectionable."

Herald and Review, June 6, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

Decatur Area Education Coalition secures second \$2 million grant

By THERESA CHURCHILL - H&R Senior Writer

DECATUR - Members of the eight-month-old Decatur Area Education Coalition learned Thursday that they have a better chance of achieving their goal of making their community the most educated in Illinois.

The news came at a luncheon attended by about 100 people at the Madden Arts Center, where Larry Haab, chairman of the Community Foundation of Decatur/ Macon County, announced the foundation will receive an additional \$2 million challenge grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation in Chicago.

Haab said he hopes the community will step up with the \$2 million in matching funds needed and vowed that initial earnings from the endowment would support the work of the education coalition.

He added that the challenge grant follows a \$2 million grant made by Grand Victoria in February, \$1 million of which was for an operating endowment for the community foundation and \$1 million for a Communityworks endowment.

Communityworks, an initiative of Grand Victoria, financially supports community efforts to improve child care, workforce development and land use and protection.

"We have the prospect of receiving funds that are among the most significant, the largest that this community has ever received for projects like this," Haab said. "This is a huge deal."

He then introduced Nancy Fishman, executive director of the Grand Victoria Foundation, who praised the community foundation and the education coalition.

"I travel around the state a lot, and you're way ahead of most other communities in Illinois," Fishman said.

Since the community foundation announced the formation of the education coalition, the coalition has hired Executive Director Barb Beck and gotten three volunteer improvement teams under way. They are devising strategies to ensure every child in Macon County is ready for kindergarten, is performing at grade level in school and graduates with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace or college.

Fishman also talked about the origins of Grand Victoria, a private foundation supported solely by the Grand Victoria Casino in Elgin. She said Grand Victoria started Communityworks a half dozen years ago to support 17 community foundations around the state.

"You are part of a larger statewide network, which at the moment is getting a lot of national attention," she said. "Community foundations are organizing around issues and are becoming the watercooler of their communities."

Lucy Murphy, executive director of the community foundation, concluded the program by inviting guests to tour the new offices on the art center's third floor for Beck and York Powers, the coalition's kindergarten readiness coordinator.

In an interview, Murphy said the additional funds will let the coalition, among other things, sponsor a larger kindergarten camp that will last longer and serve more children in summer 2009. She said this

Herald and Review, June 6, 2008 (Page 2 of 2)

summer's camp is set to begin July 14, last three weeks and serve 100 prekindergarteners at the Scovill Zoo education center.

She also expressed confidence that the \$2 million in local monies will come in.

Gloria Davis, Decatur School District superintendent and a member of the coalition's steering committee, said the support from the Grand Victoria Foundation, the community foundation and the education coalition is a "tremendous boost" to the children, schools and community.

"It says people care, and they want to help," she said. "As a school superintendent, I can't ask for any more."

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The News-Gazette, EDITORIAL, June 2, 2008

The marketing of the University of Illinois

Monday June 2, 2008

The University of Illinois' Global Campus initiative will require nontraditional means to attract nontraditional students.

There probably was a time more than 30 years ago when the fledgling University of Phoenix, like today's University of Illinois online Global Campus, had just 42 enrolled students.

Today, though, Phoenix has more than 313,000 students, an increase of 100,000 students in less than five years. The Apollo Group, the for-profit company that owns the University of Phoenix and several subsidiaries (and which realized a profit of \$409 million last year), obviously is on to something.

As the company's annual report notes, the nontraditional education market "is a significant and growing component of the post-secondary education market," both in the United States and other countries. The U.S. Department of Education, it says, reports that 39 percent of all U.S. students enrolled in higher education are over the age of 24. The average age of a University of Phoenix student is the early 30s. About two-thirds are women and more than a quarter are African-American.

Obviously that isn't what the University of Illinois' Urbana campus looks like.

But those numbers ought to hearten University of Illinois administrators and faculty who have committed to the nontraditional Global Campus but are dismayed about its slow start. Clearly there is an obvious demand for online education, and it should be just a matter of time before the University of Illinois, and its strong brand, begins to capture some of it.

Marketing, a notion that is foreign and perhaps uneasy to those comfortable in the traditional bricks and mortar campus, is part of the way to reach those students. And the UI strategy seems similar to the University of Phoenix: a lot of Web-based advertising as well as other media. Phoenix also uses direct mail, print, radio and television advertising, and counts among its tactics its naming rights deal with the home stadium of the Arizona Cardinals. (Consider the potential value to the UI's Global Campus of all those football and basketball games broadcast from Memorial Stadium and the Assembly Hall.)

If this nontraditional university is to succeed it is going to require nontraditional means. That doesn't mean diluting or cheapening the product. But it does mean attracting a different kind of student with a different lifestyle on a different kind of schedule. And it will mean attracting such students through means other than friends, family members and high school guidance counselors.

The Wall Street Journal, June 1, 2008 (Page 1 of 2)

Don't pay the sticker price for college

By SHELLY BANJO

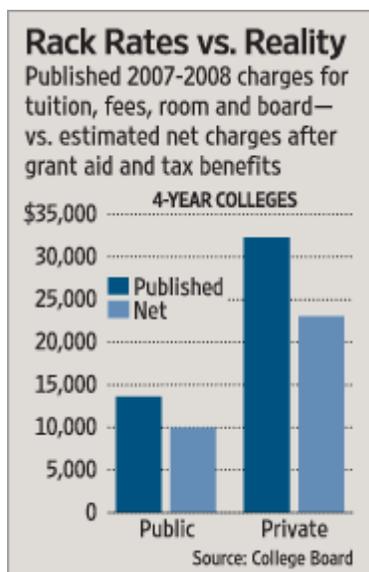
June 1, 2008

One time-honored strategy to lower the cost of college is to opt for a public college or university rather than a private one.

But the cost savings may not be as great as some prospective students and their families think -- and it thus makes sense for even cash-strapped students to consider applying to a mix of public and private schools.

To be sure, the sticker price of tuition at public schools is far lower: According to the College Board, average published 2007-2008 tuition and fees for in-state students at public colleges came to \$6,185 -- 74% less than the average \$23,712 cost of private four-year colleges. Including room and board, the average quoted charges were \$13,589 for public schools and \$32,307 for private ones.

Bigger Grants



But private colleges typically offer more generous financial-aid grants, which narrow the cost gap. After grant aid and tax benefits, the College Board says the average net cost of tuition, fees, room and board for public colleges was \$9,981, compared with \$22,995 at private universities.

In some cases, "an expensive private school can actually be cheaper than a local state school" after federal and private grants, scholarships and financial aid, says Sandy Baum, senior policy analyst for the College Board and professor of economics at Skidmore College.

The Bottom Line

Experts say one of the biggest mistakes families make when deciding which colleges to apply to is getting stuck at the sticker price. State schools typically don't have the large endowments of private schools and, especially during a sluggish economy when state budgets are stretched, they may not be able to offer as much financial aid.

"In California, I tell clients they may spend less at private schools like the University of Southern California and Pepperdine University than if they settled on a public University of California school," says financial planner William Jordan, founder of Sentinel College Funding.

One factor: Due to overcrowding in the public colleges, he says, "it's no longer a four-year college; it's five or six years of paying tuition."

Breaks From Top Schools

In addition, recent changes to financial-aid policies at top-tier, expensive private universities like Harvard, Yale, Cornell and Stanford have dramatically changed what some students may be able to afford.

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Cornell replaced loans with grants, which don't have to be repaid. Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Dartmouth don't charge any tuition for families earning less than \$75,000 a year. Harvard and Yale this year began capping their charges at a percentage of family income.

Parents with income between \$120,000 and \$180,000 can send their child to Harvard for 10% of their income, or \$12,000 to \$18,000, a year. Students are expected to contribute about \$4,000 a year from part-time jobs and summer work -- but compared with the average net cost of a state college, Harvard sounds like a steal for those who get in.

Since cost is only one factor in looking at private and public colleges, "families should consider a broad range of institutions" based on the right fit for their student and "then make a decision based on the whole picture," Ms. Baum says.

A Full Picture

For instance, consider a school's best-acclaimed fields of study and degrees offered, as well as factors such as a school's size, location and activities. Is a school known for an extensive alumni network or counselors who help students land helpful internships and jobs?

Also weigh the importance of a school's reputation and reach, considering the student's after-college goals.

If a Florida resident dreams of a fashion-marketing job in New York, it may be worth it to pay more for a nationally known college since "University of Florida has a reputation in state that far exceeds its national reputation," says Bari Norman, an independent college counselor based in New York and Miami.

Picking the State Route

Hayley Hoffman of Denver and her parents are one family that decided the economics of a state school were too attractive to turn down.

Ms. Hoffman initially wanted to get out of her home state to attend a private school like American University in Washington or University of San Francisco. She applied to six private schools and, at the request of her mother, the public University of Colorado at Boulder.

But even with generous financial-aid offers -- such as University of San Francisco's offer of \$30,000 a year toward its \$49,000 sticker price -- the private schools "didn't seem to offer the programs and reputation that the University of Colorado did for a lot less cost," says Ms. Hoffman's mother, Carol.

Next fall her daughter will attend the University of Colorado. The estimated price tag after grants and aid: about \$6,000 per year including room and board.

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Many adults left behind

As study after study, politician after politician, educator after educator all call for the United States to find ways to provide a college education to a larger share of the population, much of the emphasis of these exhortations is about low-income disadvantaged youth who may lose a shot at higher education because they lack funds and good high schools.

A new analysis of state policies and enrollment patterns, however, is trying to put more focus on adult learners. "Adult Learning in Focus," released Friday by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, prepared in collaboration with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, argues that many state policies may discourage those older than traditional college age from obtaining any higher education. This group of students, the report argues, is particularly in need of higher education to get good jobs, and these students' states depend on having more highly trained workers.

The report is a mix of data showing the large share of the adult population lacking any higher education degree, and information about various policies that might encourage more degree attainment. Of particular importance, the report notes, are policies that affect community colleges and part-time students, as adult students are more likely than their traditionally aged counterparts to enroll part time, and to enroll in two-year institutions.

In a legal sense, of course, college students who are 18 years and up are adults, so the definition of "adult student" is a key issue. Generally, the new report notes, the term is used to refer to those who are 25 and older, a group that makes up about 38 percent of all undergraduates in credit programs in the United States. But the report suggests that there are other students, younger in age, who may also deserve to be counted in this group. These are students who did not move directly from high school to college, enroll part time and/or while holding a full-time job, are financially independent of their parents, and who have dependents other than spouses.

At community colleges, adult students make up around 43 percent of the student body, a share that has been growing.

Despite the growing enrollments, the report suggests that many if not most adults who might benefit from higher education are not receiving any. Among the key statistics:

In 35 states, more than 60 percent of the population does not have an associate degree or any higher degree.

More than 32 million adults in the United States have never attended college and do not earn a living wage. Of these, 8 million speak little or no English.

Using data suggesting the share of the population that needs a college education for states to compete economically, 32 states will not be able to reach target goals educating only traditional age students.

The data in the report show that states vary widely in terms of the share of their adult populations that have a college degree, the relative cost of higher education and the availability of aid.

For instance, the percentage of adults aged 25-64 with at least an associate degree is as high as 49.2 percent (in Massachusetts) and as low as 25.0 percent (in West Virginia). The average for the United States is 37.2 percent.

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Percentage of Adults Aged 25-64 With a College Degree

Rank	State	Percent
1	Massachusetts	49.2%
2	Connecticut	44.6%
3	Maryland	44.5%
4	New Hampshire	44.3%
5 (tie)	Colorado	44.1%
5 (tie)	Minnesota	44.1%
7	Vermont	44.0%
8	New Jersey	43.6%
9	Hawaii	43.3%
10	New York	42.9%
11	North Dakota	42.8%
12	Virginia	42.6%
13	Washington	42.3%
14	Rhode Island	40.6%
15	Nebraska	40.4%
16	Illinois	39.7%
17	Utah	39.5%
18	Kansas	38.9%
19	Montana	38.6%
20	South Dakota	38.5%
21	California	38.2%
22 (tie)	Iowa	37.8%
22 (tie)	Oregon	37.8%
24	Wisconsin	37.7%
25	Maine	37.1%

26	Delaware	37.0%
27	Pennsylvania	36.9%
28	Florida	36.7%
29	North Carolina	35.6%
30 (tie)	Michigan	35.3%
30 (tie)	Georgia	35.3%
32	Alaska	35.2%
33	Arizona	34.8%
34	New Mexico	34.3%
35	Idaho	34.1%
36	Wyoming	34.0%
37	Missouri	33.8%
38	Ohio	33.4%
39 (tie)	South Carolina	32.7%
39 (tie)	Texas	32.7%
41	Indiana	31.8%
42	Oklahoma	31.0%
43	Alabama	30.5%
44	Tennessee	29.9%
45	Kentucky	29.3%
46	Nevada	29.0%
47	Mississippi	28.4%
48	Louisiana	26.7%
49	Arkansas	26.1%
50	West Virginia	25.0%

As a means of identifying the availability of higher education to those adults most in need, the report ranks states on the share of median family income — among the poorest adults aged 25-44 — necessary to pay tuition and fees at a public community college. The national average is 7.0 percent.

Public 2-Year College Tuition and Fees as Percentage of Median Family Income for Poorest 40%

Rank	State	Percent
1	New Hampshire	15.0%
2	Vermont	14.5%
3	New York	12.3%
4	Minnesota	11.9%
5 (tie)	Ohio	11.8%
5 (tie)	South Carolina	11.8%
7 (tie)	West Virginia	11.7%
7 (tie)	Maine	11.7%
9	Alabama	11.4%
10	South Dakota	11.2%
11 (tie)	Montana	10.7%
11 (tie)	Iowa	10.7%
13	Pennsylvania	10.6%
14 (tie)	Tennessee	10.1%

14 (tie)	North Dakota	10.1%
16	Kentucky	9.9%
17 (tie)	Oregon	9.8%
17 (tie)	Oklahoma	9.8%
19 (tie)	Wisconsin	9.1%
19 (tie)	Indiana	9.1%
21	Massachusetts	9.0%
22	Washington	8.9%
23	Missouri	8.8%
24	Mississippi	8.5%
25	Michigan	8.1%
26	Maryland	7.9%
27 (tie)	Delaware	7.7%
27 (tie)	Alaska	7.7%
29 (tie)	Connecticut	7.6%

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29 (tie)	New Jersey	7.6%
29 (tie)	Arkansas	7.6%
32	Rhode Island	7.5%
33	Illinois	7.4%
34 (tie)	Kansas	7.3%
34 (tie)	Nebraska	7.3%
36	Florida	6.7%
37 (tie)	Utah	6.6%
37 (tie)	Virginia	6.6%
39 (tie)	Colorado	6.5%
39 (tie)	Idaho	6.5%

41	Wyoming	6.4%
42 (tie)	Georgia	6.3%
42 (tie)	Louisiana	6.3%
44	North Carolina	5.2%
45	New Mexico	5.1%
46 (tie)	Texas	5.0%
46 (tie)	Nevada	5.0%
48	Arizona	4.9%
49	Hawaii	3.4%
50	California	2.4%

Additionally, given the need for so many adult students to enroll part time, the report ranks states on the percentage of their need-based aid that goes to part-time students. States can make it easier or more difficult for part-time students to receive aid (with the report strongly advocating the former approach).

Percentage of Need-Based Aid Going to Part-Time Students

Rank	State	
1	Minnesota	41.4%
2	New Mexico	30.0%
3	Nebraska	28.8%
4	Illinois	26.0%
5	Wyoming	25.0%
6	Arizona	21.5%
7	California	18.8%
8	Kentucky	17.0%
9	Florida	16.0%
10	Michigan	15.0%
11	Rhode Island	14.0%
12	Washington	13.0%
13	New Hampshire	11.7%
14 (tie)	Colorado	11.0%
14 (tie)	Vermont	11.0%
16	Massachusetts	9.0%
17	Virginia	8.0%
18	Oklahoma	7.1%
19 (tie)	Alaska	7.0%
19 (tie)	Connecticut	7.0%
19 (tie)	Hawaii	7.0%
22	South Carolina	6.0%
23 (tie)	Maine	5.0%
23 (tie)	Montana	5.0%
23 (tie)	Pennsylvania	5.0%
26	Maryland	4.5%
27	Tennessee	4.0%
28 (tie)	Indiana	2.0%
28 (tie)	Missouri	2.0%
28 (tie)	New Jersey	2.0%
31	New York	1.5%

32	Arkansas	1.0%
Tied for last	Oregon	0%
Tied for last	Alabama	0%
Tied for last	Delaware	0%
Tied for last	Georgia	0%
Tied for last	Idaho	0%
Tied for last	Iowa	0%
Tied for last	Kansas	0%
Tied for last	Louisiana	0%
Tied for last	Mississippi	0%
Tied for last	Nevada	0%
Tied for last	North Carolina	0%
Tied for last	North Dakota	0%
Tied for last	Ohio	0%
Tied for last	South Dakota	0%
Tied for last	Texas	0%
Tied for last	Utah	0%
Tied for last	West Virginia	0%
Tied for last	Wisconsin	0%

— Scott Jaschik

The union impact and non-impact

By Scott Jaschik

One of the major growth areas for academic unions in recent years has been among adjunct professors. More of them are forming unions – either in their own units or with their tenure-track counterparts. In recent weeks, adjunct unions have won recognition at Henry Ford Community College. As this movement has grown, all three major faculty unions in the United States have adopted a goal of seeing colleges create more tenure-track lines and of reversing the “casualization” of the faculty.

The trends together raise an obvious question, especially since the union movement in higher education is far more successful in some areas than others: Does the presence of unions minimize or even prevent the erosion of tenure-track faculty?

The answer of two University of Michigan social scientists — who are themselves active in the labor movement — is No. An article they have published in the new issue of *Labor Studies Journal* (abstract available here) compared the faculty make-up in Canada and the United States (the former being far more unionized) and among unionized and non-unionized colleges in the United States. The scholars found “to our surprise and disappointment” that unionization doesn’t seem to protect the tenure track.

The authors are David Dobbie, a doctoral student in social work and sociology who is past president of the graduate students’ union at Michigan, and Ian Robinson, a non-tenure-track faculty member in sociology and labor relations, and an officer in the lecturers’ union at Michigan. (Both unions are affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers.)

In their analysis, Dobbie and Robinson note the vast differences in terms of union presence in academic labor. In three large states (New Jersey, New York and California) more than 60 percent of higher education faculty (including graduate instructors) have collective bargaining. In a total of 19 states, no faculty are represented by unions. Generally, Dobbie and Robinson find no correlation between high union representation levels and lower than average reliance on part-timers. At least part of the explanation, they write, may be that tenure-track faculty members were focused on their own economic well being, rather than the changing shape of the professoriate. The authors arrive at this conclusion based in part on trends in organizing.

At the community college level, they find more success at protecting tenure-track lines. Faculty unions at community colleges, the authors note, tended to be far ahead of their four-year counterparts in recruiting non-tenure-track members – at least in part because a larger share of the community college professoriate has always been off the tenure track.

“Since many of these union locals included tenure-track and (full-time) non-tenure-track faculty in the same bargaining unit from the outset, we might expect successive rounds of collective bargaining to reduce substantially the compensation differential between the two faculty statuses. In addition, virtually all two-year faculty focus primarily on teaching, avoiding the potential research/teaching division that often maps onto the tenure-track/non-tenure track division at four-year schools,” the authors write.

Minimizing the gaps in pay, benefits and job security between tenure-track and adjunct faculty members is a key issue, many labor experts say, because part of the incentive for colleges to hire off the tenure track is to save money. If hiring without the possibility of tenure doesn’t save money, the theory goes, the incentives may change.

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In contrast, the authors note, most union organizing at four-year institutions was focused for years on the tenure track. "If, in the 1970s and 1980s, most of the organized faculty were tenure-track and the focus of those unions encompassing both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty was mostly on advancing the interests of the tenure-track majority, then unions might have increased the incentives to hire more contingent faculty by increasing the gap between the cost of tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty," the authors speculate.

If this is the case, the authors suggest that more may be required to prevent the erosion of tenure-track positions than unions for adjuncts. It is "possible – perhaps even likely – that non-tenure-track unions will never have as much bargaining power as tenure-track unions, and so will never be able to substantially narrow the gap between tenure-track and non-tenure-track compensation and job security on their own, even though they may significantly improve the situation of their members." Since such a scenario would not narrow the gaps between adjunct and tenure-track professors, the authors says, the ultimate push for the tenure track and true protections for all who teach will need to come from the "enlightened self-interest" of those on the tenure track, in their unions. The authors write that they view this as possible, but note that it may be difficult politically for unions to pull off the necessary emphasis on protecting the tenure track as an institution — as opposed to just the conditions of current tenure-track faculty members.

Lawrence N. Gold, director of higher education at the AFT, said that he had only had time to skim the study so far. Based on an early read, he said that "I'm glad to see that they and other researchers are starting to seriously explore the connections between achieving full equity for contingent faculty and organizing effective unions. It will obviously require more research and more time to get a really firm handle on what works best under what circumstances and the more data we have the better."

Gold said that the "basic conclusion the authors reach about the need to vigorously organize contingent faculty conforms to our own view and is the reason why contingent faculty organizing is AFT's top organizing priority in higher education." He also acknowledged that "the authors also point to the importance, and some of the difficulties, of building solid support networks between tenured and untenured colleagues." The FACE campaign (for Faculty and College Excellence), AFT's main effort in this regard, has a dual goal of shifting more faculty slots back to the tenure track and also of improving pay and working conditions for adjuncts.

As to the study's suggestion that adjuncts need more support for those on the tenure track, Gold said he agreed that "contingent faculty leaders, whether in shared locals or not, deserve strong support from their full-time tenured colleagues."

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Is retention improvement within colleges' reach?

Low graduation rates. High transfer rates. Students who never graduate. Gaps — sometimes embarrassingly large — between minority and white students' retention rates. Are retention problems just too difficult to solve?

Actually not, according to speaker after speaker Tuesday at the "National Dialog on Student Retention," a conference in Atlanta organized by Education Dynamics, which advises colleges on enrollment and retention issues. The theme of speakers was that enough research has been done that colleges know what they need to do to get more students through their degree programs. The problem appears to be in execution, especially on a large scale.

"We find things that work and we only do them with six dozen students," said George D. Kuh, director of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University at Bloomington and the founder of the National Survey of Student Engagement. When colleges determine that certain actions will encourage graduation, "we're shy about asking and requiring and cajoling" students into taking those actions.

In addition, too many colleges are satisfied to know that the right kinds of programs — say undergraduate research or internships or learning communities in which students live and study together — exist on their campuses. It's not enough that these programs are around, Kuh said. The question to be asking is: "How many students do those things?" Additionally, colleges need to ask whether all students equally take advantage of these options, or whether some of these key efforts are largely devoid of minority students.

Many academics familiar with the reports done on NSSE will not be surprised by Kuh's advice for colleges. He urges them to be more clear with students about what they need to do to succeed, to better link classroom and out-of-classroom experiences, and to make sure students have a significant connection — to a professor, to a program or activity — that creates roots on a campus.

Kuh stressed the importance of what happens in the classroom, and of the need for colleges to take action very quickly based on certain danger signs. For instance, he noted that there is overwhelming evidence that students who don't complete at least 18 credits in their first year enrolled see a significant drop in their chances of earning a bachelor's degree within six years.

"Early warning systems" are essential, he said. "But many campuses think an early warning system is midterm grades," he said, when actions are needed in the first two weeks of courses. "Who is showing up?" Or, in online courses, "Who is logging on?"

While much of Kuh's advice focused on actions colleges can take, he also said that colleges need to accept that there are factors beyond their direct control. Especially for first generation, low income students, family members are the most trusted advisers about colleges — even if those family members have no knowledge of colleges and may not view dropping out as a bad thing. In most cases where such students drop out, the first person they talk to about such a decision is a family member, so if colleges want to keep these students, they need to pay more attention to families.

Other speakers discussed how parts of Kuh's message played out based on their areas of expertise.

Carol Aslanian, who consults with colleges about adult students and how to serve them, said that for older students, the classroom is everything. "Classroom instruction has to be superb," she said. "Not theoretical, but more applied, with teamwork. Your best faculty have to be in those classrooms," she said.

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Because adult students are making particular sacrifices of their time to be there, they will leave if they aren't getting what they want.

"Your students are savvy buyers as consumers," she said.

Asked if it mattered if many colleges use adjuncts for evening programs that serve many older students, Aslanian said without hesitation that adjuncts aren't a problem – it's all about quality teaching. "Good teaching is good teaching."

Similarly, Kenneth Hartman, academic director of Drexel University Online, said that to retain students online, teaching is also key — and he too said that adjunct or tenure-track wasn't the relevant factor.

The reality, Hartman said, is that for online programs, "the people are not your senior level faculty," nor are they junior professors who are focused on earning tenure. Members of both groups may experiment with hybrid courses, but they aren't the instructors online program directors rely on, who are adjuncts.

Colleges that want high retention rates in online programs, he said, need to "motivate and train adjuncts," Hartman said. That means taking real time to be sure people have the skills and support to teach online, and spending more time on making sure courses have been designed for online formats and aren't just created by putting handouts on a Web page.

"If you have a course that sucks on campus, it's going to suck online," he said.

Kristina Cragg, assistant to the president for research and analysis at Valdosta State University, said her institution is taking to heart the advice about early interventions, so that students have better odds at success. She noted many surveys find that students realize that academic support is important, but don't take advantage of the resources that are offered.

Valdosta State has taken to inviting, strongly, certain students to use academic support centers — rather than just having tutoring and advising services and seeing who shows up. Some students are invited because they have characteristics that make it more likely they will not graduate. Others are invited based on performance (or lack thereof) in classes.

While this is a significant change, Cragg said it was necessary if colleges want to raise retention rates. "We are now telling students who need assistance that it's not optional," she said.

— Scott Jaschik

Inside Higher Ed, June 5, 2008

Assessing the P-16 phenomenon

As state policy makers and educators have increasingly focused on the frequent disconnect between the sectors of elementary, secondary and higher education, most states have seized on at least one common answer to the problem: P-16 councils aimed at getting the sectors talking to each other and working together to provide more consistency throughout the educational pipeline.

Wednesday, as it unveiled its annual report on the state of high school graduation rates, *Education Week* zeroed in on the impact of these councils, which “have been popping up across the country,” said Amy Hightower, deputy director of the EPE Research Center, which produced the report with the magazine. Despite their popularity — such councils have cropped up in 38 states, according to the report — “their ability to affect change remains in question,” Hightower said.

The report shows that more than half of the councils were created by legislation, executive order or a combination of the two. Ten of the councils are led by the governor’s office, Hightower said; debate persists, she said, about whether that imprimatur legitimizes the work of the councils or “further politicizes the work and raises questions about longevity once the governor leaves office.”

The most common work of these councils is in developing student data systems — which are controversial in some quarters in higher education, but seen as a potential boon for assessing the performance of state education systems — and creating dual enrollment initiatives, she said.

“But the jury’s still out in terms of their results,” Hightower said. “So far, they’re quite heavy on process and initiatives, but light on bringing about tangible policy change. If the process is the product, is this enough to drive the staying momentum in the P-16 arena?” That is especially true because most of them do not have authority to set policy, but only to recommend it.

After the unveiling of the report, a panel of experts weighed in on it. Gov. Donald Carcieri of Rhode Island, who put together a council in his state, said one of the biggest challenges he faced was getting the different sectors to work together and toward common goals.

Patrick Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, said that states need to create mechanisms for tracking the progress of such councils. “If the work of these councils is as important as we’re saying it is, then we’re going to have to find a way to hold them accountable,” he said — without going “too far” and creating new bureaucracies.

Kathy Christie, chief of staff of the Education Commission of the States, argued that it was important to have a governor on such councils to set a tone of importance for the work the councils do. And legislators and state higher education officers should be included so they can take ideas from the panels and implement them, she said.

The group’s report, “Diplomas Count 2008,” found that the high school graduation rate of all students across the country in 2005 was 70.6 percent, a 2.6 percent increase from five years ago. But some states at the bottom actually decreased over that period, the study found.

— James Heggen

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Lessons from for-profit institutions about cutting college costs

By GOLDIE BLUMENSTYK

It's not just the climbing walls and the salaries for star professors that are driving up the cost of college. In some cases, costs go up because the culture and management of traditional institutions are simply not structured to promote efficiency and savings.

At for-profit colleges, it's a different story.

There the "incentives to save money are centralized," notes Guilbert C. Hentschke, a professor of education at the University of Southern California and co-author of a book about for-profit colleges. As a result, several for-profit colleges employ strategies rarely used by traditional institutions—such as paying instructors by the student rather than the class—that help them make money.

In this era of tight budgets and growing national scrutiny of rising college costs, might some of the same bottom-line practices work as cost-cutting approaches for nonprofit colleges?

The Chronicle looks at three strategies that help for-profit colleges succeed financially and in some cases pedagogically—strategies that might reduce costs in traditional higher education.

Lesson 1: Create faculty pay plans that tie compensation to demand.

American Military University, a fast-growing all-online institution, has an unusual approach to compensating faculty members. It pays them by the student rather than by the course.

University leaders say the "variable-pay model," a cornerstone policy of the institution since its founding in 1991, allows it to keep its expenses and students' costs down while making it possible to offer niche courses like "Civil War Medicine" and "The History of Piracy."

"We can have very small majors," says Frank McCluskey, provost and executive vice president of the American Public University system, of which American Military is a part. He came to the system from Mercy College, in New York. In some of the majors at American Military, he says, courses run with six or seven students. "In my old college, this course would never run."

The university and its sister institution, American Public University, pay instructors \$130 per student in undergraduate courses and \$150 per student in graduate courses. The maximum pay per course is \$2,500, an amount Mr. McCluskey says is "in the ballpark" for teaching gigs of this type, where the instructor does not design the course but just teaches it.

(Courses are designed primarily by teams drawn from the pool of the universities' 140 full-time faculty members, in consultation with instructional designers. Mr. McCluskey says full-time instructors are paid "competitive salaries". The university employs about 600 adjunct faculty members.)

While demand also factors into faculty salaries at traditional colleges, the idea of paying instructors based on the number of students who sign up for their classes would stand thinking about faculty compensation on its head. That could be a good thing, says Mr. Hentschke, particularly at institutions where the best—and best-paid—professors now often teach classes with the fewest numbers of students.

A pay-per-student model "could counteract the inequities that come from the classic system," says Mr. Hentschke. Or, to avoid creating new inequities, colleges might consider a hybrid of the system, with guaranteed base pay but extra compensation for those with fuller classes.

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A former adjunct instructor himself, Mr. McCluskey says he realizes the pay scales his institution offers would present hardships for instructors trying to support a family or even just themselves.

Still, as he notes, many colleges now employ working professionals to teach their online and continuing-education courses, and many of those people are happy to teach at these pay levels. Indeed, American Military has just hired a U.S. Park Service ranger employee with a master's in American history who is based out of the Antietam National Battlefield to teach about the Civil War.

Mr. McCluskey acknowledges that the universities profit under the system, but he insists it's not unfair: The system works "not on the backs of the adjuncts but on the heart of the adjunct."

Others might argue the system is exploitive, or perhaps one more sign of the eroding faculty job market. But clearly some potential faculty members don't find it too offensive to consider. Mr. McCluskey says the universities have 1,000 résumés from would-be faculty members.

Lesson 2: Treat space as an asset with a measurable value.

The executives who run DeVry University and the institutions of Corinthian Colleges Inc. routinely cite a statistic you rarely hear from presidents of traditional colleges: the number of square feet per student.

Those executives also know what their optimum ratio should be for maximum profitability. (They aim for 30 to 50 square feet per student, depending on the program.)

For-profit colleges hawkishly track their use of real estate because they know it is their second biggest cost, after salaries. It's a major cost at traditional colleges, too.

"When you're not using your facilities well, your cost of educational services is higher," says Jerry R. Herman, an analyst of the for-profit education industry at Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, an investment bank.

DeVry figured that out a few years ago and has gradually been shrinking some of its facilities, in some cases selling off larger campuses and replacing them with smaller "centers." The company has also begun relying more on leased space, an approach long embraced by most other for-profit companies.

By recognizing the inherent value of real estate, "you can put cash back on the balance sheet and reinvest in other ways," says Joan Bates, director of investor relations for DeVry Inc., the parent company.

Traditional nonprofit colleges, by contrast, have more incentives to own land and facilities, since they are exempt from property taxes and can often borrow money tax free to pay for construction. As a result, many are, as Mr. Hentschke notes, "in the real-estate business in a major way." At traditional colleges, he adds, space is treated "as a scarce but free good."

But, of course, owning real estate is never free.

As a rule, traditional universities don't measure their success on how efficiently they use space, although a number of consultants say that's a mistake. "I could make a pretty strong argument that they should," says James H. Roth, vice president for health and education at Huron Consulting Group.

Harvey H. Kaiser, another consultant who specializes in space planning, says a few institutions, including the University of North Carolina system, have begun to focus on ways to better track and use their space. As a general practice, however, "it's really random," he says.

The one exception: Research universities are very good about calculating the use and expense of space in laboratories because they can recover some of those costs through the overhead rate they charge on

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grants. Space is a critical component of that calculation, says Mr. Roth, so institutions have an incentive to have "a fairly sophisticated process" for tracking it.

Lesson 3: Use the college's buying power to get students' textbooks cheaper.

Once they have registered for a class, the 330,000 students at the University of Phoenix are safe from at least one unpleasant surprise of college life: the \$100-plus tab for the textbook.

Instead, Phoenix students pay a per-course fee of \$75, which gives them full electronic access not only to the textbook assigned for their course but also to the thousand or so textbooks used in Phoenix's other classes.

The textbooks are part of a larger library of electronic materials that the university calls Resource.

Phoenix began Resource in 2000, when it made a deal with three publishers that accounted for 80 percent of all of its assigned textbooks.

The idea was to save students money, but the new system also fell in line with emerging practices in professional fields, where the use of online resources seemed to be growing, says Adam Honea, Phoenix's provost.

Mr. Honea says the publishers were reluctant at first because in 2000 there were fewer ways to protect their copyrighted material from being pirated once it went online. Now they like the system because it gives them something they can't get from the traditional textbook market, he says: a sure thing. "They get some money from every single student."

Phoenix makes a profit, too, though it won't disclose how much. Mr. Honea says it negotiates an annual per-student price with each publisher, which gives the university access to a set number of books for the year.

"Early on, it was our size that allowed us to break into the market," says Mr. Honea. And even today, he allows, the approach would probably work only on a large scale. Also, at Phoenix, individual professors don't choose which textbooks to assign; that decision comes from a central committee of faculty members.

The idea of having the college manage textbook purchases has yet to take hold at traditional institutions, even at big ones where thousands of students taking "Freshman Composition" or "Introduction to Psychology" use the same two or three textbooks, or at institutions where large departments have agreed on a common set of textbooks.

Mr. Hentschke, whose book *New Players, Different Game: Understanding the Rise of For-Profit Colleges and Universities* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) highlights the distinctions between for-profit and nonprofit colleges, says he understands why something like Resource might not find a ready home in traditional academe, despite demands to contain costs. The problem, he notes, is that "the folks who have to make the cuts are not the people who make the textbook decisions."

George Otte, director of instructional technology at the 400,000-student City University of New York, says the Resource idea could certainly work at many institutions, including his own, particularly now that students are becoming more comfortable with books in electronic formats.

But, he says, academe's hesitancy to challenge faculty independence is not the only barrier. "There is a certain inertia factor in the publishing industry as well," he says.

In higher education, "we do not change that eagerly or quickly," admits Mr. Otte. "But neither do the publishers."

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U. of Phoenix reports on its students' academic achievement

By GOLDIE BLUMENSTYK
Phoenix

The University of Phoenix is often derided by traditional academics for caring more about its bottom line than about academic quality, and every year, the annual report issued by its parent company focuses more on profits than student performance.

The institution that has become the largest private university in North America is releasing today its first "Annual Academic Report." The university's leaders say the findings show that its educational model is effective in helping students succeed in college, especially those who are underprepared.

Freshmen at the University of Phoenix enter with reading, writing, and mathematical skills that are, on average, below those of other college students, but according to data from standardized tests, Phoenix students appear to improve in those skills at a greater rate than do students at other colleges.

And in a comparison of students who enter college with "risk factors" that often contribute to their dropping out, Phoenix's rates of completion for a bachelor's degree were substantially higher than for institutions over all.

William J. Pepicello, president of the 330,000-student university, said those and other findings shared in advance with *The Chronicle* show that the 32-year-old, open-access institution is fulfilling its goals.

"This ties into our social mission for our university," said Mr. Pepicello, in an interview at the company's headquarters here. "We take these students and we do give them a significant increase in skills."

Phoenix for years has been extensively measuring and monitoring student progress for internal purposes, using the data to change the content and design of its courses or to reshape its approach to remedial education.

It decided to develop and publish this report—distinct from the financial reports that its parent company, the \$2.6-billion Apollo Group Inc., regularly provides—as "a good-faith attempt on our part" to show the university's commitment to growing public demand for more accountability by institutions of higher education, said Mr. Pepicello.

He and other university leaders fully expect some challenges to the findings, but they say the institution, by publishing the report, is showing its willingness to confront scrutiny of its educational record from within academe. "It lets us, in a public forum, talk to our colleagues about what we do and how well we do it," said Mr. Pepicello.

The introduction this academic year of a test that could be administered to both campus-based and distance-education students—the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress exam by the Educational Testing Service—also made this kind of reporting possible, he said. Nearly two-thirds of Phoenix students attend online.

Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, said that

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although he had not yet seen Phoenix's data, its decision to publish such a report was "a very positive development."

He has urged colleges to be open in their reporting on themselves. Even if the university has chosen to release data that put it in the best light, as others often do, Mr. Callan said the report will be a significant piece of the national debate over what value an institution can add to a student.

"For higher education, it is a positive and useful and constructive approach," Mr. Callan said. Publication of the report, he added, was in line with other efforts by the university "to be part of the discussion on the outcomes of higher education." Those efforts include the university's recent creation of a research center on adult learners (for which Mr. Callan is an unpaid adviser).

A Mixed Report Card

In the report, some of those outcomes look better than others.

"It certainly is not perfect," said Mr. Pepicello of some of the test scores. "It is where we are."

In its report, Phoenix shows the results from its 1,966 students who took the MAPP test this year, compared with the national sample of more than 376,000 students from about 300 institutions.

The results show that in reading, critical thinking, and writing, its freshmen scored below those of the population over all, but the difference between those scores and those of its seniors was greater than for the population at large. The difference was more marked in mathematics, although the university's freshmen and seniors' scores were both notably lower than those of the whole test-taking pool.

Bill Wynne, MAPP test product specialist, said that without knowing more about the makeup of the comparative samples and other information, he could not characterize the statistical significance of the gains the university was reporting, except that they were at least as good as those reported by the national cross section. "The magnitude of the change is in the eye of the beholder," he said.

Mr. Pepicello said he wished the seniors' scores were higher, particularly in math, but he considered all of the findings positive because they indicated that students improve when they attend. "This doesn't embarrass me," he said. "This is really good information for us to really improve our institution."

(Phoenix did not track the progress of individual students, but MAPP officials said the university's pool of freshmen and seniors taking the test appeared to be large enough and random enough to justify its using different groups of students for comparisons.)

In another test, involving a smaller pool of students, the Phoenix students' "information literacy" skills for such tasks as evaluating sources and understanding economic, legal, and social issues were also comparable to or significantly higher than the mean scores in several categories. Adam Honea, the provost, said the findings from the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills test, developed at Kent State University, were important to the institution since "information literacy is a goal of ours."

The report includes data on the university's degree-completion rates that differ from those found in national reports because those graduation-rate reports track only students who enter as first-time freshmen; most of Phoenix's students enter with some college credits. The Phoenix report shows that 27 percent of its students seeking associate degrees graduate, which is the same as the national rate; 38 percent of those seeking bachelor's level do (versus 43 percent nationally); and 60 percent pursuing graduate degrees do (versus 61 percent nationally).

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But because the university caters to students who have jobs, have delayed entry to college after high school, have families, or have other characteristics known to contribute to dropping out of college, the report also assesses the university's degree-completion rates in comparison with statistics from national studies on students with similar characteristics.

In that analysis, Phoenix's results are far better. For students with two risk factors, the bachelor's completion rate at Phoenix was about 55 percent, compared with 20 percent for the national pool; for students with five risk factors, the Phoenix completion rate was more than 30 percent, while the national rate was less than 20 percent.

Such students "are much more likely to finish in our world," said Mr. Pepicello.

Diverse Populations

The report also shows that the university's student body and faculty are more diverse than those in higher education at large. At Phoenix, more than 15 percent of the 22,000 full- and part-time faculty members are African-American and nearly 6 percent are Hispanic, as of 2008. Nationally, based on statistics in the report from 2005, about 5 percent were African-American and about 3 percent were Hispanic.

The student population at Phoenix is about 25 percent African-American (compared with 12 percent nationally in 2005) and nearly 13 percent Hispanic (compared with 10 percent nationally).

The report is also likely to stir some controversy on another front: It seeks to show that despite the indirect subsidies the University of Phoenix receives through federal student-aid programs, it saves taxpayers money, while other institutions cost them thousands of dollars per student.

The report does so with an analysis—which the university fully expects to ignite some debate—that calculates the costs of state financing, Pell Grants, and federal loan subsidies but also the taxes paid by Phoenix and the taxes forgone to the federal and state treasuries from nonprofit colleges' earnings on endowments and gifts.

By that calculation, Phoenix officials contend, a typical public university costs the public \$11,700 per student, a typical private one more than \$9,200, and a typical for-profit college only \$22 per student. By contrast, Phoenix officials say, their institution saves the public more than \$322 per student, largely because of the taxes its corporate parent pays.

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Inflated assessment by Phoenix?

In a new, first annual report on academic outcomes, the nation's largest private university — and the largest for-profit — makes a case for value-added education. The University of Phoenix reports that on the Educational Testing Service's Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) test, "University of Phoenix seniors score significantly higher than their University of Phoenix freshmen counterparts in all areas."

The report emphasizes comparisons of Phoenix's (lower) freshman and (higher) senior year scores in critical thinking, reading, writing, mathematics, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. "Results show that as a group, University of Phoenix students make significant progress in basic content areas from freshman to senior levels. University of Phoenix students often enter their studies with lower scores in the general education areas as compared to more exclusive institutions but perform at levels comparable to seniors at other institutions by the time they graduate." In reading, for instance, Phoenix freshmen, defined as students with one to 30 credits, attain average MAPP scores of 116.45, compared to 117.20 for freshmen from all institutions, whereas Phoenix seniors have MAPP scores of 119.27, just below the 119.72 average for all students.

But are Phoenix freshmen and seniors actually "counterparts," as the report claims? The university's public relations office indicated Thursday that it did not have adequate time to respond to a question on the proportion of seniors who transferred at or above the sophomore level, but the report itself states that the student who starts and finishes a degree at the same institution "is an anomaly at University of Phoenix." For the university's 165,000+-student online campus, its federally-reported graduation rate, reflecting only the number of full-time, first-time entering college students who complete a bachelor's degree within six years, is just 5 percent.

Given its high transfer rates of mid-career professionals with some college education and significant workplace experience — the university began as a "degree-completion institution," where students "sought out to finish what they had started" — how does Phoenix know the disparities in freshman and senior year scores are attributable to the Phoenix education and not reflective of the different demographics of those who fall under "freshman" or "senior" status in terms of credit attainment? The university only recently began catering specifically to first-time college students through its two-year degree granting college, Axia, where it now steers students who come in with few or no transfer credits.

"These are really different populations. I would tend to think that that would be the disparity between their different skill levels, frankly," said Trace A. Urdan, an analyst with Signal Hill, an investment group.

"It gives kind of a false impression to suggest that they should somehow be credited with the improvement," Urdan continued relative to Phoenix's report. "I'm not saying that they're not helping these students and it may in fact be that the first-time students who are starting in Axia, it may be after two years, you would see gains on that same test. But that's not what they presented in the report. What they presented in the report was PR, and not very clever."

Phoenix's leader, however, described the problem of tying measurable gains to classroom learning as a universal one in higher education. "How do we know that people who come into the Ivy League and leave who are highly successful can attribute that directly to the education they receive there? That's always a bit of a dicey proposition for all of higher education," Phoenix's president, William J. Pepicello, said in an interview Thursday. He added that the university did not break down scores by transfer status for this first report but that he fully expects that from it, future research questions will emerge.

"The point we were trying to make in the report is if you look at where students who graduate from the

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University of Phoenix are compared to the rest of higher education, we're very comparable. There's always a mix of reasons how people get there," Pepicello said.

"We hope that a major part of that is linked to their experience at the university with the curriculum."

In releasing its first Academic Annual Report, Phoenix invokes the language of the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, citing "access, accountability, quality, and affordability."

"Lots of people think they know about the University of Phoenix and they think they know what we do and who we are, but for the most part people tend to focus on the business side of what we do," said Pepicello.

"One of the things I wanted to do was tell the academic story of the University of Phoenix and talk about how we are addressing the social agenda of the university."

The report, for instance, emphasizes the university's diverse student body – just 54.3 percent white, compared with 61 percent nationally, with more than twice the percentage of African Americans enrolled in 2008 than the 2005 national average (24.6 versus 12 percent).

In addition to the MAPP, the report includes comparisons on the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS), which 1,170 Phoenix students took. The university found that Phoenix students performed significantly better than students at all participating SAILS colleges in searching, evaluating sources, and understanding economic, legal and social issues, while at statistically equivalent levels in developing a research strategy, selecting finding tools, using finding tools features and retrieving sources. Phoenix students scored significantly below others in documenting sources.

Also in the report, the university argues that when all students are counted — as opposed to only first-time students, as allowed under federal graduation rate formulas — degree completion rates are comparable with national averages (38 percent for bachelor degrees versus 43 percent nationally, for instance, and 27 percent for associate degrees, equal with national norms). The university also argues that Phoenix students with risk factors inhibiting graduation – like enrolling part-time, being a single parent, or working full-time while enrolled – graduate at higher rates than peers with the same number of risk factors nationally. In its report, the university stresses its mission of serving high-risk students. "Inclusion and reaching out to underserved populations are at the heart of the university's mission," the document states.

"They're laying out a lot of things about who they are and how they work," said Clifford Adelman, senior associate for the Institute for Higher Education Policy. "They're trying to do comparative analysis; this is what all schools are falling over each other to do." Adelman added that critiques relative to freshman to senior year growth apply not just to Phoenix, but to any number of colleges attempting to prove their "value-added" status in similar ways through other generalized, standardized testing measurements.

"I'm giving them credit for trying to do something. Everyone's trying to do something and their motivations are fine. But what they're trying to do does not really reflect their purpose for being an institution."

— Elizabeth Redden

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For work-force training, a plan to give college credit where it's due

By LIBBY SANDER

After nearly three years of planning, Ohio's higher-education officials are finalizing an ambitious program to grant college credit for some technical courses offered at the state's adult-education centers.

In doing so, the state could become a model for an approach to career and technical training that makes it easier for students to get the credentials necessary to compete in a skilled economy.

"This is a state that long ago recognized the need for technical education beyond high school, but didn't have as much of an emphasis on college," says Eric D. Fingerhut, chancellor of Ohio's Board of Regents. "So we have a very sophisticated technical-education network which, in this day and age, now needs to be put into more of a system that leads people into college."

The program is the latest in a string of state efforts to more closely link work-force training and postsecondary education, which had operated independently.

The new program, called the Career-Technical Credit Transfer, was born in 2005. That year the Legislature passed a law calling for the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Education to create policies that would allow students to transfer courses completed at technical centers to any higher-education institution in the state.

Now, with the program finally getting its legs, faculty members from technical centers and community colleges are evaluating courses that have been submitted as candidates for credit.

They are examining courses in five key work-force areas: automotive technology, computer networking, electrical and mechanical engineering technology, medical assisting, and nursing.

And if all goes as planned, officials say that by midsummer, Ohioans studying those subjects at adult-education centers could receive college credit for certain courses that they could later apply toward a degree.

"It's not at all about dumbing down the curriculum," says Julian L. Alssid, executive director of the Workforce Strategy Center, a think tank in New York that works closely with states looking to improve the quality of their work forces. "It's about getting people a foot in the door who might not have otherwise gotten to the postsecondary track."

Not all the courses offered at Ohio's technical centers will be eligible for the new program, nor should they be, Mr. Fingerhut says. But he believes students should receive credit for courses that have become almost identical to their credit-bearing counterparts at the state's community colleges.

"Many of these [technical] schools have become enormously sophisticated in the programs they offer, and their facilities have become more comprehensive and really, in many respects, indistinguishable from some of our technical programs at community colleges," Mr. Fingerhut says.

Given the similarities in many — but not all — of the curricula, he says, it made sense to link the courses to the community-college system. The result, he hopes, will be "another front door" to a college education in a state that desperately wants, and needs, to change the educational profile of its work force.

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Pathways to College

Ohio's plan is a bold one, experts in work-force education say. But in a state with fading industry, it makes sense.

Once, people in Ohio could attend a vocational or technical center, get a factory job, and support their families, Mr. Alssid says, but "those days are going away." Ohio's plan would create "pathways" to a college degree and not treat vocational or technical training as an end unto itself, he says.

That route is not without its challenges.

There are accreditation matters to consider, making sure that the curricula of the technical courses meet the standards expected both by industry and by their credit-bearing siblings in the state's community colleges.

And there is the challenge of ensuring that credits from a technical center in, say, Toledo can transfer to a community college in Cincinnati, much the same way that community-college credits are transferable to four-year institutions around the state.

Mr. Fingerhut says Ohio's existing infrastructure for transferring credits from community colleges to four-year institutions makes it easier for officials to design a similar system for vocational and technical credits.

A Broader Debate

Ohio's move reflects the experience of many states that face shifting economies and a shrinking pool of jobs for workers without college credentials.

Educators in those places are looking for ways to provide students greater access to credit-bearing courses and, ultimately, greater career potential.

They can no longer afford for adult students to get lost in a "hidden college," where they move through at a fast clip to receive training and quickly return to the work force without getting any closer to a degree.

The Ohio program could reveal more about those students who come and go in career and technical programs.

"We're much better at tracking credit course hours than noncredit, so this could be something that would also enable us to track the essential data on student success in these programs," says Brian Pusser, an associate professor of education at the University of Virginia.

And since credit-bearing courses are generally accompanied by student aid, the program could increase the amount of money available to students over time, he says.

But perhaps most important, Mr. Pusser and Mr. Alssid say, are the intangibles.

"It is such a challenge to go back to school," Mr. Pusser says. "When someone gets that inspiration and says, 'I want to be a nurse,' it's got to be a very tough moment when they've already been there for a semester or two and find out they essentially don't have any credit toward a degree. This could be a powerful measure."