The Military’s Next Generation

Prestigious National Defense University seeks to create strategic thinkers

By Kathy Witkowski
WASHINGTON, D.C.

I T PROBABLY CAME as no surprise that the Bush administration’s plan to invade Iraq was heavily debated on college campuses across the nation in the months leading up to the war. But it might surprise you to learn that similarly frank discussions were going on among the students at National Defense University, the nation’s premiere graduate institution for military officers and federal employees engaged in national security. It certainly surprised Air Force Colonel and NDU student Mark Wasserman, who estimated in early March that only about half of his classmates in the school’s prestigious Industrial College of the Armed Forces favored military action in Iraq.

“[The] war is now a reality, and the debate was about whether we should support the president? Wow, that’s interesting,” Wasserman said. “Military people not supporting military action in Iraq.

That is not to suggest that NDU students are disloyal. Quite the opposite: They are deeply committed to protecting their country, which is why they’re at the school to begin with. It is also why NDU’s two graduate schools—the National War College (NW) and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF)—emphasize academic accomplishment and reputation. (See page 6.)

In stark contrast to the Pentagon’s often bellicose rhetoric, National Defense University’s approach to foreign policy and military firepower is remarkably cautious, even humble.

NDU’s main campus is located at Fort Lesley J. McNair, in Washington, D.C., an active Army base just across the Potomac River from the Pentagon. Military officers make up two thirds of its 500 graduate students, the bulk of its annual $102.5 million budget comes from the Pentagon, and the university president reports directly to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Its hallways are laden with military art and memorabilia; in accordance with the school’s dress code, students wear either military uniforms or business suits, and their speech is peppered with military acronyms.

But in stark contrast to the Pentagon’s often bellicose rhetoric, NDU’s approach to foreign policy and military firepower is remarkably cautious, even humble. “We believe that the military resort should be the last option,” said James Keagle, NDU’s vice president for academic affairs at National Defense University.

Colorado’s “Grand Experiment”

Voucher program could give the state’s colleges a new lease on life

By Pamela Burdman
DENVER, COLORADO

A S COLLEGES AND universities around the country find themselves facing the budget noose, policymakers in Colorado have devised a voucher-like proposal that they hope will give the state’s institutions of higher education a new lease on life.

The first of its kind in the country, the plan would turn the traditional form of state appropriations on its head, routing state subsidies for education directly to students, instead of institutions. As envisioned by the panel that hatched the idea, the higher education commission that refined it, and the legislators who are seeking to enact it into law, the new funding mechanism would have a dual effect: enticing more low-income students to attend college while allowing four-year universities the tuition increases they say they badly need.

The plan is designed to address the peculiarities of Colorado’s fiscal landscape—namely by liberating schools from constitutional limits on revenue increases. Since 1993, state government has operated under the Colorado Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights, or TABOR, amendment, which strictly limits increases in state revenue, including tuition. By placing a large chunk of institutions’ traditional revenue in students’ hands, the plan would reduce schools’ revenue below the ceiling required for exemp-

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In This Issue

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, once best known for its winning basketball teams and their accompanying scandals, is gaining in academic accomplishment and reputation. (See page 6.)
Representative Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-California) heads the education subcommittee that will shepherd the Higher Education Reauthorization Act through Congress later this year. He also intends to introduce a bill designed to curtail the rising cost of higher education. McKeon, a former western wear retailer, was first elected to the House in 1992. This interview took place in his office on Capitol Hill, and was conducted by freelance writer Ron Feemster, a frequent contributor to National CrossTalk.

Ron Feemster: About five years ago you helped create a commission to study the cost of higher education. The commission concluded that tuition costs were rising too fast. At the time you called on colleges and universities to take voluntary measures to control tuition prices in higher education. Now it would appear that you are making higher education institutions accountable, using a bill that you helped create a commission to study. Why did you help create the commission? Howard “Buck” McKeon: Colleges and universities kept increasing their tuition. That’s what happened. You know I don’t call this “price controls.” I’m a Republican. I’m a conservative. I don’t follow having price controls. What we are talking about is coming up with a bill that will let the universities and colleges control their costs. And if they don’t do it, we will have to see about some other measures. So the bill we are talking about—part of the bill, the affordability index—says that if you raise your tuition and fees more than twice the rate of inflation two years in a row, you will have to explain to the Department of Education why. If you continue and do it a third year, then we will look at some kind of sanctions.

RF: You have been fairly specific in what you think those kind of sanctions are going to be—withdrawal federal funding from the schools who don’t keep a tight rein on tuition.

BM: Right now we contribute about thirty percent of revenue to higher education. And so sometimes I think we are an accomplice in helping them raise their fees, which drives some people out of higher education. We get statistics that say that about 40 percent of people who are qualified to go are not able to go to a college or university because of the cost. That’s after we’ve increased Pell Grants from $2,000 to $4,050 on my watch as chairman.

We’ve increased other college student aid. We’ve been putting in more and more money at the federal level. We’ve driven interest rates down to make student loans more affordable. But colleges keep raising tuition and fees, and the states have been lowering their contribution. We think that we all need to come together. We need the feds, the schools, parents and the states. Everybody has to get involved with the solution to this problem.

RF: But if you cut someone off from federal funding…

BM: We’re not cutting anybody off. They will make that decision. The schools need to come to the table and look at their costs.

RF: What if a school thinks it can no longer offer the level of product they feel they have to offer at the price that the federal government requires?

BM: Wait a minute. The federal government is a partner in this. We’re putting in a lot of money. I remember one of my critics saying something about how this is free enterprise. You know the way I look at free enterprise. When I was in business before I came to Congress, I paid 35 to 40 percent of my profits to the federal government. The schools receive money. That’s a little difference. So if we’re going to be sending money, maybe we should have a voice in what they do with that money.

The schools aren’t my enemy. The schools are doing a great service. And they need to do it. But what they need to be doing is to watch their costs. To have sufficient controls so that the 40 percent of young people who can’t get into college just because of cost would have a shot at it.

RF: Tell me in a little more detail how this program will work. When are you going to introduce the bill?

BM: We don’t have a definite time frame. We’ll be holding hearings first. We’ve just talked about one thing: the affordability index. There are other things we’re going to do in the bill, too. We want to see what we can do to cut back federal regulation. If they can show us things that are driving up costs that come from the federal government, let us take a whack at that. Let us see if we can cut out those things. I want to help them cut costs, not increase costs.

Anything creative that we can do. We need to come together and not be confrontational about this. We need to come together and say what can we do to keep these rates down so that we can broaden access so that this 40 percent that can’t now get into a college or university can get into a school.

RF: What do you see as federal regulations that you could eliminate? Certainly people have come to you asking to get rid of this or that regulation.

BM: We put in a bill that we call FEDUP, because we have 800 pages of federal regulation that deal with higher education. So I contacted all of the schools, and we got over 3,000 responses from schools about things they would like to see cut out of or simplified or streamlined. We put it in a bill that was non-controversial and bipartisan. When we got to the final markup the other side had a lot of amendments and we had to pull the bill back.

RF: It seems to me that you are being a slight bit disingenuous not to say that there is a price-control element of this bill. You can say it’s somebody’s choice if they want to wear a parachute when they are sky-diving…

BM: I guess you could say that. I would choose a parachute. However, there is a little difference. If I’m jumping out of a plane, and I have a choice of parachute or no parachute, the choice is pretty simple. But schools have more choices. At this point there is no reason for them to keep their costs under control. I’m hoping that we can get enough focus on the problem that they will be able to find adequate ways to keep their tuition increases in line so that they can expand access.

RF: Five or six years ago, after the cost commission’s report appeared, you were calling for colleges to take voluntary measures to control costs. Now you are increasing the pressure on them—increasing the incentive for them to cut costs.

BM: That’s it. It’s a good incentivising program. I was in the western wear business when Nixon imposed price controls in the 1970s. They never worked and they said was everything has to stay at the price that you’re selling it now until we give you approval to raise the prices. One of the big items that we carried, the most popular item, was Levi’s 501 blue jeans with the little red tag on the back. The government said we have to sell those at a certain price. Levi Strauss said we can’t make money doing that so we won’t make many of those. Eventually Levi’s would get approval for the price to go up two dollars, and then they’d make some more. Price controls didn’t do anything.

That’s not what we’re looking for. What we’re looking for are some real sincere efforts to make college affordable for all of our population. Everybody should have the opportunity. The federal role in education is to expand access.

RF: The higher education community is very diverse. Some institutions receive much more federal funding than others. Do you think you have a one-size-fits-all solution? Or do you think you will have to modify this to accommodate different schools?

BM: I don’t know. That’s why we’ll hold hearings and get input from people. We’ve got to have the debate. I’ve said a lot of times that one size doesn’t fit all, that you can’t solve the problems out of Washington. However, they keep coming to us for solutions, and the only solution they want is more money. Someone has to pay that. We pay it out of taxes. And the people who can’t to school pay it out of lost opportunities.

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COLORADO

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tion from TABOR—a key reason the state’s two research universities favor the proposal. But since distributing dollars to students could help keep higher education funding on the public’s agenda, the notion is drawing interest from policymakers in other states as well.

Some higher education finance experts say the voucher plan can not work without a boost in financial aid dollars.

“This is the boldest plan I’ve seen,” said David Longanecker, executive director of the Boulder-based Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. “This could be the way to secure the long-term future for higher education in Colorado. I think a lot of states will pay attention.”

Longanecker, a former U.S. assistant secretary of education and former director of Colorado’s Commission on Higher Education, believes that in addition to its fiscal environment, Colorado’s conservative political climate and traditionally low public support for higher education make it an ideal candidate for this sort of experiment.

But the legislation’s destiny remained yoked to higher education’s budget fortunes, which were in considerable doubt. After slashing higher education spending from $686 to $602 million in the current year, legislators were seeking to trim another $69 million for 2003-04 as budget talks got serious in late March. Against that grim fiscal backdrop, the plan seemed as risky as it seemed urgent.

“The state of higher education is going to be extremely difficult if we pass this legislation,” said Peggy Lamm, a former Democratic legislator who chairs the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. “But if we don’t pass it, it will be much worse. We are way past the fat. We’re into the sinew and getting to the muscles and bones.”

Though the concept of college vouchers sounds brand new, it actually has a history in Colorado. In the late 1970s, conservative legislators kicked around the idea as a way of making a case for a K-12 plan. And back in 1996, when several states were looking at the voucher idea, the Colorado House of Representatives considered a higher education voucher bill, which would have made the grants available to students at both public and private colleges. Partly because it could have drained funding at both public and private colleges. Partly because it could have drained funding from $686 to $602 million in the current year, legislators were seeking to trim another $69 million for 2003-04 as budget talks got serious in late March. Against that grim fiscal backdrop, the plan seemed as risky as it seemed urgent.

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Colorado's blue ribbon panel on higher education made a point of avoiding the most contentious aspect of K–12 voucher plans—the funding of private institutions.

state care about, like K–12 funding, it will be harder to cut.”

By the time it was introduced on March 20, the proposal had garnered significant attention, with positive editorials from the state's two largest newspapers and support from the higher education CEOs as well as

The voucher plan’s success depends on getting accurate information to every high school freshman, says Tim Foster, executive director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

the Colorado Student Association. Though its introduction was repeatedly delayed as the bill underwent a series of revisions, it hit the House floor with 39 sponsors—five more than needed to clear the House.

Still, the bill's future was far from certain. When House leaders remaining in the session, it needed to clear several committees whose members had not signed on as sponsors. And its key benefits for higher education—guaranteed funding floors and tuition flexibility—left austerity-minded legislators wary of creating an entitlement and writting higher education a blank check.

“If [King] pleases us and the Democrats on this, he's going to make the fiscal conservatives angry,” said Ryan McMaken, executive director of the student association. “If he pleases the fiscal conservatives, we're going to bail. Everywhere you look, there's a coalition waiting to kill the bill. It's a pretty wild situation at this point.” CU's Hoffman wasn't much more optimistic: “It's not even worth doing if they don't fully fund the vouchers.”

If it does pass, the proposal's success in increasing college participation among low-income and minority students will depend largely on whether the blue ribbon panel was correct in its prediction that the savings accounts will entice more students to attend college. While community college tuition will decrease, the scheme allows for increases at the four-year institutions—especially if they achieve enterprise status. Students could be looking at very high numbers. If CU-Boulder's undergraduate tuition next year reaches $3,910, as expected, that figure could increase another five percent plus the $4,000 amount of the voucher for a total tuition of $8,105 in 2004-05, the first year of the program.

Some researchers, including one who presented his findings to the panel, say that students are priced out by such high-tuition prices. “The piece that they're ignoring is that, particularly for low-income students, these students tend to be more influenced by changes in price than by changes in financial aid,” said Donald Heller, associate professor at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Pennsylvania State University. “I would expect that $4,000 increase in price to have more of a negative impact on the probability that a low-income student would enroll than would the offsetting $4,000 voucher.”

CU-Boulder student leader Michael Donnelly is a senior finance major, opposes the plan for that reason. “I think a lot of students already know they're receiving a state subsidy, and they'll be turned off at a higher tuition. This is kind of like a shell game.”

—CU-BOULDER STUDENT LEADER MICHAEL DONNELLY

Colorado provides a pitiful amount of assistance for needy kids. For me to support legislation like this, there needs to be a corresponding increase in financial aid from the state of Colorado.”

In response, CU's Hoffman says she is committed to plowing a significant proportion of any tuition increases into financial aid—about one-third on the Boulder campus and 25 percent at CU's other campuses in Colorado Springs and Denver. Colorado State University President Al Yates predicts a number closer to 15 percent at CSU.

Yates lobbied hard to ensure that any state financial aid dollars fed up because of the decreased community college tuition would be available to the four-year sector, and that was reflected in an amendment to the bill. CCHE had no projections, however, as to whether it will cover tuition increases. Nor did Joe May, chancellor of the 13-campus community college system. “We've not been able to run any models to look at the savings,” he said.

While most public universities offer institutional aid, research has shown that it is less effective than statewide programs. The biggest disadvantage is that it's not as visible or predictable. You never know what you'll have when you jump through the admissions hoop,” said Paul Lin- genfelter, executive director of the Denver- based group, State Higher Education Executive Officers. “The second disadvantage is that, at the institutional level, the
typical practice is for merit and need to get blended. Schools look at students’ academic ability, their athletic ability, and tuition discounting comes into play. If your primary consideration for a certain pot of money is to meet the need of students with limited resources, it will be more visible and have a greater impact and be used more effectively if it’s at the state level.”

CCHE’s Foster, a believer in need-based aid, said he was hard-pressed to increase funding in the current budget climate. One proposal emerging from the legislature’s joint budget committee in late March would have increased the state’s $51 million expenditure for need-based financial aid by ten percent, while eliminating the $10.5 million in aid (need- and merit-based) currently available for the state’s private and proprietary institutions.

The latter proposal would have placed Colorado among a handful of states supplying no financial aid to private university students, and University of Denver President Dan Ritchie and others were fighting it vigorously. On top of public university stipends, the loss of need-based aid would mean a “double whammy” for DU and other privates, said Toni Larson, a lobbyist for independent institutions.

Even some public institution leaders were expressing reservations about the voucher plan, chief among them Al Yates, who will step down as Colorado State president this summer. His main concern was whether the plan would end up tracking minority students into the community colleges.

“I wonder about the message we send to the people of our state when we institute a policy that seems on the face of it to say that we will provide access but only to a portion of the system of higher education,” said Yates. “The message could come out that if I’m a low-income student my only entry point to the system of higher education is the community college. There are many students for whom the appropriate route is the four-year institutions.”

Ed Romero, a Denver marketing and advertising executive who served on the blue ribbon panel, thinks that students with the background for four-year schools will not be deterred under the plan. “This is about a lot of kids who don’t go to college at all,” he said. “I pressed this very hard to use the community colleges as a point of access. The big schools resent that.”

Joe May shares that perspective. “Right now we have a large part of the population simply not going anywhere,” he said. “To provide an opportunity that increases the likelihood that they will attend college somewhere is better in the long run, for them, their families and the state.”

May’s counterpart at CU, Betsy Hoffman, seemed not to be waiting for the ball to sail through. Alarmed by predictions of drastic budget cuts, Hoffman held a press briefing in mid-February highlighting the already dismal funding her university receives—and noting that the Boulder campus had already reached the ten percent threshold, and that she could apply for enterprise status even without vouchers. While research institutions in California and Illinois spend $16,886 and $10,895 per full-time-equivalent student respectively, Hoffman said, Colorado contributes just $6,126 per FTE student to the University of Colorado’s four campuses. And at $3,566, Boulder’s tuition and fees for this year are among the lowest of Association of American University members. “We’re underfunded and overregulated,” she sighed.

CU has partly made up for Colorado’s frugality by aggressively—and successfully—pursuing federal research dollars. Because of the high ratio of research and development funds, and because it takes in a high proportion of tuition dollars from out-of-state undergraduates paying $16,000 a year, Boulder hit the ten percent TABOR cut-off after the latest round of budget cuts, Hoffman said.

In the last two years, the CU system has seen its enrollment increase by 3,779 despite a $37 million drop in general fund support. To sustain cuts of $28.9 million in the current year, the university eliminated 178 positions, cut four programs, and shuttered ten academic centers on its four campuses. Other belt-tightening measures have included unpaid furloughs for administrative officers.

But CU’s finances are not nearly as vulnerable as the state’s regional colleges—Adams, Western and Mesa—which are undergoing a transition from a single governing board to separate boards. The small rural institutions may be integral to efforts to enroll more minority and low-income students, but they will remain reliant on role and mission grants for the foreseeable future. “If that gets pulled, we probably will have difficulty adjusting to any fluctuations in the economy,” said system President Lee Halgren. “Our three institutions are the institutions of opportunity for their regions of the state. To raise tuition significantly for the population we’re serving is not realistic…unless we have a subsequent increase in financial aid.”

Halgren also worries about enrollment pressure if the universities use the colleges as a cushion by dipping below their admissions standards. Currently they are allowed to make such exceptions for up to 20 percent of their classes, but Halgren insists that that needs to change. Despite those risks, Halgren, like other administrators, was intrigued by the possibility of increasing public ownership of higher education—the chief reason other states were taking an interest.

“It makes you have the right set of conversations,” said Richard Jarvis, chancellor of the Oregon University System. “It forces you to bring together financial aid, appropriations, tuition…This is the only way you’re ever going to see anything that looks like an entitlement.”

Jarvis said the idea of putting money in students’ hands would resonate with Oregon’s business community. “I’m trying to seed discussions around here,” he said. “But if it crashes and burns in Colorado? End of conversation.”

And in Washington, state Senator Don Carlson, a Republican who chairs the state’s higher education committee and serves on the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, has already taken an interest. But he would not want any limitations concerning the use of vouchers at private schools. “If you let the student go where they’re going to be best served, you have to include private facilities in your state,” said Carlson.

He did not say how Washington would come up with the money to fund vouchers at private schools, which now receive little in the way of state support. But he said the plan would force publics to compete for students or “go out of business.” He was considering introducing legislation next year to start with a pilot voucher project at an institution such as Eastern Washington University, whose president, Stephen Jor-

—COLORADO STATE SENATOR RON TUPA

Pamela Burdman is a freelance writer in San Francisco, and a visiting scholar at the Mills College Woman’s Leadership Institute.

“I don’t want to see this proposal mask the fact that the state of Colorado provides a pitiful amount of assistance for needy kids.

President Al Yates of Colorado State University worries that the voucher plan will direct most low-income and minority students into community colleges.
An “Entrepreneurial” Way of Thinking
UNLV seeks to establish itself as a respected research institution

By Anne C. Roark
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

RISING LIKE A MIRAGE out of the Mojave Desert, this city of nearly 1.5 million residents and ten times the tourists is full of illusions. It is a place where a person can, if he or she has a mind to do so, stand in a rain forest to check into a motel; float down an ersatz canal of Venice listening to gondoliers sing Italian arias; spend an afternoon watching a stranger undress; or pass an evening gambling away a lifetime of savings.

About the only thing a person can’t do in Las Vegas is get a first-rate university education. But that is changing.

After less than a decade of expansion and aggressive fundraising, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas has begun to shake its old reputation as an unruly basketball powerhouse and establish itself as a full-fledged research university. By most accounts, the transformation from athletic notoriety to academic respectability is more than just another “Sin City-Lost Wages” illusion.

Founded as a regional division of the University of Nevada in Reno on an unpaved road 45 years ago, UNLV now offers more than 20 doctoral and professional degrees, is home to some 40 research centers, and sits on a 335-acre campus in the middle of the country’s fastest growing metropolitan area.

While Nevada continues to rank at the bottom in the percentage of high school students who go to college, UNLV’s enrollment has grown dramatically, from 19,000 in 1992-93 to nearly 25,000 in 2002-03, with graduate school enrollments rising annually at ten times the national average.

Buildings on the campus have proliferated almost as fast. Recent additions include the $6 million Arnold Shaw Popular Music Center, the $7 million Stan Fulton International Gaming Institute and the $51 million Leid Library. In 1998, UNLV opened a law school, the only one in Nevada, which already has a $15 million facility and is on a fast track for full accreditation sometime this year.

Last fall, a new school of dentistry admitted its first class of students and will eventually be located, along with a new biotech research center, on a newly acquired 17-acre satellite campus. UNLV has spent more than $20 million renovating and expanding its bookstore, residence hall, education building and engineering complex. And if all that is not enough, the university alsoboasts a new softball stadium, a new track, and its first parking garage.

The growth of UNLV is noteworthy because it has been rapid and has taken place while many colleges and universities are cutting back. Thanks to heavy losses on Wall Street and double-digit cuts in government spending in recent years, campuses all over the country have halted building projects, tightened department budgets and, in some cases, prepared for layoffs.

“The grass has to be greener somewhere. It happens to be here,” said UNLV Provost Raymond W. Alden, III. Like many at UNLV, Alden is a transplant to Nevada. Six years ago, he moved from Old Dominion University, a public institution in Virginia with a history not unlike UNLV’s, in that it began as a regional division of the College of William and Mary but is now a university in its own right.

For years the state provided the nation’s largest percentage increase in support for higher education, which helped finance UNLV’s expansion. Much of the support, however, has come from sources other than state government.

Over the past decade, gifts from private donors to UNLV more than doubled, from $10 million in 1992 to more than $20 million in 2002. Support for sponsored research, which comes largely from federal agencies, now stands at $56 million, triple what it was only four years ago.

As a result, state appropriations, excluding student fees, now make up less than one third of the university’s operating budget, said Anthony B. Flores, UNLV’s vice president for finance.

The state’s share of UNLV’s budget could slip even further as Nevada faces a somewhat unique budget crisis. While revenues have not dropped off the way they have in many states, the costs of running state programs have skyrocketed in Nevada. To cover the costs associated with a growing population and ever-increasing demands on public services, Governor Kenny Guinn has proposed an estimated $1 billion in “revenue enhancements”—otherwise known as new taxes—for 2004 and 2005.

With its eye on constituents’ libertarian leanings and its members’ own desires to be re-elected, the Nevada legislature has been as charry of increased taxes as the Bush White House. Officials at UNLV and in other state agencies believe they have a strong case to make and will continue arguing it until June, when lawmakers settle on a budget for the state’s next biennium.

Raising private funds to make up for what the state does not provide is hardly a new concept for American higher education. As a result of being able to win large federal research grants and to attract big donors, many research universities receive only a tiny fraction of their budgets from their states.

Las Vegas may have been slow in getting into the higher education business, but private fundraising seems tailor-made for UNLV. For one thing, Nevada has no state income tax, which should put more discretionary funds in the hands of potential donors. Las Vegas’ continued rapid growth—some 5,000 new residents every month—may be clogging freeways and straining public services but it has been a boon for builders, bankers and real estate developers, some of whom have been willing to share their good fortune.

Much of UNLV’s support has also come either directly or indirectly from the city’s gambling industry, which is no surprise. Gambling—or to use the new, more politically correct term gaming—has been the backbone of the city’s economy since the Nevada legislature made the pastime permanently legal in the 1930s. In the 1940s organized crime muscled its way into some casinos, allowing bookmaking and narcotics trafficking also to become part of the economy. In recent years, business leaders and politicians have been trying to diversify the city’s economy in other, less troublesome ways.

When she came to UNLV from New York state almost eight years ago, UNLV President Carol C. Harter picked up on the city’s restlessness and began making the case that UNLV’s drive to become a major research university and Southern Nevada’s desire to diversify its economy are directly linked.

Las Vegas’ colorful Mayor Oscar B. Goodman, a former mob lawyer, has publicly acknowledged that the city is starved for high-paying, high-tech industries. While Nevada leads the nation in new job growth, half of Las Vegas’ employment opportunities are low-wage, dead-end service-economy jobs. The mayor would like to stop the region’s suburban sprawl, rebuild the center of the city, and refocus the business community on something besides tourism and gambling.

Harter wants to help the city to do some of that refocusing. With its new resources, UNLV can tackle tough problems, generate new ideas, and produce whatever skilled labor force the city may need, she believes.

For several years, Harter has been pushing UNLV’s faculty and administration to be more entrepreneurial in their thinking—to take advantage of research opportunities as they arise, and also to seek out local and regional problems they can help solve.

“We are not going to do research for research’s sake. We’re doing research that supports Nevada,” explained John F.
Gallagher, vice president for development and director of the UNLV Foundation, the private fundraising arm of the university. If discoveries also have applications beyond the state's borders, all the better. No one would object, for example, if UNLV's Cancer Institute were to succeed in its current effort to find better techniques for diagnosing cancer.

To help get discoveries to the marketplace, UNLV has set up a separate research foundation which allows faculty members and members to enter into financial relationships without the red tape normally associated with university research.

Much of UNLV's support has come either directly or indirectly from the city's gambling industry.

UNLV is also now in the planning stages of a new $85-million high-tech science and engineering complex.

Perhaps the most notable example of UNLV's new entrepreneurial way of thinking centers around Yucca Mountain, a ridge of volcanic rock that rises from the desert 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. In 2001, the Bush administration approved the site as the country's new repository for some 77,000 tons of nuclear wastes.

UNLV joined the city and state in opposing the plan, yet as soon as the project appeared to be a fait accompli, the university quickly changed course and began looking for research opportunities connected to the repository. Unapologetic about what critics have labeled as blatant opportunism, Harter said, "We would prefer the project not come here but if it is to be here, we're going to make the most of it."

In the past, some faculty members, especially in the liberal arts, have looked askance at applied research, arguing that basic and theoretical studies are the sine qua non of a great university. Chairman of the UNLV history and philosophy department are divided in their opinions about the administration's priorities.

Paul Scholmeier, the philosophy chairman, has seen little growth in his field in recent years. The department has lost three professors who retired and one who retracted—none of whom has been replaced. The result has been larger classes, more part-time teachers, and no move to create a graduate program, even at the master's level.

"Some administrators and state legislators think the university should be run like a business...self-supporting, if not making profits," Scholmeier said. "The business model changes the goal of education...to preparation for particular occupations and no longer an end in itself."

Andy Fry, chairman of UNLV's history department, takes a different view. "I don't think we've been poor stepchildren of the university in any way." In the 25 or so years Fry has been at UNLV, the history department has doubled in size to 22 faculty members. Master's and doctoral degrees are now being offered, and the department has established a reputation as a center for the study of western U.S. history.

"We don't have as much support, but we have less to support," Fry said. "We simply don't have the startup costs (that face researchers in science and engineering). What is crucial is that we have gotten adequate to strong travel budgets. Money for travel is key—or one of the keys—for historians who must get to sources to do research."

Provost Alden said his job is exhausting. "We're constantly on the cutting edge. President Harter wants the university to do for biotechnology, health care, the arts and a host of other fields what it has done for hotel management." That is, become one of the premiere educational and research institutions in the country.

UNLV's William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration was named after a donor who was one of the country's most successful casino operators. The college trains people to manage hotels, restaurants and convention centers offering undergraduate degrees as well as graduate degrees, including a master of science in leisure studies, and a Ph.D. in hospitality administration.

Hospitality administration is fairly self-explanatory, but leisure studies is a relatively new academic field which trains students to become managers of health clubs, YMCAs and park and recreation programs. The curriculum for golf club management was approved recently by the Professional Golf Association, thus making it easier for UNLV graduates to qualify as PGA members.

The International Gaming Institute, which is also part of the Harrah College, conducts research, including salary surveys for hotels and casinos, and offers seminars on a host of topics, ranging from the mathematics of slot machines to problem gambling. Within the institute, a new top-of-the-line casino laboratory attracts gaming regulators from around the world who want to be trained on "state-of-the-art" computer surveillance systems, according to Stuart H. Mann, dean of the hotel college.

"Rather than try to recruit well-known full professors from other universities, UNLV has hired promising young teachers and researchers who may one day be well-known experts in their fields. It is a gamble, of course, but then so is most everything in Las Vegas."

"Las Vegas is simply not everyone's cup of tea," admitted Richard Morgan, the law school dean. "Beyond the glitz and glitter, the skin and bright lights, it's actually pretty nice. Housing is relatively inexpensive, certainly less than on either coast. There are five-star restaurants and world-class entertainment."

With so much focus on faculty and research, it is easy to forget there are also students at UNLV. While few of them are aware of all the details of what is happening to their university, many are caught up in the excitement of the changes.

"UNLV was once known as a place where every stripper has a right to a decent education," said Eric Ball, editor of the student newspaper Rebel Yell. When Ball announced he would be attending UNLV, a friend mocked it as "the world's largest commuter college." Yet there may still be some truth to both of those characterizations. Ball sees a wide range of students attending UNLV for a host of reasons.

Monica M. Moradkhan, UNLV's student body president, said she "had the grades to have gone anywhere...I came here. I'm thrilled I did."

The university's new entrepreneurial way of doing business seems to have rubbed off on Moradkhan. As student president, she has learned to manage a budget of $1.2 million and a staff of 100 people. When she finishes her education, she plans to start her own business, a specialty design company aimed at what she sees as an unfulfilled niche in Las Vegas' hospitality industry. "I plan to specialize in balloon decorations, providing them for conventions and hotels. I'll do that after I go to graduate school and get my doctorate."

UNLV hopes to draw more highly qualified students with a new Millennium Scholarship program, which is supported with funds from Nevada's share of a statewide settlement from the tobacco industry. The scholarship program will provide support to students based on academic merit rather than financial need.

In many ways, UNLV students don't seem that different from students in any large public university. They go to football games. They drink beer. They belong to fraternities and sororities. They throw parties. They go to concerts. By virtue of living in Las Vegas, they also have unusual cultural opportunities. For example, last fall The GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) club hosted a free music and dance performance by some of Las Vegas' leading drag queens, among them Sasha Scarlett, who owns his own club near the UNLV campus. But many UNLV students don't take advantage of any activities on campus.

"The average age of a UNLV student is 26," Ball said. "The majority work, many are married and have children." With so many heavy demands on their time, few attend classes full-time, let alone participate in extra-curricular activities. Unfortunately many UNLV students leave without graduating. Some succumb to outside pressures; others are lured away by high-paying, although dead-end, entry-level jobs in Las Vegas. The six-year graduation rate is a relatively low 37.3 percent.

High dropout rates may also result from the university's admissions policies. The only requirement is a 2.5 high school grade point average, or a minimum composite score of 21 on the ACT or a combined score of 990 on the SAT.

Plans are now under discussion to raise the minimum GPA to 3.0, and also to put a cap on enrollment, which would not only raise the caliber of the student body but would also help the university to deal with a state budget that is not keeping pace with enrollment.

Critics oppose boosting the minimum GPA on the grounds that it will hurt minority students. The dispute turned nasty last year when a student writing in the Rebel Yell called a member of the Board of Regents who opposed the new standard "an idiot." The regent in question—a woman and the board's only African American member—responded by demanding to see the student's record, with continued on page 10
Pushing Advanced Placement
Dallas business and philanthropic communities lead the way in promoting incentives program

By Kay Mills
Dallas, Texas

Robert Trevino (right), who teaches Advanced Placement calculus at Jefferson High School, in Dallas, hopes Alex Towar and other students will pass the AP calculus test this year.

State governments in Texas, California and Florida, among others, have created programs to help AP students and teachers.

for similar results—students who can pass the tough AP calculus test and who are better prepared for college.

Like Garfield, Jefferson has mainly Hispanic students. It has two AP calculus teachers, Trevino and math department chairman Minh Nguyen. Last year one Jefferson student passed the AP calculus exam. The difference now is the support for these students and teachers from the Dallas business and philanthropic communities. Spurred originally by the O'Donnell Foundation, others, including the Texas Instruments Foundation and retired PepsiCo president Roger Enrico, have joined the effort.

Last year 62 Jefferson students took courses to prepare for AP calculus, which, like other advanced placement classes, is a college-level course. Forty now take AP calculus. Trevino has a self-imposed goal: to see ten students pass the test. He is confident they can do the work. Each Jefferson student who passes an AP math or English test will receive $500 per test and could qualify for a $10,000 college scholarship, all donated by Enrico. Trevino would also receive $500 for each passing score. He and his fellow teachers, and ultimately their students, are also benefiting from extra training.

For example, Trevino and other Dallas AP calculus teachers spent one late afternoon learning techniques to help motivate students. One of the teachers read aloud from a “Cal-Clueless Mystery,” and her colleagues solved a series of problems to eliminate suspects in a fictional case. Tutoring also was stressed. “Although we think working math problems at night is fun,” said one of the lead calculus teachers, June Harmon, “many kids don’t want to stay late.”

State governments in Texas, California and Florida, among others, have created programs to help AP students and teachers. Some districts have found private support, such as Guilford County, North Carolina, where the Harris Teeter grocery chain contributes five laptop computers and five $2,500 college scholarships for students who pass five or more AP exams. Crown Automotive Group, a string of car dealerships, throws a party for the students, one of whom won an Acura donated by the firm.

But there is “nothing close” to the level of private financial involvement seen in Dallas and seven other Texas school districts, said Lee Jones, vice president of the College Board, which administers the AP program. That’s important, Jones said. “In many school districts, especially at this time of economic downturn and budget cuts at the state level, which is the main support for education, if we could replicate that kind of business and corporate support for challenging AP courses, it would be a big win for students.”

Peter O’Donnell, Dallas philanthropist and state Republican Party chairman from 1962 to 1969, started the incentive program. In 1990, after Texas had landed the superconducting super collider project for high-energy physics research, O’Donnell decided that the schools around Waxahachie—those that the scientists’ and engineers’ children would attend—needed help.

A self-described “education junkie,” O’Donnell felt that the AP program offered the best way to challenge students. The O’Donnell Foundation that he and his wife established provided financial incentives: Each student who passed AP tests in English, math or science received $100 per test; AP teachers received $100 for each of their students who passed the exam, as did their schools. The foundation also paid to train teachers for the AP courses.

The year before the program began in 1990, students in the nine schools involved in Ellis and south Dallas County passed 54 AP tests. Five years later, there were 521 passing scores.

In 1993, Congress killed the supercollider as too expensive, but O’Donnell kept at his project. The superintendent in Dallas at the time approached the O’Donnell Foundation after learning that one high school in south Dallas County—Duncanville—had more passing AP exam scores than all of the then 22 high schools in Dallas combined, said Carolyn Bacon, the foundation’s executive director.

The program began in Dallas in 1995-1996 school year, adding the concept of lead teachers to aid their colleagues. O’Donnell helped recruit more donors, and the program spun off a non-profit management and resource agency called Advanced Placement Strategies, headed by Gregg Fleisher, a former Dallas AP calculus teacher. The foundation also is underwriting development of curriculum guides for middle school pre-AP teachers in English, science and math, so that students have the background needed for AP classes.

Texas Instruments Foundation, philanthropic arm of the Texas Instruments semiconductor company, took over O’Donnell’s commitment to ten high schools in 2001. This year marks the beginning of retired businessman Roger Enrico’s involvement at five high schools, including Jefferson. AP incentive programs in the core subjects have spread to seven other Texas school districts, including Abilene, Amarillo, Tyler, and Wichita Falls. Programs in the arts are available in some schools in ten Texas districts. Several other donors are involved in Dallas, and the Texas Education Agency has given $450,000 a year to conduct pre-AP English training in seven school districts.

Rosalba Estrada, 18, is a beneficiary of the program. She is a senior at Skyline High School, a majority Hispanic school in Dallas which has had AP classes but without the training resources, support for teachers, tutoring and financial incentives this program added. “There’s a premium placed on these courses now,” said AP Strategies’ Fleisher. “It filters down.”

Estrada belongs to the first generation of college goers in her family. Last year she passed five AP tests—chemistry, statistics, English, French and history. She received $300 (foreign language and social studies classes don’t qualify for incentives). This year she is taking two AP calculus classes, AP government and economics, AP English, AP physics and AP French.

“I can’t imagine myself in a class where they’re not bombarding me” with information and work, she said. She would like to attend either the University of Texas at Austin or Southern Methodist University. “I thought I wanted to be a lawyer, now maybe a chemical engineer, or maybe a lawyer with a mathematical mind.”

Estrada is not alone in her success. The year before Skyline became part of the incentive program, approximately 150 students there took AP classes in math, science and English; there were 17 passing scores on those AP tests. Last year approximately 450 students enrolled in AP classes, 182 took the tests, and there were 91 passing scores.
Skyline is one of the ten schools in the Dallas Independent School District that have been involved in the incentive program. Overall, the year before the program began in 1995, 269 students at those schools took 379 exams in math, science, and English; there were 157 passing scores. Last year, 1,531 students took 2,572 AP exams in those fields. There were 1,047 passing scores.

Results also improved across race and gender. At the ten schools in 1995, there were 29 passing grades on AP math, science and English exams among African American and Hispanic students. Last year this group had 417 passing scores. Looking only at math and science results, African American and Hispanic students had ten passing scores in 1995, 224 in 2002. “We didn’t really start the program out to help African American students, but I’m glad we did it,” O’Donnell said. “And look at the results.”

Female students also showed gains, earning 73 passing scores on AP math, science and English exams in 1995, but increasing to 539 in 2002. Of those passing scores, 232 were in math and science.

Vickie Richie, Skyline’s principal, said that her school is making a special effort now to identify students who have the potential to do this work but who might have gone unnoticed. The best recruiters for the AP program, she added, are college students who return and tell others how these courses gave them a head start on campus.

Statistics from the National Center for Educational Accountability, an offshoot of the Education Commission of the States, show, for example, that Hispanic students who passed an AP exam and enrolled in a Texas public college or university had a first-year grade point average of 2.89, while those who took, but did not pass, an exam had a 2.50. Both groups fared better than first-year students who had not taken an AP exam; their GPA was 2.09. Results were similar for white, African American and low-income students. Students who passed an AP exam, or at least took one, stayed in college at higher rates than those who did not.

The program “builds confidence, particularly with minority students,” said Martha Lee, lead AP biology teacher for the schools supported by the Texas Instruments Foundation. “We know they’re going to take the test so we work especially on preparing them. As the year builds, they start to say, ‘I can do this. I can do this.’” Several teachers also agreed that the incentives have made the AP program more inclusive, because more than just the top kids are expected to take these classes.

This program “forced the kids to focus on college,” said Brenda Bradford, the Dallas school district’s AP coordinator. “AP is college work. They might not have thought about it otherwise. For the teachers, it set a standard of excellence. Good teachers are absolutely critical to this. They know someone is looking at what they’re doing. They know kids are going to get to re-wards. Synergistically, it changes the whole climate of expectation and excellence.”

Bradford said that the incentive program also kept in the classroom a lot of teachers who were thinking about retirement—experienced people between 50 to 55 years old with years of service. They now have better resources—extra novels or more science equipment. “For me personally, if I needed something, I got it. In education, that’s rare.”

For the teachers in this AP incentive program, it’s not the money that matters (although most are happy to have it for the extra work). Instead, it’s the support they receive from lead teachers who suggest ways to teach difficult material, as well as the sense that the school system—and people outside that system—care about their efforts.

“I’ve seen a pep in their walk,” said Jennifer Russell, principal at Wilson. They need the pep: Of Wilson’s 1,700-plus students last year, only 12 passed AP exams, eight of them in Spanish.

Wilson wanted to get her school involved in the incentive program, and she got the chance when Roger Enrico, former head of PepsiCo (and a National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education board member), heard about the program from O’Donnell. “I was interested in finding some way to add value to the school system,” Enrico said. “I didn’t want to go and reinvent the wheel. I’m not an educator.”

The schools that were not already part of the incentives program were generally considered tougher in terms of showing gains. Enrico will provide $500 incentives per test passed for both teachers and students at five high schools, and $10,000 scholarships for students who pass the AP English language test their junior year, show proficiency in AP English literature and AP calculus in their senior year, and score 1100 or better on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests taken for college admission.

Enrico wants to make sure that students receive good counseling to find the right college and succeed once enrolled. Gregg Fleisher, AP Strategies president, is working with the school system to hire two college advisors, at Enrico’s expense, to work with the 300 AP students at the five schools he sponsors. They would help in finding colleges and financial aid, and work in the classroom for students once they reach college.

Enrico estimated his contribution at $2.5 million over five years. During its five years as the principal donor in Dallas, the O’Donnell Foundation contributed $3.6 million. “That’s an absolute peanut when you compare it with the results,” O’Donnell said. In 2001, the Texas Instruments Foundation took over the schools. O’Donnell had backed, and has pledged $2 million in incentives over five years.

With Enrico committed to the program, Sueze Oliphint, executive director for advanced academic services for the Dallas district, asked last spring for applications from schools not already receiving the in-centives. The district selected five high schools—Kimball, Roosevelt, Seagoville, Sunset and Jefferson. Last year there were only 12 passing scores at these five schools on the AP English language, English literature and calculus tests.

Each donor brings a different wish list. Texas Instruments Foundation is interested in research and development in education programs, and “this particular program was too good to pass up,” said foundation president Mike Rice. He hopes to learn why young women are not taking AP physics, and why those who do are not passing the test.

Last year, for example, 61 girls took AP physics at the five Texas Instruments Foundation schools but only 11 passed the test. Members of the Women of Texas Instruments, a company-wide organization, speculated that many physics teachers are men and communicate differently with female students. “We don’t see these deficiencies in math,” Rice said. Working with the foundation, AP Strategies is trying to determine whether the problem lies in the instruction or in the female students’ preparation.

Eight Dallas high schools are not in the incentive program, but they do have AP classes, and their teachers participate in training and summer institutes. “Those schools have not been completely neglected,” Oliphint said, but their students do not receive any money.

What about the policy of paying students and teachers extra for their success? Shouldn’t they be striving to do well anyway? “People get paid for academic achievement all the time,” said Fleisher. “If you get 1600 on your SATs, you are not going to pay for college. This is nothing new in the education system.”

Some students, like Michael Boyles, a senior in the science and engineering magnet at Townview High School, see the financial incentives as “a nice little bonus when you’re done” but say they don’t take the classes for the money. The classes are worth much more than the incentives, students add, because passing the AP exam earns college credit for the course, possibly reducing the time—and thus the tuition—they spend on campus. But Teresa Whinery, a junior at Townview, said, “Having the money is a very nice thing.” Incentives also cover part of the cost of the test, which is $80, “so if you’re taking four or five tests, that’s good, too,” she added.

Some experts raise questions about this approach. “There is extensive literature about rewarding kids for stuff you’d like them to be intrinsically motivated to do,” said Joshua Aronson, assistant professor of applied psychology at New York University, who has written widely about improving academic achievement. The concerns identified center on undermining creativity by focusing on winning money, and on the risk that students will lose interest once re-
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wars stop.

Aronson said he generally favors putting resources into making learning so interesting that students want to do it. But he added that in the Texas case, $100 per AP test passed sounded like “a small level of incentive” because it would reinforce students’ and teachers’ commitment without distorting the real goals of learning.

“There is a critical question to ask,” he added. “Do students construe the money as a bribe that’s needed to induce them to study or as a bonus and financial support for caring about success? Bonuses are better. Ultimately, you want kids to develop a strong sense of themselves as scholars. If kids think that they had to be bribed—or scared, or otherwise pushed—into study, you can frustrate that development.”

To buttress the program in Dallas, AP Strategies has hired curriculum experts who help the teachers. “We share things—books, ideas. There are people I can call up,” said Rebecca Jensen, who teaches AP statistics and AP physics at Townview.

But AP teachers do not have this opportunity unless they teach math, science or English courses. Said Deanna Dove, who teaches AP U.S. history and human geography at Townview, “It’s wonderful what the sponsors do.” But she would like social studies to get that help, too. As would Marsha Evans, Townview AP art history teacher, who confessed to a touch of jealousy, wishing that she had someone to help her teach about Oriental art.

Texas has seen “a massive expansion of students taking AP classes,” said Uri Treisman, director of the Charles A. Dana Center, an education research and resource unit of the University of Texas at Austin. In three years, the state has gone from one in 12 students taking these courses to one in eight. Treisman said, “Peter O’Donnell is a modest man.” But he credited him with being the force behind the state’s support for these programs. Most reform efforts work on improving literacy among low-achieving students, and that is important, Treisman said. But O’Donnell had the vision to see that those efforts needed to be balanced by stressing high achievement as well.

The state contributed $11.5 million to AP programs last school year and $16 million this year—paying $30 toward each exam fee, $450 per teacher toward expenses for training seminars, $100 to schools for each student passing the AP exam, and providing grants for equipment. The latest O’Donnell initiatives support the statewide effort to improve preparation of students and teachers for AP classes, and have produced “a very good working partnership between the state and a private foundation,” said Evelyn Haist, senior director for advanced academic services at the Texas Education Agency.

The Dana Center now operates programs that help students prepare for AP courses and tests, and provide online and traditional curriculum support for teachers. With all this effort, there are still some questions to be resolved, Treisman said. Which of these different strategies for improving AP participation and performance are most “scaleable,” that is, usable in more schools? Which of the components is most important? How can these strategies be combined?

Asked why the business community has become so involved with the AP program, Texas Instruments Foundation’s Mike Rice said, “I lay that at the feet of Peter O’Donnell, who saw the whole state’s AP effort at a disaster if we couldn’t get competent people to be the engineers.”

As for his foundation’s involvement, Rice said, “If you look at it from a hard-nosed dollar perspective, we have to be able to hire good people to run our factories and work in them.” In addition, the quality of a community is highly dependent on the quality of education, Rice said. “We’re in a trot when the pace of change is a 100-yard dash. So we’re creating even bigger problems as we go.”

Rice added, “Let’s face it, Texas Instruments can get good people. My reason is that the quality of the community is tied to education.”

Former Los Angeles Times editorial writer Kay Mills is the author of four books, including one on the federal Head Start program.

“The year before the program began in 1990, students passed 54 AP tests. Five years later, there were 521 passing scores.”

Student newspaper editor Eric Ball says UNLV is no longer “where every stripper has a right to a college education.”

LAS VEGAS

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out his permission.

That, in turn, brought on the wrath of another regent—a white man—who appeared on a popular morning talk show last fall, called his colleague “an orangutan” and urged her to resign. At a regent meeting last December, the two apologized, but were back at it within days.

It is not the first time UNLV has had its dirty laundry aired in the media. “Many colleges and universities can’t get their name in the paper. We can’t seem to keep ours out,” President Harter lamented.

While personnel disputes have been a favorite of the local press, most recently the media have turned their attention to a disgruntled donor who announced that he intends to stop giving money to UNLV, because he does not like the president’s “attitude.” Star Fulton, former chairman of Anchor Gaming, has given UNLV $10 million—$7 million of which went to a new building for the International Gaming Institute.

Harter said Fulton was “unreasonably impatient… with how long it took to get permits…and to cut down trees” in front of the building that bears his name. In a letter to the Board of Regents, Fulton claimed that because of Harter’s leadership, “many Las Vegas donors wanted to dissociate themselves from the university.” However, donations have not dropped off, according to university records, and executives of casinos, banks and development corporations have praised Harter’s leadership in letters to the Board of Regents.

A decade ago, UNLV’s media exposure focused on basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian, who put UNLV on the basketball map by recruiting talented players with questionable academic skills from ghettos around the country. Few graduated, and some ran afoul of the law. Then UNLV President Robert Maxson ordered Tarkanian fired. A decade later, the Tarkanian saga struggle resulted in both men being forced to resign. (Oddly enough, both resurfaced in the California State University system, Maxson as president of Cal State Long Beach and Tarkanian, who is now retired, as basketball coach at Cal State Fresno.)

UNLV’s graduation rate for athletes continues to remain well below the national average. The university had claimed to be doing a better job in getting student-athletes through college, but a NCAA study of the performance of the incoming class of 1995-96 found that six years later UNLV had not managed to graduate a single male basketball player. UNLV shared that distinction with seven other Division I institutions. Of all freshman athletes who entered college in the 1995-96 school year, UNLV graduated 30 percent within six years, compared to 60 percent nationwide, according to the study, which was based on data from the U.S. Department of Education.

Especially irksome to UNLV administrators is the fact that its graduation rates for student athletes also lag behind its rival, the University of Nevada, Reno. When it comes to the student body as a whole, the gap between the two institutions is even greater. Reno graduated nearly half of its students who entered college from 1992 through 1996, while UNLV graduated only about a third. Competition with Reno has always been a thorny issue for UNLV. The Las Vegas campus complains that Reno gets more funding from the state—some say about $8,000 per full-time-equivalent student at Reno compared to $6,000 at UNLV. Some of the discrepancy is a result of Reno being 134 years old and having older buildings with higher maintenance costs. In part because of its age, Reno also has more senior faculty who earn top salaries. Yet some of the difference, as more than one UNLV administrator put it not so delicately, is “purely political.” Reno may get more money simply because it has more clout with state legislators.

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UNLV has other competition as well. The nearby Community College of Southern Nevada and the newly opened Nevada State College of Henderson, which

is only 13 miles from downtown Las Vegas, compete not only for the same tax dollars but also for the same donors and, in some cases, the same students. Insisting she is not worried, UNLV’s Harter once again would like to turn a difficult situation to UNLV’s advantage. If the new state college takes over more of the vocational end of education, Harter reasons, UNLV can comfortably raise admissions standards and continue to expand research programs.

When she talks about UNLV’s prospects for the future, Harter is fond of paraphrasing Pogo. What UNLV faces, she says, are “insurmountable opportunities.”

Anne C. Roark is a former higher education writer for the Los Angeles Times.
Declining Access
A potential—if slow moving—train wreck
By David W. Breneman

I T IS SAD—and ironic—that as higher education struggles with sharp cutbacks in state support and declining endowments, federal legislation (No Child Left Behind) holds out the promise of preparing all children academically for further education. I believe the rising demand for higher education that may result from enhanced K–12 academic preparation, coupled with demographic, political and economic forces operating on higher education, put the country well on its way toward a potential—if slow motion—train wreck.

Many pieces have to fit together to enable increased access to quality, affordable higher education in the next decade, and rather than congruence of the necessary factors, I see disarray. Furthermore, given current economic and political realities, solutions will be neither easy nor inexpensive. Because I believe that most Americans continue to support equal educational opportunity, all of us who care about wise and essential investments in human capacity must find a way around the dilemmas sketched below.

The pieces have to fit together
State governments and private philanthropy have combined historically to provide the supply-side of higher education, while the federal role has focused on underwriting student demand through grants, guaranteed loans, and work study. The last great expansion of supply occurred during the years of the baby boom generation, and few new colleges or universities have been built since, or are planned to be built.

Furthermore, state government appropriations that underwrite below-cost tuition have been declining as a share of institutional budgets for two decades, and the trend looking forward is even more ominous. Since 1979, we have been shifting the cost of higher education from the general taxpayer to the student and his or her family, and the latest round of double-digit tuition increases, induced by falling state support, accentuates that trend.

One result is that the federal government can no longer assume the presence of low-tuition colleges and universities available to low-income students receiving Pell Grants. As a consequence, any increase in the Pell Grant maximum that one might squeeze out of a constituency will be built since, or are planned to be built.

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Looking ahead, however, the relationship of tuition and Pell Grant increases is virtually unanswerable. For-profit colleges such as the University of Phoenix, DeVry and others perform effectively, as measured, for example, by the annual rankings of U.S. News & World Report magazine. Many of the less selective institutions, public and private, will see the opportunity provided by larger applicant pools to enhance selectivity, and will allocate much of their institutional aid on merit awards to attract higher ability students.

Furthermore, most public institutions will embrace higher tuition as the only way to replace reduced state subsidies. Community colleges will be the institutions of last resort for many capable students, but one can foresee these institutions becoming overburdened and overcrowded, and less likely than now to work as transfer programs to four-year colleges. (Many of the non-transfer technical/professional programs that produce highly marketable graduates already ration access because of constraints of equipment, space and trained faculty.)

Most states have long since dropped enrollment-driven funding formulas, and thus increased enrollment does not automatically bring additional resources as was the case in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, few public institutions have an incentive to grow substantially. Institutional self-interest is not likely to enhance the access agenda.

States, meanwhile, are coping with structural deficits, and have shown for 20 years a tendency to cut higher education budgets sharply when under duress. The rapid and projected growth of Medicaid expenditures promises to absorb much of whatever growth in state revenues occurs in the next several years. States increasingly look to higher education as an economic development tool, creating merit-based aid programs to reduce the brain-drain of their most promising young citizens out of state.

Merit-based programs are modeled to varying degrees on the first such program, the Georgia HOPE Scholarship. To date, 12 states have created such programs, which provide free tuition or substantial grants for students who attend in-state institutions and who earn relatively high grades in high school, or achieve high SAT/ACT scores, or some combination thereof. The Georgia program has no income limit for recipients, and most of the funds go to students from middle- and upper-income families. These programs are immensely popular politically, and governors take great pride in creating them. They respond to concerns over affordability, not access, and thus do little to help the capable student from a low-income family whose academic performance does not qualify for a merit award.

It appears, therefore, that neither institutions nor states have a fundamental interest in ensuring access for the capable but average student with few financial resources. Indeed, only the federal government has the incentive and the resources to underwrite the access agenda, but as noted earlier, the pieces do not mesh well enough to meet the challenge posed by rising numbers of low-income high school graduates seeking some form of post-secondary education.

The era of low-tuition public higher education is coming to a close, which vitiates the ability of Pell Grants to ensure access. Tuition tax credits do little for the poor, and loans at the level required to meet rising tuition and related costs will be seen as prohibitive by many potential students. Space limitations in colleges and universities are another constraint that will increasingly bind. Distance learning has yet to prove its viability as a mass form of education, and experiments such as the Western Governors University have thus far failed.

For-profit colleges such as the University of Phoenix, DeVry and others perform effectively for some students, but are unlikely to grow to sufficient size to encompass all potential new students. Financial constraints also limit the number of students who can afford a for-profit institution.

Conclusion
Efforts to improve K–12 schooling will be undermined if substantial numbers of students see their way to college blocked by financial, admission or space constraints. The first lesson, then, should be that the focus on No Child Left Behind (NCLB) must go beyond the years of elementary and secondary schools to include access to higher education. School reform must be considered in a K–16 framework if it is to succeed. Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act must include linkages to NCLB.

The second lesson I draw from the above analysis is that substantially more public funds will have to be invested in student support if we expect to enroll in college the students that NCLB promises to prepare. In a state and federal political environment that seeks tax cuts rather than tax increases, this proposition will not be popular, but I see no way around it. One option would be a federal statute that would relieve some of the financial burdens at the state level, e.g. Medicaid, in return for increased state support of higher education, and hence reduced tuition levels. Pell Grants could then be a more effective vehicle to finance broader access.

A second option would be to modify and expand the federal SSIG/LEAP program to provide an incentive for states to shift support to need-based financial aid, perhaps under-
they plan to attend some form of postsecondary education. But while parents, educators and others have been successful in motivating more students to attend college, the K–12 and postsecondary systems have not been as successful in promoting student success in college. For instance, rates of remediation and attrition in college are startling. According to the U.S. Department of Education:

- More than half of students entering college are required to take remedial courses, many in several subjects.
- About half of first-year students at community colleges do not continue on for a second year.
- About a quarter of first-year students at four-year colleges do not stay for their second year.
- More than 40 percent of college students who earn more than ten credits never complete a two-year or a four-year degree.

Remediation and attrition rates are most troubling at broad-access colleges and universities, which have low admissions requirements. These institutions enroll about 80 percent of the nation’s college students. Yet the primary policy debates and media attention concerning postsecondary education are devoted to the more highly selective colleges and universities—witness the current attention to affirmative action issues. Increasing the rates of student success at broad-access institutions is a sound public investment because it can have a tremendous impact on the economic and civic well-being of each state. It is also the best way to improve educational attainment levels among economically disadvantaged students and students of color.

We have known for some time that factors such as teacher quality and rigorous course-taking in high school are important in promoting effective student preparation for college. Likewise, studies have shown that financial and other issues—as well as poor preparation—are important factors in contributing to high attrition rates once students are enrolled in college.

What we now can add to this body of knowledge, as a result of six years of research by the Bridge Project at Stanford University, is evidence that the wide chasm between K–12 and higher education is also a major contributor to poor student preparation for college, which in turn contributes to high remediation rates and low completion rates in college. Moreover, we now know that this breakdown between the systems of education is particularly disastrous for students of color and students from low-income families. These and other findings can be found in “Betraying the College Dream,” available at www.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject.

With funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the U.S. Department of Education, the Bridge Project analyzed consistencies and discrepancies between high school coursework, high school exit policies, college outreach and communications strategies, college entrance policies, college placement policies, and a wide range of data collection and accountability issues. The research focused on a geographic region in each of six states: California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Oregon and Texas. Each region included at least two four-year institutions, as well as community colleges in California, Maryland and Oregon.

Researchers surveyed nearly 2,000 students and parents from 23 high schools in these states, asking about students’ educational aspirations and their knowledge of issues related to student preparation for college, including tuition, admissions criteria, and placement criteria at the colleges and universities in their geographic area. Researchers talked with groups of community college students about their college preparation activities and academic experiences in college. Researchers also interviewed high school administrators, counselors and teachers about such issues as their knowledge of college admissions and placement policies, the relationship between high school coursework and college expectations, and college counseling at their schools.

The Bridge Project found that the current fractured systems create unnecessary and detrimental barriers between high school and college. Some of the primary barriers include:

- Multiple and Confusing Assessments. State K–12 standards have swept across the nation with scant participation by postsecondary education institutions. Meanwhile, college entrance and placement exams remain uninformied by changes in K–12 standards. As a result, students face a bewildering set of high school assessments, college entrance exams, and college placement tests. In California, for instance, students in middle and high schools have taken up to 14 exams outside of their regular classroom tests, and those going on to college could end up taking upward of 15 additional exams during high school and upon entrance to college.

Not surprisingly, these various assessments have different formats and stress different skills. For instance, college admissions and placement tests generally contain logic items and are likely to assess intermediate algebra and trigonometry—skills that are generally not needed to pass high school assessments.

- Disconnected Curricula. The coursework between high school and college is not connected; students graduate from high school under one set of standards and, three months later, are required to meet a whole new set of standards in college.

- Inequities Throughout the Systems. Since almost all students plan to attend college,
The wide chasm between K–12 and higher education is a major contributor to poor student preparation for college, which in turn contributes to low completion rates in college.

Michael Kirst is principal investigator for the Bridge Project and professor of education at Stanford University. Andrea Venezia is director of K–16 projects at the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research.

The Online Learning Boom

Tailoring college to the needs of working adults

By Gene I. Maeroff

What observers tend to overlook as online courses deepen their inroads at institutions of higher learning is that the content of, and audience for, these offerings remains largely specialized. Chances of signing up students for online learning are perhaps greatest in job-related fields in which courses tend to be more about training than about theory. It follows that students are found most readily among adults looking to upgrade or revamp their careers.

Requirements by states and professional organizations that people engage in continuing education help boost enrollments. The constituencies for the courses often include working men and women with positions that make it difficult for them to meet campus residency requirements and sometimes even to break away from work to attend courses. Thus, online courses have the appeal of giving students the chance, among other things, to overcome obstacles of time and place.

These students, in turn, are an attractive group for higher education. Unlike students of traditional age, they have money and are not as dependent on loans or grants. Anthony F. Digenio, formerly chief executive officer of the University of Phoenix Online, maintained that what gave his institution a kick start in e-learning was that the online component simply targeted the same audience that the university pursued in its campus-based courses: mid-career professionals.

Cornell University organized its for-profit arm, eCornell, along similar lines. It began by mounting courses for working professionals in human resources management, hospitality management and continuing medical education. These online courses have been created with the help of Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations and the School of Hotel Administration, along with the Hospital for Special Surgery, an affiliate of Cornell's Weill Medical College.

Even blue-collar and service workers comprise a potential constituency for adult-oriented e-learning. Job skills of all sorts seem to lend themselves to online instruction. The 16 institutions that make up the Wisconsin Technical College System, part of the statewide University of Wisconsin, joined forces in late 2001, for instance, to establish a collaborative online presence, etechcollege.com.

This venture represented a first step in lending coherence to what had been a collection of disparate online offerings. The 16 colleges continue to determine their individual fates in e-learning, but now, in addition to their separate home pages, they have benefit of a single portal at which potential students can find all of the system's online courses. “Our presidents ex-
Online courses have the appeal of giving students the chance, among other things, to overcome obstacles of time and place.
said, but “there are real consequences. People do die. And we don’t want to go into the decision lightly.”

Keagle knows about consequences. A retired Air Force colonel who holds a Ph.D. in politics from Princeton University, he was wounded in action in Panama. Other professors at NDU also have had combat experience, he said, which makes them well-equipped to share the human anguish of war.

At NDU, Keagle said, “The real obligation is to develop critical minds.”

That is an ambitious goal, especially given the military background of many of its students, said War College professor Melvin Goodman. The school’s strict non-attribution policy, which prohibits citing the source of an opinion, allows students, teachers and guest speakers to speak freely without fear of retribution. “The real tension at the War College is education versus training,” said Goodman, a retired CIA analyst who has taught at the college since 1986. “The military is devoted mainly to training. Education is a much more intense process.”

Or, as Air Force Lt. Colonel Greg Burns, an ICAF student, jokingly explained it: “In the military, we write one-line bullets. Now all of a sudden we have to write subjects and verbs together. And then they throw punctuation in!”

In all seriousness, said Burns, whose most recent assignment was as a squadron leader at Misawa Air Base in Japan, he was enjoying the intellectual challenge and appreciated the time for reflection. Instead of simply preparing the U.S. to go to war against Iraq, he had the luxury of considering whether or not it should.

Those are exactly the sorts of big questions that NDU wants its students to pose. “If you ask our students how to bomb,” said Mark Clodfelter, a military historian and professor at NDU’s National War College, “They’ll throw back: ‘Why bomb?’”

“There’s plenty of war in War College,” continued Clodfelter, who is fond of talking about “friction,” German war philosopher General Carl von Clausewitz’s term for the combination of uncertainty, chance, danger and exertion that exists in all conflicts. “But we do plenty more than stress military solutions to national security problems.” The school also encourages its students to consider economic, diplomatic and informational instruments of power as ways to achieve national security.

No matter what they thought of the plan to invade Iraq, NDU’s graduate students were just as powerless as any other graduate students to affect the administration’s policy. But they are likely to wield a great deal more influence when it comes to future national security decisions: Approximately one third of all U.S. generals and admirals on active duty are graduates of either the War College or ICAF; an estimated one third of the War College’s State Department graduates have become ambassadors. The War College’s list of alumni includes Secretary of State Colin Powell, Senator John McCain and three of the nation’s service chiefs.

Those statistics lend gravity to the school’s seminars. As future leaders, NDU students know they may actually have to deal with the hypothetical threats they address in class. “I think it’s incredibly relevant to the future of our nation to get this right, given the increasing threats that we face—really to our very existence,” said Army Colonel and ICAF student Deb Lewis. Upon graduation from NDU, Lewis will have to think almost constantly about those threats; she has been tapped to take over as commander of the Army Corps of Engineers Seattle division, where her responsibilities will include securing waterways and helping to keep ports clear in an area that spans 100,000 square miles.

While no one can be expected to predict the future, some of the class discussions at NDU are prescient. A year before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, students engaged in a two-hour seminar about al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and developed a non-military strategy for addressing terrorism, said War College professor Bard O’Neill. “If the school was really named properly, it would be called the National Security College,” added O’Neill, who wants his students to think in terms of long-term strategy instead of short-term gains.

Students in O’Neill’s Global Security Arena seminar consider a long list of troubled regions around the world—and try to understand how they got that way. The fourth of the War College’s five core courses (the others are Fundamentals of Strategic Logic; the Nature of War; The National Security Decision Process; and Doing National Military Strategy), the Global Security Arena, according to its syllabus, encourages students to “confront the reality that even if we have mastered the complexities of strategic logic, military theory and the interagency process, we may still fail—and in some cases blunder very badly—if we do not understand those things we are trying to influence…The lessons of Vietnam, the Somali Republic and Lebanon remind us that fortune may deal unkindly with those who choose neither to pose the right questions nor seek answers.”

During a recent class, 12 students representing the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, State Department, Defense Intelligence Agency and the Bulgarian military were engaged in a matter-of-fact but chilling look at the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. It is a place, O’Neill warned the students, where the possibility of nuclear conflict “is very real.”

His point was underscored by an Air Force officer and student who had visited India. Military officers there, he said, had indicated to him that they might be prepared to lose up to a million people—which, after all, comprise only one percent of their nation’s population—to a limited nuclear war.

“This is likely to be a crisis on your watch,” O’Neill told the students. “Where there are internal conflicts, leaders create diversions.” And that is exactly what is happening in both India and Pakistan. India, O’Neill said, is plagued by economic and social instability, and its leaders have a legitimate fear that if Kashmir gains independence, other states would quickly follow—which explains why India will go to great lengths to prevent that from happening.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, meanwhile, despises India and faces his own set of troubles, including religious factionalism, tribalism and corruption. So Musharraf is not particularly interested in quelling the Kashmiri uprising, which unifies Pakistanis and serves his political purposes. Nor is Musharraf interested in expelling the al Qaeda operatives that have sought haven in the tribally controlled regions of his country, because that would mean clashing with the powerful Pashtun tribe.

But his reluctance to address that issue might lead to another potentially devastating scenario: O’Neill suggested that if al Qaeda carried out a large-scale assault on the United States with weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. might retaliate against Pakistan tribal regions for harboring terrorists. Noted O’Neill: “Pakistan’s internal problems have in effect become our national security problems.”

Added one of his students, an Air Force officer: “You don’t have to worry about it with your head in the sand until it kicks you in the ass.”

That is exactly what NWC and ICAF are trying to prevent. Students at NWC focus on formulating national security strategy; students at ICAF concentrate on how to marshal the nation’s resources to support that strategy.

NDU also oversees a vast network of educational and research arms, including a second campus in Norfolk, Virginia, two
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other colleges that offer shorter certification courses, two think tanks and three regional centers that organize educational workshops for military and civilian leaders in Latin America, Africa and the Near East/South Asia. Each year, about 500 people earn a graduate degree from NDU, and another 4,500 people participate in one of NDU’s programs, all with the aim of figuring out how to protect the United States and its interests.

“It’s one of the best-kept secrets in Washington. Students get to come for a year, step back and see what the big picture is,” said professor Goodman, speaking about NDU’s National War College. Still, said Goodman, who often lectures at other institutions, “People who don’t go there don’t know much about it.”

U.S. and foreign dignitaries often deliver speeches at the heavily guarded main campus at Fort McNair, but, with rare exceptions, the speeches are off the record. The school does not advertise or recruit. It doesn’t even have an admissions office. Just about the only way to get accepted to either of NDU’s two accredited graduate programs (the National War College’s Master of Science in National Security Strategy or ICAF’s Master of Science in National Resource Strategy) is to hold the rank of lieutenant colonel/Navy commander or above in the military, or hold an equally senior civilian position in the State Department or other federal agency. Then you have to be nominated by your employer. Two thirds of NDU’s graduate students already hold master’s degrees or Ph.D.s from other educational institutions.

NDU was founded with a similar mission. The idea is to avoid “group think,” by moving people out of their limited professional circles and allowing them to network beyond their own military branch or agency.

Today, the schools are considered the “crème de la crème” for the 20 percent of military officers tapped to pursue professional military education at a senior service school. Army Colonel and ICAF student Deb Lewis called it “the finest school I’ve attended,” a rich academic environment where no subject is off-limits and where “there’s no right answer.” That is high praise, considering the fact that Lewis was a member of the first class of women to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and later earned an M.B.A. from Harvard.

One aspect of her education that excites Lewis is learning about the media. Not only is she enrolled in a news media elective, she has also chosen the media from among 20 industries ICAF students can focus on for their required end-of-year field studies. The power of information is a main theme at NDU, one that repeatedly surfaces in classrooms.

In February, for instance, several dozen NWC and ICAF students who were enrolled in an “Information Engagement and National (Soft)Power” (sic) class—one of about 70 school electives—were listening to a guest lecture about strategic communication. The lecturer, Bruce Gregory, is now executive director of George Washington University’s Public Diplomacy Council. As a State Department employee, he helped to write a 2001 Defense Science Board Task Force report about “managed information dissemination”—in other words, public relations.

“Information,” the report noted, “is a strategic resource—less understood but no less important to national security than political, military and economic power.”

Among the report’s recommendations: The government should expand its use of radio, television, print and internet sites; significantly increase foreign opinion research and studies of foreign media environments and influence structures; and, take full advantage of commercial media production methods—in other words, use advertising specialists.

During his lecture, Gregory made a case for the necessity of these measures. Strategic communication, he pointed out, is used by everyone from candidates and policymakers to corporations, non-profits, unions and litigants—as well as the U.S. and foreign governments. But the government does not put a high priority on communication, he said, so it is compartmentalized, underfunded, and released with little or no coordination or strategic planning. Meanwhile, other organizations—with other agendas—are carefully crafting their messages.

“The government,” Gregory said after class, “has every right to do the same thing.”

Arguably, that is exactly the sort of thing one would expect to hear in an Information Engagement class. But the importance of public relations also surfaced that week in a less likely setting: In his seminar on mobilization, Professor B.F. Keagle proposed a question: “What other tools are important to mobilization besides things that go bang in the night?”

The students already had zeroed in on the mobilization of public support as key to the U.S. success in what Cooling referred to as “the first” Persian Gulf war, and the lack of public support as problematic in the Iraqi invasion that President Bush was lobbying for at the time.

“We can be prepared for the physical aspects of war,” said one Army officer. “But we’re losing the PR battle.”

“We’re really doing an abysmal job of diplomacy—internally and externally,” added a civilian Navy employee.

James Keagle wants to make sure that NDU doesn’t make the same mistake. “We have to be part of America. People need to know what we’re doing,” said Keagle, explaining why he’s a major advocate of the university’s new emphasis on outreach—an attempt to show the public and other government agencies what he called the “better side” of the Department of Defense. “They need to understand that we aren’t all trigger-happy bums,” he said.

Two years ago, the school established a public relations office. This year, it hired former CNN Washington Bureau Chief Frank Sesno to teach courses on the media. The school has redesigned its website, which includes links to student papers and a short video that features praise from Secretary of State Colin Powell: “The education I received at NDU was without a doubt the most significant learning experience of my military career,” Powell is quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, NDU is trying to be a better neighbor. Each of its senior colleges has “adopted” an inner-city District of Columbia school where NDU students can volunteer as mentors. In 2001, NDU became a member of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. It has hooked up with George Mason University to offer weekend and night courses on homeland security and counterterrorism, and is considering similar cooperative ventures with other nearby universities.

Ironically, while the Bush administration has invaded Iraq without approval or help from many of its allies, NDU has been looking to extend its outreach overseas: There is talk of increasing by 50 percent the number of foreign military officers enrolled in the graduate programs, from 44 to 66, to encourage more international connections and goodwill.

Keagle has even proposed a motto for NDU, its first: “America’s University: We Play Home and Away.”

Keagle said his motto reflects the military’s paradigm shift (post-September 11, 2001) from an emphasis on overseas missions to homeland security. As proof, look no further than the NDU campus itself: Visitors to Fort McNair are now subjected to rigorous car searches, and there is an air monitor set up outside the National War College’s Roosevelt Hall to detect a chemical or biological weapons assault. NDU is even considering establishing a separate homeland security college.

But the fact that Keagle has bothered to come up with the motto at all reflects the school’s—and the government’s—recognition that broad public support is key to the Pentagon’s success. No matter what their opinions, members of the military ultimately will obey their commander in chief. But the real battle is for the hearts and minds of the public. And that battle starts at home. “Mom decides (if her children join the military),” said Keagle. “If Mom doesn’t support what we’re doing, we’re not going to get the next generation of folks.”

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