The Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture
For outsiders, the school’s unusual practices can be shocking

By Kathy Witkowsky

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

ON A CHILL AND CLEAR desert morning at Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright’s renowned Arizona landmark, several tour groups meandered through the main building, as they do every day, learning about Wright’s “destruction of the box” through cantilevers and open floor plans. Meanwhile, a small group of students at Wright’s namesake school of architecture there were getting a literal lesson in destruction.

Using shovels and pickaxes, they demolished the roof of a small outbuilding, chipping through the light concrete and foam insulation, then tossing the debris over the rooftop, where it piled up near a large saguaro cactus.

The roof demolition was the first phase of an expansion project for a school computer laboratory. It also was considered an essential part of the students’ education—a chance for them to obtain hands-on construction experience.

During a short break, Sarah Murphy, of Clearwater, Minnesota, who said she decided to pursue her Bachelor of Architectural Studies degree at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture because “it fit my personality better than the normal school,” sipped lemonade and pointed out the blisters on her hands to fellow student Tony Walker. He was unsympathetic. After wiping the sweat from his forehead, he removed first one glove and then the other to tick off proof of his own efforts. “Blister, blister, blister,” chanted the 32-year-old Master of Architecture candidate, jabbing at one palm before turning to the other and repeating the observation.

“Oh, I’m not complaining,” responded Murphy cheerily. In fact, the 19-year-old said that she considered them “battle scars”: proof of her commitment to the school’s philosophy of learning by doing—a philosophy that is every bit as important to the school today as it was when Frank Lloyd Wright was alive. Widely heralded as America’s greatest architect, Wright’s innovative building design overshadowed his university when he died in 1959. But his legacy continues through his School of Architecture, which opened in 1950.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, near Scottsdale, Arizona, houses a school, a community and a commercial architectural practice.

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The Turbulent History of UC Merced
The University of California’s proposed tenth campus encounters thorny environmental problems

By William Trombley and Carl Irving

MERCED, CALIFORNIA

TRY NOT TO MENTION the word “shrimp” when talking to University of California officials about their proposed new campus near this small agricultural city at the northern end of the San Joaquin Valley.

The 2000-acre campus site selected by the UC Board of Regents is filled with “vernal pools”—small pockets of water that form after the winter rains in most years and that contain, for a few weeks, a tiny fairy shrimp, the largest only about an inch long, that have been listed as endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. That means the university must go through a lengthy permitting process, involving Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency and at least two state agencies, before any building can begin.

Consequently, it now seems likely that a new site must be chosen and that the campus will not open by the fall 2004 date that California Governor Gray Davis has promised.

“I think that’s clear,” UC Merced Chancellor Carol Tomlinson-Keasey said in an interview. “The likelihood is that the permitting will take longer than 2002, which is what we had hoped for” in order to complete the first buildings by 2004.

“Something will open in 2004 but it won’t be a ‘campus’ in the usual sense,” said another UC official.

In all probability, the “something” will be a leased building at recently closed Castle Air Force Base, six miles north of Merced, which will house offices for administrators and the first group of faculty members. An uncertain number of students—perhaps several hundred—will be in “distributed learning centers” in Fresno, Bakersfield, Modesto and possibly in rented space in downtown Merced.

That will enable Governor Davis and local politicians to proclaim the “opening” of the UC Merced campus, and to cut a few ribbons, but it will be several years before an actual campus takes shape.

These are the latest developments in the turbulent history of what would be the tenth campus in the University of California system and the nation’s first new environmentalists Lydia Miller and Steve Burke threaten litigation if University of California officials do not obey state and federal laws in locating the new campus.

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EDITORIAL

Measuring Up 2000 and Beyond

LAST FALL, the National Center released Measuring Up 2000, the first state-by-state report card on higher education—grading each state’s performance related to education and training beyond high school through the baccalaureate degree. Grades in the report card are based on a set of quantitative indicators in five key categories: preparation for college level work; participation in postsecondary education and training by the young and by working age adults; affordability; degree and certificate completion; and state economic and civic benefits.

These five categories are areas that have a crucial impact on college and life opportunities and are susceptible to influence by state policy. Grades are assigned in each of these categories by comparing each state’s performance to that of the highest performing state. In a sixth area, learning, all states are assigned an “Incomplete,” for they—and we—lack information on the educational performance of college students that would allow systematic state and national comparisons.

We designed Measuring Up 2000 as a catalytic and analytic tool for state and higher education leaders and for public understanding of higher education issues.

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Virginia B. Smith Award

M. SUSANA NAVARRO, executive director of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, has received the Virginia B. Smith Innovative Leadership Award for the year 2000.

Since 1991, Navarro has been directing the Collaborative, an unusual partnership of the University of Texas, El Paso, and the public schools that has led to significantly improved student performance in schools in and around El Paso.

“Dr. Navarro has demonstrated an extraordinary level of leadership, bringing together the city’s education, business and civic leaders to focus on preparing all students to become educated citizens,” said Charles L. Bunting, of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

The Virginia B. Smith Award, named for the President Emerita of Vassar College, has been established to encourage and support leadership and innovation in American higher education. The endowed award is jointly administered by CAEL and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

School or GED diploma, compared with 62 percent of those with low incomes. In every state, there is room for improvement.

However gratifying the headlines have been, they are yesterday’s news. The continuing value of the report card and its media attention will now be tested as the focus shifts to each state. What is needed now is vigorous debate, informed by data and analysis specific to each state. The strengths and weaknesses of higher education opportunity must be explored in the context of each state, as must be the public policies that address them. The fundamental issues raised by Measuring Up 2000 are not technical ones about data and statistical analysis—informe criticism of these will be reflected in the next two report cards. The crucial issue is about the responsibilities and performance of states in assuring the opportunity to prepare for higher education and to benefit from it.

We are confident that all states seek to improve citizens’ opportunities for education and for socially and economically productive lives. Some states are now embarked on improvement of these opportunities, others plan to do so, and each will face unique demographic, economic and political factors.

We are equally confident that policy leaders in most states can find ways to use Measuring Up 2000 as a tool to stimulate, strengthen and support those efforts. But our report card is only a tool, and of value only when used. Neither Measuring Up 2000 nor any other report can create policy leadership that recognizes and embraces an agenda of inclusive opportunity. Where such leadership is lacking, the report card will indeed be yesterday’s news. But effective leaders can and will use Measuring Up 2000 and other relevant reports to accomplish public purposes.

For our part, the National Center recognizes the need to move forward on the policy agenda, and to continue to improve our ability to measure, evaluate and compare state higher education performance. Discussion and debate are needed on both fronts. Future editions of the state report card, Measuring Up 2002 and Measuring Up 2004, will, we expect, reflect progress along both lines.

To initiate and stimulate both conversations, we have solicited the reactions of a number of educational and political leaders to Measuring Up 2000. Their responses comprise part of the special supplement to this issue of National CrossTalk. Your comments on Measuring Up 2000 and this supplement will be welcome. We are committed to continuing this discourse, and are planning a number of forums and other opportunities for comments, criticisms and suggestions.

—Patrick M. Callan

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Muskingum College’s Gutsy Move
Slashing tuition five years ago reversed a chronic enrollment decline

By Carl Irving

New Concord, Ohio

Students at Muskingum (Mus-KINGum) College here complain about crowded housing, and faculty members vent about lack of classroom space.

But administrators almost welcome such gripes, because they signal a dramatic turnaround since 1995. Slashing tuition five years ago reversed chronic enrollment decline, which boosted revenues to help strengthen this isolated little campus at the edge of Appalachia.

Campus veterans say that since then, several raises dissuaded a number of young faculty members from leaving, enabled the administration to budget for several new academic hires and programs, patch up neglected buildings and hire an architect to design the first new academic complex in 30 years.

The outlook now, they say, contrasts with gloomier visions that had prevailed before 1995. Enrollment has increased by 31 percent over the past five years, adding $4 million more in revenues annually.

Economists who study tuition issues in America praise campus leaders here for a successful public relations coup at the right moment, but doubt that the move at Muskingum can be successfully imitated. Still, the payoff seems to be long-term for a rural campus that must compete with a swarm of similar small private schools in Ohio and nearby states.

The change took place amidst a flurry of national and regional publicity, after the college had announced that it would reduce tuition by 29 percent—from $13,850 to $9,850.

Undergraduate enrollment now totals 1,575, compared with 1,091 in 1995, and freshman applicants have nearly doubled during the same time, approaching 2,000 a year. Although tuition has since increased to $12,250, that still leaves a $6,319 gap compared with average charges at 17 schools with which Muskingum competes for students in the region, according to Enrollment Dean Jeff Zellers. Including room and board, a year at Muskingum now costs $17,890.

By next year, three consecutive years of faculty raises totaling 17.5 percent will put the campus “ahead of the competition,” said J. Ransom Clark, vice president for academic affairs. Professor Robert Burk, chairman of the history department and a University of Wisconsin at Madison Ph.D., said he had been “inclined to look elsewhere,” along with a number of other younger faculty members, before prospects improved.

“There’s less need now to hold the line on hires” of Ph.D.s, Burk said. Before, tighter budgets had forced the faculty to contemplate settling for doctoral students who had not yet completed their dissertations. Burk and other faculty members also say student aptitude has improved a bit over the past five years. The average student now scores about one more point, to “a high 22” on the ACT, roughly equal to about 1,060 on the SAT. At the same time, enrollment now includes more students from farther outside the region and urban areas.

“I’ve seen more ‘skater kids,’ with different personalities who believe in freedom and have a broader range of interests,” said Kristen Walker, a 21-year-old senior and editor of the campus newspaper.

Alumni have increased their donations, which reached a record million dollars last year. This has helped to increase the operating budget by $800,000 over the past two years.

The alumni supported the tuition change from the start, according to the trustees’ finance chair, William T. Dentzer, Jr., retired chairman and CEO of the Depository Trust Co. in New York. A fundraising campaign in the early 1990s had raised more than $35 million in pledges. Like Dentzer, many other successful alumni grew up in Appalachia, in “lower middle class families.”

Board members joining Dentzer in a unanimous vote for the tuition cut included alumni Philip Caldwell, then chairman of the Ford Motor Co., and former astronaut and U.S. Senator John Glenn.

Glenn grew up here, and if Muskingum had a pantheon he would be in it. Memories of his space feats—he was the first American to orbit the earth in space—are scattered around the campus, beginning with a huge cardboard cutout of him in a space suit greeting visitors to the admissions office. A replica of his capsule has a place of honor in the science building. Glenn, who returns periodically with his wife Annie, a fellow alumni, attracted 50,000 people—the largest crowd New Concord had ever seen—when he returned in 1962 after his historic flight.

A smaller crowd, including many in wheelchairs, rose in welcome when he returned in 1998, after a space shuttle flight at age 77. During that flight, media from around the world had been based at the campus’ John Glenn Gymnasium for the local angle.

Ordinarily, Muskingum—supposedly derived from an Indian word, the meaning of which nobody now seems certain (guesses range from Eye of the Elk to Moose Eye)—is located in a very quiet village of 2,500 people. Scotch-Irish farmers who had come west on the new North American Wilderness Trail had given the village its name.

By the 1960s, a solid majority of the residents were of Muskingum College ancestry. By the 1970s, this isolated village was nearly a college town.

Enrollment at Muskingum College has increased by 31 percent over the past five years, adding $4 million more in revenues annually.

continued next page
Jim Dooley (right) teaches a “Conservation Science” course at Muskingum, much of which takes place on a 10,000-acre piece of reclaimed strip-mining land, 12 miles from campus.

The benefits flowing from both more tuition revenue and contributions will include a new building for communications studies, the arts, and a theater.

The regional growth after publication of a favorable article in U.S. News and World Report, which since then has ranked the campus as one of the best bargains among private Midwest liberal arts colleges.

“My dad brought it to my attention,” said Mark Fields, a 22-year-old senior from near Lexington, Kentucky. He chose Muskingum from among several schools in the region after calculating that, while it offered less aid, the lower tuition made it a better deal. “My sister was also in college, and I wanted to make it easier on my parents,” he said.

Like many other private campuses, Muskingum also offers substantial aid, although Zellers estimates that tuition reductions now average about 30 percent compared with 40 percent five years ago. Fields, for instance, gets $1,000 in annual discounts, compared with 40 percent five years ago. Fields, for instance, gets $1,000 in annual discounts, compared with 40 percent five years ago.

Stipends will be added next year.

One of these innovations involves Jim Dooley, a recent faculty hire, who directs a new “conservation science” major, which he calls the cutting edge of environmental studies. Two other faculty members have joined with Dooley, a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, to supervise study and research with 30 students, nearly twice as many as he had expected.

“Much of this takes place 12 miles south of here on 10,000 acres reclaimed from strip mining that had been widespread in Appalachia as recently as the mid-’80s. Instead of waiting until they become seniors, the customary pace, Dooley’s students begin their research as freshmen and sophomores, concentrating on what can be done to restore an area which is much like many other parts of Appalachia.

With encouragement from the college, Dooley has arranged for cooperation with a nearby public two-year technical college that offers wildlife management studies and has research equipment that Muskingum can’t afford to duplicate. Herds of rare varieties of hoof stock, from white rhinos to endangered deer species, are kept in the restored area.

The scientists and their students currently are at work on drafting abstracts to submit to the Ohio Academy of Science. Later, Dooley said, papers on basic problems, such as how to restore nutrient-starved life where topsoil had been stripped away, will be submitted to national and international journals.
Muskingum's move is praised for both wisdom and foresight by Gordon Winston, director of the Williams College Project on the Economics of Higher Education. “They took a very hard look before lowering the sticker price, instead of gimmicking with fee cuts,” he said. “They knew they were blazing new trails, and did it thoughtfully. And the public decided it was not a weakness, but to be applauded.”

But Muskingum's good fortune also has to do with being first to do it, which resulted in lots of favorable publicity, Winston pointed out.

The college "orchestrated it as well as any school could,” said David Breneman, dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Both Breneman and Winston noted that while other schools have considered such tactics, the closest they have come has involved making statements that they try to keep their tuition increases tuned to the rate of inflation.

Wells College, a women's campus in Aurora, in upstate New York, did follow Muskingum's lead two years ago, reducing tuition and fees 29 percent from $17,550 in 1998-99 to $12,630 the following year. With room and board, total average costs, $18,830. Since then, fulltime undergraduate enrollment has increased 25 percent from 322 to 468 students, according to the admissions director, Susan Raith Sloan. Average SAT scores increased 16 points, from 1,111 to 1,127. The cut followed a 30 percent enrollment decline in the prior five years, Sloan said. The change increased net tuition revenue by 41 percent in the freshman classes, partly because of a 13 percent decline in tuition discounts, according to spokeswoman Michelle Courtney Berry. The enrollment boost also helped stimulate a successful end to a $58 million alumni fundraising campaign.

A study of the positive reaction to Muskingum's tuition cut did encourage Wells to do something similar, Sloan said. Wells also was at least partly motivated by its ability to endure as a women's campus, including, not long after its founding, successful resistance to overtures for a merger from Cornell University, 25 miles to the south.

But Wells, too, remains the exception. “Most other schools have settled into an enrollment management practice which involves individual discounts to individual students,” said Winston. Thus, over the years, advertised tuition, which runs as high as $30,000 among the nation’s prominent private colleges and universities, has become virtually meaningless.

The College Board’s annual survey found that, before discounts, average tuition at private four-year campuses increased from $1,820 in 1971 to $16,332 in 2000. Taking account of inflation would raise the 1971 figure to $7,634. Public four-year schools on average have maintained far lower tuitions and fees to students, from $376 in 1971 ($1,577 in today’s dollars) to $3,510 last year.

Since 1980, without including discounts, private tuition, adjusted for inflation, has increased 118 percent, compared with 114 percent at public campuses. During the same period, median family income rose 20 percent. During the past three decades, aid for inflation, has increased financial squeeze on campuses down the line, which depend mostly on tuition for their operating expenses.

“Free market at work, but the disappointing part is that it’s to the disadvantage of the poor kids and to the advantage of the wealthy,” Winston said. “It looks like it will significantly mess up access for low income kids, except for the very best.”

To complicate matters, there is resistance to cutting back on tuition charges because of “the old notion that you judge quality by price,” Breneman said in an interview. “There’s an inherent bias against price cutting.” But he sees no alternative, and is concerned about growing public resentment.

Public campuses face price pressures from politicians because of adverse public reaction to rising charges. With state government pressures to hold the line on fees, many public universities have launched ambitious fund raising campaigns. The University of California has more than doubled its endowments to $6.1 billion, compared with $2.6 billion five years ago.

Williams, a private, but well endowed, campus, which has about 5,000 applicants for 500 freshman spots each fall, sought to respond to growing public concern by freezing tuition for 2000-01. “We made so much through a happy market, it made sense that some of this unexpected wealth be shared with parents,” Winston said. But the freeze at Williams had no visible impact on similar campuses.

According to Winston, therefore, the main hope for private higher education lies in better public understanding of the fact that campuses really are hybrids, simultaneously churches and car dealers.

“What higher education gives away is in service of equality of opportunity, the democratic role of an educated citizenry, the contribution of education to economic growth,” he wrote in a recent paper. To pay for this, he said, the campuses must seek to extract money from the public motivated by the “belief that society as a whole will be better off if more people are well educated.”

At Muskingum, that challenge has been met, President Steele said. Enrollment management experts, she said, saw a two-step process here: The price cut attracted the attention of prospective students, who then took a look and decided they liked what they saw and enrolled. Although few have followed suit, Muskingum continues to get calls from other campuses asking how they made it work.

Alumni, many of whom grew up in Appalachia, take pride in improving access for students, and the trustees see that this is a “strong period in Muskingum's history,” Steele said. “There’s a great sense of optimism along with greater energy here. People are willing to come together and work through and solve the problems that always exist at a campus.”

—MUSKINGUM COLLEGE PRESIDENT ANNE C. STEELE

CROSS

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—MUSKINGUM COLLEGE PRESIDENT ANNE C. STEELE

“Being larger makes us more interesting. A larger faculty and student body makes for more stimulation intellectually.”

—MUSKINGUM COLLEGE PRESIDENT ANNE C. STEELE

Freelance writer Carl Irving lives in the San Francisco Bay area.
UC Merced from page 1

major research university of the 21st century.
UC has long wanted a campus in the San Joaquin Valley, a fast-growing and increasingly influential part of the state, where there are several California State University campuses but only a limited UC presence.

Officials argue that a new campus is needed if the university is to meet anticipated enrollment demands, since most of the other UC campuses are full. An increase in California high school graduates is expected to bring an additional 63,000 students to the nine UC general campuses by 2010. Plans call for UC Merced to accommodate about 6,000 of that increase.

Local politicians and business leaders also hope the new campus will boost the local economy and help to eliminate persistent double-digit unemployment.

In 1990, the Board of Regents approved the tenth campus and began the search for a 2,000-acre valley location—1,000 acres for the campus and another 1,000 for “future development of revenue-generating activities.”

Shortly thereafter, state budget cuts forced the university to retreat and the site selection process slowed to a crawl. By the mid-’90s, however, California’s economic fortunes had brightened considerably, the UC budget had improved and tenth campus plans were moved from the back burner. After a heated competition, the Merced site was chosen over two that were closer to Fresno, which is by far the largest city in the valley. Political support for the project grew in volume.

The governor is committed to UC Merced,” said John Mockler, who until recently was Davis’ interim education secretary. “There’s a massive multiregional need there.”

Davis has shown this commitment by pouring millions into plans for the campus and for conservation efforts intended to mitigate the environmental problems. His 2001-2002 budget contains $162 million for UC Merced, most of it for construction of the first three permanent buildings, even though the location of the campus is still in doubt.

Last year’s state budget included almost $50 million to mitigate wetlands damage and to ease the path for UC construction.

By 2010, when UC Merced enrollment is expected to reach 6,000, at least $1 billion will have been spent on the campus—$400 million for construction, $300 million for infrastructure, and another $400 million for operations, according to estimates by the California Postsecondary Education Commission.

Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, who grew up in the valley, said the new campus would “fundamentally change the economy and cultural and political environment in the Central Valley.” (The “Central Valley” extends 500 miles from Redding in the north to Bakersfield in the south and includes both the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys.)

A campus chancellor was chosen—Tomlinson-Keasey, who had worked on the project as a member of UC President Richard C. Atkinson’s Oakland staff. The chancellor and a staff now numbering about 70 set up headquarters in a one-story Merced office building complex that also houses insurance agents and chiropractors. The UC Merced Foundation, with a board of trustees numbering 102, was formed. Local benefactors already have endowed seven faculty chairs.

Meanwhile, in those shallow vernal pools, referred to as “mud puddles” by some, tiny crustaceans that have existed for more than 200 million years—survivors of the Ice Age—were paddling upside down, wiggling their 11 pairs of swimming legs and feeding on algae, bacteria and other delicacies, blissfully unaware of the turmoil they were about to cause.

While environmental problems have pushed academic planning into the background for the time being, interviews with UC Merced administrators indicate that their goal is to become a traditional research university, like other UC general campuses. At first, most of the students will be undergraduates but the main focus will be on graduate study and research.

“If you were just going to build an undergraduate program, you’d build another Cal State, you wouldn’t build a UC,” said former UC Berkeley Provost Roderic B. Park, who came out of retirement to help recruit deans and other top academic administrators for the new campus. “You’ve got to do the undergraduate part well, but it has to be within the context of a research university.”

A few years ago, a group of faculty members from several UC campuses, hoping for a more innovative approach, drew up a quite different plan for the new campus, suggesting closer integration of graduate and undergraduate instruction. They proposed student learning centers, emphasizing individual initiative, group discussions and group learning, with small classes and seminars. According to Charles Muscatine, a retired professor of English and a veteran of largely unsuccessful efforts to improve undergraduate education at UC Berkeley.

“That was not an attempt to abandon research but to integrate research and teaching at the undergraduate level,” said another member of the group, Alexander Astin, professor and director of a higher education research institute at UCLA.

These ideas went nowhere. To many, they sounded like the original plan for UC Santa Cruz, which opened in 1965 with a determination to make undergraduate education at least as important as graduate study but since has evolved into a research-oriented institution.

“I can’t tell you how many people have said, ‘Don’t give us another Santa Cruz!’” said Karen Merritt, director of academic planning at UC Merced.

Chancellor Tomlinson-Keasey agreed. “That ideology was prevalent in the early days at (UC) Riverside and Santa Cruz,” she said, but “the fact of the matter is, if you want to take your place alongside similar research universities, you have to stress graduate work and research.”

The chancellor said the campus “will tilt in the direction” of computer science, environmental science and engineering at first, because of society’s “pressing need for technical skills.” Although “there are five jobs available for every person (UC) can turn out” in these fields, she said, the programs are overenrolled on UC campuses and “hundreds of qualified students are being turned away.”

By stressing science and engineering, the campus also hopes to attract financial support from the federal government and from private enterprise. “We can’t expect the state to pay for all of it, so we need to develop other revenue streams immediately,” Tomlinson-Keasey said.

However, the chancellor said other academic areas will not be neglected. She hopes to build strong social science departments and expects that one of the university’s first professional schools will deal with public policy.

After reviewing the latest academic proposals, however, Berkeley’s Professor Muscatine said “plans for the faculty and curriculum in the division of social sciences, humanities and the arts seem both too slim and somewhat incoherent. It looks like it will be a run of the mill ‘research’ campus, but oriented even more than usual toward vocational education, business, industry and big-money opportunities for both the university and faculty.”

There are plans for a Sierra Nevada Research Institute, where scholars would study “issues of global significance—water, geology, ecology, air quality… but certainly with a definable local component,” the chancellor said.

The hope is that the institute will provide a research base for new faculty members as the campus is being built and academic departments are forming. But progress has been slow.

“It’s not going quite as rapidly as we had hoped,” said Fred N. Spiess, professor emeritus of oceanography at UC San
Diego and chair of the university-wide faculty task force that has been overseeing academic developments at UC Merced.

One reason for the delay is that Tomlinson-Keasey and the task force could not agree on a director for the institute, and the chancellor has decided to postpone the appointment until other top academic jobs have been filled.

Some have wondered if first-rate faculty and administrators can be recruited for a new campus in a little-known, largely rural area of California, far from the golden coastline. But both Tomlinson-Keasey and Rod Park say this has not been a problem.

The proximity of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and Yosemite National Park, 90 miles east of the proposed campus, has been helpful. “East of the Rockies, nobody knows where Merced is, but all of them know where Yosemite is,” the chancellor said.

Park said he has been deluged with applications from candidates with “impressive backgrounds” for the top academic positions. During his search, Park said, he always got around to asking candidates if they had a “frontier spirit, (because) when I first saw the site, I thought of ‘Dances with Wolves,’ without the buffalo. There’s no question many are exhilarated by the prospect.”

In addition to the main campus, wherever that turns out to be, UC Merced plans to operate the “distributed learning centers” in Modesto, 30 miles north of Merced; in Fresno, 60 miles south; and in Bakersfield, another 100 miles farther south at the southern edge of the Central Valley.

Campus officials hope these centers will attract qualified lower-division (freshman and sophomore) students, especially Latinos and other minorities, who have shunned UC in the past, for financial and cultural reasons.

“This is probably the boldest part of our experiment,” said Director of Academic Programs Joe Castro, who will run the regional centers. “We are looking for UC-eligible students in the valley who would love to go to a UC campus but cannot because of costs or because their families don’t want them to go that far away.”

In 1999, only 3 percent of Merced County high school graduates enrolled at a UC campus—one of the lowest percentages of any county in the state, according to the California Postsecondary Education Commission. In surrounding counties, the percentages were not much higher.

“The median family income here is around $30,000,” Tomlinson-Keasey said. “You can’t take that and subtract $13,000 (average cost of a year at a UC campus, including tuition, fees, books, room and board) and expect a family to send a student to UC.”

The chancellor said an aggressive financial aid approach is planned, so that no academically eligible student will turn down UC for lack of money.

“This is also a cultural issue,” said Castro, who is Mexican American. “We don’t want our kids to go too far away.”

Castro cited his own case as an example.

After graduating from high school in the San Joaquin Valley community of Hanford, Castro had planned to enroll at nearby College of the Sequoias, a two-year community college. But then he was offered a chance to attend UC Berkeley as part of a special program for graduates of rural high schools.

“My grandmother didn’t want me to go,” he recalled. “She said, ‘are you too good for the community college?’ But I went. It was maybe one of two or three times in my life when I did something my grandmother didn’t want me to.”

There are tentative plans to enroll about 250 students at the three learning centers in fall 2004, although the number could be much larger if, as seems likely, there is no main campus by then. Many other questions remain. Will students take all of their lower-division work, or only some of it, at the centers? Will students who do well at the centers be guaranteed transfer slots on the main campus? Who will teach at the centers—regular UC Merced faculty members or part-time adjunct professors?

Professor Spiess said he doubted that full-time UC Merced faculty would want to teach at the centers.

“If people are going to come to build a campus, not a bunch of places scattered around the countryside,” he said. “If you tell prospective faculty they’re going to have to go down to Fresno or Bakersfield to do some teaching, I don’t think that would be attractive to the kind of people we are seeking.”

Rod Park agreed but said, “That’s not what we’re asking them to do.” He believes much of the instruction at the centers will be handled by part-time faculty members, probably from Cal State or community college campuses, supplemented by online classes and videoconferencing.

As Park sees it, every student enrolled at the centers would take a weekly seminar of about two hours at the main campus, with a UC Merced professor, and Merced faculty members would make occasional visits to the centers. “That would not be a big load on the faculty,” he said.

Campus officials realize that not only must they attract more UC-eligible students through the learning centers and other means, but they also must increase the pool of eligible high school graduates.

California Postsecondary Education Commission figures show that, during the 1997-98 school year, only 27.4 percent of high school graduates in Merced County completed the courses required to enter UC. This compares with 38.2 percent in Alameda County (Oakland and surrounding area), 40.1 percent in Los Angeles and 56.5 percent in San Francisco.

Joe Castro and his staff, calling on faculty members from several UC campuses, are working with valley school districts to improve science and mathematics instruction and to increase the number of Advanced Placement classes offered in high schools.

But all of these efforts to plan a campus and a curriculum will be in vain if the thorny environmental problems cannot be solved.

These began in May 1995, when the UC Board of Regents selected the campus site, six miles from downtown Merced, on land that was donated by two local educational trusts. The agreement called for development of a community of at least 50,000, to be built on 8,000 acres adjacent to the campus.

Revenues from development of the community would flow to the trusts, eventually providing some $300 million in scholarships to UC and other higher education institutions for the region’s high school graduates. Privately, UC officials now downplay these prospects.

Except for cattle grazing on the land between November and April, the proposed campus and the land around it are almost empty. Last fall, a visitor found a vast, silent brown landscape, where a red-tailed hawk taking flight provided the sole sign of life. There are no roads, sewers, water lines or other infrastructure, and county officials estimate that it would cost at least $350 million to provide them.

But this part of Merced County is wetlands country. When the winter rains end, the area is dotted with thousands of vernal pools, in which live the three endangered species of fairy shrimp. Five other species in and around the pools also have been listed as either “endangered” or “threatened,” and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials say there might well be more.

California Governor Gray Davis’ 2001-2002 budget contains $162 million for UC Merced, even though the location of the campus is still in doubt.

Chris Nogano, Sacramento branch chief for U.S. Fish and Wildlife, explained the importance of vernal pools in a Fresno Bee interview last fall: “These pools are used by migrating birds on the Pacific Flyway, and many other species use the pools. You find insects and native plants at vernal pools. In general, if you have degraded habitat for fairy shrimp, the quality of nature degrades for many species of animals and plants.”

The plight of fairy shrimp does not touch the hearts of many in the region. “All of us here today feel that children and education are more important than animals, fish, fowl and creepy things,” State Senator Dick Montieth, a Modesto Republican, said at a pro-campus rally last summer.

These potential problems with wetlands and vernal pools were mentioned in an environmental impact report done for the
When UC opened three new campuses in the 1960s—Irvine, San Diego and Santa Cruz—environmental restrictions were a minor concern. Before a shovel of dirt can be turned on the Merced campus, however, UC needs approval from half a dozen federal and state agencies. Two especially important permits—one from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, required by the 1972 Clean Water Act, and one from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, required by the 1973 Endangered Species Act—generally take years to obtain.

“It’s not a pretty picture,” said Clifford W. Graves, UC Merced’s vice chancellor for physical planning. “It will take a lot longer than we would like... it’s not just a question of what you can create; it’s a question of what you can get permitted.”

Under the present schedule, the campus would not even apply for a Clean Water Act permit until 2003, said Tom Coe, spokesperson for the Army Corps of Engineers. First, Merced planners must complete a survey of 14 alternate sites that might be less environmentally damaging than the one the UC Regents have chosen.

UC officials were encouraged by a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that limited the scope of the federal Clean Water Act and allowed some suburban Chicago communities to build a landfill on top of ponds used by migrating birds. It is not clear if this ruling will apply to vernal pools but if it does, UC Merced might not need a Corps of Engineers permit.

However, UC attorney David Moser told the Modesto Bee that the decision is “not likely to speed up the process significantly.”

Also, the Endangered Species Act still would apply, so a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service still would be needed. That process usually takes four to five years, said Vicki Campbell, chief of the Conservation Planning Division, Endangered Species Program, in the agency’s Sacramento office.

“The whole process is complex,” she said. “Resource issues are never simple. We have to try to meet the needs of the species and we have to try to meet the needs of the county and the state to build the campus.”

“We would much prefer that they shift the site,” Campbell added.

Local environmentalists are keeping a close watch on the UC Merced planning process.

“We’re not taking on UC; we’re taking on the process,” said Lydia Miller, president of the San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center, which finds homes for wounded barn owls, red-tailed hawks, shrikes and other raptors. “We’re trying to make sure they do this project right, and, if they don’t do it right, we’re laying the groundwork for a lawsuit.”

This is not popular with some of Miller’s Merced neighbors. “Some people will say things like, ‘You’re depriving your son (a high school student) of the chance for a college education,’” Miller said. “But you’d be surprised how many say things like, ‘My god, we don’t want this in Merced!’”

Miller and Steve Burke, president of Modesto-based “Protect our Water,” have won important environmental lawsuits in the past, and UC planners do not take them lightly. “They have a tremendous track record,” Roger Samuelsen said.

Both the university and Merced County, which is jointly planning the project with UC, expect to be sued. “So we’ve got to make sure we’ve got a defensible project,” said county planner Bob Smith.

Many UC biologists oppose the present campus site. Some have protested publicly against the plan to build a campus for 25,000 students, and several thousand faculty and staff members, in such an environmentally sensitive area. Others are trying to work within the system, hoping to persuade the Regents and the UC administration to move the site.

But there is strong political pressure to start building soon, on the theory that once permanent buildings are under construction, the project cannot be stopped.

Some of the pressure comes from officials and local politicians thought they had found a way out of their environmental dilemma. They floated the idea of placing the first three permanent campus buildings on a 200-acre public golf course that is part of the trust lands. This location is one and a half miles from the original site but has few, if any, vernal pools.

“Because the golf course already has been developed, it would be easy to avoid any wetlands,” campus spokesman James Grant told the Sacramento Bee. “So we are looking quite seriously at this alternative.”

Environmentalists immediately cried foul.

“This is piecemealing the project, and that’s against both federal and state law,” said Lydia Miller. “They know that once they get a couple of buildings out there, it will be almost impossible to stop the whole project. They’re just thumbing their noses at the federal agencies... This is shady and corrupt in the worst way.”

Officials of both the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have expressed reservations about the golf course alternative.

“It depends what kind of buildings they want to put out there,” said Vicki Campbell of Fish and Wildlife. “If it’s something like a remote field station, that would probably be okay, but if these are basic campus buildings, like a library or an administration building, that would be piecemealing” and that would be illegal. (The three buildings UC has in mind are a library, an engineering/science building and a classroom/office building, not a “remote field station.”)

Most of the parties in this complicated dispute agree that eventually a deal will be struck, and a UC campus will be built somewhere in the Merced area.

“I think we will see a campus in eastern Merced County,” Campbell said. “I wouldn’t hazard a guess on where or when.”
"Co-Location" Experiment
Ten-year-old university branch and a new community college share a campus

Bothell, Washington

The state of Washington is finding out if a two-year community college and a senior university branch can live happily ever after on the same piece of land.

Last fall, 1,470 Cascadia Community College students joined almost the same number from the University of Washington's Bothell branch on a new campus in this suburban community, 20 miles northeast of downtown Seattle.

The two schools have separate faculties, classrooms and laboratories but they are sharing a library, a bookstore, parking, food services and maintenance and security staff.

So far, so good. Cascadia's fall enrollment exceeded expectations, while UW Bothell met its target. Administrators and faculty members at both institutions say the sharing of facilities, especially the library, has gone more smoothly than expected.

“Our agreements with Cascadia—who cuts the grass? Who handles security? All those kinds of things—seem to be working well,” said UW Bothell Chancellor Warren Buck.

“We’re all surprised at how well it’s working,” Victoria Munoz Richart, Cascadia’s president agreed.

The state Legislature authorized this “co-location” experiment six years ago, to prevent the ten-year-old university branch and the brand-new community college from building separate campuses less than five miles apart.

The thinking was that one campus would be cheaper than two and might lead to richer educational experiences for students at both institutions. But cost-saving hopes have evaporated. More than $150 million has been spent on the new campus so far. By the time full-time enrollment reaches 3,000, the cost of land, design and construction will have risen to $225 million, according to Jim Reed, deputy director of the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Academically, the arrangement already has proven beneficial for the community college students, who have access to a much larger library, and better classroom and lab facilities than two-year schools usually provide. Eventually, they also will benefit from the “richer intellectual environment that co-location is going to create,” Cascadia President Richart predicted.

However, the degree of academic cooperation between the two institutions has yet to be determined.

“It’s very exciting to think of the possible interactions with the UWB (University of Washington, Bothell) faculty—perhaps some joint seminars and other things like that,” Brian Bansenauer, who teaches computer programming and web site development at Cascadia, said in an interview last summer.

In a second interview, after the fall quarter ended, Bansenauer said, “there has been quite a lot of faculty-to-faculty interaction” but “we’re not quite at the stage where we know how a lot of these interactions will develop.”

Some doubt that UWB faculty members, who teach upper division (junior and senior) and graduate courses will have much in common with the community college instructors.

“We’re trying to be good neighbors; we don’t have a high fence between us,” said Stanley Slater, director of the UWB business program and former vice chancellor for academic affairs. “That said, it’s clear the culture and value systems of the two institutions will be very different.”

UWB Chancellor Buck began an interview this way: “I want to make this really clear: We’re two separate institutions that happen to be on the same campus. Our students, faculty and staff have a University of Washington brand and, more than that, a University of Washington, Bothell, brand.

“It’s possible that some courses could develop into partnerships,” Buck added. “We’ll know more in a year. Right now, it’s just theoretical.”

State higher education officials are more interested in providing additional access to higher education than they are in whatever cross-campus courses or joint faculty seminars might evolve at Bothell.

“The goal was to provide additional lower division and upper division capacity in an under-served area,” Jim Reed said.

Although future college enrollment projections have been scaled back, the state of Washington still expects at least an additional 70,000 undergraduates by the year 2010. If expectations are fulfilled, the Bothell campus eventually will meet part of that need by accommodating a full-time enrollment of 10,000—6,000 at UW Bothell-Cascadia Community College.

“Access is the key in this state,” said Scott Morgan, director of financial services for the state’s community and technical college system. “That’s been the biggest higher education issue of the last ten years.”

While Washington’s enrollments have been strong at the lower division (freshman and sophomore) level, upper division enrollment ranks 46th in the nation, and bachelor’s degree production has been relatively low.

To try to correct these problems, the state in recent years has opened upper division branch campuses of the University of Washington and Washington State University; has encouraged joint use of facilities by two- and four-year campuses; and has tried in various ways to ease the transfer of students from community colleges to university campuses. Now they are trying co-location.

This approach has had a spotty record around the country. Two-year and four-year institutions generally consider that they inhabit different universes and cooperation is difficult. Faculty members at four-year schools tend to look down on community college instructors.

David Habura, who was president of Cascadia College in the early planning stages, once put it this way: “Walls are built up. They (university people) are afraid we’re going to water the soup.”

Perhaps the nation’s most successful co-location example is the Auraria Higher Education Center in downtown Denver, where the Community College of Denver, Metropolitan State University and the Denver branch of the University of Colorado co-exist on a 127-acre campus. Total administrators and faculty members at both institutions say the sharing of facilities, especially the library, has gone more smoothly than expected.
This “co-location” experiment was authorized six years ago, to prevent the ten-year-old university branch and the brand-new community college from building separate campuses less than five miles apart.

said the new two-year school should be built on the same campus as UW Bothell, which was moving to a permanent location after ten years in leased business park space.

But the 128-acre site, one of the few available large parcels of land in this built-up suburban area, cost more than anticipated—$22 million. Almost half of the acreage is wetlands, so millions more are being spent to protect salmon and other endangered or threatened species.

By the time the conservation project is finished in two or three years, 400,000 trees, shrubs and bushes will have been hand-planted, and a stream will have been re-routed to make it more “fish friendly.”

The cost will be at least $7.5 million.

“Expense is not the issue,” Chancellor Buck said, “not if it is realized that, ten or 15 years down the road, we will have a scientifically interesting model for others to copy. We have the largest wetlands reclamation project in the state right here on campus. It’s a wonderful research lab.”

Buck, a nuclear physicist who came to UWB from Hampton University in Virginia, said he hopes to build up both science and engineering at Bothell, which, he pointed out, lies “at the heart of the high tech corridor that runs from Redmond (home of Microsoft) to Everett.”

The chancellor said the higher education coordinating board has approved UWB’s first bachelor’s degree in environmental science, which “opens the door for us to bring to this community more science and technology.” Campus officials expect early approval for two other new degree programs—a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Arts in Policy Studies.

How well this emphasis on business, science and technology will mesh with the Cascadia Community College curriculum is not clear.

Cascadia stresses interdisciplinary classes, team teaching and a “learning-centered” approach to education, along with intensive counseling of students, to try to reduce the high drop-out rate that plagues almost every community college, everywhere.

President Richart came to Cascadia in July, 1998, from the huge Los Angeles Community College District, where she learned “how easy it was for us to become isolated, to protect our own territory and not think about the college as a whole,” she said in an interview. In her new job, Richart is trying for a new style.

“I think collaboration brings out the best in people,” she said. “I think the principles of team building and collaboration that I wrote about in my doctoral dissertation (at UCLA) actually do work.”

The president has divided her small faculty of 17 full-time instructors and 25 part-timers into interdisciplinary “learning outcomes” teams, organized around themes such as “learning actively” or “thinking creatively.”

Computer specialist Bansenauer, who came to Cascadia from the University of Wisconsin’s Eau Claire campus, is a member of the “learning actively” team, along with instructors in English, mathematics and psychology.

“The interdisciplinary model was attractive to me,” he said. “I tried to do it at the University of Wisconsin but found it very difficult.”

Bansenauer said the team is still “feeling its way” but already has come up with several ideas for interdisciplinary courses that might be offered in the winter and spring quarters.

During the fall quarter, “everybody was in a frenzy, just trying to get the lights turned on and get started,” said Jack Bautsch, Cascadia’s vice president for student success, a job he described as a “bridge between academic affairs and student services.”

This winter and spring “we’ll have more time to devote to the learning communities” and other learning activities that could mark Cascadia as an unusual community college, Bautsch added.

This “learning community” approach to higher education is a far cry from the emphasis on research in science and technology that Chancellor Buck and others at UW Bothell are talking about.

There are other, perhaps more obvious, differences between the university branch and the community college.

UWB faculty members teach less and are paid more than their Cascadia counterparts. Most UWB professors teach two or three classes per quarter, while their Cascadia counterparts will teach three, four or even five. Average pay for a UWB professor in fall, 1999, was $58,299, while Washington was paying community college instructors with the same amount of experience less than $45,000.

The state provides more money for universities than for community colleges. Both UW Bothell and Cascadia are above average for their systems but the $10,000 UWB receives for each full-time student is considerably more than Cascadia’s $7,000.

Some see this as a fatal weakness in efforts to gain cooperation between the two institutions.

“Every time Victoria (Richart) sits down to negotiate a division of UWB’s $700,000 library or security on campus or whatever, she brings less money to the table than Warren Buck does,” said one former statewide higher education official. “That creates an inevitable tension and puts Cascadia at a distinct disadvantage.”

Suzy Smith-Kratz, director of facilities planning, design and construction for the new campus, said, “the legislature has to step up and fund this project at an appropriate level.”

Richart insisted that the funding discrepancy has not been a problem in what she described as “tough negotiations” with UWB officials over what pays for what on the jointly-occupied campus. “Everything that has come to the table so far has been at the university level and we have been able to match it,” she said.

But the president acknowledged that differences in pay and teaching loads “will be a real challenge as we move ahead.”

Most of these problems can be solved, and co-location can work “if there’s good cooperation at the top,” said Jan Yoshiwara, director of educational services for the state technical and community college system.

Before the fall quarter began, relations between Chancellor Buck and President Richart were strained, and some statewide officials feared for the future of the co-location experiment. But once classes began and the everyday routines of a college campus—two-year or four-year—began to take hold, conditions improved.

“For awhile there, it was like watching two porcupines making love,” one of these officials said, “but now things seem to be going along pretty well.”

—William Trombley
DeVry Institutes of Technology
A 70-year-long roller coaster ride continues

By Alexander Russo
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Within a single week last November, DeVry, Inc., the publicly traded company that owns a national chain of for-profit postsecondary schools known as the DeVry Institutes of Technology, announced a whopping 15.5 percent enrolment increase, received a Better Business Bureau award and was sued by three recent graduates for failing to provide an adequate education.

The day after the lawsuit was announced, DeVry stock tumbled 22 percent, but a few weeks later, the stock had rebounded. These recent events are typical of DeVry’s 70-year-long roller coaster ride.

Walk up to the DeVry campuses in Chicago or suburban DuPage County—two of 21 nationwide—and you will see nondescript buildings that resemble offices more than anything else. Inside, old-fashioned electrical scopes with dangling clamps and eerie green and black screens sit alongside modern computers that have large color monitors, in the electronic labs that are DeVry’s signature teaching environment.

Founded by inventor Herman DeVry in 1931 as a film and radio repair school, DeVry was for many years a little-known subsidiary of Bell & Howell. During those years, the school was known mainly for its late-night television ads and matchbook-cover recruitment efforts.

In 1987, however, DeVry was bought by the Keller Graduate School of Management, run by Dennis Keller and Ron Taylor, who had started out working at DeVry years before. Since Keller and Taylor took over, DeVry has grown into one of the largest proprietary (for-profit) higher education institutions in the nation.

The DeVry Institute recently opened in Orlando, Florida. Undergraduate enrollment has reached 47,000 and has increased by 85 percent since 1995. Earnings and stock market performance have been strong.

DeVry’s enrolment is racially diverse—45 percent minority, 42 percent white last year. (“Not known” accounted for 12 percent.) Successful graduates include Carl Ray, executive director of NASA’s small business research and technical transfer programs, and Kathryn Wolfe, president of Zenith Sales Co., the consumer division of Zenith Electronics.

Although the two-year electronics program is still offered, four-year degrees in computer information systems and telecommunications are now the most popular choices of DeVry students.

DeVry is certainly not alone in its recent success. The University of Phoenix has almost 100,000 students enrolled in degree programs, on campuses across the country. Nearly half of all U.S. postsecondary institutions are proprietary, according to the Career Foundation’s Fact-
DeVry by the Numbers

**Enrollment**
- 47,000 students on 21 campuses
- Enrollment at the affiliated Keller Graduate School of Management is about 7,000

**Student demographics**
- White—42 percent
- African American—20 percent
- Hispanic—12 percent
- Not known—12 percent
- Women—27 percent
- Men—73 percent
- Average age—26 (46 percent are 25 years and older)

**Faculty**
- 700 full-time; 850 part-time
- Faculty salary: $50,000 average
- Average full-time teaching load: three or four courses per semester

**Tuition**
- $3,950 per term (three terms per year) = $11,850
- Average cost of degree completion is $31,100–$35,000 for a BS; $19,475 for an AA
- Percentage of students receiving tuition assistance (state or federal): approximately 82 percent
- Student loan default rate: 12.7 percent (1998)

Source: DeVry, Inc.

DeVry has been aided by a population boom among college-age students, the growth of technology-related fields, and the strongest economy in decades.

of 1999, largely due to problems facing other for-profit institutions. But DeVry’s planning and attention to detail saw the schools through that slump and, many experts agree, should serve them well in the future.

Michael Moe, an analyst for Merrill Lynch and author of The Knowledge Web, an annual education industry report, summed it up succinctly: “From an operations standpoint, my view is that DeVry continues to click on all cylinders.”

Alexander Russo is a Chicago-based freelance writer.
The Dark Side of Merit Aid
Funding for merit programs has greatly expanded, often at the expense of need-based financial aid

By Donald E. Heller

I OFTEN SPEAK with policymakers, researchers and parents about state-sponsored financial aid programs. While almost every state has a grant program that awards scholarships to students based on financial need, the trend in recent years has been toward the creation of programs that award grants based on some measure of merit, rather than financial need.

Legislators and governors have noticed these trends, and for those states that do not yet have merit scholarship programs, or have only small-scale, limited programs, there is great pressure to make available more funds for merit aid.

Most state financial aid programs were founded after the enactment of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965. One of the provisions of the 1972 reauthorization of the act was the creation of the State Student Incentive Grant (SSIG) program. This program created a federal-state partnership whereby the federal government provided matching funds for state-run, need-based grant programs. SSIG sought to reinforce the goals of the Higher Education Act's Title IV programs to promote access to college for low-income families. It was the creation of the State Student Incentive Grant (SSIG) program. This program created a federal-state partnership whereby the federal government provided matching funds for state-run, need-based grant programs. SSIG sought to reinforce the goals of the Higher Education Act’s Title IV programs to promote access to college for low-income students.

While in 1969 only 19 states had need-based scholarship programs totaling under $200 million in awards, by 1974 these programs had expanded to 36 states and $423 million. By 1982 the share of grant dollars in the merit programs was 9.3 percent of the total appropriated by the states; by 1998, this share had doubled to 18.6 percent.

The Georgia HOPE scholarship program has garnered much of the national attention, other states have jumped on the merit aid bandwagon in recent years. Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico, Texas and Washington have either created new merit programs or have greatly expanded the funding for existing programs, often at the expense of need-based financial aid.

From the perspective of public policy and the use of public resources, it makes little sense to give financial aid to individuals who would attend college without that assistance.

There are a number of characteristics of these merit aid programs that are troubling from the standpoint of public policy. Having examined several of these programs, including how they are funded and the criteria used to determine “merit,” I have reached the point where I can formulate a clear set of recommendations for policymakers who wish to craft these programs in a manner to ensure that they are the most abhorrent to the goal of promoting college access for low-income students.

The recommendations are:

• Use a high-stakes test to determine who will receive the awards
• Have no income eligibility requirements for the scholarships
• Fund the scholarships from state lottery revenues or tobacco settlement funds

Use a high-stakes test to determine who will receive the awards

The relationship between standardized tests and socioeconomic status is well-established. In general, groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education in this nation—poor, African American, Hispanic and Native American students—score lower than students from higher income, white and Asian American families. Thus, the use of a high-stakes test to award merit scholarships is likely to channel money away from students who need the financial assistance to enable them to attend college, and award it to students who are likely to attend college without the financial help.

An example of this phenomenon can be found in the newly implemented Michigan Merit Award Scholarships. This program, which provides one-time grants of up to $3,000 for college, awards the aid based on students’ scores in the statewide 11th grade Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests.

In research I conducted with Douglas T. Shapiro of the University of Michigan, we found a large gap in the scholarship qualification rates of white and Asian American students on the one hand, and African American, Hispanic and Native American students on the other. For the first cohort of eligible students, those graduating from high school in 2000, 22 percent of white students and 25 percent of Asian American students qualified for the scholarships. In contrast, the scholarship qualification rates of underrepresented minority students were three percent for African Americans, 11 percent for Hispanics, and 11 percent for Native Americans.

We found the same types of gaps in the scholarship qualification rates when we examined students from schools in richer and poorer communities. Almost one-quarter of the students in the wealthiest communities qualified for the scholarships. In contrast, only six percent of students in the state’s poorest communities qualified. Our conclusion is that the program is unlikely to have much impact on its stated goal of increasing access to college in the state.

These scholarship qualification rate differences have led to a “disparate impact,” in legal parlance. This disparate impact is the core allegation in a federal lawsuit filed against the Michigan program last June by a coalition of groups headed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan. The suit, White v. Engler et al., alleges that the program violates the civil rights of minority and poor students in the state through the use of criteria that are not educationally defensible. The suit is expected to go to trial this year.

A similar suit has been filed in federal court in Arkansas, alleging that a merit scholarship program run by that state also discriminates against minority students. The Arkansas Governor’s Distinguished Scholar program, which bases the scholarships on the SAT or ACT scores of students, has given only four of the 808 grants awarded since 1997 to African Americans. And this is in a state where approximately 20 percent of the high school graduates are African Americans.

These are only two examples of the misuse of high-stakes tests. (For more on the misuse of high-stakes tests, see “Standards for the Standards Movement: Do High School Exit Exams Measure Up?” by Rebecca Zwick, in the Fall 2000 issue of National CrossTalk.) Other states use high-stakes tests for merit scholarships in conjunction with other criteria, which, while a step in the right direction, is still problematic if the use of these criteria results in the awarding of scholarships to students who are likely to attend college anyway.

Have no income eligibility requirements for the scholarships

As described earlier, one of the strongest predictors of whether an individual will attend college is the income and wealth of his or her parents. Data from the College Board indicate that 89 percent of high school graduates from families in the highest income quartile (family income above $74,500 in 1997) attend college. For students from families in the lowest income quartile (below $25,000), only 53 percent continue on to college. While many factors help to determine whether somebody attends college—including academic preparation and aptitude, and the influence of parents, siblings and peers—the research on college choice tells us that financial considerations are an important part of the equation.

The Georgia HOPE scholarship program, when first introduced in 1993, included a family income cap of $60,000. Students from families with incomes above this level were excluded from participation. By the program’s third year, however, the income cap was eliminated, thus opening up participation to all academically eligible Georgians. Most other state merit programs, such as the Michigan Merit Scholarships and the Bright Futures merit scholarships in 1998 went to students from families with incomes above $60,000 per year.

Almost 40 percent of Florida’s Bright Futures merit scholarships in 1998 went to students from families with incomes above $60,000 per year.

The recommendations are:

• Fund the scholarships from state lottery revenues or tobacco settlement funds
• Have no income eligibility requirements for the scholarships

These are only two examples of the misuse of high-stakes tests. (For more on the misuse of high-stakes tests, see “Standards for the Standards Movement: Do High School Exit Exams Measure Up?” by Rebecca Zwick, in the Fall 2000 issue of National CrossTalk.) Other states use high-stakes tests for merit scholarships in conjunction with other criteria, which, while a step in the right direction, is still problematic if the use of these criteria results in the awarding of scholarships to students who are likely to attend college anyway.
from preceding page

Futures scholarships in Florida, similarly have no income ceiling. An analysis conducted by the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission found that almost 40 percent of the scholarships in 1998 went to students from families with incomes above $60,000 per year. Charles Reed, former chancellor of the state university system in Florida, related a vignette that summarized his frustration with the Bright Futures scholarships. After being approached by a man who praised the program on behalf of his two children who received the scholarships and were attending the University of Florida, ‘Reed was troubled when he learned that the man was an orthopedic surgeon who could easily afford university tuition without financial aid from the state. ‘Something is really wrong when you do that,’ Reed said… ‘When you can give something away to the middle and upper-middle class, in politics, it doesn’t get any better than that.’” (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, December 20, 1997)

The exceptions are few and far between, however, as most of the newly established merit aid programs have no financial need tests at all.

Fund the scholarships from state lottery revenues or tobacco settlement funds

The nation’s two largest merit aid programs, Georgia HOPE and Florida Bright Futures, are funded from lottery revenues in each state. Research on lottery participation has found that tickets are disproportionately purchased by lower-income individuals, making it among the most regressive of all implicit state taxes. Charles Clotfelter and Philip Cook in their 1991 book, Selling Hope: State Lotteries in America, also note: “The fact that participation declines with education appears to support critics’ charges that with the state. ‘Something is really wrong when you do that,’ Reed said… ‘When you can give something away to the middle and upper-middle class, in politics, it doesn’t get any better than that.’” (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, December 20, 1997)

Though Wright died in 1959, and his wife, Olgivanna, who remained at Taliesin’s helm, died in 1985, the Fellowship lives on. There are about 20 apprentices, as the students are still known within the community. Roughly half of them are Bachelor of Architectural Studies degree candidates, and the rest are candidates for Master of Architecture degrees. They continue to travel back and forth between the two architectural landmarks, where they live with members of the Taliesin Fellowship, 19 of whom studied with Wright himself. There are about 120 visitors a year—tour guides, architects, faculty and staff—who work, and in some cases live, at both Taliesins and a satellite architectural office in Madison, Wisconsin.

Just as their predecessors did, the apprentices continue to immerse themselves in the three aspects of their education—lectures, presentations and independent studies, is Taliesin’s answer to the liberal arts, and is considered a cornerstone of the school’s mission.

The dilemma facing the school these days is how to retain the ideals and philosophies on which it was founded, while also answering to a host of changing cultural, professional and financial demands.

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For outsiders, the school’s unusual practices can come as a bit of a shock. When an evaluation team from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools visited Taliesin West in 1997, they were “blown away,” said David O. Justice, who was a member of the team. “I suppose it’s probably fair to say we were kind of appalled because there was nothing apparent about the school these days is how to retain the ideals and philosophies on which it was founded, while also answering to a host of changing cultural, professional and financial demands.

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strains, today these unusual living arrangements are a big draw for students as well as the public. Students say that being exposed to the elements of nature makes them better architects, and they love the challenge of designing their own environmentally sensitive space. Meanwhile, public tours of the innovative shelters have become so popular that proceeds have funded several school field trips.

Twice a month, Murphy will set aside her well-worn sweatshirt and jeans and put on a long gown for the school’s “Taliesin Evenings.” black-tie dinners that often include a theatrical or musical performance, either by apprentices or visiting guest artists. These Saturday night events are considered more than just a nod to a longstanding Taliesin tradition; they are yet another learning opportunity—in this case, for students to function in a formal setting—a skill they presumably will need if they are to be successful architects.

“What’s totally unique about Taliesin is it really does take experiential learning down to a life basis,” said Mark Hammons, an architectural historian, who is now assistant to the dean. “There is very little parallel in American or even European education.”

Dead now for more than 40 years, Frank Lloyd Wright is more popular today than ever. More than 120,000 architecture buffs toured Taliesin West in 1999, and 36,000 more toured the original Taliesin in Wisconsin. That same year, the licensing fees for Frank Lloyd Wright designs and the use of his name, image and archival materials reaped more than a million dollars for the Foundation. But Wright’s beloved school and Fellowship—the place where he integrated all his philosophies—remain relatively unknown.

“Frank Lloyd Wright is not recognized as an educator—or at least not as an educational innovator,” acknowledged Ari Georges, the school’s curriculum director. “His legacy in education is something we have yet to discover.”

For 26-year-old master’s degree student Fabian Mantel, that legacy meant a chance to help design and oversee the expansion of the computer lab. “At the beginning, all kinds of exotic pictures popped into our minds about what the studio could look like,” said Mantel, as he took off his dust mask and surveyed his colleagues’ progress on the roof. But then he and his co-designer realized that they had to respect the architecture of the entire campus—and that meant the new design had to tie in with the old one, he said.

“You want to respect the past, but you don’t want to copy it,” Mantel explained. “That’s really the challenge.”

And it’s the same dilemma facing the school these days: how to retain the ideals and philosophies on which it was founded, while also responding to a host of changing cultural, professional and financial demands so that the institution can remain viable.

For most of its existence, the school did not give degrees. Apprentices stayed as long as they chose, sometimes remaining permanently as members of the Fellowship. But as time went on, more and more states began to require a professional degree approved by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) before they would allow architects to obtain a license. So in the mid-1980s, Mrs. Wright decreed that the school should begin the accreditation process. The school has since earned North Central Association accreditation for both its bachelor’s and master’s degree programs and NAAB accreditation for its master’s degree.

Accreditation has helped legitimize the school, and has forced it to articulate measurable goals and evaluation processes for its students. But some members of the Fellowship lament a downside as well. Just as the suburban sprawl of Scottsdale has begun to encroach upon the organic architecture of Taliesin West, so the pragmatism of modern-day students has washed up against the idealism of the Taliesin community.

“The love for work as process is not as strong as it used to be,” said Eafi Casey, a longtime senior member of the Fellowship and the school’s director of assessment and music. “People want things fast, and because of the demands of the profession, which demands an accredited degree, the focus is very much on the degree itself. And so our challenge is to really make learning by doing the main focus,” said Casey, who was instrumental in the accrediting process.

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The North Central Association evaluation team was enthusiastic about the school’s holistic approach to education. But it also suggested that the school update its facilities and develop a recruitment and long-range strategic plan. In the past five years, average enrollment has dropped from 35 to 20, a problem the ad

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ministration ascribes to increased competition from other alternative architectural programs, from a sense that Taliesin hasn’t kept up with changes in modern architectural practices, and a notion among potential students that Wright’s philosophy of organic architecture is an historical anachronism.

The National Architectural Accrediting Board also expressed concerns about the school’s physical resources, as well as what it characterized as “a perception by the team that insufficient time is given to the academic component when compared to the other two endeavors (work in the commercial architectural firm, and participation in the community).” The NAAB report also encouraged the school to address western architectural traditions and specific architectural standards and designs such as life-safety systems and building-code compliance.

The school has developed a draft master plan that begins to address these concerns; it will be considered by the Foundation Board this month. Some steps already have been taken, with the expansion of the computer laboratory the first of numerous construction and renovation projects in the works. After running a deficit at the end of 1999 and beginning of 2000, the architectural firm is once again making money. And the school is discussing how to ensure adequate and diverse enrollment (currently men outnumber women 17 to three) while continuing to offer rolling admissions and graduations.

A separate though equally difficult challenge is the aging of the original members of the Fellowship—those who received personal tutelage from Mr. and Mrs. Wright. That has created concern within the community about how their passing will affect the school’s ability to fully grasp and live up to the Wrights’ vision. “You don’t have two charismatic leaders [anymore],” said Effi Casey. “So you have to rediscover what the basis of your intention is. You have to focus on your idea.”

Still, it would be hard to overstate the influence Frank Lloyd Wright and his wife hold over life at Taliesin. Despite their public reputation as being difficult and autocratic, the couple remain so revered from the community that they are never referred to as anything other than “Mr. and Mrs. Wright.” (To do so, even in jest, is to risk severe criticism from members of the Fellowship.)

Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with Wright’s extensive archives, sometimes even going so far as to trace his drawings. Many, if not most, have read Wright’s autobiography. They listen to his recorded talks, and occasionally read and discuss talks given by Olgianna Wright, who oversaw the community’s daily life and spiritual and moral development. And the students are educated in buildings and on furniture Wright designed, so they’re literally surrounded by his architectural philosophy.

“It’s really neat to be able to live in a place like this,” said Sarah Murphy, as she helped a visitor negotiate Taliesin West’s complex floorplan, a typical Wrightian maze of hidden doors and low-ceilinged passageways. “It makes you think about a lot of things—like how things are put together, where the windows are placed, how the walls are leaning.”

Yet school officials insist that they are not interested in turning out Wright clones. Although there is a strong resurgence of interest in Wright’s work, “This is not about Frank Lloyd Wright revivalism,” said Mark Hammons. “The [firm’s] clients are attracted to Frank Lloyd Wright,” he admitted. “But the apprentices are attracted to the opportunity to carry forward that work—as opposed to being little Frank Lloyd Wrights.”

Apprentices are encouraged to apply Wright’s concept of organic architecture; that is, to create designs that respect and mirror that environment.

“Taliesin West student apprentices live in desert shelters of various sorts. They say being exposed to nature makes them better architects.”

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The only school receives about 20 completed applications annually, but the vast majority of those are from highly motivated individuals. They would have to be: Things have changed since the days when Mrs. Wright single-handedly decided whether to admit someone based only on an interview.

Today, prospective students have to send a statement of purpose, a biographical essay, a portfolio of sketches and architectural drawings, three personal references, a high school and college transcript (bachelor’s degree candidates have to complete at least one year of prerequisites at another college), and a medical report to prove they are healthy enough to participate in the school’s intensely physical program. They also have to visit either campus for two days, during which time they are expected to participate in whatever activities happen to be going on, and are interviewed by an admissions committee as well as admissions director Stefansson. (Foreign students are exempt from the visit, but must have an interview.)

By the time they finish the process, both the student and school officials know whether it is a good fit. About half of those who apply, matriculate. And in the past five years, only three students have left before completing their degree or predetermined time at the school, said Stefansson. (The school sometimes allows non-degree students to spend a year or a term there; it also accepts visiting students from a Thai university for several months each year).

If the measure of a school’s success is its employment rate, the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture is a resounding triumph: virtually 100 percent of its Master’s of Architecture graduates are employed in the architectural field. (The school’s Bachelor of Architectural Studies is a pre-professional degree which cannot lead to licensure.)

But unlike other institutions, the school needs to do more: It must provide graduates who will join the Fellowship and the architectural firm, since both are integral to the continued financial viability of the community and the school. (Proceeds from the school’s annual tuition of $9,600, which includes room and board, cover only a small fraction of the cost of running it.)

Ironically, the same attributes that allow the apprentices to succeed at the school—a high level of motivation, tremendous talent and a strong sense of themselves—also lead many graduates to seek greater personal and professional freedom than Taliesin offers.

Frank Lloyd Wright was constantly renovating and changing the buildings at Taliesin and Taliesin West. So, too, the community he founded must continue to evolve or risk becoming an historical anachronism. There are debates within the community about what the Taliesin of the future should look like. But regardless of their vision for it, the people connected with the Fellowship remain dedicated to its educational, architectural and philosophical mission, and optimistic that it will survive in some form.

Perhaps that is because Taliesin’s appeal actually is much simpler than its high-minded and complex philosophy of holistic living might lead one to believe. Apprentice Tony Walker, for instance, hopes to remain at the Fellowship following his graduation in September. “I had a hard time deciding whether to admit someone based only on an interview.”

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