Texas’ Demographic Challenge

New programs attempt to substitute for race-based admissions policies

By Carl Irving

AUSTIN, TEXAS

TWO YEARS AFTER a federal court barred use of race in admissions, Texas has responded by liberalizing admissions policies at public campuses and by preparing to launch a massive scholarship effort aimed at low-income minority students.

The new law, which requires automatic admission for students who graduate with grade point averages in the top ten percent of their high school classes, made little difference last fall, a year after the court ruling led to a drop in African American and Hispanic undergraduate enrollments at the state’s two most selective public institutions—the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Texas in College Station.

One reason, educators and political leaders believe, is that many poor minority students can’t afford to attend Austin or College Station (or some of the state’s 33 other public universities and colleges) even if they are admitted. So legislators from both political parties have united in support of a permanent scholarship program that initially may provide more than $160 million to finance about 50,000 four-year scholarships.

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By William Trombley

FORT MYERS, FLORIDA

APRIL 30 WILL BE an important date in the brief history of Florida Gulf Coast University, where 85 percent of the faculty has been hired on multi-year contracts instead of tenured-track positions.

By then, about 50 professors with three-year contracts will know if these agreements have been renewed or if they should plan to look for jobs elsewhere. Although most expect to be renewed, an air of anxiety hangs over this small campus.

“I’m a little nervous about it, to tell the truth,” said Eric Strahorn, a young history professor who has taught at Florida Gulf Coast since the campus opened in August 1997. “Everybody says most of us will be renewed, but until I have it in my hand, I’m going to be nervous.”

Maria Roca, an associate professor of communications who has a five-year contract and thus is not being evaluated for renewal this year, put it this way: “If we renew as many contracts as people think we will, this will allay a lot of the fears about multi-year contracts. It will show that this campus isn’t going to be a revolving door.”

The no-tenure policy is not the only unusual feature of this, the newest of Florida’s ten state universities.

The very existence of the campus, in an area more hospitable to alligators than to humans, is surprising. It took more than 500,000 tons of landfill to provide a foundation for the first group of campus buildings. “We had to build the land up four and a half feet to get the campus above flood level,” President Roy E. McTarnahan explained.

On all sides there are tall, skinny Melaleuca trees, which were imported from Australia several decades ago to soak up swamp water but which also have consumed much of the natural vegetation.

To end one of the many environmental skirmishes that were fought before the campus site was approved, the university provided more than $160 million to finance about 50,000 four-year scholarships.

Do you want to know how to write a 17th century four-voice counterpoint composition? Or discuss whether Aristophanes was justified in his criticism of Socrates? If so, St. John’s, a small liberal arts college where the “Great Books” are the only curriculum, might be the place for you. (See page 14.)

An Experiment in Florida

Gulf Coast University tries faculty contracts, no tenure

In This Issue

New admissions policies and a large state scholarship program are expected to increase Hispanic enrollment at the University of Texas, Austin, where they were only 13 percent of last fall’s freshman class.

In addition, UT-Austin, Texas A&M and other campuses have expanded counseling and recruiting efforts, and special scholarship programs, financed by staff and campus funds, to recruit and retain more minority students.

Behind all these moves is growing awareness among Texas leaders, across the political spectrum, that the widening chasm between the more affluent, mostly Anglo, and the unskilled poor, mostly African American and Hispanic, threatens the state’s economic future.

There are scary predictions that Texas’ bright prospects will fade if a growing portion of the population fails to provide skills and customers to compete in an increasingly competitive global economy.

In nine years, Anglos, who dominate enrollment in most colleges and universities in this state, are expected to become a minority.

By 2030, according to these projections, Hispanics will increase from 26 to 46 percent of the population, and Anglos will shrink to 36 percent, nearly parallel to demographic predictions for California.

Yet Hispanics make up only 13 percent of freshmen enrolled at the Austin campus continued on page 5 continued on page 8
As president of the Washington-based Education Trust, Kati Haycock has been a leader in the movement to increase collaboration between higher education and the public schools. This interview was conducted by William Trombley, senior editor of National CrossTalk.

William Trombley: What is the Education Trust?

Kati Haycock: The Education Trust is a non-profit organization whose mission is to work toward improving achievement in kindergarten through college, with special attention to eliminating the gaps that separate minority and poor children from other children at every level.

WT: What is that motivation in the beginning, to improve things for poor kids?

KH: We actually started as a unit within the American Association for Higher Education called the Office of School-College Collaboration. That office was created in the late 1980s, after the “Nation at Risk” call to action to serve as a kind of cheerleader, exhorting higher education to collaborate with schools. In those days the attitude was that any old collaboration would do, thank you very much.

In the early ’90s we took a look at what had come out of that, at the many hundreds or thousands of programs, and asked the question, Does this really add up to anything? Does it have the effect of improving student achievement or changing teachers’ practice? And the answer was, probably not.

Two things happened that led us to try to change that. One was a growing understanding from our work with K–12 on standards-based reform, that unless there were some real changes in higher education, the effort in K–12 was going to fail. Then the Pew Charitable Trusts provided an opportunity to work with half a dozen communities in trying to see what might look like if higher education and schools worked together more systematically.

WT: K–16 collaboration suddenly seems to be a hot topic. It was one of those things that people talked about at conferences for years and nothing happened, and then suddenly things began to happen. What caused the change?

KH: Yes, if my schedule and the demands on my staff are any sign, there’s no question that interest has grown exponentially in the last year or two. Thirty-five to 40 communities are in one stage or another of building a K–16 strategy, and 13 or 14 states are working on statewide plans. There’s a lot more visibility and a lot more seriousness about this now.

There are several reasons for that, some of them on the K–12 side and some on the higher education side. On the K–12 side, we’re really now beyond the early part of standards-based reform. Most states or communities have adopted higher standards for kids, they’ve begun to put into place new assessments, and the results are uniformly dismal. As states and school districts look at what they need to do to get larger numbers of kids up to these standards, they’re beginning to realize that their teacher force is not up to it. That causes them to ask why, and the answers lead inevitably to higher education.

The second problem that they’re beginning to see is that, while elementary kids, and to a certain extent middle grade kids, will try as hard as they can on any test put before them, that’s not true with high school students. The test needs to count for something in order for them to struggle to do well on it. And at the moment, these new tests they’re putting in place are not used by either higher education or employers.

What matters most to kids and parents? Higher education. So, as they think about how to get students to take this stuff more seriously, they are once again led inevitably to higher education. So that’s why I think there’s greater interest on the K–12 side.

On the higher education side, the pressures are different, but in the end they fit together. Lots of states—28 at last count—are reviewing remediation policies. There is a lot of pressure at the state level for higher education institutions to achieve certain goals is beginning to lead educators—not to mention governors and legislators—to understand how intertwined K–12 and higher education really are.

WT: What are the most important factors in making K–16 partnerships work?

KH: Perhaps the most important thing is strong leadership. At least one of the CEOs—either the president of the university or the chancellor of the system or the K–12 superintendent—has to be strongly committed to make this work. One of the reasons the El Paso Collaborative is successful is that Diana Natalicio (president of the University of Texas, El Paso) has been driving this forward.

Secondly, you can’t do this with part-time staff who are in and out of the project. Some places have tried to do it that way and it just didn’t work. You need to have full-time staff, people who can think about systems change, who are working at this all the time.

You have to have strong voices from the community—people who will support you when you run into trouble. For these partnerships to make real change, you have to move faster than is comfortable. This angers a lot of people and makes a lot of others nervous. Somebody besides an educator has to be there to tell them that all this change is okay.

Finally, you can move faster if there are good statewide standards and a tough accountability system that demands results. One of the reasons the El Paso Collaborative has been successful is that they have had the Texas statewide assessment to help them know how they are doing, and pressure from the accountability system to improve performance for all groups of students.

WT: Improvements in teacher education seem to be crucial to the success of these K–16 collaborations.

KH: Absolutely. In Nevada, for instance, the legislature recently said to the University of Nevada, “Are you sure you’re producing teachers who can teach to these new standards we have approved?” When the faculty began to look seriously at this question, they found, as did their peers in Georgia, that it’s virtually impossible for teachers to learn what they need to know to teach these new standards without significant change in teacher education. So now Nevada is working to make the necessary changes.

We’ve had two decades of exhorting institutions to improve teacher education and not very much has come of it. But if you start with the question, What do college and university students need to know to teach to these standards? and you get faculty into the mix—not just education faculty, but arts and science faculty as well—it’s tremendously exciting what can be done about improving teacher education.

WT: Do K–16 partnerships work better in some settings than in others?

KH: The easiest places are those where you have a tight and obvious feedback loop. El Paso is a good example, where the university gets 90 percent of its students from a few school districts, and where the school districts draw the bulk of their teachers from that institution. In communities like that, the interrelationships are much clearer. The self-interest of both systems in coming together is much more obvious and you can actually get a joint effort underway quite quickly.

Where the feedback loop is less tight—where there are either multiple higher education institutions or multiple school districts, where higher education institutions draw their students from a state or a region instead of from one distinct community—it’s much tougher to get them to understand these connections. Los Angeles is trying clusters of schools around
NEWS
FROM THE CENTER

Several National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education staff members were key participants in a higher education finance seminar held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in February. The seminar was co-sponsored by the Center and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Center President Pat Callan moderated a panel discussion of affordability issues, while Vice President Joni Finney led a discussion of performance-based financing. Kristin D. Conklin, director of the Center’s Washington, D.C. office, summarized her recent report on the new federal tax credits and their likely impact on state higher education financing policies.

Research Associate William Doyle joined Center consultant John Immerwahr of Public Agenda in a discussion of public opinion about higher education. Earlier in February, at the Center and the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media co-sponsored a three-day seminar on “Costs, Access and Politics of Higher Education” at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco. The sessions were attended by more than 30 education reporters from newspapers across the country. The Hechinger Institute is affiliated with Teachers College at Columbia University.

Also in February, the Center held a two-day symposium on “Assessing State Policy Needs and Alternatives for Higher Education” at the San Francisco Marriott Hotel. The discussion centered on papers written by Richard C. Richardson, Jr., professor in the Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University, and Harold Hovey, president of State Policy Research, Inc.

Among those who spoke at a higher education finance seminar co-sponsored by The Center and the National Conference of State Legislatures were (from left), South Dakota legislator Larry Gabriel; Joe Burke, State University of New York; Center Vice President Joni Finney; and Dennis Jones, president of The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

At a San Francisco symposium sponsored by The Center, Harold Hovey, president of State Policy Research, Inc., talked about the financial problems facing public higher education.

there are fewer protections for adults. So far, most of the progress in our efforts has been made in places that are not heavily unionized. I hope that doesn't continue to be so. There certainly are some examples of successful reforms in places where unions are strong, for example the exciting progress that Tony Alvarado was able to make in New York City's District 2.

We: Some argue that you have to get the child before age three to make any difference in learning ability, so the standards-based reforms you advocate come too late.

KH: It's just maddening to have to listen to stuff like that. It's simply wrong. Not that the first years aren't important, but clearly you can make great progress after that. If not, perhaps we should simply fund a national system of preschools and let it go at that.

We: Will people in higher education ever change their attitudes and participate fully in K–16 partnerships?

KH: It's much easier to get higher education people to tackle problems in K–12 than to look at problems in higher education—teacher education, for instance, but the K–12 part is hard, too. Some faculty members think public school education is not their problem, or it's beneath them to study possible solutions, or they are too involved in their own research to pay attention. Fortunately there is a group that is beginning to understand the importance of improving the entire educational system, not just a little piece here and there. I think that group will grow, especially as the public begins to pay more attention.

Higher education has sort of floated above these problems for a long time. They've been on a kind of ice-skating party where they just zoomed by and paid no attention to the public schools. But I think that's about to end, because I don't think the public will stand for that any longer.

I think the public will insist on higher education playing a much larger role in creating a K–12 curriculum that incorporates higher standards and in training people who can teach to those standards.◆
EDITORIAL
Is the Door Closing?
The narrowing of higher education opportunity

A M E R I C A N higher education will face a severe crisis in the early years of the rapidly approaching new century. During its first decades, I expect us to be debating our traditional concepts of higher education opportunity and access. Opportunity in American higher education has continually expanded throughout our history, but, sadly, I believe—recent trends evidence a narrowing of that concept.

Traditional concepts of opportunity are being redefined in a piecemeal fashion. Without early, deliberate reconsideration, these traditional concepts will be at risk.

The expansion of access and participation in higher education has been a major theme of American social and economic history in the post-World War II era. The nation, the states, and our colleges and universities have successfully accommodated the veterans under the GI Bill and then the baby boomers. They responded to the Civil Rights movement, and dramatically expanded educational opportunity for those initially called “non-traditional” students.

Student financial aid, enlargement of existing facilities, and—in the public sector—the unprecedented construction of new campuses were the major policy tools used by government during these past five decades of expansion.

Growth was based on national consensus that every American who was motivated and could benefit from education and training beyond high school should have that opportunity regardless of personal or family financial resources, race or ethnicity. The civic and individual values that supported this consensus in a period of national economic growth must be preserved in the coming century, when financial support will be problematic.

Opportunity must be preserved because education beyond high school has become a necessity if not sufficient condition for the employment to which most Americans aspire—employment that can afford them economic sufficiency, employment that in turn correlates with civic, community and cultural participation.

Other options for upward mobility and a middle class life have been narrowed. Domestically, technological advances have increased productivity, and fewer industrial workers are required; and offshore competition has limited domestic production. If opportunity is broadly defined as the chance to fully participate in American society, higher education has become the gateway to this participation.

Economic growth will, I trust, continue in the next century. By 2008, however, some two million additional students will seek entry into our colleges and universities, and projected state support will not be commensurate with that growth. Costly construction of new facilities, the past solution to growth, is unlikely: There are political limits to raising taxes and to shifting funds from other public services that have legitimate demands on public funds.

Ironically, as education and training beyond high school have increased in importance, recent federal and state policies have narrowed the opportunities for participation—often in the name of the opportunity itself.

Evidence of diminished concern for the neediest potential students is not hard to find. Faced with the recession of the early 1990s, states shifted responsibility for higher education away from taxpayers toward students and their families. Public higher education tuition increased by about a third without commensurate increases in need-based student financial assistance.

Moreover, in many states the rate of growth of financial aid programs for academically successful students without means testing outstripped the growth of need. While about $9 billion in forgone aid affords subsidies to students who are already college bound. The best known of these—the Georgia Hope Scholarship—was structured to exclude low-income students from participation, a kind of reverse means testing.

This program influenced the trend toward publicly supported grants that do not consider financial need. In one year, 1995-96, non-need-based dollars for under-graduates increased by almost 11 percent from the previous year, but need-based grants decreased by two percent.

At the federal level, two developments have placed opportunity in jeopardy. First, without major policy debate, the federal financial aid system has been transformed over the past two decades from one characterized predominantly by need-based grants to one in which loans predominate. Federal loans increased in constant dollars from about $17 million in 1987 to some $42 million in 1997. During this same period, federal support of need-based Pell grants remained relatively stable at $5 million.

The second development was middle class relief from college costs in the form of tuition tax credits. The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 is expected to cost some $40 billion in foregone revenues from 1998 to 2002—the largest infusion of federal aid for college since the GI Bill. Two non-refundable tax credit programs, designed to ease the burden of college costs for the middle class, are at the heart of the federal law. While about $9 billion in foregone revenue for these tax credits was expected to be incurred in 1998, only an estimated $650 million was authorized to increase the Pell Grant program, which serves the lowest income students.

Higher education opportunity is inextricably tied to overarching public policy issues—the distribution of public resources, and the priorities and incentives, explicit and implicit, that have an impact on governmental support of students and institutions. In the mid and late 1990s, these policies seem to reflect the broad political trends that Nicholas Lemann referred to in a recent New York Times Sunday Magazine article as “the new American consensus.” According to Lemann, this consensus focuses on the primacy of suburban middle class interests, and dominates both major political parties. Lemann characterized this consensus as one of “government of, by and for the comfortable.”

Lemann’s analysis suggests that neither the problems nor the solutions to the issues of opportunity are likely to be found by examining higher education in a vacuum. I do not claim to predict how the societal, political, economic and educational scenarios will play out into the first decade of the new century. It is possible, however, to identify several elements that may help us reframe, revitalize the concept of higher education opportunity, and preserve the core values that underlie it.

• First, money matters, and most Americans know that it matters. Family income is highly correlated with enrollment in higher education and completion of degrees. Recent trends show that governmental policy makers believe that public subsidies are an effective way to encourage college attendance for families with middle incomes and above. Cannot at least as powerful a political and substantive case be made for the potential impact of subsidies for the less affluent?

• Second, lowering financial barriers to college alone will not suffice. The financial gap is all too often a preparation gap as well. Those from low-income backgrounds are less likely to enroll, and, if they do, are disproportionately represented among those requiring remedial assistance. The reframing of opportunity must address this preparation gap.

• Third, the concept of opportunity has often been oversimplified to mean only access or the opportunity to enroll. But opportunity encompasses more than this; once enrolled in college, students must have the opportunity to achieve the educational goals. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, less than half of the students who entered college in 1989 aspiring to four-year degrees actually received them within five years. Without improvement of student learning and attainment within higher education, the reframing of opportunity and access to it will be a hollow gesture.

• Fourth, reframing opportunity must recognize a role for higher education in meeting the growing need for education and skills of the adult population. Economic volatility, immigration and the demands of continuing technological advance bring new pressures on all ages to higher education. Our rapidly changing, information-based economy will continue for the foreseeable future to create a large gap between the knowledge and skills of the workforce and the demands of the modern marketplace.

• Fifth, escalating costs of higher education inevitably drive up prices; steep and precipitous increases in the price of college create a “sticker shock.” Shocked reaction to high tuition dampens the college aspirations of many low income and first generation students. Confining the growth of per-student college costs is therefore, a key element of preserving and enhancing accessibility.

• Sixth, the states have leverage to take the lead on the opportunity agenda. More so than individual higher education institutions or the federal government, states have the capacity to develop cohesive strategies for opportunity that mobilize the public schools, public and private colleges and universities, and the growing number of corporate and other providers of education beyond high school. States can target their own subsidies in ways that leverage the opportunity agenda.

These six concepts are not a comprehensive strategy, but rather are elements of a new framework for opportunity and access. Each addresses a piece of the opportunity puzzle. Federal and state higher education policies of the 1990s and the “new consensus” that Lemann has so aptly described would, more by drift than by design, diminish higher education’s role as catalyst of opportunity.

There is still room for optimism, however. The political and educational conditions for the reframing of opportunity and access are also present—a recommitment to higher education’s critical responsibility for opportunity is possible. The conditions for this recommitment are found in the values of the general public, in the traditions and capacities of American colleges and universities that were demonstrated so well over the half century since World War II, and in the confidence that they can play an active and invaluable role in the reframing and renewal of opportunity in the next century.

—Patrick M. Callan
Texas history brims over with natural and economic turbulence—droughts, floods, plunging prices for crops, livestock and oil, disastrous bankruptcies by giant savings and loans. But some fear even graver and more lasting consequences if the state ignores the impact of these trends in population, education and income. That and the presidential prospects of Governor George W. Bush have been leading topics during the current biennial legislative session in the state capital.

The drive to deal with this demographic challenge has a special Texas flavor:

• “It doesn’t matter if you are a right wing racist,” said one influential state official, “if you share interest in education to make sure that the state can compete.”
• You see very high levels of involvement in community affairs in Texas,” says Uri Treisman, a math professor at the Austin campus, who came here from Berkeley a decade ago. “I know of no other place where there is this kind of commitment.”
• “The future of Texas absolutely depends on being able to educate minority and disadvantaged students to a potential we have never done before,” said John Stevens, executive director for the Texas Business and Education Coalition, which includes many of Texas’ leading business enterprises.

Political leaders from both parties agree.

• “If the state accepts its responsibilities, we’ll have a better atmosphere, and no one will say they’re giving us handouts,” said Representative Irma Rangel, a liberal Democrat and chairwoman of the Mexican American Caucus and a state-wide minority association (partly financed with state funds) to raise private funds to sponsor scholarships for minority students.

“Texas has undergone huge social, cultural and economic changes. It strikes me that education is the answer to all our woes.”

—State Senator Teel Bivins

Texas and California struggle with admissions formulas, while a national legal debate continues over whether they and other states should continue or impose bans on race-related affirmative action.

In March, the University of California Board of Regents approved a milder version of the Texas plan (see main article), starting in the fall of 2001, to admit graduating seniors ranked among the top four percent in grade point averages at their respective high schools. All must take 11 of 15 courses required by the university before the end of their junior year.

These changes will not ease the pressure for admission at UC Berkeley, which last year turned away 7,200 students with grade point averages of 4.0 or higher, including 500 African American and Hispanic applicants. Unlike the Texas program, the four percent in California will not be guaranteed admission to a specific UC campus. Officials estimate the four percent rule will bring in an additional 3,600 students of whom 716 will be Hispanic and 161 African American.

Meanwhile, an alumnus of Berkeley’s Boalt law school has sued the university, claiming that it illegally encouraged the alumni association (partly financed with state funds) to raise private funds to sponsor scholarships for minority students. The ban on race-related affirmative action has continued to take a toll at Boalt: In 1996, before the ban took effect, 75 African Americans were admitted; last fall the number dropped to 32.

Undergraduate enrollment at Berkeley was fast affected by the ban last fall, when the number of African American students enrolled as freshmen dropped to 98, compared with 260 the prior year. The number of Hispanic students decreased from 492 to 264.

Affirmative action involving racial and gender preferences was banned in California after voter approval of a state proposition in 1996, which the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review a year later. The Hopwood ruling in Texas banned affirmative action effective in the fall of 1997.

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In other cases scheduled for trial or hearings later this year, Anglo students contend they were denied admission to the University of Michigan’s undergraduate and law school programs because of double standards favoring minorities in rating test scores and grades. The university asserts that race is only one among a number of factors taken into account in its admissions. The Michigan campus at Ann Arbor has room for about two thirds of eligible freshman applicants.

In Maryland, a student filed suit last year against the University of Maryland medical school, which had used different standards for white and minority applicants. The case is being appealed.

In Oklahoma, a white male at the University of Tulsa sued last October, contending that a scholarship program sets different test score requirements for members of different racial groups and for men and women.

—Carl Irving

[Image] David Montejano, a University of Texas history professor, helped draft the new admissions policy, which makes the top 10 percent in every Texas high school eligible for admission to any state university.
Montejano said, because it admitted students without regard to region or school district wealth. The proposal ignored SAT scores and did not require college prep courses. It thus gave equal status to largely segregated high schools in poorer regions. Legislators subsequently amended Montejano’s proposal to include all public campuses in Texas, reasoning that a broader ten percent rule would both encourage achieving students and overcome lingering biases.

Rangel led the effort in the lower house to gain passage for the ten percent admissions bill. “I wanted to send them (the Anglo majority) a message,” she said in an interview. “I told them that when you were only learning to read and write, I was also learning to speak. You have to let us have our rights, what you took from us 100 years ago.”

Rangel, the daughter of “very poor parents,” grew up in Kingsville, close to the Mexican border. Her father taught himself to read and write, and progressed from picking cotton to owning a string of barber shops and saloons. Representative Rangel graduated from Texas A&M University in Kingsville and taught until she earned a law degree in 1977.

Rangel resisted efforts, mostly by Republicans, to require that the “top ten” had to take college prep courses. “We don’t guarantee degrees, but we want to provide an opportunity to prove one’s ability and worth,” she said. “We’re not lowering (academic) standards; we are reducing admissions standards.”

The bill passed in 1997 because “it had the support of a coalition of people who believe in fairness and opportunity,” said UT-Austin Provost Ricardo Romo, who will become president of the University of Texas at San Antonio next fall. “Without the rural Anglos, we wouldn’t have gotten it through. The same people who favored a ban on affirmative action also oppose segregation.”

Governor Bush signed the bill on May 20, 1997, guaranteeing automatic college admission for approximately 21,000 graduating seniors that spring, saying, “we want all our students in Texas to have a fair shot at achieving their dreams, and this legislation gives them that fair shot if they are willing to work for it.”

The percentage that made it to college campus, which enrolls 48,000 students, in the Valley, the huge, mostly Hispanic region in south Texas. The Austin campus “has been mobilized” to recruit more minority students, said Director of Admissions Bruce Walker.

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Hispanics make up only 13 percent of freshmen enrolled at Texas’ two most selective public campuses, even though they totaled 31 percent of state high school graduates last spring.

minority students in Texas 44 percent of African American students who enroll at Prairie View A&M (a mostly African American campus), come from households with annual income of less than $4,000, according to Murdock.

Provost Romo estimates that the Hopwood decision cost the campus about $4 million in campus scholarships that had been earmarked for minority students. Interestingly, and minority studies say she and other Hispanic students find financial aid to be scarcer at the sprawling campus, which enrolls 48,000 students.
protests from any member of the biennial legislature last fall when a commission of more students to attend private colleges was created. The commission recommended a huge gram, which began as an effort to enable state, Texas does not have a large state leader, headed by Hobby, contended that affirmative action brought me here. I told them it was a lot of people who assume affirmative programs and added more than 250 high schools to its recruiting visits. In a joint effort with Texas A&M, the Austin campus expanded "outreach" centers for students from the seventh grade through high school. UT-Austin "has been mobilized," said Bruce Walker, director of admissions and associate vice president for student affairs. Officials have allocated an extra $50,000 for counseling and recruitment. The admissions office hired four extra staff members. Thousands of enrolled students have called potential applicants and visited their high schools. Last fall, they mailed post cards with handwritten notes to such students, Walker said. "We're more intense now about our counselors going to high schools. Where they might have made a single trip in the past, they now may go back three more times." last fall, enrollments of Hispanic and African American freshmen at Austin and College Station remained essentially flat, slightly below pre-Hopwood levels. Both admissions offices say it probably will require several years before any decisive trends can be charted. But Walker did get some hopeful news this spring: Compared to last year's figures,

She has qualified for work-study, to help pay rent and other bills. She reflected the views of other minority students interviewed, when she said she must agree with Hobby, but $100 million proposes spending $200 million. "In my phone." The ban on affirmative action also has affected private campuses, which enroll 12 percent of Texas college students. A year after the Hopwood decision, Rice University, the most prestigious private university in the state, saw the number of Hispanic freshmen fall from 111 to 56 students. A subsequent survey found "a brain drain," according to Robert M. Stein, dean of social sciences. "The best and brown students went to the Ivy League and Stanford. They rarely come back to the state after they graduate. That's what really hurts. They were denied financial aid here so they went to a Stanford, where the tuition's twice as much."

Most Hispanic and African American students attend essentially segregated elementary and high schools—with Hispanics concentrated in south Texas and African Americans in the larger cities and in east Texas. Personally contacted 21,000 more by phone. "We wanted to tell students that though this is a large campus, it's possible to look at it as a more welcoming place than they might have imagined," Walker said. "We're more intense now about our counselors going to high schools. Where they might have made a single trip in the past, they

### Minority Freshmen Enrolled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Austin</th>
<th>At College Station</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(fall)</td>
<td>(fall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglos</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
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### Undergraduates in Texas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All public universities</th>
<th>UT-Austin</th>
<th>Texas A&amp;M</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglos</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
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(States: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas A&M)

Irma Rangel, the first Mexican American woman elected to the Texas House of Representatives, led the campaign for the ten percent admissions policy.

Unlike most other heavily populated states, Texas does not have a large state financial aid program. There is no equivalent to California's Calgrant program, which began as an effort to enable more students to attend private colleges and universities, but has become a major source of financial support for University of California students.

A bill introduced earlier this year by Representative Henry Cuellar of Laredo, education subcommittee chairman for the State House Appropriations Committee, proposes spending $200 million. "In my heart I agree with Hobby, but $100 million to $200 million probably is more realistic," Cuellar said in an interview. Cuellar and others say they have not heard any public protests from any member of the biennial legislature, which concludes its 140-day session at the end of May.

Unlike the ten percent automatic admissions program, students will have to take college prep courses to qualify for a scholarship, which would cover all tuition and fees charges for four years if they make satisfactory progress toward a degree. The Austin campus charges about $3,400 in tuition and fees per academic year, while average annual tuition and fees charges total $2,281 at the 35 degree-awarding public campuses and $774 in the 50 community college districts.

If the scholarship bill allocates $163 million, as predicted, the amount would support 33,000 qualified and needy students in the first year and 56,000 by the second year. About 60 percent of the scholarships would be granted to Hispanic and African Americans, because of their greater economic needs, according to an analysis by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Democrats are pushing for an eligibility ceiling of $25,000 in family income, while Republicans want a $75,000 ceiling, which would make more middle class students eligible for the scholarships.

Other bills proposed spending $30 to $35 million for counseling to help retain "economically disadvantaged" students at the campuses, and $50 million for students who intend to become school teachers.

"There is no parallel to this in the history of Texas," said Cuellar, a Democrat and member of the Mexican American caucus. Legislators in both parties voiced optimism about the bill's chances for passage and the likelihood that it will be signed by Governor Bush.

In an effort to supplement the state scholarships, the Austin campus has created a Longhorn Opportunity Program, which concentrates on high schools with large numbers of low-income students. A computer search found 49 schools in Texas that apparently never have sent students to Austin. Campus officials offered up to 150 four-year scholarships covering tuition costs for those with the greatest need among the top ten percent graduating from those schools, as well as others in inner city districts of Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Laredo, El Paso and Fort Worth.

A group of UT-Austin alumni has raised more than $3.5 million for what are called post-Hopwood scholarships. Contributors are divided about the wisdom of the Hopwood decision, said Austin attorney Larry Temple, who heads the group. But all agree that racial diversity, and financial aid to maintain it, are "critically important to the university and the state."

The ban on affirmative action also has affected private campuses, which enroll 12 percent of Texas college students. A year after the Hopwood decision, Rice University, the most prestigious private university in the state, saw the number of Hispanic freshmen fall from 111 to 56 students. A subsequent survey found "a brain drain," according to Robert M. Stein, dean of social sciences. "The best and brown students went to the Ivy League and Stanford. They rarely come back to the state after they graduate. That's what really hurts. They were denied financial aid here so they went to a Stanford, where the tuition's twice as much."

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continued next page
Florida Gulf Coast
continued from page 1
promised the Army Corps of Engineers that it would eradicate the Melaleuca, a tax one faculty member likened to “eradicating dirt.” Periodically, groups of state prisoners are bused onto campus to hack away at the trees but progress is slow.

Signs warn students and others not to feed the alligators that live in several man-made lakes (the result of another environmental agreement) and that periodically can be seen sunning themselves on campus. There are also wild pigs and turkeys, fire ants with nasty dispositions,

and a variety of snakes.

But there have been no sightings of the Florida Panther, an endangered species believed to roam the area. The Army Corps of Engineers required the university to buy $2 million worth of land for panther habitat, but so far none have dropped by for a snack.

Officials cheerily point out that all of this flora and fauna provide excellent material for a “collegium” called “A Sustainable Future,” an interdisciplinary course, required of all undergraduates, that is intended to provide students with “an ecological perspective,” to quote the campus catalogue.

“The campus itself becomes a laboratory,” said Jack Crocker, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Crocker is a strong supporter of the interdisciplinary approach. All Arts and Sciences graduates earn the same degree—Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies, with a “concentration” in history or computer science or any one of a dozen other subjects. All must complete at a 21-hour core of interdisciplinary courses—one-third of their upper division work—organized around such themes as “Issues in Culture and Society” and “Issues in Science and Technology.”

“We want students to think on their own and relate one thing to another, not just sit in lecture classes,” Crocker said. “We got some resistance in the beginning. Students arrive with the mind set that they have to ‘major’ in something, but now I think there’s a lot of acceptance.” However, some undergraduates still worry that their “liberal studies” degrees might not get them into top-flight graduate or professional schools. It is too soon to know if their fears are well founded.

The campus is heavily into “distance education.” Many of the 2,900 students (average age 33) have jobs and find that courses taught over the Internet or by two-way video are easier to fit into their schedules than classroom appearances.

More than 90 distance education courses have been developed. This spring, 62 courses were offered and more than 20 percent of Florida Gulf Coast (FGCU) students took at least one. The lecture halls have podiums and overhead projectors but no blackboards (or “whiteboards”) on which professors can scrawl. “We wanted this to be a different kind of place,” President McNamara said.

The Florida Board of Regents hopes that lessons learned at FGCU can be applied at the state’s other universities. Like California, Texas and South Carolina, Florida faces an explosion of postsecondary enrollments over the next decade. There won’t be room for all these students in traditional campus settings, and the likelihood of building many new campuses is slim, so the hope is that distance education can relieve the pressure. That is one reason McNamara, a technology enthusiast, was picked to run Florida Gulf Coast.

But McNamara has announced he will leave at the end of this semester, and many on campus wonder if his successor, who will be named soon, will be equally enthusiastic about educational technology.

Peg Gray-Vickrey, associate professor of nursing in the College of Professional Studies, has taught several courses through distance education (or “distributive learning,” as she prefers to call it). “Many students are hesitant to speak up in class, and the Internet makes it easier for them to reflect and write,” she said.

But Maria Roca, who teaches communications, thinks this approach “is good for highly motivated students but not for many others,” who require face-to-face contact with faculty members and other students.

“I’m very cautious about the uses of electronic communication,” Roca said. “We’re supposed to be advancing student learning, and I wonder sometimes if we are so enamored of all these toys that we forget what this is all about.”

The campus “messages” sometimes fall short. Counselors at the Harlingen high schools said they get no feedback about how their graduates fare beyond the freshman year—whether they drop out, what they study, and when they graduate. A legislative proposal to require the campuses to provide such information was killed in committee, after strenuous objections from higher education officials about excessive costs and labor.

Officials at UT-Austin must struggle with problems common to large state universities lacking in the kinds of personal contacts that are possible at smaller institutions. Last fall, a survey found that four years after enrolling at the Austin campus, 35 percent of African Americans, 34 percent of Hispanics and 29 percent of Anglos had dropped out.

The abrupt ban on affirmative action left a negative feeling of being unwanted at Austin, said Margarita Arellano, assistant dean in charge of retention services. “We’re not recruiting as many minority students now, and we should because of the invasion and fear and loss of out of state. Hopwood added another negative, and students tell me, ‘my brother and sister aren’t coming here because of that decision.’”

“But it’s been a really ugly transition,” Montejano said. “The administrators feel like they have their hands tied because of potential lawsuits, so they aren’t really doing anything.”

“Even with affirmative action, this wasn’t a very hospitable place for minority students,” said Robert Jeffers, associate professor of journalism at Austin. “UT’s well known to the black community as unfriendly. There’s historic hostility. For Hispanics, it represented first-generation students coming from the Valley to a big school, with little structural support, while working at two jobs. Their struggle has been immense.”

Others on campus are more optimistic, partly because of a wide range of off-campus voices calling for adjustments to a changing population without challenging academic standards.

In an opinion survey among top Texas businessmen, Murdock found that a large majority wanted the universities to change more quickly. Executives told Murdock they sought more cooperation and internships and more “multicultural, multilingual and internationally oriented graduates.”

Earlier this year, the governor’s office posted a notice near the center of the state capital, pointing out that Mexico is Texas’ biggest trading partner and that Texas accounts for nearly half of all US trade with Mexico. Graduates literate in Spanish and English will help sustain expanding trade with all Latin America. “Businesses are very interested in this,” said Murdock.

“People see higher education as a medieval, never changing enterprise,” said Urti Treisman. “But one of the strengths of higher education is that it is amazingly responsive to national need…What we have now is a crisis. If we don’t handle it right, it will have devastating social implications…Texas has the potential to figure out how to deal with this in ways that respect the traditional American values of equity.”

Carl Irving is a former political and higher education reporter for the San Francisco Examiner.
It took more than 500,000 tons of landfill to provide a foundation for the first group of campus buildings.

that research is expected," he said. "And I have to publish to be sure I can get a job elsewhere, if I have to."

Many FGCU professors "are struggling with this issue in a very big way," Maria Rocca said. "To be credible, our people need to be engaged in scholarly activity but it's hard to find the time for it."

Suzanne L. Richter, vice president for academic affairs, agreed that "the first semester we were here, there was too much of everything for everybody to do." But she said demands have lessened since then.

"Once faculty members get the (course) development work done, and learn to manage their time better, things improve," Richter added. "You don't have to answer every email message the instant you get it."

Richter said she was "insistent that we not abuse our junior faculty...I don't want them penalized for teaching here."

However, Chuck Lindsey, associate professor of mathematics and chair of the Faculty Senate, said, "everyone is pretty laden at this point."

Lindsey said a faculty-administration task force is studying the possibility of offering higher pay or a reduced teaching load for professors who are developing new online courses.

Both Richter and Kathleen Davey, dean of instructional technology, have been somewhat taken aback by complaints about the demands of distance education. After all, they thought, faculty members knew about the technology plan when they were hired and most expressed enthusiasm for the idea.

But last summer, more than half of the faculty surveyed said they did not think distance learning was an effective alternative to traditional instruction. "Where is this resistance coming from?" Davey wondered. "I thought I was back at Ohio State." (Before coming to Florida, she was associate director of academic technology at Ohio State University, where faculty enthusiasm for distance learning was limited.)

But Davey has decided that "the resistance is healthy, the tension is good...We're not having a revolution, but the future of distance learning here will depend somewhat on the new president."

Community support for the new campus has been strong, although there has been some grumbling because FGCU does not plan to field a football team for at least a decade. President McTarnaghan and others have raised more than $30 million in private gifts—a large sum for a new public campus.

McTarnaghan said one of his biggest problems has been trying to make rigid state funding formulas, as well as systemwide university rules, fit his experimental campus. "We basically need less money for bricks and mortar and more for technology," he said, "but our laws and rules so far do not permit that kind of flexibility."

The president said he had to eliminate two buildings from the "first phase" of campus construction in order to have enough money to properly equip the rest.

McTarnaghan spends a lot of time in Tallahassee, the state capital, trying to persuade legislators to provide more flexibility for FGCU, but it has been a tough sell. "Most legislators graduated from the University of Florida or Florida State, where they do things the old way," he said.

Confusion over Florida Gulf Coast's accreditation has been a major headache in the first two years. For many years the University of South Florida (whose main campus is in Tampa) maintained an upper division branch in Fort Myers. That campus closed when FGCU opened, and many of its students transferred to the new campus, some thinking accreditation would be transferred automatically from one school to the other.

But the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accrediting body, said the campus could only be a "candidate" for accreditation until its first cohort of students had graduated, an exhaustive self-study had been completed and there had been an evaluation by an SACS visiting committee.

Some transfer students told Florida newspaper reporters they had been assured by FGCU officials that the new campus already was accredited, a charge denied by Vice President Richter. Last spring, 237 of the 318 members of the first graduating class received University of South Florida degrees, while many others delayed their degrees until accreditation questions could be answered.

"This is one of the most frustrating experiences I've had here," Richter said. "Neither the students nor the press seemed to understand the difference between 'candidate' for accreditation and accreditation itself."

Now the problem seems to have been solved. The self-study has been completed. The SACS team has made its visit, finding no major problems at Florida Gulf Coast University and issuing eight "commendations"—an unusually high number—in its report. Full accreditation is expected.

**The Florida Board of Regents hopes that lessons learned at Florida Gulf Coast can be applied at the state's other universities.**

when the SACS "college commission" meets in June. But the viability of multi-year faculty contracts remains in question.

Florida Gulf Coast is not alone in seeking alternatives to the tenure system. A few experimental campuses, like The Evergreen State College, in the State of Washington, and Hampshire College, a private liberal arts school in Massachusetts, have used contracts for years.

Post-tenure review has become almost routine on the nation's campuses (although the number of faculty members eliminated by such a process remains small). Merit pay plans, rewarding professors who do not rest on their laurels after receiving tenure, have been adopted by the California State University...
Last summer, more than half of the faculty surveyed said they did not think distance learning was an effective alternative to traditional instruction.

The proportion of those with tenure-track jobs dropped from 29 percent to 20 percent.

College administrators and governing boards love no-tenure policies, which they believe enable them to eliminate faculty “deadwood” and to shift financial resources more easily from one academic area to another.

The Florida Board of Regents had hoped to impose multi-year contracts on all ten state universities, but the faculty union, the United Faculty of Florida (UFF), strenuously opposed the move. In a compromise, the union agreed to what UFF Executive Director Lilona Geiger called “an experiment on one campus (Florida Gulf Coast), in which multi-year agreements would supplement, but not supplant, tenure appointments and promotions.”

Now, Geiger said, “it is clear that ‘supplement’ is not the right word—they are simply waiting for all the dinosaurs to die and then they will be replaced by contract people.”

Twenty-eight professors gave up tenure or tenure-track positions at other institutions to teach at FGCU, according to an article in Change Magazine by Richard Chait, professor of higher education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and C. Ann Trower, a senior researcher there.

One of these professors was Peg Gray-Vickrey, who left a tenured job at Lycoming College in Pennsylvania because “I was kind of interested in trying a non-tenured system,” she said in an interview. “There are some good things about tenure and I would never say it should be abolished, but there are some problems with it as well. Some professors, once they get tenure, just really aren’t active participants in the college anymore.”

The attempt to make multi-year contracts work at FGCU has been complicated by the fact that about 30 professors, with tenure or in tenure-track jobs, transferred from the local University of South Florida branch to the new campus, creating an awkward two-tier system.

“This seemed to be a place where everyone was starting on the same page,” said Gray-Vickrey, who was not told she would have tenured colleagues when she accepted the Florida Gulf Coast offer. “But then the South Florida people turned up and, incredibly, we had a kind of caste system.”

“We’ve tried very hard not to have two classes of faculty,” said Chuck Lindsey, the Faculty Senate chair.

But Maria Roca called the mixed faculty—some who have a lifetime job guarantee or the prospect of one and some who face contract renewal every few years—“our biggest problem.”

“They have to look for some other way to hold the contract people—with more money or reduced teaching assignments or something else,” she said. “Otherwise, we’re going to lose a lot of our best people and we’re not going to attract people who are as good.”

In their Change Magazine article, Chait and Trower reported that the overall quality of the initial faculty “as gauged by degrees, diversity and academic experience, compares quite favorably with similar regional universities in the state and beyond.”

“…”

But others suggested that the combination of a heavy workload, doubts about faculty evaluation procedures and the “two tier” mix of tenured and contract professors, among other reasons, have made FGCU a less attractive alternative than some expected.

Academic freedom, presumably a major advantage of the tenure system, seldom was mentioned during interviews with FGCU faculty members. However, several said they were reluctant to criticize campus administrators because they feared reprisals.

“Since I learned that our collective bargaining agreement does not guarantee the right to speak out on campus issues, I’ve found I had much less to say about things like university governance,” said historian Eric Strathorn, whose contract is up for renewal.

“…”

The combination of a heavy workload, doubts about faculty evaluation procedures and the “two tier” mix of tenured and contract professors have made FGCU a less attractive alternative than some expected.

A somewhat more measured estimate of campus prospects was offered by Arts and Sciences Dean Jack Crocker: “Much will depend on how we handle the research issue, how we treat faculty, how we handle academic freedom. And it’s going to be a few years before we will know any of that.”
A Good Deal For All?
The Berkeley-Novartis agreement

By Robert M. Rosenzweig

I T SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING that there was some disquiet at the announcement that the Novartis Corporation, a Swiss pharmaceutical company, had joined with the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology of UC Berkeley's College of Natural Resources in a five-year, $25 million deal that will fund research in the department and, in exchange, give Novartis licensing rights on a large fraction of the inventions coming out of the department.

The most public, though not the most articulate, expression of the disquiet was the attempt by members of two groups calling themselves the Hexterminators and the Biotic Baking Brigade to throw pies in the faces of the school dean and the President of Novartis of North America at the press conference announcing the deal. Other, quieter, expressions of protest followed from some graduate students, among others.

In the interests of full disclosure, I must admit that I, too, was troubled by the press reports of the deal, although in general I have been rather sanguine about the growing links between industry and university research. These connections raise some potentially serious problems, to be sure, but so, too, do relations with any major patron.

I have argued that if university scientists and administrators are faithful to a few old and tested academic principles, the problems are solvable and the benefits to all parties, including the public, can be substantial.

But this deal seemed to be something more, and it was these extra elements that gave me pause. The most important of them was that this arrangement embraced an entire academic department, virtually all of its faculty and a large share of its research program. This was not a single faculty member, or even a single large laboratory. In this case, the work of a major academic unit was being sold to a single corporation—and a foreign one at that.

My unease was not alleviated by Chancellor Robert Birckhead’s statement that, “This is the first, though experimental, step in what we hope will be a long and fruitful relationship.” What if the experiment were to succeed? What would be the next part of the university to be sold to a corporation? Perhaps this would be one case in which supporters of the university ought to hope for failure while there is still something left unsold.

In a sense, how one evaluates this agreement depends on one’s position at the start. For those who believe that any connection with business is corrupting to universities because their purposes and values are irreconcilably different, then the answer is easy, and it has nothing to do with the specific terms of this or any other agreement. I do not believe that.

On the contrary, I believe that important intellectual, economic and social values can be served by carefully structured connections between these two very different kinds of institutions.

I also believe that there are some problems inherent in the relationship that may not be solvable, certainly not easily so, and that it is important to have a very clear-eyed view of what these problems are, and to weigh them in any final assessment. Thus, both the specific terms of an agreement as well as generic issues of the relationship need to be examined in order to make a fair evaluation of the Berkeley-Novartis contract.

I learned long ago that the press are selective in what they write about science and universities, generally looking for the most headline-worthy parts of a story, often at the expense of balance and depth. It seemed a bad idea to reach conclusions about the meaning of the Berkeley-Novartis arrangement without first looking at exactly what they agreed to.

It turns out, on careful examination, that there is both good news and (maybe) bad news.

The good news is that the university and Novartis have gone to unusual lengths to build into the agreement protections for the rights of the scientists involved. Restrictions on publication, a common cause of conflict in such agreements, are well within generally accepted guidelines. Short delays will be permitted for purposes of patent protection, but the decision to publish is strictly left to the faculty member involved.

Another common source of conflict is the treatment of proprietary information or materials provided by the business to the university. Here, the agreement is uncommonly thoughtful and candid. It explicitly recognizes that the university “is an open, academic environment and as a public, non-profit educational institution has no mechanism to guarantee the confidentiality of information, and as a public non-profit educational institution is subject to statutes requiring disclosure of information and records which a private corporation could keep confidential.” Separate, special agreements may be made with respect to specific cases, but the general rule for the company is “share at your own risk,” a rule that gives fair warning to the giver and protects the essential character of the receiver.

Finally, the patent policies contained in the agreement are consistent with government requirements and university policies. The university will hold all patents and negotiate licenses where feasible. This agreement breaks no new ground in its standard patent provisions.

In one important respect, though, the agreement is unusual, if not actually novel. What Novartis gets for its $25 million is first crack at licenses for a proportion of the total number of inventions produced in the department that equals the company’s share of the department’s total research budget, whether or not those inventions were the product of company-sponsored research. It is thought that the proportion will turn out to be 30 to 40 percent.

From the company’s point of view, this is the reason for the agreement, and it would seem that they got a terrific deal. They have bought the right to skim the cream from a highly productive research program. And even if the grants made with company money turn out to be less productive than planned, there is still all of that work being done under NIH, USDA and other auspices—60 percent to 70 percent of the total.

It’s not quite the same as paying for the button and buying the coat, but it is surely an unusually effective way for the company to hedge its bets.

The issue here is not one of principle, but of money. From the university’s point of view, the problem with the arrangement is that it requires the university to give up the right to negotiate licenses, and presumably maximize income, from its most promising inventions. The fee for that is $25 million over five years. I assume that smart people at the university ran the numbers and concluded that the price was right.

The economics aside, this is a carefully drawn agreement that keeps academic values at its center—much more than can be said for some other university-industry connections around the country. And the UC people responsible for negotiating the agreement should be commended for their work. That is the good news, but as I suggested earlier, it is not all of the news. There are matters that, while not readily amenable to solution by contract language, are nevertheless of real importance. Here are some examples:

• The agreement pays a good deal of attention to the structure that will govern the relationship, and the university insists that the structure guarantees that Novartis will not be able to influence departmental policies or direct the research agenda. No doubt both of those statements are true as stated, but it is ingenuous to think that the corporation will have no influence over the research agenda. That agenda will in fact be determined by a grant committee of five persons, two of whom will represent Novartis.

• It is hard to believe that the company would have been interested in putting out $25 million with no role whatsoever in deciding how it would be spent. That role does not, arithmetically, constitute control, but it surely adds up to considerable influence.

• The university’s information says that virtually all of the members of the department have agreed to participate in the program. It is not entirely clear what that means, except that failure to participate means that no funding under the contract could go the individual. However, any inventions coming out of that person’s own, separately sponsored research would be subject to the agreement unless the work were sponsored by another corporation.

• Depending on how the overall program develops, though, one can imagine circumstances that would lead an individual to prefer to have nothing to do with it. Fair enough, but suppose that individual were a young and ambitious assistant professor with limited access to other research funding. Does such a person really have a free choice? If her work were of particular interest to Novartis scientists, could her senior colleagues refrain from pointing out how helpful to the department and the renewal of the agreement...
her participation would be? And would such a young person be in a position to resist?

I have no doubt that this suggestion will be met with quite sincere indignation by senior members of the department. I would simply point out that such a possibility is built into the nature of the agreement. Denial of that fact makes it more likely that the danger will not be recognized should it arise.

- The investigator-initiated, peer-reviewed application process that dominates research support in the life sciences has its own set of problems, but no other allocation system has yet been devised that so productively rewards individual creativity and provides such powerful safeguards against the perpetuation of mediocrity.

The essence of the system is that judgments of quality are not made by the applicant's close colleagues. Indeed, immediate colleagues are typically barred from deliberations. For all of its flaws, it is the best system available, and to act in ways that undermine it is to risk a diminishing of scientific quality.

The framers of this agreement would not, I suspect, dispute these observations. In fact, they have established what looks like a system of peer review as the basis for allocating the research funds. But it is not, and it cannot be, genuine peer review. Rather it is virtual peer review, for the necessary distance between applicant and judges is simply not possible in an arrangement like this one, and the form cannot be made to substitute for the substance.

The weakening of peer review is, however, an important byproduct of a more fundamental underlying problem. The really important fact about this agreement is that a great deal of research money is being made available to a closed group of scientists. Outsiders are not welcome, either as applicants or judges.

One would need to be blind to the value of the funding processes that have made the patronage of American life sciences so brilliantly productive, to be unconcerned that this heralded exemplar of a new way of doing business for many years at Stanford that you do research for the sake of doing research, for pure intellectual thought. This is outdated. Research has to be useful, even if many years down the road, to be worthwhile.

In this case, the work of a major academic unit was being sold to a single corporation— and a foreign one at that.

The University of California has been scrupulous in its concerns for the issues that lie at the four corners of its agreement. But it has not shown comparable concern, at least publicly, about the direction in which its good fortune takes. If their example turns out to be cover for others less scrupulous, or less well-positioned, in their pursuit of money, then the real cost of this agreement may be more than we can afford to pay.

Robert M. Rosenzweig is President Emeritus Of The Association of American Universities.

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**Press Release Journalism**

**Higher education reporting is not tough enough**

By Jon Marcus

When colleges and universities finally responded last fall to the decade of complaints about their escalating costs, it wasn’t by explaining why tuition has consistently increased at double the rate of inflation or by outlining the measures they were taking to save money.

No, the higher education honchos, in their wisdom, launched a campaign to explain how, with the right combination of loans and savings, a family could still afford the $120,000-plus price of an undergraduate degree from a private, four-year college or university.

This could, of course, be seen as an outrageously condescending tactic serving only to prove the widely held belief that academia remains completely out of touch with an increasingly hostile public. But I see it as a commentary on education journalism.

After all, the colleges figured they could get away with it. And in many newspapers, magazines, television broadcasts and wire services, they did. That’s because American journalists in general—and education writers in particular—have become unquestioning stenographers whose reporting, to twist an old cliche, is 24 hours wide and ten seconds deep.

Most Americans would probably agree that journalism is in crisis, an intrusive and celebrity-centric perversion of an age when ink-stained wretches worked to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Where I depart is to suggest that higher education coverage in particular should be more, not less, questioning and critical.

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Studies reveal growing imbalance in ratio of men to women in higher education enrollment...
learn the difference between FTE and headcount, with the connoisseur of news organizations that pay too little attention to the topic. The education beat has an indisputably high turnover rate—even in New England, where higher education is a major industry.

And make no mistake: Higher education is an industry. It is no coincidence that some of the best higher education coverage in New England and elsewhere appears in business publications. As much as colleges and universities resist the idea that they offer a consumer product, the ones that do well on those annual magazine rankings send out reprints to reporters, donors and prospective students—much the way advertisers sell soap.

The lack of an investigative tradition among education writers stems in part from the fact that higher education once was viewed as largely sacrosanct and incorruptible. Academia’s moral high ground gave way slowly, but the ultimate collapse might be traced to the day the former president of Stanford University was caught using taxpayer money to throw parties and redecorate a yacht. Before that time, few papers ran stories critical of such things as administrative bloat, high presidential salaries and tenured faculty who teach only about 28 weeks a year.

Still, too few media outlets pursue these angles. It took years before most higher education writers went beyond the news releases and dared to pose the questions: Why exactly does tuition increase every year at double the rate of inflation? Exactly what component of a higher education has increased in price at double the rate of inflation?

Even today, too many reporters and editors readily accept the explanation they get from colleges and universities, which goes something like this: Everything just costs more; or, There still are affordable community colleges; or this year, If you save all your disposable income and work two jobs and take out loans, your kid can go here.

Feeble as it is, the media continue to be blamed by higher education administrators for even false explanations why the big annual increases have far outstripped income. Or an announcement of an early buyout plan one cash-strapped local university described as a “voluntary tenured faculty separation.” Problem is, too few education journalists challenge the evasions and euphemisms. Just as few who covered the findings of the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education exercised the discretion to point out that 11 of the commission’s 13 members represented universities or university associations.

Education is, in fact, one of the most important topics in America. Few stories elicit reactions as strong as news about colleges and universities. Educators ought to take this as a compliment. Theirs are institutions where parents aspire to enroll their children and where students enjoy their first true taste of independence. Sports fans follow the athletic teams. Alumni savor the nostalgia. Businesses depend on them for competent employees and for basic and applied research.

Yet criticism of colleges and universities has increased as fast as their tuition. And cost is not the only complaint. There also is the ongoing debate about political correctness, in which even false charges are regurgitated by reporters who reprint them uncontested.

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American journalists in general—and education writers in particular—have become unquestioning stenographers whose reporting, to twist an old cliche, is 24 hours wide and ten seconds deep.

Nor are universities and colleges above attempting to mislead the public. Why shouldn’t they, if they can pull it off so easily? Witness the campaign to persuade families that they can still afford tuition—that beats explaining why the big annual increases have far outstripped income. Or an announcement of an early buyout plan one cash-strapped local university described as a “voluntary tenured faculty separation.” Problem is, too few education journalists challenge the evasions and euphemisms. Just as few who covered the findings of the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education exercised the discretion to point out that 11 of the commission’s 13 members represented universities or university associations.

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Not all campuses are public places in the legal sense, but they are public possessions in the emotional (and financial) sense, and therefore accountable to neighbors, parents, students, prospects and alumni. And yet important higher education stories in New England and elsewhere are more often absent than on the front page or the evening news. Except, Unfortunately, the ones that recapitulate the press releases.

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A Quiet Counterrevolution
St. John's College teaches the classics—and only the classics

By Kathy Wilkowski

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

FROM THE OUTSIDE, the Santa Fe campus of St. John's College looks not unlike a lot of other small, liberal arts schools. Located on 250 acres high above New Mexico's capital city, the campus consists of a cluster of two- and three-story adobe-style buildings, designed to blend in with the area's southwest architecture. T-shirt and jeans-clad students congregate outside the student union, smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee. Most of them look desperately in need of a good night's sleep. Nothing unusual there.

But inside those buildings, St. John's is staging a quiet counterrevolution. Defying educational trends that emphasize multiculturalism and technical know-how, St. John's teaches the classics—and only the classics, insisting that they still are and should be the basis of a college education.

One morning last fall, freshman Anna Canning stood, chalk in hand, at the blackboard in front of her dozen or so classmates. Following Euclid's proof, she created an equilateral pentagon around a circle—with using outside measuring tools. "I've never really liked math," Canning, of Eugene, Oregon, said afterwards. But because the class had started with the very basics—"What's a point? What's a line?"—Euclid wasn't so threatening, she said. And it was a lot more interesting.

"Being able to see where things are coming from is very different than reading a textbook that says, 'This is that way.'" That's a sentiment heard over and over again from St. John's students, or "John-nies," as they are known, who are taught not to take anything for granted. The tacit definition is meant to be freeing." Freeing from what, exactly? From preconceived notions and the prejudices of the day, said Carey. Thus the curriculum, what St. John's refers to reverently as "The Program," consists almost solely of the great books of western civilization—and it is mandatory for all students.

Textbooks—the middlemen of academicians—are conspicuous by their absence. So are a lot of other things, like professors (teachers are called "tutors"), lecture halls (there aren't any lectures), majors (the curriculum is preset), and tests (students are evaluated on class participation and original papers; students see their grades only upon request). In Santa Fe, there is also no gymnasium and just 15 school-owned computers.

At St. John's, everything is secondary to the texts. And these are not simple texts. Anna Canning and her fellow freshmen are starting with the Greek philosophers, historians and mathematicians: Homer, Sophocles, Herodotus and Euclid, among others. Next year, they'll move on to Renaissance thinkers: Shakespeare, Aristotelio, Machiavelli and Copernicus. As juniors, they'll take on the works of the 17th and 18th centuries: those by Cervantes, Moliere, Voltaire, Rousseau and Mozart. And finally, in their senior year, they'll tackle 20th-century authors: Melville, Yeats, Dostoevski, Freud, Heidegger and Einstein. And that's just a sampling.

By the time she graduates, Canning and her classmates will have completed four years of math, two years each of ancient Greek and French, three years of laboratory science, one year of music and four years of philosophy, history and literature, as well as a semester of visual arts (the visual arts program is offered in Santa Fe but not in Annapolis). In the process, they will have digested classic works by more than 100 authors whose writings span nearly 3,000 years of western history. Reading these works in chronological order, the thinking goes, students not only learn facts and ideas; they learn the process by which those facts and ideas are created.

And because all students must study all subjects, they can see the links—and the gaps—between them. "There's no academic place to hide," said John Agresto, president of the Santa Fe campus. "It takes a kid to say, 'I want to be smart in all the areas a person can be smart.'" Some schools boast about the number of students who graduate with straight A's. Agresto brags about just the opposite: "We have only graduated four straight-A students in 30-odd years." That, he said, is partly because St. John's doesn't stoop to grade inflation, and partly because it is virtually impossible to be good at all the subjects students are required to take at St. John's.

"No wonder The Fiske Guide to Colleges describes St. John's as "perhaps the most intellectual college in the country." And no wonder, too, that the attrition rate at St. John's is more than 30 percent. Officials acknowledge that St. John's is not for everybody. But for students who like to read, and talk about what they read, it's nothing short of collegiate heaven.

"It was like, books?! All we do is read?! That's my thing!" exclaimed Katy Christopher, a sophomore from Gunnison, Colorado, recalling her reaction when she first learned about St. John's. As is the case for about 40 percent of her classmates, Katy did not apply anywhere but St. John's—a choice she has never regretted. "Being able to read all the time and talk to interesting people is so much fun," said Katy. "I go home and think, 'Well, gosh, I can't really have a conversation about Aristotle here!'"

"People at home just don't think that much," Katy continued. "They may not be stupid," she allowed, "but they just don't think." And to a Johnnny, not thinking is, well, unthinkable.

That St. John's turned into a haven for intellectuals is little more than an accident of history—the silver lining to a rather ugly academic cloud looming over the school. St. John's was founded in Annapolis in 1696 as King William's School (it became St. John's in 1744), and for more than two centuries it limped along, distinguished primarily, according to Dean Carey, by its lacrosse team.

But during the Depression, St. John's lost its accreditation. Subsequently, the board of directors turned to educational reformers Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan, hired them as president and dean, respectively, and gave them carte blanche to design a new curriculum. Unbound by the rivalries inherent in the academic departmental system, the two men were free to design an integrated system based upon the great books of western civilization. About two-thirds of the authors included in the newly unveiled 1937 curriculum remain part of it today.

In 1964, rather than increase enrollment in Annapolis, the school opened the Santa Fe campus. Students can, and often do, transfer between the two campuses, which maintain the same undergraduate curriculum. (St. John's also offers a master's degree in liberal studies and, in Santa Fe, in

"The word 'liberal' comes from 'liberty,' and liberal education is meant to be freeing."

—JAMES CAREY, DEAN OF ST. JOHN'S SANTA FE CAMPUS
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President John Agresto frequently called upon to defend the St. John’s “Great Books” curriculum, which has changed only slightly over the years.

John’s won’t accept credits from other institutions.

This year, freshman Paul Obrecht of Wheaton, Illinois, was one of those transfers. Why was he willing to start over? “At state schools, the goal is to prepare yourself for a career, and the diploma is a badge,” said Obrecht, who majored in education at the University of Illinois but dropped out after two years. “These classes call upon you to synthesize everything you’ve learned up to that point. It’s a good opportunity to hone your thinking skills.”

St. John’s believes the key to honing those skills is discussion. So instead of professors, classes are led by “tutors,” whose job is to engage the students in active learning. Don’t be fooled by the humble title, though: Almost all of St. John’s tutors have earned Ph.D.s, many from the world’s leading academic institutions.

But the school believes that even the most educated scholars remain advanced students at best. So, at St. John’s teaching is less about answering questions than it is about asking them. Even then, tutors try to limit their input. “Am I being too directive?” tutor Michael Bybee asked his “Hamlet” class recently, after he had suggested a course of thinking. Not a question you are likely to hear very often at other colleges—at least not from a teacher.

And while professors at other academic institutions are encouraged to specialize, tutors at St. John’s are required to lead classes outside their fields of study. Over the past 33 years, for instance, tutor Ralph Swentzell has taught every single class St. John’s offers, with the exception of French. The policy, said Swentzell, keeps tutors on their academic toes. “It’s easy, he said, to lose empathy for your students if you lecture in the same subject year after year. “But when you’re forced to be a student again,” he said, “you pick up a tolerance which I think most college professors have lost.”

St. John’s also eschews the usual “publish or perish” attitude. Many tutors, Swentzell among them, have never published at all. Instead, they are evaluated on the strength of their teaching.

That teaching takes place in small, stark classrooms, which consist of a table encircled by 20 or so chairs. There is usually a blackboard, and only sometimes a clock, which, despite the lengthy and intense two- and three-hour classes, doesn’t seem to bother anyone. Computers are relatively rare; computer classes are non-existent.

Even the science labs are pretty bare-bones. “But there’s a reason for that,” said sophomore Heather Davis of Easton, Maryland. “We’re repeating experiments that have been done by the founders of science.” They didn’t have a lot of fancy high-tech equipment. What they did have was basic curiosity and intellectual reasoning—and that’s what St. John’s is attempting to foster, Davis said.

Part of the learning process is acknowledging intellectual failures. So, at St. John’s, it is not at all unusual for students to “fess up in front of their peers. “I don’t get it,” one student announced unabashedly at the beginning of her senior math class, which was studying Einstein. “I can’t do it,” said Obrecht, a former Einstein enthusiast. “I think that’s a good testimony to our teaching.”

And “smart,” according to St. John’s, doesn’t mean understanding the latest software or being able to predict the stock market’s future. What it means is being able to discern what is true from what is not. “Truth is an issue for us,” Carey said. Other issues that remain at the core of the St. John’s experience: What is a good life? What is a just regime? What is nature? What is God?

“Clarity about these questions is what we’re aiming at,” Carey said. Indeed, at a time when the nation’s colleges and universities are struggling to broaden their appeal by offering unique specialty courses designed to attract a wider cross-section of students, St. John’s remains committed to its unwaveringly intellectual, rigorous and western-based approach.

Twenty-five years ago, The Los Angeles Times published an article about St. John’s College. According to St. John’s President Agresto, that article could be published today virtually unchanged. While some schools might be embarrassed by such an admission, Agresto, who has had to defend the St. John’s curriculum against critics who attack it as narrow and male-dominated, said, “I think that’s a good testimony to our steadiness.”

No one denies that most of the works read at St. John’s were written by white men—dead white men at that, since the program features very few late-twentieth century books. Virginia Woolf and Flannery O’Connor have made the cut, but Toni Morrison and Ralph Ellison, for instance, have not. Agresto said there’s a reason for that: The works read at St. John’s have stood the test of time, and have had a lasting effect upon society.

Those who advocate multiculturalism, Agresto said, claim they’re doing so in the name of diversity, when actually they come armed with a specific social and political agenda. “Multiculturalism has been used by ideologists masquerading as educators for decades now,” charged Agresto. “And we’re not going to do that.”

Critics who suggest the school discriminates by excluding female and minority authors have got it all wrong, Agresto said. By choosing works based solely on their merits, St. John’s treats women and minorities more equitably, not less so, he argued. “Women need to know what men have known all these years,” Agresto said. “No sense giving lesser authors to the women and Great Books to the men.”

Dean Carey concurred. “We wouldn’t be inclined to read someone because he or she represents a group that is disen...
works of fiction by women or minorities, either in eight-week junior and senior electives called “preceptorials” or in student-organized reading groups. The school’s small bookstore maintains a section devoted to modern fiction, where sophomore Aaron Mehlhaff of Binghamton, New York, and Tommy Thornhill of San Rafael, California, were browsing one afternoon last fall. They admitted they rarely found time to read anything beyond their schoolwork, but “you can dream,” said Thornhill, longingly fingering a couple of trade paperbacks. The only way to squeeze in an extra book, he said, was to turn in early on a Friday or Saturday night—something he recently did in order to digest some Goethe.

That might sound alternatively confining and intimidating to some But St. John's students don’t appear to chafe at the curriculum’s constraints. Instead, they universally praise the cohesive nature of their education, preferring an integrated educational feast to a smorgasbord of viewpoints. Take, for instance, Kallisti Staver, a sophomore from Detroit, who initially was drawn to St. John’s because of her interest in philosophy. At St. John’s she has seen connections she never thought about. “I’ve learned things about Greek math from reading the Greek plays,” said Kallisti. She was so excited by her academic forays into Greek civilization, in fact, that last year she joined a Greek study group that met outside class.

“I really think that the way [the curriculum] is put together lays a very strong foundation for branching off into any areas we might take,” Staver said.

According to the college seal, that is the goal of the school. “I make free adults out of children by means of books and a balance,” it states.

Yet even St. John’s officials acknowledge that such balance sometimes eludes them. Despite its ballyhooing about classical education, there is one area in which St. John’s is somewhat remiss: physical education. The school doesn’t offer any intercollege sports, and physical education is not included in the curriculum.

The situation—and the attitude about it—is best summed up by a T-shirt popular on the Santa Fe campus. “Great Books, No Gym,” it proclaims. The T-shirt is soon to be obsolete (the school has broken ground for a new student activities center that includes a gymnasium, but remains short of funds to build it, and the Annapolis campus already has a gym).

“Meantime, as head of the Santa Fe campus student activities office, Mark St. John is relegated to a messy basement room out of which he runs the school’s intramural program. Forget about trophy cases: The school’s two athletic trophies—representing its city league softball championships—are stashed away in a corner with some old newspapers.

St. John estimated that half of the students participate in one of the athletic extracurricular activities. The school prides itself, for instance, on its Santa Fe Search and Rescue team, which offers its services to the community. Across the hall from his office are mountain bikes, kayaks and canoes that students can check out for a small activity fee; students also can sign up for fencing, yoga or ballroom dance classes. Nonetheless, St. John said, some students consider the student activities office merely a source of “Pascalian diversions,” unworthy of their time.

“There is a kind of disdain for physical activity among some students,” St. John acknowledged. For an awful lot of students, physical activity means little more than walking to and from class. Sure, Johnnies may play “Spartan madball” (a kind of soccer/football/rugby free-for-all) at their spring festivals, but in reality they wouldn’t make terribly good Spartans. “There are a couple of really weird people who do [athletic] stuff,” said sophomore Nicholas Alexandra, of New York City. “But the rest of us just sit around smoking cigarettes and thinking.” (The school does seem to have a preponderance of smokers, something students attribute to the intensity of the program.)

But eventually, those same students have to come down off the hill and deal with the real world. The prospect of leaving the insular community of St. John’s makes them nervous, said Margaret Odell, director of placement. But they actually fare pretty well once they make the leap. About 80 percent of St. John’s alumni wind up in graduate school within five years of graduating. A 1993 survey of graduates revealed that 20 percent are in business or business-related occupations; another 18.5 percent are in teaching; 14.5 are in communication and the arts. The rest go on to a wide range of professions—in medicine, social services and law, among others.

“I honestly don’t think there’s anything our students can’t do,” said Odell, who, like several other staff members, is enrolled in the school’s graduate program. But at the same time, she worries that Johnnies are going to suffer from the school’s—and the students’—aversion to technology. “It’s like pulling teeth to get them to do research on the Internet,” she lamented.

“If they don’t get a little smarter about using technology, the gap between what they learn here and in other places is going to get wider and wider,” Odell predicted. “I don’t want this curriculum to become obsolete, but I think we’re going to have to make some changes.”

But if the past 60 years are any indication, St. John’s isn’t big on changes. School officials proclaim, without apology, that they offer the best liberal arts education in the country. They ask, Why fix something that’s not broken?

Their students agree. Despite the theoretical nature of their education, most Johnnies profess confidence in their abilities to maneuver in the world beyond St. John’s. Sure, there are the usual “Would you like fries with that?” jokes about the opportunities available to liberal arts graduates. But in general, Johnnies say they’re optimistic about their futures. Given what they have accomplished, that’s not surprising.

“After Einstein, Maxwell and Hegel,” noted senior Carisa Armendariz, who is looking for a job in journalism, “nothing seems all that hard.”

 Freelance writer Kathy Witowsky lives in Missoula, Montana.