

"Truth in Tuition"

Illinois' novel answer to skyrocketing rates

By Susan C. Thomson

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

COLLEEN AND MARK Schloemann marveled at how much more stuff it took to send their first-born, Greta, off to college this fall than they had required a generation ago. The computer! The refrigerator!

The money! Greta is a freshman at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where the going tuition for her class is \$7,042. "It makes my stomach hurt to think how we're going to afford it," her mother said, noting that as social workers she and her husband "don't have a big income."

The Schloemanns, of downstate Herrin, have one reason to take heart: If Greta graduates in four years, her tuition bills will never rise. For her and the university's other in-state freshmen, the first-year rate is nailed down for the next three years as well. The same goes at Illinois' 11 other public university campuses, all now in their second year of guaranteeing incoming Illinois undergraduates the same tuition for

four straight years, or more for bachelors degrees that take full-time students longer to complete.

It's the law, passed by the General Assembly two years ago, one state's novel reaction to eye-popping tuition hikes seen in many recession-battered states as they slashed spending for public higher educa-

Illinois' public universities are in their second year of guaranteeing incoming Illinois undergraduates the same tuition for four straight years.

tion in recent years.

In Illinois, between 2002 and 2004, lawmakers cut the appropriation for university operations by 13.3 percent. Suddenly tuition increases that had been bumping



LARRY EVANS, BLACK STAR FOR CROSSTALK

Mark and Colleen Schloemann are pleased that daughter Greta, a freshman at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will pay the same tuition for four years. Others dislike the policy.

along at about the inflation rate breached the ten-percent barrier and, in a couple of extreme cases, exceeded 30 percent.

Doubling the whammy on the neediest students, the state simultaneously clipped the budget of its Student Assistance Commission. This is the agency that,

among other things, administers the state's Monetary Assistance Program (MAP), one of the nation's most generous programs of need-based grants, available to state residents attending any Illinois college or university, two- or four-year, public *continued on page 14*

In Katrina's Wake

Mississippi's coastal community colleges struggle to rebound from disaster

By Kathy Witkowsky

PERKINSTON, MISSISSIPPI

ON AN UNSEASONABLY cool Thursday evening in late September, hundreds of spectators seemed to breathe a collective sigh of relief as they crowded into the stadium at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College's Perkinston campus to watch the

Even the most heavily damaged of the south Mississippi community colleges managed to reopen within three weeks of the hurricane.

school's first football game of the season. The match-up, between the Gulf Coast Bulldogs and one of their biggest rivals, the Wildcats of Jones County Junior College, was to have been the season's fourth contest. But the three previous games had to be cancelled or rescheduled in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which left thousands ei-

ther homeless or jobless or both.

The worst natural disaster in the nation's history also caused tens of millions of dollars worth of damage to the state's south Mississippi community colleges, including between \$15 million and \$20 million at Gulf Coast; between \$3 million and \$5 million at Jones County Junior College; and a whopping \$50 million worth at nearby Pearl River Community College. Together, the three schools enroll more than 16,000 students at ten different sites throughout south Mississippi.

But aside from the press box, which was destroyed, and the women's restrooms, which suffered broken windows and flooding, Gulf Coast's stadium survived intact. And that was a blessing for fans like 18-year-old Gulf Coast freshman Jessica Weaver. Football is a way of life in the



JACKSON HILL, BLACK STAR FOR CROSSTALK

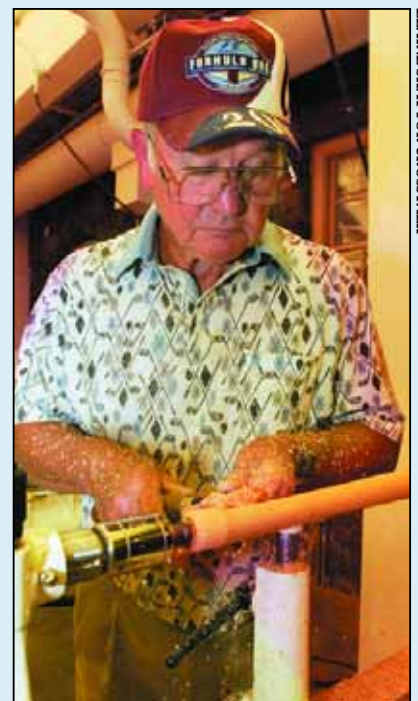
Weary faculty and staff members attend a meeting at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College one week after Hurricane Katrina.

south, and for many people in the stands, the game provided a welcome respite from the grief and frustration that had defined their lives for the past several weeks.

"It makes things feel a lot more normal," said the slight brunette, whose home in Gulfport was so badly flooded that her family had packed up and relocated 35 miles inland. She was displaying her school spirit with a blue hair ribbon on which she had painted "Go Dawgs" in yellow paint. Blue and gold are the school colors.

Neither the Bulldogs—who won the *continued on page 8*

In This Issue



ELAINE SHAY FOR CROSSTALK

AT THE KENTUCKY SCHOOL of Craft, in Hindman, William Walker, 70, demonstrates his skill with a lathe. The state's patchwork of two-year community colleges and technical schools was recently transformed into the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. (See page 6.)



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Recent National Center Reports

The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success, by Andrea Venezia, Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst and Michael D. Usdan (September 2005, No. 05-3).

This report identifies and examines four policy levers available to states that are interested in creating sustained K-16 reform: finance, assessments and curricula, accountability and data systems. The report also examines the importance of other factors—such as leadership and state history and culture—in initiating and sustaining K-16 reform.

Measuring Up on College-Level Learning, by Margaret A. Miller and Peter T. Ewell (October 2005 No. 05-8)

In this report, the National Forum on College-Level Learning proposes a model for evaluating and comparing college-level learning on a state-by-state basis, including assessing educational capital. As well as releasing results for five participating states, the National Forum also explores the implications of its project's findings in terms of performance gaps by race and ethnicity and in the education of future teachers.

Also upcoming is a Policy Alert pointing out that a decline in the educational level of the nation's younger workers, especially among racial and ethnic minorities, could lead to their inability to compete in the global marketplace and could depress personal income levels. ♦

NEWS FROM THE CENTER New Center Associates

FIFTEEN MID-CAREER PROFESSIONALS have been selected by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education as Program Associates for 2005-06. They include faculty members, administrators, legislative staff members and postsecondary education specialists. They will attend three formal meetings during the academic year and also will work with National Center staff members on a variety of projects.

The goal of the program, financially supported by the Ford Foundation, is to engage scholars and prospective leaders in the study of higher education policy issues. ♦



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STEVE WOIIT FOR CROSSTALK

Wingspread Conference

IN SEPTEMBER the National Center sponsored a conference on "State Policy Dimensions of K-16 Reform" at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin. The conference brought together representatives of K-12 and postsecondary education, as well as business leaders and others, to discuss state policies that could lead to a smoother student transition from high school to college. ♦



Senior Fellow

WILLIAM M. ZUMETA, a professor of Public Affairs and Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Washington, has joined the National Center staff for a nine-month period as a Senior Fellow. Zumeta has taught at the university since 1985. From 2001 to 2005 he was associate dean of the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs. His research interests focus on higher education finance, worker training policies, and federal policies related to academic science and the education of academic scientists. ♦

Colorado On the Edge

Years of state funding cuts put higher education in a precarious position

By Robert A. Jones

DENVER

COLORADO'S long-awaited voucher system for public universities swung into operation this summer, making this state the first in the nation to use vouchers for higher education. But the hoopla has been noticeably muted as attention has focused instead on a state budget crisis that threatens to cripple campuses and reduce the vouchers to virtual meaninglessness.

The brewing crisis in the state capitol emanates not from a business downturn—Colorado's economy is doing nicely—but from strict limits on state spending and revenues imposed by a 1992 referendum

“Higher education has gone from one of our highest priorities in Colorado to one of the lowest.”

—HANK BROWN, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO PRESIDENT

known as the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights or TABOR. The TABOR restrictions have left the government staring at a \$400 million deficit next year, and much of that money is likely to come out of the higher education budget.

The threatened cuts have imparted a sharp sense of déjà vu in college administration offices statewide. For more than a decade, TABOR has delivered a series of financial shocks to Colorado's public colleges and universities. In the last three years alone, state financial support for The University of Colorado at Boulder, the

state's flagship campus, has dropped 55 percent, and the state has not provided funds for new construction on campuses since 2001.

Ironically, the vouchers—which could be a prime target of the cuts—were developed in 2003 precisely to circumvent some of TABOR's more draconian provisions. At the time, public institutions were prevented from raising tuition, even though state support had fallen dramatically, because such increases would have violated revenue caps. By directing money to students rather than institutions, the campuses could skirt the restrictions and raise tuition.

As proposed by the state's Blue Ribbon Panel on Higher Education in 2003, the program would have granted \$4,200 to each student annually while simultaneously bringing to an end traditional institutional funding. Students then would have the right to spend their vouchers at the public campus of their choice.

Institutional funding of undergraduate education was, indeed, terminated in Colorado. But TABOR restrictions came back to bite the voucher proposal in the state legislature, which reduced the amount to \$2,400. And now, only three months after starting the program, state officials say the upcoming cash crisis in Colorado could force them to slash the vouchers down to \$768 per student.

Such predictions have set up predictable howls from college presidents who claim entire campuses could close and tuition rates soar under such circumstances. Even before the threatened cuts



University of Colorado official Kay Orten says many students are confused by the state's new tuition voucher program.

PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY WHEELER, BLACK STAR FOR CROSSTALK

Colorado had fallen to 47th in state funding of higher education.

One projection by the University of Colorado (CU) estimated tuition could jump as much as 42 percent for some programs, and those increases would come on top of hikes of 28 percent this year. On the state's community college campuses the percentage increases in tuition could be even steeper.

Currently, tuition and fees at four-year institutions in Colorado range from \$5,500 at Mesa State College in Grand Junction, to \$9,400 for an engineering student at the University of Colorado at Boulder. At the community college in Aurora, in suburban Denver, charges stand at \$4,700.

Hank Brown, the new president of CU, barely had settled into his office before the dire predictions began. Brown, a former businessman and Republican U.S. Senator, replaced Elizabeth Hoffman after she failed to survive dual scandals at the university, one involving accusations of sexual abuse by members of the football team and the other growing out of pronouncements by Ward Churchill, the CU professor who described victims of the World Trade Center attack as “little Eichmanns.”

Brown knew he was taking over CU during a bad patch. The scandals had eroded public support for CU, and the university's national reputation was seen as slipping into the third tier. But the financial firestorm drew his first attention.

In his Denver office, Brown characterized the budget cuts and the shrinkage of voucher amounts as “devastating” to CU. “Higher education has gone from one of our highest priorities in Colorado to one of the lowest,” Brown said. “And it's going to get worse unless there's a major change.”

Brown then reeled off some numbers. “When I served in the state legislature in 1975, higher education amounted to 25 percent of the state budget, and no one even talked about cutting it,” he said. “Today that figure stands at ten percent, and the cuts keep coming.”

Brown, a longtime member of the Republican establishment in Colorado, supported TABOR's passage and still believes it helped reform spending in state government. But, he said, if Colorado does not make some changes in TABOR's provisions, the impact on higher education will be disastrous.

“By 2015, if nothing changes, the state's funding of higher education will go to zero,” he said. Then he leaned forward and repeated himself for emphasis: “Zero.”

Startling as it seems, the zero figure comes from a straightforward application of TABOR's provisions. The referendum caps state expenditures by dictating that they can rise only at the rate of inflation. At the same time, the state is obligated to pay the costs of major programs such as Medicaid and K-12 education that are rising faster than inflation. To compensate, the legislature must cut other programs, most notably higher education.

In the last three years alone, state financial support for the University of Colorado at Boulder, the state's flagship campus, has dropped 55 percent.

Next year's predicted downsizing of the vouchers to \$768, in fact, stems from this process. Extend that forward to 2015 and state funding of higher education hits zero.

This doomsday scenario has quickly converted Brown and many other college officials into champions of two stopgap measures that will appear on November's ballot. Referendums C and D would suspend the TABOR limits for five years and allow the state to spend an estimated \$3.1 billion in tax revenues that otherwise

continued next page



Higher education consultant Dennis Jones says “there's no bigger mess anywhere” than the financial crisis facing Colorado higher education.

from preceding page

would be refunded to taxpayers. Of the \$3.1 billion, community colleges and state universities would get 30 percent.

But passage of C and D is hardly certain. David Longanecker, executive director of the Boulder-based Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, said polls have consistently shown a 50/50 split on the issue. "That's not particularly good for a referendum at this point," he said. "The fact is, Colorado does not seem to have heartfelt support for higher education. There's no feeling of urgency over this issue, and the vote could go either way."

Interestingly, the referendums appear to have split conservatives in the state, giving supporters some basis for optimism. Governor Bill Owens, a Republican who has advocated privatization of many government functions, has outraged some in his party by co-sponsoring C and D, and he has been joined by Colorado's business community which has pledged financial support.

The opposition, furious over Owens' support, springs largely from Colorado's anti-tax, starve-the-beast crowd that has enjoyed extraordinary success here in recent years. In a state with the seventh highest per capita income in the nation,

One projection by the University of Colorado estimated tuition could jump as much as 42 percent for some programs.

anti-tax groups have whittled the tax burden down to the third lowest. Led by the Colorado-based Independence Institute, the opponents are characterizing C and D as a tax increase and are questioning the legitimacy of a public higher education system.

In a recent debate, John Andrews, the founder of the Independence Institute, accused the community college system of



Hank Brown, the new president at CU-Boulder, says budget cuts have been "devastating" and warns that "it's going to get worse unless there's a change."

being "nothing more than a local jobs program." Others have pooh-poohed the threat of closing campuses, dismissing it as a scare tactic.

The political drama has mesmerized one group of analysts who are accustomed to viewing states undergoing educational crises. Colorado's collection of higher edu-

Colorado has not provided funds for new construction on campuses since 2001.

cation think tanks is one of the largest in the nation, and their leaders have watched in fascination and dismay as a potential fiasco develops in their own back yard.

"There's no bigger mess anywhere," said Dennis Jones, president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems in Boulder. "There's a lot of states hurting, but I know of no other state where the leadership has so little control as Colorado and where there's so little inclination to deal with it. If I was a faculty member at a Colorado university and I had an offer someplace else, I would think very seriously about taking it."

Longanecker, at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, said the relative wealth of the Colorado electorate makes the crisis all the more disturbing. "This is not a poor state, so the motive is not poverty. It's stinginess. And you have a political leadership that does not like public higher education and will say that. They see a college education as a private good, not a public good."

Meanwhile, throughout Colorado, campuses are busily implementing the first year of the vouchers. The program is managed through something known as the College Opportunity Fund, which mandates the procedural requirements, some of which have proven a challenge to students and administrators. The COF, for mysterious reasons, also expunged the word "voucher" from all its materials and substituted the word "stipend," a nomenclature that has now also been adopted by state officials.

At CU-Boulder the process involved months of planning by a team of managers to make sure students were familiar with the program and knew how to take advantage of it. The task was not always easy. Students first had to go online to the College Access Network and create a personal account. Then they had to go to their chosen institution and signify during the registration process that they had established an account and were applying for voucher, or stipend, funds for that semester.

At that point the insti-



PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY WHEELER, BLACK STAR FOR CROSSTALK

Ric Porreca, senior vice chancellor for finance at CU-Boulder, worries that a decision to lower freshman enrollment might cost the campus millions of dollars.

tution was responsible for determining whether students were official residents of the state and therefore eligible for the voucher. If so, the institution went back to the students and asked for signed approvals to credit the voucher amount to their accounts. Similar approval must be given for each semester that a student enrolls, or the state will not credit the institution with the funds.

Kay Orten headed the CU team, which conducted several focus groups early in the process to see whether students understood the program.

"It was the state's hope that the program would raise the visibility of higher education. I don't know that our students got that," Orten said. "There was confusion over some of the language, like the use of 'stipend' rather than 'voucher.' The students seemed to connect the word 'stipend' with financial aid or a loan, and that made them wary."

The several-part process also confused them, she said, and as late as February of this year only 43 percent of eligible students at CU had established their accounts. "We got concerned at that point and started doing everything but deliver pizza to their door and say, 'Sign up.'"

Eventually the effort paid off, and about 95 percent of the CU Boulder students used the vouchers if they were eligible. Those numbers are similar to other campuses across the state.

However, the 95 percent compliance rate pertains only to students who actually enrolled on a campus. That number says nothing about the success of the program in attracting high school seniors who otherwise might not have attended college. Statistical reports from high schools are not yet available.

The high school statistics are important because the stated goal of the voucher program is to increase college participation by high school seniors, which has been particularly low in Colorado. According to the

Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), Hispanics made up 25.3 percent of high school students in 2003 but only 13.9 percent of the freshman class at the state's public colleges.

So the program's effectiveness in meeting its primary goal remains unknown. But Richard O'Donnell, executive director of CCHE, said he is confident the results will show that the stipend program will succeed.

"Our study of low-income kids says if you ask them whether they are going to college, they will say they can't afford it, that tuition is skyrocketing," O'Donnell said. "Then if you say to them, 'Here's \$2,400 for next year, use it or lose it,' they light up. They begin to get engaged in a conversation about how college might be affordable."

"I believe the whole purpose of this scheme is to force low-income kids into community colleges, because that's the only place they will be able to afford."

—HANK BROWN, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO PRESIDENT

O'Donnell said six or seven other states have made inquiries about the Colorado program and have suggested they may try vouchers themselves if the system works well here.

In campus administration offices, attitudes toward the program tend to divide into two camps. The leaders of so-called "low-cost" campuses such as community colleges usually support the program, at least at the \$2,400 level. Officials at "high-cost" campuses such as CU tend to see it as

a poison pill.

The reasons are obvious. At Colorado's community colleges total funding per student now stands at \$4,500. Thus, a \$2,400 voucher will pay for more than half the total amount.

Nancy McCallin, recently appointed president of the community college system, sees another advantage: Students who sign up at a community college will bring \$2,400 with them, meaning the system is guaranteed funding when enrollment grows. Under the old system of institutional funding, there was no such guarantee.

"It gives us a flexibility we didn't have before," McCallin said. "The reality is that state funding has dropped significantly

While leaders of "low-cost" campuses such as community colleges usually support the voucher program, officials at "high-cost" campuses tend to see it as a poison pill.

over the past few years, and it's been tough. But at this (\$2,400) funding level, we are much more in charge of our fate with the stipends than under the old system."

Although the voucher amount is usually cited as \$2,400, the College Opportunity Fund actually specifies the voucher amount as \$80 per credit hour. The \$2,400 figure is merely a calculation based on the standard 30 credit hours per year. A student is capped at a total of 145 credit hours, but each student can choose how and when to "spend" their hours. If a student were to take 36 credit hours in a year, for instance, their voucher or stipend would amount to \$2,888.



Richard O'Donnell, executive director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, says the vouchers will persuade low-income youngsters to attend college.

That also represents an advantage, according to McCallin, because it assures funding for each course rather than obligating the colleges to provide however many courses a student chooses to take.

Over at CU-Boulder, the highest-cost institution in the state, a very different view of the voucher program emerges. The campus gets the same \$2,400 for each in-state student, but its costs are twice as high.

CU President Brown argues that this disparity puts both CU and its potential students at a large disadvantage. CU will be forced to cut programs and raise tuition to make up the difference, and the higher tuition rates will then drive low-income students away from CU toward the community colleges.

"I believe the whole purpose of this scheme is to force low-income kids into community colleges, because that's the only place they will be able to afford," Brown said. "It's just bad policy to say low-income students can't go to a quality institution."

Asked the possible reason for such a "scheme," Brown replied, "Some in Colorado believe you can deliver basic courses more economically at community colleges. That may be true, but you can't help but notice that, at some institutions, kids can make straight A's and still not be able to write a simple sentence. To assume that all institutions have the same quality and requirements in basic courses is just not true."

Ric Porreca, senior vice chancellor for finance at CU-Boulder, also noted that the per-capita funding of the voucher program can work in the opposite direction of the example cited by McCallin at the community colleges. If a particular campus experiences a declining enrollment for whatever reason, its state funding will fall.

And that is the current case at the Boulder campus. In the early years of the decade, Porreca says, the freshman class grew so large, to approximately 5,600 students, that the administration concluded the education experience was eroding. So the decision was made to reduce the class size gradually to 5,000.

That decision could now cost the campus \$1.4 million for each entering class. "We made that decision before the stipend program came along," Porreca said. "The idea was to make an investment in quality, but I suspect we may now have to re-evaluate."

It is a measure of the gloominess on the state's campuses that few adminis-



Nancy McCallin, president of the Colorado Community College System, thinks student vouchers will benefit the two-year schools.

trators assume Referendums C and D will pass. In fact, speculation over which campuses will close, should the referendums fail, has become a ghoulish game in some administration offices. The consensus seems to be that the rural community colleges would be the first targets. Another version of the game directs itself to which programs would be eliminated, and there's

Speculation over which campuses will close, should the upcoming voter referendums fail, has become a ghoulish game in some administration offices.

a debate about whether the victims would be high-cost programs such as engineering or the old-style liberal arts courses that are no longer seen as connected to jobs.

If the referendums fail, the state has projected it will face a \$400 million shortfall immediately. O'Donnell at CCHC argues that Colorado could buy a year or two of normalcy by spending the state's tobacco settlement funds to support higher education. After that, he said, higher education could try to get another ballot measure past the voters or face the music.

Jason Hopfer, an aide to O'Donnell, said the Commission also has discussed the possibility of campus asset sales to raise operating income should the referendums fail. When asked what type of campus asset might be attractive to investors, Hopfer suggested dormitories.

"Essentially you'd be privatizing student housing by selling the dorms to private interests and then leasing them back to the university," Hopfer said. He conceded that dorm rates would likely rise significantly in such a case. "Also the question has been raised about privatizing institu-

tions themselves, and whether we should be looking at which institutions could go entirely private," he said.

The notion of privatizing institutions has been raised in other states over the past five years, particularly when those states were experiencing financial upheaval. Thus far, it hasn't happened, except in the case of some professional schools in Virginia and elsewhere.

But Porreca said Colorado may, indeed, be moving toward privatization, only in a new way. Recently, he pointed out, the legislature opened the door to private colleges in the state receiving voucher monies. The legislature limited private voucher use to low-income students eligible for Pell grants and restricted the amount to 50 percent of the \$2,400 received by public campuses. Still, three private institutions applied and will begin receiving the 50 percent vouchers in the spring.

Everyone expects the legislature to consider expanding private institutions' involvement in the voucher program in coming years. "Once the legislature says the privates have equal access to stipends, what's the difference between private and public institutions?" Porreca asked in his Boulder office.

He answered his own question: "Very little. There's the issue of campus assets that are owned by the state on public campuses but that could be handled in a number of ways. At that point, the distinction between public and private has disappeared."

The questions of public vs. private, Referendums C and D and the voucher program could decide the fate of higher education in Colorado for the near future. The state stands on the cusp of some very large decisions. "It's going to be a real spectacle," Porreca said. "If there wasn't so much at stake in the outcome, I'd be fascinated to just sit back and watch." ♦

Robert A. Jones is a former reporter and columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

Kentucky's Rocky Road

Recent reform legislation produces results, but faces tough challenges

By Kay Mills

MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY

WHEN KENTUCKY PASSED its ambitious higher education reform legislation in 1997, the authors doubtless had never heard of Janie Spurlock or Teresa Younce of Prestonsburg, in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. But these two women have demonstrated what the landmark effort was all about—helping more Kentuckians receive education beyond high school.

Spurlock, 47 and mother of six children, and Younce, 44 and mother of two, might never have realized their dreams of a college degree if they had been forced to com-

In 2001 the economy soured, and higher education budgets were cut for three years in a row.

mute from Prestonsburg to the nearest public four-year university, Morehead State, an hour and a half away. The reform legislation not only encouraged universities to collaborate more fully with community colleges to smooth transitions into four-year institutions but also sought greater access for students to bachelor's degree programs; Spurlock and Younce benefited from both provisions.

Both women first attended Big Sandy

Community and Technical College in Prestonsburg, then transferred to the Morehead State off-campus center there in 2003. While the center has existed for 30 years, it was only four years ago that the university, building on the momentum of the reforms, began an extensive outreach program and started offering the bachelor of social work program at Prestonsburg. When she graduated in May, Younce was honored as the outstanding undergraduate student in Morehead State's department of sociology, social work and criminology. Spurlock, just two electives shy of her degree, was named the outstanding social work student.

Thousands of students have benefited from the reforms, as these indicators show:

- Undergraduate enrollment increased to 205,832 students in fall 2005, up from 160,926 in 1998, according to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

- By 2004, 81.8 percent of adults 25 or older had a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma, up from 77.9 in 1998. Adult education enrollment increased from 51,177 in 2000 to 120,051 last year.

- The six-year graduation rate from the state's public universities rose from 36.7 percent in 1998 to 44.3 percent in 2004.

- The patchwork of two-year community colleges and technical schools was transformed into the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS); enrollment grew from 52,201 in the year 2000 to 81,990 in 2004.

- The Research Challenge Trust Fund, inelegantly known as "Bucks for Brains," poured \$350 million into higher education over the first six years after the reforms passed, enabling the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville to hire dozens of new research-minded professors. The goal is to lift UK into the top 20 American research universities by the year 2020 and to make the University of Louisville a nationally recognized metropolitan research institution.

When former Democratic Governor Paul Patton took office in 1997, he was determined to move Kentucky away from its traditional economy based on bourbon, horse racing and tobacco, toward one that relied more on science and technol-

ogy. To achieve this, Patton knew the state needed a better-educated citizenry and an improved public higher education system.

The legislature agreed, passing House Bill 1, which established "Bucks for Brains" and five other trust funds to finance the reforms. The legislation gave the Council on Postsecondary Education the authority to determine how the new money should be spent, but the council works with the universities on developing the criteria. The legislation also provided the council with a stronger role in coordinating the public system of two research universities, six four-year colleges and 16 community and technical colleges.

The council's first president under the new setup was Gordon K. Davies, an outspoken man who insisted that legislators stop funding their home universities when they didn't perform well, and encouraged university presidents to work together rather than competing for programs and money. "It was worth being blunt—and it was worth being fired," said Davies, whose contract was not renewed in 2002. "Putting aside the petty stuff that occupies many people in Kentucky higher education now, we started a revolution. And even revolutions that fail add something to our experience."

Thomas Layzell, former commissioner of higher education in Mississippi, succeeded Davies. To him fell the task of brokering distribution of cuts that were made in the universities' budgets during an economic slowdown. "That was an important event to make that happen," said Ron Carson, senior fellow for policy development at the postsecondary council. "It was an early test."

"Gordon brought a degree of intensity that was really necessary to take the details in the legislation and make them happen," said Aims McGuinness Jr., of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, a consultant on the reforms. "One of the skills that Tom brings to the job is that he is very much a peacemaker, bringing people together. They simply have different leadership styles for different times."

The question remains, however, whether the council is strong enough to keep the universities from slipping back into their old competitive, territorial ways. For example, the reforms call for the regional universities to be four-year baccalaureate institutions with only UK and Louisville offering Ph.D.s. Yet by 2002 the *Lexington Herald-Leader* was reporting that the presidents of both Eastern Ken-



Teresa Younce, helped by Kentucky's higher education reforms, graduated from Morehead State University with a degree in sociology.

tucky University and Western Kentucky University wanted to offer doctorates in education. Davies had resisted such ambitions, calling them "mission creep," and so far the council has received no formal proposals for these programs.

Layzell said that having the reforms both written in law and as part of a public agenda "gives you a very strong basis to argue against institutional self-interest. You can say, 'Hey, this isn't about you. This is about Kentucky. This is about the needs of Kentucky.' As long as that framework remains in place, this is going to continue."

State spending on higher education increased by 40 percent in the early years of the Patton administration. But in 2001 the economy soured, and higher education budgets were cut for three years in a row. A new governor, Republican Ernie

"It was worth being blunt—and it was worth being fired...Even revolutions that fail add something to our experience."

—GORDON K. DAVIES

Fletcher, took office in 2003, and there was deep concern that the reforms might be derailed by either budget constraints or politics or both.

"Governors don't adopt their predecessor's babies," Patton said in an interview. "I didn't, and I didn't expect my successor to adopt mine. Education is a little more universal than a pet program, though, and I'm sure Fletcher understands that. The reforms should be able to survive. And I hope the universities will concentrate on trying to make the pie bigger instead of fighting over the pieces."

Fletcher said he had no problem with

ELAINE SHAY FOR CROSSTALK



President Lee Todd of the University of Kentucky says part of his job is to "build a fabric of approval for higher education among Kentuckians."

STEWART BOWMAN FOR CROSSTALK

adopting Patton's reform agenda as long as it was good policy—"and this is," he said in an interview. Fletcher wants to take the reforms to the next level, which he described as having universities and colleges look not only at academics but also increasingly at their roles in community and economic development. "We've had some challenges" economically since the reforms were passed, Fletcher added, but he pointed out that the state increased higher education budgets by 12 percent, or \$81.6 million, this year over last.

The budget increases generated renewed hope among educators. "If you had asked me this time last year (about how the reforms were doing), I'd have said aw-

"I hope the universities will concentrate on trying to make the pie bigger instead of fighting over the pieces."

— PAUL PATTON, FORMER GOVERNOR OF KENTUCKY

ful," Morehead State Provost Michael Moore commented. "Now I'm optimistic. The legislature and governor's office gave a clear positive signal in support of higher education."

However, other leaders say the three years of budget cuts have left Kentucky higher education several years behind. "The rate of improvement has slowed down," said Michael Nietzel, former provost of the University of Kentucky. "We got off to a fast start in 1998 and it wasn't reasonable to expect that it would continue, but it decreased more quickly than we expected." But Nietzel added, "I don't think that the economy was the only reason. It's hard to stay with the reform agenda." It's also hard to divorce politics and regionalism from a state in which higher education was set up to be regional.

The low levels of educational attainment that prompted the reforms stemmed

not only from Kentucky's poverty but also from what some say is the state's historical failure to value education. University of Kentucky President Lee Todd Jr. says that part of his mission is to help "build a fabric of approval for higher education among Kentuckians." Using a metaphor from one of the state's favorite sports, Todd said that "coaches will say that a player has a great basketball IQ. We want Kentuckians to have a great research IQ and a great cultural IQ."

Some in Kentucky are skeptical that UK can become one of the nation's top 20 research institutions. (UK ranked 63rd out of 100 top institutions in federal funds for academic research in 2004, the National Science Foundation reported.) But in fiscal year 2005, UK researchers brought in a record \$273.9 million in outside grants and contracts—the fourth year in a row that the university exceeded \$200 million in sponsored project awards.

Since 1997, UK has increased the number of endowed chairs (each supported by at least \$1 million) from 22 to 88, with 56 of them filled, and endowed professorships (\$100,000 minimum endowment) from 45 to 226, with 134 filled. Among those joining the UK faculty through "Bucks for Brains" financing have been Gail Robinson, who headed the young talent development program at the Metropolitan Opera and who now teaches voice; David Wildasin, an economist who came from Vanderbilt; and Greg Gearhardt, a professor of anatomy from the University of Colorado who is studying Parkinson's disease.

However, UK faculty salaries, which averaged \$71,026 in 2004, lag behind those of its benchmark institutions, such as UCLA, the University of Michigan and Ohio State, where the median salaries were \$81,681 last year. As a result, the university has lost some outstanding faculty members to other institutions. Officials cite the examples of Mike Desch, who left the Patterson School of Diplomacy directorship to go to Texas A&M, and Winston Ho, a chemical engineer who left for Ohio State University soon after being named to the National Academy for Engineering.

Todd pointed out that UK lost \$73 million in cumulative cuts from 2001 to 2004, then received \$18 million in additional appropriations this year. "We had had a pretty rapid ramp upward after the legislation was passed, but then it plateaued," he said.

John Thelin, a professor in UK's educational policy studies department, thinks the university administration is being a bit unfair in talking about how much money it has lost since 2001, because that year was such a high water mark. Thelin believes that Kentucky "has been relatively generous to higher education and allows it flexibility. It doesn't micromanage." And he considers the action of Governor Fletcher and the legislature this year a "mild win-win situation."

University of Louisville President James Ramsey, who was Patton's budget director when House Bill 1 passed, said that the reforms brought a broader public agenda to the state than just teaching English and math efficiently. The reforms created an energy on his campus that has lasted despite budget cuts, he said.

Louisville is concentrating its efforts on research and teaching in the life sciences and medicine, early childhood education, entrepreneurship, and logistics and distribution (that is, focusing on getting goods to market), according to Ramsey. Much of the money it has received from the state and in federal grants has gone into the health sciences area. For example, Bucks for Brains money helped bring Donald Miller from the University of Alabama, Birmingham, to run the James Graham Brown Cancer Center. Eric Lentsch, an otolaryngologist, came from the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston to study how neck and head cancers invade and spread.

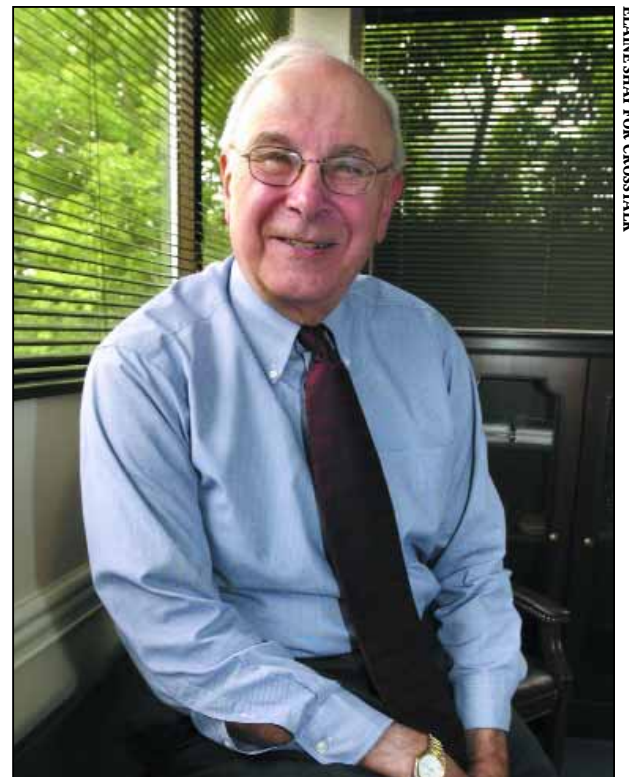
Bucks for Brains faces an uncertain future. The final round to date—in the 2002-04 biennium—was financed by state-supported bonds. For 2004-06 the Council for Postsecondary Education requested \$61 million for the program, but it was not funded. There is some talk that the bigger need now is for additional space for all the researchers who have been hired, yielding the possibility of a "Bucks for Bricks" program, but that hasn't happened yet.

Although much of the new money to implement the reforms has gone to UK and the University of Louisville, the six regional campuses—Eastern Kentucky, Western Kentucky, Northern Kentucky, Kentucky State, Morehead State and Murray—also have benefited. For example, at Northern Kentucky, the Center for Integrative Natural Science and Mathematics has as one of its goals improving teaching and learning of math and fostering increased science activity.

"Public engagement is a big piece of what we do," said Northern Kentucky president James Votruba. Through its strategic planning process, the university learned that among community concerns was the fact that too few high school graduates go on to college. NKU is starting a program this fall through which working adults can get a four-year degree in four years by taking two courses at a time in the evenings on eight-week cycles.

Local people also have taken the initiative. Residents of Hazard, in the southeastern Kentucky coal belt, had long wanted a four-year institution, because of the region's low educational attainment. In 1990, only 7.4 percent of the population had bachelor's degrees.

Eventually it became clear that the area was not going to get a university, so a consortium made up of Hazard Community and Technical College, Morehead State, Eastern Kentucky and the private Lindsey Wilson College established the University Center of the Mountains. Hazard's instructors provide the first two years of courses, and Eastern, Morehead or Lindsey Wilson faculty members (either on site or on television) provide the final two years, leading



Thomas Layzell, president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, has brokered state budget cuts of recent years.

to bachelor's degrees in criminal justice, nursing, social work, human services and counseling, early elementary education and business administration.

Jay Box, Hazard's president, said that his institution is also attempting to become the Appalachian arts college, with programs in bluegrass music, storytelling and the visual arts, and by training artisans at the Kentucky School for Craft in Hindman, about 20 miles from Hazard. The school, which opened last year, offers courses taught by craftsmen in jewelry and wood, and will add ceramics, architectural ironwork, and various fabric-related crafts such as weaving. There are 25 students now; eventually there will be 75.

The reform legislation encouraged universities to collaborate more fully with community colleges to smooth transitions into four-year institutions.

One of the biggest controversies during the reform debate involved removing the community colleges from the University of Kentucky's authority and placing them and the two-year technical schools under a single administration, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Now, some observers consider KCTCS to be the most successful of the reforms.

"The community college part of the reforms worked better than I expected, faster than I expected," former Governor Patton said. "We disavowed the word merger, but that is in fact what happened," said Patton, crediting the new system's first president, Mike McCall, with the patience and toughness to make it work.

In addition to consolidating the colleges and improving the rate of transfers to four-

continued on page 10



Mike McCall is president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, where enrollment increased from 52,201 to 81,990 between 2000 and 2004.

MISSISSIPPI

from page 1

game 44 to 7—nor the dazzling half-time show, which featured skilled performances from both schools' marching bands, dance teams and flag-waving color guards, disappointed Weaver.

But it will take more than a few well-executed plays on the gridiron and a show of school spirit for the community colleges in south Mississippi and the people they serve to rebound. School officials say it's too early to predict the full financial and emotional toll of Katrina. Much, they say, depends on how quickly the coastal casinos and communities rebuild.

At the urging of Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, lawmakers have already set that reconstruction in motion. Meeting in a special post-Katrina legislative session, they approved a bill that will allow coastal casinos to build on land, as long as they remain within 800 feet of the water. Previously, the law only allowed floating casinos. The governor also has appointed a commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and

Even the most heavily damaged of the south Mississippi community colleges managed to reopen within three weeks of the hurricane.

Renewal to ensure that the coast rebuilds "bigger and better than ever."

"We're going to have the greatest renaissance that Mississippi's ever seen, but that's going to be a time off," said Wayne Stonecypher, executive director of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges. Stonecypher and other community college leaders believe that their schools are poised to benefit from the state's anticipated post-Katrina boom, both in terms of funding and enrollment. But that boom may not begin to kick in for another six to nine months, and it may take as many as three to five years for the region to fully recover. "The trick," Stone-

cypher said, "is surviving that."

The Mississippi community colleges near the Gulf coast played a key role during and immediately after the August 29 storm by sheltering and feeding emergency personnel and recovery workers, and by serving as a gathering place and provider of hot meals for neighbors and staff who had no means of communication and no electricity, in some cases for weeks. (Some rural residents are not expected to have landline phone service until November.) Now school leaders say that the community colleges can—and should—continue to contribute to the region's recovery.

"The darkest of challenges are opportunities," said Willis Lott, president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. "This is an opportunity for us to be a part not only of the reconstruction, but also a part of the new coast—because it will be a new coast."

Despite extensive damage to their facilities, even the most heavily affected schools—Gulf Coast, Jones County Junior College, and Pearl River Community College—managed to reopen within three weeks of the hurricane. (The exception was Pearl River's leased center in Waveland, which was destroyed; classes didn't resume there until the first week of October, when they began operating out of three trailers the school set up at a nearby airport.)

In part that was because dozens of staff, including high-level administrators, pitched in to help with the clean-up, manning everything from chainsaws to backhoes.

Now those same administrators are grappling with an array of financial uncertainties. Most immediately, they are trying to determine if insurance and the federal government will pay the full cost of rebuilding and repairing their campuses, and if not, where they will find the money to pay for it.

And those are only the beginning of the financial hurdles that administrators face. Even after the blue roof tarps and scaffolding are gone, it seems likely that Katrina will adversely impact their three main sources of revenue: tuition, state appropriations and county mill levies.

In the wake of Katrina, thousands of



RICH KOPP FOR CROSSTALK

President Willis Lott said Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College has postponed several planned construction projects and will spend \$10 million in reserves to get through the next few months.

students who had enrolled for the fall semester at one of the three south Mississippi community colleges have dropped out. Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, whose four-county district includes hard-hit Gulfport and Biloxi, saw the largest decrease: more than 2,700 of its students—some 26 percent of total enrollment—hadn't returned to classes by the end of September.

No one is sure exactly what has happened to these students, nor whether they will return, said Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, vice president for academic and student affairs at MGCCC. Based on requests for transcripts, it doesn't appear that many have re-enrolled at other institutions. Some may simply have been overwhelmed dealing with post-Katrina financial, housing, transportation and child-care issues. Others, she suggested, might have chosen to take advantage of the incipient boom in construction-related jobs, which tend to pay well.

Katrina's damage wasn't limited to coastal counties. At Jones County Junior College, which is 70 miles inland, the storm generated sustained winds of 110 miles per hour, and trashed much of the school's eight-county district. More than 740 students have withdrawn since the beginning of the semester—about double what the school would see in a normal year.

Equally troubling, said Jesse Smith, dean of the college, is that students continue to drop out at a much higher rate than in the past. He attributed that in large part to the high price of gasoline, which is now selling for nearly three dollars per gallon in the area, and which might be deterring financially strapped commuter students, some of whom live 50 miles away from campus. Students may also be withdrawing because of financial or emotional difficulties at home as a result of Katrina. And a few, he said, "are just wiggling out" from the trauma of the storm.

Regardless of the reasons, those enrollment decreases are costing the institutions. Many of those students received 100 percent refunds for the fall semester. In addition, state appropriations are dispersed on a per-pupil basis—and that amount has been steadily cut over the past five years.

Indeed, Katrina hit at an inopportune moment for the state's community and junior colleges, which enroll 70 percent of all college freshmen in Mississippi and which have already weathered some tough times. Between fall 2000 and fall 2004, statewide enrollment increased more than 26 percent, to 67,645. During roughly the same time period, state appropriations for the two-year colleges decreased more than 17 percent while legislators fulfilled a five-year commitment to increase pay for K-12 teachers. To make up their shortfall, the community and junior colleges were forced to raise tuition, which has increased an average 66.5 percent since 1999, to \$846 per semester.

The abysmal funding situation was expected to turn around during the upcoming 2006 legislative session. Based on conversations with key lawmakers and Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, "This was supposed to be our year," said

Community college leaders believe that their schools are poised to benefit from the state's anticipated post-Katrina boom.

Stonecypher. "But it may not turn out that way."

Katrina wiped out thousands of businesses, among them the Gulf coast casinos, which employed 14,000 people and were expected to generate \$84 million in gaming taxes this year, and millions more from associated tourism. The specter of that lost revenue has created a lot of pessimism about the state's near-term economic health, which in turn has caused grave concerns among the state's community college officials.

"We're already on a barebones budget," said Ronald Whitehead, president of Jones County Junior College, which serves one of the poorest districts in the state. About 70 percent of JCJC's 4,500 students receive federal Pell grants to pay their tuition, which has more than doubled in the

JACKSON HILL, BLACK STAR, FOR CROSSTALK



Pine trees snapped in the yard of Ronald Whitehead, president of Jones County Junior College, where Hurricane Katrina caused several million dollars in damage.

past five years, and Whitehead said he would be reluctant to raise it again.

But at the same time, he was unsure how the school would cope if it suffered a mid-year cut in funding, which he foresaw as a “real possibility.” Already, Whitehead said, the college has lost 25 to 30 faculty members—more than ten percent—because of previous funding cutbacks. Still, he was trying to remain philosophical. “You can’t print dollars,” Whitehead said. “You reach the point where you do the

At Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College alone, 200 employees—about one quarter of the staff—were displaced by Katrina.

very best that you can with what you have.”

At best, Mississippi’s immediate financial picture is murky. If the gaming industry rebuilds quickly, and the expected Gulf Coast construction boom kicks in soon, the state may still achieve its forecasted revenue, said Darrin Webb, senior economist for the state of Mississippi. Webb also pointed out that not all coastal gaming revenue will be lost in the intervening months, because some of that business will simply shift to casinos in other parts of the state.

“There’s a lot of sad stories in Hurricane Katrina, but I don’t think that the revenue picture is going to be one of them,” Webb said.

Wayne Stonecypher doesn’t dispute that the state is primed for an economic boom. But he is not convinced that it will kick in before late March and early April, when lawmakers will be writing next year’s budget. He said he thought community colleges have a 50 percent shot at a good year in terms of state appropriations. “It’s the other 50 percent that causes me to worry,” he said.

Adding to his anxiety is the possibility that the colleges’ workforce development funds may be in jeopardy. The legislature has approved a bill earmarking a percent-

age of the taxes paid into the state’s Unemployment Security Trust Fund for that purpose—as long as the fund remains greater than \$500 million. The new bill was expected to generate about \$20 million annually for workforce development. But a flood of post-Katrina unemployment could force the trust fund below the \$500 million threshold.

It’s a classic case of Catch-22, Stonecypher said. “There’s going to be the biggest boom that Mississippi’s ever seen for the next three to five years, yet at the same time we will not have the resources to train the folks who need the skills to get the construction jobs that are going to be out there.”

And until that construction kicks in, devastated south Mississippi counties may suffer such a shortage of revenue that they will not be able to meet their obligations to the community colleges.

Given all the uncertainties, education leaders in the state legislature said Stonecypher’s anxiety was understandable. “I think we’re going to get them through it,” said State Representative Herb Frierson of Pearl River County, chair of the subcommittee on community college appropriations. “I don’t know how pretty it will be. There’s a lot of water that has to go under the bridge before the budget is written.”

Frierson’s interest is more than academic: He and his grandfather both attended Pearl River Community College (and his grandfather attended it in its original incarnation as an agricultural high school); now his daughter is a freshman there.

Those kinds of family loyalties are not unusual. Mississippi’s community college system has a long history, dating back to the 1920s. Its leaders and board members are both politically astute and well-connected, and the institutions enjoy a lot of support throughout the state, Frierson said. So he thinks that the legislature will do what it can for the schools, given the financial realities come spring.

State Senator Mike Chaney, Frierson’s counterpart in the state Senate, and chair of the senate education committee, agrees. “We’re going to try to keep them whole,” he said.

The State Board for Community and Junior Colleges is exploring ways for lawmakers to do that. The board might recommend that the legislature revise the funding formula so that next year’s monies are not divvied up based on this year’s enrollment, said Stonecypher, the board’s executive director. One alternative would limit decreases (or increases) in funding to ten percent more than the previous year, no matter what the enrollment figures; a second plan would average enrollment over a three-year period.

Stonecypher also wants the legislature to revisit a law prohibiting community colleges from offering gaming-



Albert Fairconnetue (left) and Jonathan Hall, both freshmen at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, lost their homes and belongings to Katrina.

related training. “There’s a lot of good jobs there,” he said. “Why do we deny Mississippians the opportunity to have them?”

Meanwhile, the colleges are trying to be prudent. Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College has put on hold plans for nearly a dozen major construction and renovation projects, including two new dormitories at its Perkinston campus. The school also has decided not to proceed with a \$10 million capital campaign that it was planning to launch next summer.

One thing the school won’t do, pledged MGCCC President Willis Lott, is implement layoffs. He said the school would likely use some of the \$10 million it has in reserves to get through the tough months ahead.

Pearl River Community College also has delayed several planned construction projects, including a performing arts center and an athletic field house, said PRCC President William Lewis.

The schools are taking steps to recoup their enrollment losses. MGCCC has more than tripled its offerings of accelerated short-term classes—to more than 100—that begin at the end of October. Those classes meet twice as many hours so that students can still earn a full semester’s worth of credits. And in an attempt to reduce the amount of money students have to spend on gas, the school also has increased the percentage of those courses that will be taught online, either in part or in full.

Pearl River Community College, which has lost about 400 students since the semester began, also is offering online accelerated courses, a first for the school. And next semester, with an eye toward the cost of gas, it plans to increase the number of classes that meet twice rather than three times a week.

“We want students to stay on track towards their degree and resume normalcy as soon as possible,” said John Grant, PRCC vice president for instruction.

But as the fall semester progresses, school administrators said they are discovering that normalcy is an elusive goal, and that they need to provide more than academics to help students and staff cope with

the enormity of their losses and the stress that they’re now under.

At Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College alone, 200 employees—about one quarter of the staff—were displaced by Katrina, and 50 of them lost everything. So did many students.

“All I have is what I left up here at school,” said a dejected-looking Jonathan Hall, 18, an MGCCC freshman from Pass Christian, Mississippi, a coastal community that was wiped out by the hurricane’s huge storm surge. Hall’s roommate, 19-year-old Albert Fairconnetue, also of Pass Christian, said he was in the same situation. “My house is under water, gone, in the neighbor’s yard,” he said. Both students were thrilled to return to school, where they have food, hot water and a routine.

But that routine hasn’t left people much time to process Katrina’s enormous and ongoing impact. Those who lost everything haven’t had a chance to mourn their losses, while many of those who did not are suf-

Thousands of students who had enrolled for the fall semester at one of the three south Mississippi community colleges have dropped out.

fering survivor’s guilt. “You find yourself qualifying your statements all the time,” said Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, whose house was undamaged but who didn’t have power for three weeks. “Since you did not lose everything, how can you possibly complain?”

The long lines and bumper-to-bumper traffic don’t help matters, she added. “Anything you try to do—whether it’s go to the bank or the grocery store—is frustrating and irritating.”

A part-time counselor who was hired by MGCCC has been booked solid, and the school plans to offer support groups for *continued next page*



“We often refer to the college as the Mississippi Gulf Coast family,” says Colleen Hartfield (center), vice president for institutional relations, shown with Allison Matthews (left) and Keith Lee (right), as they worked in makeshift surroundings after the hurricane.

MISSISSIPPI

from preceding page

both students and staff, Thompson-Stacy said.

Counselors working for Pearl River Community College and Jones County Junior College have also been busy, officials said.

"I think a lot of our students have held a lot of this in," said Adam Breerwood, dean of student services at PRCC's main campus in Poplarville. Many students there come from the devastated coast.

Adding to their stress, about 100 students whose dorm rooms were damaged have had to double up with other dorm residents, making already tight quarters even tighter.

To try to defuse the tension, and to encourage the students to get out of their dorm rooms and socialize, the school is increasing the amount of intramural sports and evening activities it offers. "We think if they have something to do, if they can find

some friends, they'll feel comfortable here," said Breerwood. "We know that their life out of Pearl River is just turned upside down right now—it's just a disaster. So we're trying to give them some joy."

But administrators also believe there is

Katrina hit at an inopportune moment for Mississippi's two-year colleges, which have already weathered some tough times.

more emotional fallout to come. "When the holidays set in and they don't have a home to go to, or their family is spread out all over different locations, I'm expecting it to happen," said Breerwood.

Still, there are bright spots. Students like Jonathan Hall said he had learned

valuable lessons. "I was a materialistic person," Hall said. "Material things were important to me. But what's important to me now is my family."

And for a lot of people, that sense of family extends beyond their biological relations.

"We often refer to the college as the Mississippi Gulf Coast family," said Colleen Hartfield, vice president for institutional relations at MGCCC. "And since the hurricane, that sense of family has been strengthened." Not only have students and staff from within the college rallied to help each other, she said, but more than 100 community colleges from across the state and the nation have contacted the school to offer assistance.

In the weeks after Katrina, a team of students and administrators from Pensacola Junior College in Florida, including the college president, provided hot dogs and hamburgers at MGCCC's Jackson County campus, and delivered a \$2,100 check for the school's foundation. A

few days later, a crew of administrators from Hinds Community College in central Mississippi barbecued chicken for employees and students at MGCCC's heavily damaged Jefferson Davis campus. Copiah-Lincoln Community College in southwest Mississippi sent a team to help in the financial aid office, while Gulf Coast Community College of Panama City, Florida, sent a \$15,000 check. Students at Illinois Central College are selling plastic wristbands and donating all proceeds to MGCCC. And each of the 22 Arkansas community colleges is "adopting" an MGCCC employee who has been heavily impacted by Katrina.

"There really is a great sense of unity among the community colleges across the nation," Hartfield said. "And I think a catastrophe of this sort demonstrates that very well." ♦

Kathy Witkowsky is a freelance reporter in Missoula, Montana, and a frequent contributor to National Public Radio.

KENTUCKY

from page 7

year institutions, McCall said, his system is "constantly looking at our communities—doing environmental scans—to see what kinds of jobs are being created. For example, there's a resurgence of coal in Kentucky...But we've lost a generation of miners, and the equipment is 20 years old." So KCTCS is working with industry to prepare simulators to help train new high-tech miners.

"Creating this centralized community and technical college management is one

The Research Challenge Trust Fund, inelegantly known as "Bucks for Brains," poured \$350 million into higher education over the first six years after the reforms passed.

of two changes that may have the most long-term effects," said consultant Aims McGuinness. The other is the effort to improve adult education and literacy under legislation passed in 2000. "If adult education gets forgotten, that's going to cause severe problems."

The legislature gave the Council on Postsecondary Education responsibility for policy, planning and budgets for adult education, and the state increased annual funding for its programs from about \$10 million to \$22 million between 2000 and 2005. The council has set goals and accountability for those who provide the programs, including local boards of education, community and technical colleges, and community-based organizations.

Across the state 4,397 people were enrolled in family literacy programs in 2004, compared to 1,357 in 2001. "People come

to learn to read, often because they want to help their children with their homework," said Cheryl King, the council's vice president for adult education. "Or they're embarrassed (because) they want to read the newspaper and they can't. They desperately need a job that requires some level of literacy." Workforce education programs also enrolled more than 51,000 students learning communication and computer skills.

Despite these gains, the Council on Postsecondary Education is increasingly concerned that higher education is becoming too expensive for average Kentuckians. Tuition went up this year at all the four-year public universities and for the two-year college system as well. Eastern Kentucky University raised its tuition 23 percent, to \$4,660, the highest percentage increase, while UK's tuition went up 12.5 percent, to \$5,812. The KCTCS Regents boosted that system's tuition by 6.5 percent, from \$92 to \$98 per credit hour.

Each public university sets its own tuition but the council must approve all increases. In May, however, the council—prodded by Fletcher, other politicians and the public—voted to require colleges and universities to provide more justification for tuition hikes. The schools also must submit proposed tuition rates next year in time to allow for public comment and student notification. Fletcher said he was pleased to see the council exercise its role "a little more aggressively than in the past."

The council has also undertaken two affordability studies to determine if the state is pricing low-income Kentuckians out of higher education. One of these recently concluded that "by most measures, Kentucky higher education is within reasonable range of affordability for most students." It added, however, that independent students from low-income groups do not get as much state aid as those still living with their parents and must borrow more money.

To succeed, Kentucky educators must maintain the collaboration between universities, independent colleges and com-

munity colleges, said Ed Hughes, president of Gateway Community and Technical College in northern Kentucky. "I have felt, and see, a falling off of that collaboration," he said, adding that it is a critical issue for the council to push. "We cannot go back to the days when one university never talked to another." Kentucky higher education also needs "another 15 years" as a top funding priority for both the governor and the legislature, Hughes added.

"Yes, all of us would like more money," said Northern Kentucky University President Votruba. "But the challenge is to use the funds that we have in creative ways. We have to demonstrate, in the governor's language, ROI—or return on investment. I think if we do that, that can be Governor Fletcher's stamp on what was a Governor Patton initiative.

To continue expanding enrollment, Kentucky must reach more people like Janie Spurlock and Teresa Younce. And it's not always easy for adults even when they are highly motivated.

"When you start something like this, you're scared you can't do it," Spurlock said. She took some of her first courses over instructional television, and when she got into conventional classes Spurlock did very well, eventually maintaining a 4.0 average. "I realized I wasn't stupid. I could do this," she said, adding that her older children and several local high school students helped her to learn the computer skills she lacked.



The Kentucky reform legislation has led to gains in family literacy, said Cheryl King, vice president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Faculty members helped as well. Several professors traveled regularly from Morehead to the Prestonsburg center to teach in the social work program. "They did a lot of personal things for us—like picking up books on the main campus so we didn't have to stand in a line there after driving an hour and a half—as well as educating us," Younce said in gratitude. "They were like a family." ♦

Kay Mills, a former Los Angeles Times editorial writer, is the author of "Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case that Transformed Television" (University Press of Mississippi, 2004).

OTHER VOICES



The Remediation Debate

Are we serving the needs of underprepared college students?

By Bridget Terry Long

THERE ARE NUMEROUS BARRIERS to enrollment and persistence in higher education, but one factor that may play a significant role in helping underprepared students is college remediation. New research suggests that students in remediation have better educational outcomes than do students with similar backgrounds and preparation who do not take remedial courses.

Only one-third of students leave high school at least minimally prepared for college, and the proportion is much smaller for black and Hispanic students. Among those who persevere to college, 35 to 40 percent require remedial courses in reading, writing or mathematics. The courses are intended to address academic deficiencies and to prepare students for subsequent college success. Because the average college student attends a

Remediation is an important part of higher education, and it plays a significant role in addressing the needs of underprepared students.

nonselective institution to which he or she is almost assured admission, the remediation placement exam taken when first arriving on campus has become the key academic gatekeeper to post-secondary study.

Despite the extensive use of remedial courses, which are also called developmental or basic skills courses, researchers have only begun to understand the role remediation plays in higher education and the effects of the courses on subsequent student performance. Institutions vary substantially in how they place, educate and support remedial students, and more needs to be done to determine best practices.

Meanwhile, many states are debating measures that would limit how remedial courses are offered and who takes them. But policymakers should exercise caution in pursuing such actions, as the consequences are likely to affect thousands of college students each year.

The remediation policy debate

The debate about the merits of investing in remediation, which has an estimated annual cost in the billions, has intensified in recent years. There are many questions about whether remediation should be offered in colleges at all.

Some states, such as Connecticut and Arizona, officially do not allow remedial education at public institutions, and several institutions have chosen to expel students who have severe academic deficiencies. For example, during the fall of 2001, the California State University system “kicked out more than 2,200 students—nearly seven percent of the freshman class—for failing to master basic English and math skills,” according to a 2002 *Los Angeles Times* article by Rebecca Trounson. Supporters of such measures question the appropriateness of work below college level at a postsecondary institution and suggest that remedial courses remove the incentive to adequately prepare for college while in high school.

Most states and colleges, nonetheless, have remedial programs. A 1996 study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 81 percent of public four-year colleges and 100 percent of two-year colleges offered remediation. However, the policies governing remediation vary greatly. States and institutions often differ in how they interpret postsecondary standards, and so there is a great deal of variation as to what constitutes a remedial course and how students are selected into remedial courses. Selection into reme-

diation is usually determined with a combination of measures including placement exams in reading, writing and mathematics, standardized test scores, and high school achievement.

While the thresholds for remediation differ greatly, most remedial courses do not count toward degree credits. Therefore, placement into remediation could lengthen the time to completion and might also have implications for financial aid due to federal time limitations. Moreover, remedial courses are often the gateway for students to enroll in upper-level courses. About two-thirds of campuses nationally restrict enrollment in some classes until remediation is complete. As a result, remedial placement can restrict students' class schedules and impede the ability of community college students to transfer to four-year institutions.

While most states allow remediation, many are considering other ways to limit the courses. Some policymakers have argued that community colleges should be the principal provider of remedial courses. At least eight states, including Florida and Illinois, restrict remediation to two-year institutions. In a controversial move, the City University of New York (CUNY) system joined this group during the late 1990s when it eliminated remedial courses at its four-year institutions. Focusing instead on the finances behind remediation, states such as Texas, Tennessee and Utah have imposed or are considering limits on the government funding of remedial coursework. Others, like the California State University system, impose a one-year limit on remedial work.

Several initiatives seek to pass on the costs of remediation to students. For example, the Florida legislature chose to require college students who need to repeat courses to pay the cost of their remediation, an expense much larger than the regular tuition rate. Instead of passing the costs on to students, several states have targeted secondary school systems and blame them for the needs of remedial students. During the CUNY controversy, Rudolph Giuliani voiced the sentiment of numerous officials when he was quoted as saying that the “university system currently devotes far too much money and effort to teaching skills that students should have learned in high school.” In a similar vein, for a short time, Minnesota allowed colleges to bill secondary schools for the cost of their graduates' remedial classes.

However, measures that target the responsibilities of secondary schools do not fully address the problem of remediation. Only 64 percent of students earn a standard high school diploma, and high school graduation standards often do not coincide with the competencies needed in college. Moreover, such actions might prompt high schools to steer underprepared students from entering college altogether so the schools will not be responsible for their remedial costs.

Impact of remediation on student achievement

While the policy debate about college remediation focuses on where it should be offered and who should pay for it, more careful thought should be given to what impact remediation has on students. Do the courses help remedial students perform better and remain in higher education longer? Is the investment in remedial programs worthwhile? In a paper I wrote with Eric Bettinger, we considered how remedial courses affect the educational progress of students.

To understand the impact of remedial courses on subsequent educational experiences, our study compared the outcomes of students placed in remediation to those who were not. However, selection issues precluded a straightforward analysis. Because less-prepared students are more likely to drop out even in the absence of remediation, finding that remedial students are less likely to persist than non-remediated students is neither surprising nor an appropriate test of the impact of remedial courses. Therefore, the effects of lower preparation have to be separated from the effects of a remedial course.

Fortunately, the higher education system in Ohio provides an opportunity for such analysis. Public colleges and universities in Ohio are free to set their own admissions, placement and remediation policies. While there are statewide standards to distinguish between remedial and college-level work, given this autonomy, colleges differ in how they interpret these standards at the campus level. All schools require entering freshmen to take placement exams, but the cutoffs for placement vary. Therefore, two identical students attending different colleges face dissimilar probabilities of remediation based on each college's policy. Using this setup, we compared students with similar academic backgrounds who were in and out of remediation due to the differences in the policies of their institutions.

The following example further explains the intuition of this empirical strategy. Consider the hypothetical case of Jim and John. Jim lives in Cleveland and attends the closest college, the imaginary Cleveland College. John is from the opposite side of the state, Cincinnati, and attends the imaginary Cincinnati College. Jim and John have identical backgrounds, ACT scores, years of preparation and grades in high school courses. However, because Cleveland College uses a higher threshold to determine remedial placement, Jim is placed into remediation while John is not. To determine the effect of

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Research suggests that students in remediation have better educational outcomes than those who are not required to take the courses.

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remediation, our analysis compares the outcomes of Jim and John. The paper, therefore, compares two observationally similar students to understand the impact of remediation.

Because we needed information on students' academic backgrounds, our project focused on traditional-age (18 to 20 years old) college undergraduates who took a standardized test (the ACT). We also limited our sample to full-time students who had signified the intent to complete a degree, so that baccalaureate completion would be a relevant indicator of success.

To sufficiently isolate the effect of remedial courses from other factors, the analysis accounted for differences in demographics, high school preparation and performance, test

Some policymakers have argued that community colleges should be the principal provider of remedial courses.

scores and family background. Also, because the estimation strategy relied upon students for whom the probability of remediation differed according to the college they attended, students who would always be placed in remediation (i.e. those who have very low levels of preparation) or who would never be placed in remediation (i.e. those who have very high levels of preparation) were not included.

While a simple comparison of students in and out of the courses would suggest that remediation has a negative effect on outcomes, the use of a more appropriate comparison group, as we did in our study, reveals that remediation produces positive results. The study estimates that over five years, math and English remediation reduce the likelihood of stopping out nearly ten percent and increase the likelihood of completing a baccalaureate degree by nine percent. Moreover, English remediation appears to reduce the likelihood of transferring to a less selective or lower-level college.

In summary, the results of the research suggest that students in remediation have better educational outcomes in comparison to students with similar backgrounds and preparation who are not required to take the courses.

Implications for policy

Remediation is an important part of higher education, and it plays a very significant role in attempting to address the needs of the thousands of underprepared students. While further research is needed to more fully understand the relative effects of different kinds of remedial programs and services, it is clear that remediation could play a significant role in improving students' chances for college success. Our research certainly suggests that remediation improves student outcomes.

While some policymakers have proposed shifting all remediation to community colleges, limiting the number of courses students can take, or charging differential rates for such work, these reforms should be approached with caution. Additionally, given the thousands and thousands of students who need remediation, exclusionary admissions policies are likely to have widespread effects on enrollment and degree completion patterns. Also community colleges are often strapped for funding and may not have the capacity and resources to provide effective remedial programs for an entire state.

As noted in an October 2002 *Time* magazine article, eliminating remediation in higher education "could effectively end the American experiment with mass postsecondary education." The costs of not offering remediation are also likely to be much higher than the expense of the programs. Lower levels of education are associated with higher rates of unemployment, government dependency, crime and incarceration.

Moreover, the economy increasingly demands skilled workers. With persistent concerns about the abilities of high school graduates, higher education must find ways to address the needs of underprepared students and provide the American economy with the skilled workers it needs.

It is also important to acknowledge that the need for remediation is rooted in the K-12 system. Students often do not take the appropriate courses, and high schools and colleges need to communicate more about the academic expectations of continued study. One promising approach that could reduce the need for remediation is early placement testing, which helps to improve student advising and conveys the expectations of higher education. Several states, including Ohio, Kentucky, Oklahoma and North Carolina, have begun to give the college remedial placement exam to students who are still in grade ten or 11. The results of the test are then shared with the students and their parents as a way to inform all parties of the competencies that still need to be mastered in order to avoid college remediation.

As long as students graduate from high school underprepared, remediation will continue to be an important and necessary practice. Therefore, efforts should focus on helping those who are no longer in high school to gain the skills that will help them succeed in higher education while also supporting policies that could reduce the need for remediation. ♦

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Killing Academic Freedom Softly

The muzzling of professors who do not enjoy the luxury of tenure

By David L. Kirp

NOT SINCE THE 1970 contretemps over Angela Davis, the onetime Black Panther fired by the California Regents, and maybe not since the days of Joe McCarthy, has academic freedom been so prominently in the news. Larry Summers, Ward Churchill—the media are drawn to these controversies like the children of Hamelin heeding the Pied Piper's call. But almost no one is paying attention to a more pervasive assault on academic freedom: the muzzling (and consequent self-silencing) of those whose jobs hold no promise of tenure.

For the Rip Van Winkles who slept through the recent goings-on, here's a quick recap. Last winter featured Harvard President Larry Summers' ill-considered foray into gender and genetics. When the remarks were made public, there were calls from the Left for Summers' head and a "no confidence" vote by the Harvard faculty. "Let the man speak," the Right demanded.

Soon thereafter, Ward Churchill, a Native American professor at the University of Colorado, was lifted out of obscurity and into the hall of shame for having described the victims of the World Trade Center as "little Eichmanns." Defenders of academic freedom bemoaned the fact that several colleges withdrew speaking invitations once these vituperative remarks came to light. Meanwhile conservative critics took time off from vigorously defending Summers to demand Churchill's head; on Fox TV, Bill O'Reilly feasted on the hapless Native American for days on end. Then Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia, ventured a Solomonic resolution of a clash between pro-Israeli students and a Palestinian professor who had supposedly denigrated them. On Morningside Heights, both sides cried foul—and, of course, demanded Bollinger's head.

These events prompted noisy debates over this vexed and vital matter: How should professors' right to speak their minds be distinguished from professorial abusiveness, proselytizing and sheer quackery? "Tyranny of the enlightened" versus "the new McCarthyism"—from both sides of this ideological divide the insults flew.

There ought to be no debate about the proposition that college teachers can assign challenging readings, pose tough and controversial questions, set high standards and resist grade inflation. To tenured professors, these matters are as taken for granted as air. Yet in many institutions it's risky business for anyone who is not on the tenure track to behave in this way.

The number of such instructors is substantial. In 2001, full-time non-tenure track faculty accounted for a third of all full-time faculty, and those numbers are growing rapidly. Half of the newly-minted Ph.D.s who go into full-time teaching hold jobs with no prospect of tenure—and this doesn't count the Ph.D.s who can only secure part-time teaching assignments. Many of these no-hopers, it appears, enjoy precious little academic freedom.

I say "appears" because there is no way to know how many instructors are in this parlous situation. Deans and department heads, schooled by campus lawyers in the litigious ways of the world, are rarely foolish enough to fire someone on the grounds that the instructor is too intellectually challenging—that would risk, if not a lawsuit, at least embarrassing publicity. Rather, as the British say, these teachers are made redundant, told that their courses will no longer be offered, or simply informed, with no reason given, that there's no longer any need for their services.

Why might this happen? Perhaps a student with a heady sense of self-entitlement has complained about having been put upon in class; perhaps the instructor has gotten mixed reviews for being overly demanding; or perhaps a parent has complained that the topic of the day should be off limits for impressionable undergraduates. In an environment in which students are treated as customers and the customers know best, there are many reasons why an administrator might decide to show an adjunct the door. It's easy enough to hand out pink slips, since these jobs come with no guarantees; and college teaching remains a buyers' market, with unemployed Ph.D.s looking for piecemeal work.

Some states do not allow remedial education at public institutions, and several institutions have chosen to expel students who have severe academic deficiencies.

In 2001, full-time non-tenure track faculty accounted for a third of all full-time faculty, and those numbers are growing rapidly.

What's more, fear of such treatment prompts instructors to censor themselves—to give inflated grades, make anodyne assignments, hand out reading lists composed of pablum and keep those readings short. After all, why should a lecturer risk losing a teaching gig by saying something that might cause trouble? Speak truth to power is the mantra in academe, but these instructors are obliged to cover before power.

The American Association of University Professors, long-time guardians of academic freedom, can't count these cases. And because of the long odds and fear of being blackballed, adjuncts rarely file lawsuits against a school that has issued a long goodbye. A few years back, a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article recounted a fistful of examples. There

How should professors' right to speak their minds be distinguished from professorial abusiveness, proselytizing and sheer quackery?

were tales of instructors who had lost their jobs after talking about pornography in an ethics class, using racist language in a communications class in order to make a point about offensive speech, or criticizing Twelve-Step programs as cultish.

All this was news to me. Ever since, I've been trying to guesstimate the seriousness of the problem by conducting my own, decidedly unscientific experiment. Whenever I lecture on a college campus, I find a way to raise the issue. From the audience there invariably come nods and murmurs of recognition, and after the talk a couple of those murmurers tell me their stories.

The specifics vary but the themes are the same: the warnings from department chairs or kindly colleagues to be gentle interlocutors and charitable graders; above all not to wander into the dark forests of sex and politics, where the possibility of committing thought crimes is ever-present.

Whenever those tales are recounted, I recall the heresies I have uttered over the years—remarks that, if taken out of context, violate almost every cherished belief of both Right and Left. Those comments have all been in the service of getting students to think hard about complex questions of ethics and social justice: That's my vocation. Never once did I imagine the job might actually be at risk—but then again, I enjoy the luxury of tenure.

My unscientific experiment has another component. During these campus visits I tell the adjuncts' stories to tenured professors. They are "shocked, shocked," as Captain Renault famously says in "Casablanca." And then, invariably, they quickly change the subject.

Even professors who consider themselves champions of academic freedom—and that's almost all of us—seem to forget that while our freedom to speak our minds is important, it's equally essential that the freeway flyer who occupies a desk in the shared office down the hall be able to teach a challenging course. Ultimately we're all in the same boat, since the successful muzzling of any instructor, whatever his or her status, invites the institutional managers to adopt a cast of mind about contentious speech that potentially knows no limits.

Academic freedom is hardly the no-hopers' only problem. They are paid a pittance and receive no health benefits. They struggle along without job security, and so must keep hunting for new jobs as ceaselessly as birds hunt for food.

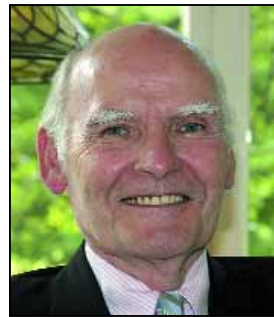
Peonage isn't the only way to treat these instructors. A number of universities—MIT and Duke among them—have recently established professors of practice, non-tenured multi-year contracts for talented teachers or practitioners who don't want the publish-or-perish life. Such arrangements give life to the rhetoric of an academic community. As NYU President John Sexton told his trustees, "new forms of faculty ought to exist because they bring value to the academic enterprise." Such institutional respect and academic freedom go hand in hand: Professors of practice, with as much job security as almost anyone in the private sector, will likely feel freer to speak their minds. But such benign university behavior is still a rarity; and because it is relatively expensive, the idea encounters resistance from the bean-counters.

Tenured professors are in a good position to speak out—to press university administrators to treat non-tenure-track faculty decently and to defend their classroom bravery. But these matters rarely receive attention from the professoriate, which by its behavior prefers the ignorance-is-bliss approach to the underside of academic life.

The chair of an economics department at a research university I visited recently put the point bluntly: "Anyone who isn't on the tenure track just isn't part of the real faculty." That's not exactly what the ideal of higher education as an intellectual commonwealth calls to mind. On the contrary, it's reminiscent of the deal that senior pilots at United Airlines struck with their bosses. Continue treating us like kings, those veteran aviators said to the bankrupt company, and we won't obligate you to give new pilots the same perks.

The United pilots actually come off looking better than the academic old guard. They did insist on decent treatment for the newcomers, and that's more than can be said of the professors. ♦

David L. Kirp, a frequent National CrossTalk contributor, is a professor at the Goldman School of Public Policy, at the University of California at Berkeley. The paperback edition of his latest book, "Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education," has recently been published.



Nine Principles

Serving the public good in a time of changing governance models for colleges and universities

By Joseph C. Burke

TALK ABOUT PUBLIC higher education has taken a different—some say dangerous—turn. Advocates spawn and spin a variety of new models mostly for flagship universities. They include student vouchers, charter or enterprise campuses, and performance compacts or contracts. Though the concepts differ, all involve more dependence on private markets and fundraising and more campus control over their operations, and especially student tuition. All would alter the traditional relations between state governments and public campuses by creating new hybrid institutions, much more private in funding and marketing, yet hopefully still public in purpose.

The talk currently centers on Colorado, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Washington. The discussions often include leaders mostly from flagship universities, and some state officials, with little publicity or participation from the general public.

Public higher education is too important to the society in a knowledge and information era to leave its form—and inevitably its function—to largely private talks between some state officials and university leaders. Before the talk turns to actions in some states, with the inevitable fallout that may cascade across the country, it is time to step back and discuss a set of principles to cling to in what could become a tidal wave of change.

When talk turns to change, the parties throw everything into the mix, in a classic case of the "garbage can theory" of decision-making. What complicates this mixture is that state and campus leaders clash on what to toss and what to keep. The talk also divides public higher education, with leaders of research universities advocating it and colleagues from community colleges and regional comprehensives afraid of its consequences.

Radical change—especially change done to colleges and universities—demands drastic consequences to drive action. One of Burke's Laws states that the interest of academics in change is in direct proportion to the distance from their campuses. The case for some change in public higher education appears compelling, if at times exaggerated. The share of state funding going to higher education has declined dramatically; and the prospects for a return to previous levels appears dim. Burgeoning enrollment in many states exacerbates the problem, as does the inevitable rise in higher education costs, resulting from clinging to traditional teaching technologies in an age of new learning techniques.

Calls for change come from flagship public universities. Speeches from presidents and chancellors trace the dismal descent of their campuses from state funded, to state assisted, to state related, to a final destination as state located. They propose a bargain between campus and capital: more autonomy over university operations, especially tuition; more accountability to states for improved performance; and level—even lower—but stable funding.

Community colleges and regional comprehensives are seldom part of the discussion and unlikely to benefit. Their leaders fear the proposals would undermine the public sector's clout in state capitals by privatizing one of its powerful parts. Proponents of the new models reply that increased funding would require a radical reformation in state tax systems to cover the new economy, which remains unlikely. Besides, under their plans everyone benefits and no one gets hurt. If public research universities require only level, even reduced, state funding, increased appropriations become available for the other public colleges and universities.

The real danger of these bargains comes from making dramatic changes in the governance without a collective discussion of their consequences. Before continuing separate talks between some state and university leaders about remodeling higher education go too far, a representative group of business, civic, government and education leaders in each state—and perhaps in the country as a whole—should convene to give some collective thought to the following principles.

1. Limited authority means less accountability.

State officials frequently forget that more authority means more accountability; less authority means less accountability. The bargaining of more authority for more account-

It is time to step back and discuss a set of principles to cling to in what could become a tidal wave of change.

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ability merely extends the reinventing government movement that transformed the old accountability of control by bureaucratic regulations to the new concern with desired results. States can hold leaders of public colleges and universities accountable for performance only by giving them the authority to manage their internal operations. Despite this truism, some states still require designated results from public colleges and universities, while retaining detailed regulations.

Deregulation should depend not on special charters or compacts, but on an assessment of management capacity and internal controls of a college or university. The second element of the new accountability demands improved performance on designated priorities. States should extend management authority to, and demand performance accountability

The share of state funding going to higher education has declined dramatically; and the prospects for a return to previous levels appear dim.

from, all public colleges and universities. They should lose this authority only when they abuse that responsibility and fail to produce the required results.

2. Deregulation is possible; autonomy is not.

The only autonomous organizations are those that are fully self-supporting, which leaves out all colleges and universities. Even constitutional autonomy has its limits, for the power of the governor and the legislature over funding limits its exercise in practice. Calls for campus autonomy for public universities sound self-serving in state capitols. More freedom in budget transfers,

funds carry over, personnel systems, and capital financing is not only possible but also achievable, but autonomy is not.

3. In accountability, more is seldom better.

Too many accountability programs turn back the clock to complying with regulations rather than producing results. Too many detailed reports obscure critical results. Too many indicators mean no priorities. An accountability report with scores of goals and indicators suggests a document designed to demonstrate external compliance rather than institutional performance.

4. Public higher education is too important to society to leave its form and funding largely to private negotiations between state officials and university leaders.

Business and civic leaders, who recognize the relation between authority and accountability, resources and results, should take the lead with state and university officials in preparing public agendas and discussing new models for higher education in each state. Business and civic leaders can make a convincing case in state capitols. Besides, many of them are also college and universities trustees, who should consider public needs and campus concerns.

5. Public universities must demonstrate that they care more about serving the public good than raising their peer prestige.

Too many flagship universities pursue the resource and reputation model of excellence advocated by *U.S. News and World Report*. As the signs of public ownership receded with diminished revenues, the danger rises of a loss of public purpose. Any new model of governance must meet the test of enhancing the capacity of public universities to meet student and state needs and not just to compete with private institutions for peer prestige. The architectural admonition is correct: Form should follow function.

6. Market demands and the public good are not synonymous.

Market demands are usually short-term and respond to individual wants, while the public good is usually long-term and reflects collective needs. Leaving accountability and performance in higher education to student, business and other markets does not always add up to the public good. Rising markets often mark momentary fads. Colleges and universities must continue critical programs that society needs but does not want.

7. The toughest accountability test for top research universities after remodeling will be support for student access and school improvement.

Articles in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* on class in America suggest that the role of higher education in social mobility has declined. Upper class students educated at the best elementary and secondary schools, often private, increasingly fill the admission slots in the most selective public universities. Student access and school improvement go together. Several public universities in Virginia, North Carolina and Texas have committed funds to ensure that qualified students from poor families can enroll. Though commendable, these programs will not work without a continuing university commitment to help in raising the public schools in their states to a level that makes many more of their graduates acceptable to flagship universities.

Those universities should ask themselves three questions. How selective in admissions should public universities become? Should they be as selective as their markets allow? And how engaged are they in collaborative efforts of school improvement? Their answers should not depend on what prestigious private colleges do, but on what public universities should do to serve the public good.

8. Preserving the unity of public higher education is an educational and political necessity.

Although public research universities are more likely to benefit from the new governance models, all proposals should support the best interest of all sectors of public higher education. Unity, not division, is essential for higher education success as well as clout in state capitols.

Most of the new models are available only to top research universities. Their student demand, which far exceeds their capacity, allows them to benefit from sizeable tuition increases. Out-of-state demand often permits tuition levels above full cost. Flagship universities can also raise substantial sums through private fundraising and sponsored research.

These universities can pursue their own interest while helping their colleagues in community colleges and comprehensive universities. They should champion delegating operating authority to all public colleges and universities. They should also pledge to lobby for increased higher education funding, even after compact agreements on their own appropriations.

9. Governors and legislators in most states will not allow public colleges and universities to set their own tuition.

Control over tuition is “the gold standard” for public universities in pursuing the new governance models. But governors and legislators fear it may become a “free standard” allowing universities to raise student charges to unacceptable levels. The debate should not remain largely an argument over tuition. National higher education associations and those for state legislators and governors should sponsor the development of models that combine tuition levels, family income and state appropriations.

Higher tuition will provoke discussion about university costs and the use of tuition revenues. How much of the revenue will go to undergraduate education as opposed to graduate studies and research?

I stop at nine principles, remembering Premier Clemenceau’s quip about President Wilson’s 14 Points: “Even God had only ten!”

Let me end with a proposition, not a principle.

The global reach of knowledge and information means that higher education knows no boundaries, even those of states!

Remodeling public higher education deserves national as well as state deliberation. When problems and possibilities become increasingly common, remodeling even a part of public higher education becomes a concern for all, and not just some states. Public higher education is a state matter, but it is also a national necessity. If no man remained an island in John Donne’s day, surely no state retains that luxury in our day.

We should think more about confirming principles before changing governance practices in public higher education. ♦

Joseph C. Burke is director of the Public Higher Education Program at the Rockefeller Institute of Government, in Albany, N.Y. He edited and co-authored “Achieving Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic and Market Demands” (Jossey-Bass 2005).

ILLINOIS

from page 1

or private.

The agency’s maximum grants, for the lowest-income students, had long been enough to pay the state’s average public university tuition. But by 2002 tuition had pulled ahead. And then, over the next two years, the state cut MAP money by 7.7 percent, and the average yearly grant fell by 11 percent to \$2,355 from \$2,646.

In Illinois neither the governor nor the legislature has any say over how much tuition the universities charge or how they and the student aid commission spend the state money parceled out to them. But

politicians had plenty to say about the tuition run-up. Campaigning for governor in 2002, U.S. Representative Rod Blagojevich vowed, if elected, to do something about the situation. At the same time, Kevin Joyce, then an assistant football coach at Chicago’s St. Xavier University, was making his first run for the state House of Representatives. Joyce says he made the same promise to college students working in his campaign.

Both men, Chicago-area Democrats, won.

The next legislative session produced a variety of proposals—to cap annual tuition increases at, for instance, five percent or the rate of inflation, or to give legislators

veto power over proposed increases.

Joyce advanced the competing notion of a four-year lock on tuition, room, board and fees. Although he didn’t realize it at the time, a plan along those broad lines had been in place at Western Illinois University since 2000. The universities were initially put off by his idea, Joyce said, but a turning point came when the University of Illinois—with roughly half the state’s public university students and half its appropriation for university operations—bought in. Chester S. Gardner, the university’s vice president for academic affairs, said he was persuaded by students’ enthusiasm for the plan and by Joyce’s willingness to be talked out of including room, board and fees in

the fix.

When the plan went into effect a year ago, Illinois became the first state to embrace a type of pricing system then in effect at only a handful of U.S. colleges, most of them small and private. The law bore a politically appealing and grandiose name—“Truth in Tuition.”

“As if we were lying before!” scoffed Walter V. Wendler, chancellor of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. His assessment of the law is brief and blunt: “I do not like it.” He described the plan as, to some extent, an overreaction to tuition increases that, at SIU-Carbondale anyway, were made all the more necessary by years of keeping the lid on. “We’re trying to build a

Trends in Tuition at Illinois Public Universities*

Numbers are left to right

(1) 2001-2002 single tuition, (2) 2005-2006 continuing rate and (3) 2005-2006 four-year fixed rate

Chicago State University	\$2,364	\$4,560	\$5,220
Eastern Illinois University	\$2,906	\$4,118	\$4,629
Governors State University	\$2,280	\$4,080	\$4,470
Illinois State University	\$3,219	\$4,123	\$5,400
Northeastern Illinois University	\$2,340	\$3,780	\$4,800
Northern Illinois University	\$3,150	\$4,813	\$5,261
Western Illinois University	**	**	\$4,968
Southern Illinois University-Carbondale	\$3,011	\$4,920	\$5,310
Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville	\$2,388	\$3,900	\$4,350
University of Illinois-Chicago	\$3,232	\$5,660	\$6,194
University of Illinois-Springfield	\$2,873	\$3,953	\$4,575
University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign	\$3,724	\$6,436	\$7,042

* for an in-state undergraduate taking 30 credit hours a year

**All students at Western Illinois University have been on a guaranteed rate without a time limit since 2000.

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education

research university," he said. "The costs are rising. We have lost ground, and one of the reasons is we've been so conscious of keeping the costs low."

David Breneman, dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, says the Illinois plan has the effect of transferring the tuition risk from students and their families to the universities. W. Randall Kangas, the University of Illinois' assistant vice president for administration and budget, conceded it's "a big risk" for the university. Wendler cited the recent blind-siding spike in gasoline prices to illustrate just how risky the new, longer-range forecasts can be. "Anybody that provides a good or service wants to set costs as close as possible to the time the good or service is delivered," he explained.

Wendler is also concerned that, because the universities' wiggle room on tuition increasingly comes down to freshmen, they will have to pay "a disproportionate share" of unforeseen budget shortfalls. Nobody disputes that assertion or denies that guaranteed tuition is, almost of necessity, front-loaded, with underclassmen paying more than their fair share of costs.

Any such plan "generally means there's going to be a bigger increase up-front," said Paul Lingenfelter, executive director of the State Higher Education Executive Officers association. But, he added, "Just

like with an insurance policy, you pay for risk protection."

The University of Illinois' Gardner also used the insurance analogy, saying students are paying a premium for their educations in their first couple of years so that they'll never have to pay more, and the university "can be certain we have the money to pay for their education in the last two years." Gardner admitted that students who drop out of school after just two years or less will have overpaid. And they won't get refunds.

Sylvia Manning, chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago, likens guaranteed tuition to a fixed-rate mortgage, costlier than the variable-rate kind at the outset but with the attractive advantage of predictability. "I think the primary benefit of it is peace of mind," she said. For President Al Goldfarb of Western Illinois University, now in its seventh year of guaranteeing student costs, the beauty of the plan is the certainty it provides parents. "They would like to know what they have to pay," he said. "They don't want to be surprised later."

That is exactly the point, according to parent Colleen Schloemann, who said the guarantee is "really nice for parents," making it easier for them to budget for college expenses.

With its four-year time horizon, the tuition plan is tailor-made for students like Greta Schloemann at places like Urbana-Champaign, where most students live on campus, study full-time and have a shot at graduating in four years. But for those who stretch out their college careers, sticker shock awaits. "Once the guarantee expires, you pay the non-guaranteed rate, which increases year to year," said Gardner. "That could discourage students from continuing. On the other hand it could also encourage some students to finish in four years."

Therein lies an eventual dilemma for the 45 percent of the 12,000 students at Northeastern Illinois University, in Chicago, who take classes part-time. They, too, get the four-year tuition pledge, as do transfer students.

Katrina Berry, 46, falls into both categories. An administrative assistant in an architect's office, she enrolled at Northeastern part-time last year after a 25-year break from college.

Because she entered with an associate's degree that gave her a leg up in credits, Berry expects to be able to finish her bachelor's degree before her guarantee expires in 2008. As for students who can't beat their tuition-guarantee time clocks, "We hope they see that education is a great enough benefit that they will keep coming," said Mark Wilcockson, vice president for administration and finance at the non-residential campus in Chicago.

Residential campuses, meanwhile, continue to have a free hand to raise room and board, which already costs as much as, or more than, tuition in many cases. Fees—those miscellaneous add-ons for items like health care, on-campus transportation and recreation—are also beyond the law's reach, automatically adding anywhere from a few hundred to a couple of thousand dollars to students' bills.

Special fees for any number of special-case programs and courses further serve to up students' ante. These extra charges peeve Pam Duffield, a 21-year-old senior art student at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. She offers the example of a silk screening class, which, besides an \$85 sign-up fee, cost her \$140 for supplies.

As for tuition, what used to be singular is becoming more and more confusingly plural at Illinois' state universities. In complying with the law, all have moved, airline-like, to differential pricing—different rates for different students, depending on when they first enrolled. This year all of the campuses are posting at least two fixed rates for in-state undergraduates—one for brand new students and one for last year's entrants.

As Colleen Schloemann noted somewhat wistfully, her family's sophomore goddaughter at Urbana-Champaign is locked into an annual rate hundreds of dollars lower than daughter Greta's—\$6,460 to be exact.

Lastly, all of the universities now post a separate rate for those generally referred to as "continuing" students, the ones who enrolled before the tuition law went into effect. In time, students who have outstayed their guarantees will be lumped into this catch-all tuition category.

For two years now, continuing students have been paying the least, the newest students the most, their premiums this year ranging from eight to 31 percent. But being subject to annual increases, continuing students are projected to eventually lose their advantage to upperclassmen on flat rates.

Time—specifically another two years—will tell. By then, the law will be fully phased in and today's freshmen and sophomores will be juniors and seniors. All of the universities' schedules will look something like Western Illinois', with different prices for each of the last four years for new students. Western even goes so far as



PHOTOS BY LARRY EVANS, BLACK STAR FOR CROSSTALK

James L. Kaplan, chairman of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, thinks prospects for more funding are "semi-favorable."

to maintain all of its fixed rates for continuously enrolled students all the way back to the 2000 rate—\$2,730, compared with \$4,968 for this year's freshmen.

Whether the other universities will keep their fixed rates in effect beyond the requisite four years remains to be seen.

The politicians who settled for Truth in Tuition never claimed it satisfied their original goal of reining in tuition. Even Blagojevich, signing the law as governor in 2003, hailed it as a boon for parents, "a binding contract that locks in the cost of tuition." That same year he signed a state budget that cut higher education spending by \$147 million, or 5.5 percent.

Truth to tell, while insulating successive classes of new students against tuition-bill trauma, the law has done nothing to brake the long-term tuition trend, which continues upward without letup.

Even with the new four-year rates

"We're coming through (financial hard times) with minimal impact on students, except for tuition."

**—JAMES L. KAPLAN,
CHAIRMAN OF THE ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

clouding what used to be a transparent tuition picture, it is still possible to track the trend in something like the old-fashioned way. Just look at what has been happening to the universities' prices for those continuing students, the equivalent of the one-size-fits-all tuitions of old.

Data from the Illinois Board of Higher Education show that, typically, the universities have raised those charges for full-time students by seven or eight percent both this year and last. By far the largest jump was last year's 29 percent at Chicago State University, the result of an increase in its per-hour rate and a decision to start

continued next page



"We're trying to build a research university," and "Truth in Tuition" is not helpful, says Walter V. Wendler, chancellor of Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

from preceding page

charging students for credit hours up to 15 instead of 12.

For those same reasons, while the other state universities pegged their first guaranteed tuition at a median of 16 percent over their previous single-year rates, Chicago State's jumped 45 percent.

This year all of the universities raised guaranteed rates over last year's, generally between eight and ten percent. North-

Illinois' guaranteed tuition plan is, almost of necessity, front-loaded, with underclassmen paying more than their fair share of costs.

eastern Illinois University set the pace with a jump of 29 percent.

Vice President Wilcockson describes this as an anomaly, reflecting the university's needs to make up for underpricing itself last year and to replenish a "resource base" eroded by years of striving to charge the lowest public university tuition in the state. Now eighth out of 12 statewide, Northeastern remains the lowest-tuition public university in the Chicago area.

The University of Illinois' Urbana-Champaign and Chicago campuses remain the price leaders, first and second, respectively, among the state's 12 university campuses. While tuition percentage increases on both campuses have been middling these last couple of years, they have come on top of bases swollen by a \$1,000-a-year tuition surcharge the university imposed on each undergraduate on the two campuses in 2002 and then made permanent. The university earmarked a portion of the proceeds for redistribution to low-income students whose MAP grants were coming up ever shorter of tuition costs.

The university's budget for need-based aid has continued to grow—to \$24 million this year from \$2 million in 2000—as the university deliberately has shifted to what



LARRY EVANS, BLACK STAR, FOR CROSSTALK

Northwestern Illinois University's tuition jumped 29 percent this year to make up for several years of underfinancing, says Vice President Mark Wilcockson.

Kangas described as a high-tuition/high-aid policy. Just as at private universities, he said, "Increasingly, the tuition you're paying out of pocket (at the University of Illinois) is based on your ability to pay." Despite a sheaf of national studies in recent years suggesting that skyrocketing tuitions are pricing lower-income students out of college, Kangas said he's always on the lookout for evidence of that happening at the University of Illinois but has yet to find it.

The proof, Kangas believes, is in Pell grants. "If you look at the number of Pell recipients versus the total number of undergraduates, it hasn't changed in 20 years," he said. Though those numbers bounce around from year to year, they stay within a "pretty predictable range" of, for instance, 17 percent at the Urbana-Champaign campus.

Clearly, the tuition hasn't discouraged applicants overall. This fall the flagship campus overshot its 7,000 target by enrolling a record 7,600 freshmen.

This fall also has brought a little relief for all of the state's college students, especially the needier among them: a MAP grant pot that the state has sweetened by two percent, or \$8 million. The move has had the serendipitous side effect of making the program eligible again for \$3.7 million in federal funds that it lost as a result of previous MAP cutbacks.

With a grand total of \$349.7 million in MAP money this year, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission expects to help 145,000 students with grants averaging about \$2,400, roughly the same amount as five years ago. Even with this infusion of funds, however, the commission will continue the rationing that hard times have forced. Besides striking some students from the eligibility rolls, last year the agency trimmed all grants by ten or 11 percent of what they would otherwise have been. This year's reduction will be an across-the-board nine percent.

However diminished, the MAP program is still big. Illinois, long second or third among the states in total need-based student aid, slipped to fifth place—behind California, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas—in the most recent survey of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs.

The public universities, meanwhile, remain under the state's budget gun, most of them with an appropriation identical to last year's. The best that officials can say about the situation is that at least they didn't take another hit. Northeastern's Wilcockson spoke wearily of "a commitment at the state level not to increase income taxes or sales taxes...a climate where they're not enhancing revenue."

Appropriations are not the whole problem, he added. The state now requires public universities to pay a greater share of their employees' retirement and health insurance costs. And Wilcockson said he has heard talk of dumping some workers compensation costs on the universities next year.

This step-child treatment has taken some getting used to by the universities. From the mid-1990s to 2002, they had been the state's fair-haired, basking in annual

state funding increases that always beat inflation by a few points. When a legislature that had been so predictably giving began abruptly to take away, it was a particularly stinging slap in the face.

An embarrassment, too. This was the state that sat at the head of the class in "Measuring Up 2000," a state-by-state report card for higher education produced by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (which also publishes *National CrossTalk*). It didn't get much better than Illinois' A's in three of five categories, including one of only three nationwide for affordability. But come "Measuring Up 2004," Illinois had slipped back a few rows, with a still-respectable B average but a lowly D for affordability. In a report that awarded no A's in that department and two-thirds of the states a flat-out F, it could have been far worse.

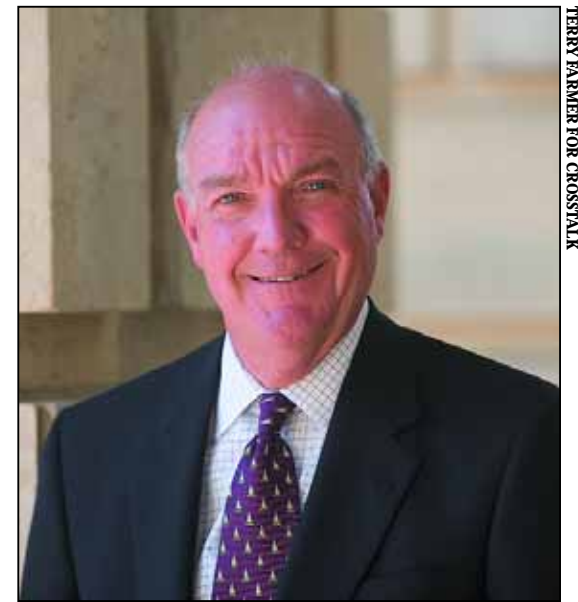
Nobody is predicting that Illinois will regain its gold star for affordability any time soon. Certainly not Thomas Lamont. A lawyer by profession now filling in as executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, he takes a dim view of the situation. It is also a relatively long and inside view, the result of his having served five years on the higher education board and 13 as a trustee of the University of Illinois, some of those years simultaneously, before agreeing a year ago to take this job on a temporary basis.

To Lamont's thinking, this year's level state funding is just another take-away in sheep's clothing. "It's not level funding for the institutions," he said. "In reality their fixed costs certainly haven't remained level. Be it energy, be it salary, be it administrative costs, they creep up. To suggest this can continue much longer, and you won't eventually affect the quality (of education) doesn't stand to reason." Illinois public higher education is "on a precipice," he added. "We've got to be careful we don't fall off."

James L. Kaplan, a Chicago lawyer and chairman of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, said Lamont overstates the case, that the state's seeming fall from public higher education grace is "not that dramatic." He said the state board and the universities have significantly reduced overhead and improved productivity, and that the prospects for funding are "semi-favorable." "We're coming through (financial hard times) with minimal impact on students, except for tuition," he said.

Lamont's contract is due to run out in November. His successor will be the fourth person to sit in the board's executive director's chair in less than four years.

Representative Joyce said he and all members, both Democrats and Republicans, of the House higher education committee add up to a determined pro-higher education coalition. "You're not going to get the cuts you got before," he said. Senator Ed Maloney—another Chicago-area Democrat, who shares home office space with Joyce and is the new chairman of the Senate higher education committee—can also be counted on, Joyce added.



TERRY FARMER FOR CROSSTALK

Illinois higher education "is on a precipice," says Thomas Lamont, executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. "We've got to be careful we don't fall off."

Two years after passing the tuition law, Illinois still is the only state to legislate against escalating tuition bills in this way. Joyce is not rushing to judgment. "Five years from when this became law, that's when we have to look at it to see if it's successful," he said. "If nothing else, we've created an awareness that universities can't just throw their costs onto the student. [The law] has also created an awareness in the legislature that if the schools aren't funded properly, they have to raise tuition."

In time, universities and students alike will be able to gauge the law's success by whether they made or lost money on it, with one side's gain likely to be the other's loss. Sandy Baum, professor of economics at Skidmore College in Saratoga, New York, and an expert on college costs, sees the universities as having the upper hand. "It's hard to imagine that students would be paying less than they ordinarily would," she said. For a rough idea, she said, students could compare their four years of identical tuition payments with what stu-

All of Illinois' state universities have moved, airline-like, to differential pricing—different rates for different students, depending on when they first enrolled.

dents on the continuing rate paid during that same time.

For now, the Schloemanns are grateful that daughter Greta's rate is safely locked in, along with loans to ease some of the immediate fiscal pain. But there's more to come—son Max, a high school senior, also is eyeing the University of Illinois. This much the family can count on: His tuition will be higher than his sister's. ♦

Susan C. Thomson is the former higher education reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.