Texas Returns to Affirmative Action

Readjustment and confusion in the aftermath of recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions

By Carl Irving
AUSTIN, TEXAS

THe UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS' flagship campus here plans to re-store affirmative action in under-graduate admissions in the fall of 2005, us-ing guidelines the campus administration believes to be consistent with last sum-mer’s 5-4 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

To support this change, the admissions office has gathered evidence that white students dominate most smaller, discus-sion-sized classes, which have few if any A frican A merican or H iespian students.

A recent month-long survey of 3,600 current undergraduate classes, each with five to 24 students enrolled, found that 90 percent had one or no A frican A mericans, and 43 percent had one or no H iespians. Less than two percent of the classes had one or no whites, who are ex-pected to become a minority of the state’s population next year.

UT-Austin officials believe this discovery vividly illustrates that the Supreme Court majority wants the na-tion’s campuses to address—the lack of a "critical mass" of underrepresented mi-nority students, enough so that they “do not feel isolated or like spokespersons for their race.”

The decision agreed with challenges to racial quotas. But in directly addressing the issue of affirmative action in higher education admissions for the first time in 25 years, the court said racial and ethnic backgrounds for underrepresented mi-norities could be used as one positive fac-tor among others in deciding which stu-dents to admit.

"The court itself didn’t define ‘critical mass’ but it means having more than one student (in a class)," said UT-Austin Director of Admissions and Vice Provost Bruce Walker. But he added, "We won’t return to the affirmative action of 1996, because [selecting students] has to be indi-

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Can Athletics and Academics Coexist?

Colleges and universities wrestle with big-time sports

By Don Campbell
ATHENS, GEORGIA

It’s halftime here in Bulldog Nation, where the University of Georgia football team is hosting the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

What was supposed to be a cakewalk for the Bulldogs—it's homecoming, for University of Alabama-Birmingham.

This year's freshman class at the University of Texas-Austin is 16 percent Hispanic, four percent African American. Returning to affirmative action should increase those numbers.

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In This Issue

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Howard “Pete” Rawlings

MARYLANDERS have just witnessed history, the conclusion of a public life truly worth living. It was, of course, the life of Delegate Howard “Pete” Rawlings, who died at 66 on November 14 after a four-year battle with cancer.

A mathematician by training, Rawlings arrived in Annapolis in 1979 after having taught at Federal Grant University, where the article first appeared. Rawlings came to Annapolis, he didn’t have to light matches to be heard, nor did he strive to be a crowd pleaser. On the floor of the House, he would speak quietly and deliberately. The usually boisterous House would grow still, knowing that his message would be filled with hard truths and wise counsel.

Rawlings grew to be the legislature’s expert on the budget. He demonstrated the political maturity to put fiscal integrity ahead of his social justice commitments, as painful as it often was. As governors and fiscal leaders came and went, he became the institutional memory on the budget, lending the reassuring sense that the state’s finances were under adult supervision.

Rawlings’ values were shaped in the Poe H ome, a public housing project in Baltimore, where he grew up. He remembered that “there were six of us, three in a bed, and life was good and secure and safe, and everyone was part of your family.” His parents educated all six children on his father’s postal worker salary, and each child went on to a substantial career.

Rawlings’ rise from Poe H ome became the formative experience of his political life. It shaped his commitment to education and housing and gave him the strength to overcome entrenched opposition to his reform efforts. But the delegate’s greatest legacy will be in the public schools. Rawlings devoted a decade to reforming Baltimore’s public schools, ordering management audits and imposing funds, until finally, in 1997, the legislature overhauled the system management and appropriated $254 million in new money.

Baltimore schoolchildren now are posting higher test scores for the first time in a generation. Rawlings spearheaded similar efforts in Prince George’s.

For his courageous efforts, Rawlings was brutally criticized by groups that might have seemed to be his natural allies: labor, the NAACP and Baltimore officials. He took their criticisms in stride. He was that rarest of politicians, one for whom political fear did not exist. He loved to tally up the cards and letters that the interest groups would send to fight his latest reform initiative. And when the attacks turned personal, he would offer a lovely smile, knowing that the intellectual arsenal of his opposition had been exhausted.

The modern political culture frowns on the kind of legislative life led by Pete Rawlings. No political consultant would recommend it. Today, many politicians spend their days on fundraising call lists, cocktail parties, “photo op” public hearings and partisan posturing.

This stands in stark contrast to the life of Pete Rawlings. He had no ambition for higher office. Instead, he had a deep ambition to bring a better life to the poor children of Maryland. He leaves behind a historic record of accomplishment, but perhaps his deepest legacy will be his example on how to live a public life, fully, wisely and courageously.
KERR from preceding page

tagionist. His prose style was spartan, reflecting his modesty; but it was also a highly-developed instrument for penetrating through the skin of issues that concerned him. These were the nature and condition of higher education in the United States, but it needs to be emphasized that this interest was inseparable from wider issues relating to the development of industrial democracies, his scholarly field before entering campus administration.

He had a grasp of the international dimensions and exhibited, in his plentiful writings and speeches, a remarkable understanding of many different kinds of social and political institutions. What is equally remarkable is that for a man constantly in the public eye, as much after his departure from the U.C. presidency as before, it must be stressed, his observations were uncommonly free of the academic clichés freely circulating in the Platitudes and commonplaces did not interest him. He sought deeper explanations.

A head of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, he oversaw the production of a bookshelf of studies on every aspect of higher education. He deserves credit for virtually establishing contemporary higher education policy studies by gathering around him many of the most eminent names in the field: Martin Trow, Burton Clark, Neil Smelser, Fred Alderson, Henry Rosovsky, Seymour Martin Lipset, Earl Chetl, Alain Touraine and others who could be mentioned. His influence, and that of California, was spread around the nation and the globe.

He traveled and lectured. He was often enough in the state capital of Sacramento, meeting with legislators, civil servants and staff. He was frequently overseas. He continued to advise chancellors and presidents, and all the while he revisited his former ideas and principles, testing them under new circumstances, measuring them against recent changes. He entertained, but an evening at dinner with the Kerrs was also an oddly formal occasion where guests were expected to discourse on significant public developments.

Kerr's attention to detail is legendary—otherwise, he could hardly have made a career as an industrial relations mediator and arbitrator. But what is so astonishing about him was his capacity to express, in those short, sharp bursts, the core beliefs underlying the development of American democracy as they were actually embodied in the humdrum workings of institutions. As an intellectual, he possessed a holistic understanding of how different institutions with different missions were nonetheless part of an organic structure. No campus or system could succeed without regard to the health of all the others. This is possibly easily said, but he meant it, and what is more, he worked out a practical framework for advancing the goal.

He appreciated the great range of American colleges and universities. He held degrees from Swarthmore and Stanford before taking his doctorate at Berkeley. It was Harvard, very likely, more than Berkeley or the other U.C. campuses that was his archetypal multiversity. But his archetypal college was Swarthmore. In the euphoria of institution building in the late 1950s and 1960s, he dreamed of a public campus committed to undergraduate teaching. He poured his soul and his hopes into the collegiate university of U.C. Santa Cruz.

Readers of Kerr's many essays and lectures or even his memoirs may well overlook the intensity of his emotional investment in Santa Cruz, or the profound dis- appointment about it that he carried to his grave. Sadly, he came to believe that no public university in the United States could ever achieve the excellence of undergraduate education typical of a private liberal arts college. It was not merely that Santa Cruz was unfortunately born when the counter-culture flourished, but that the values traditionally associated with historic forms of liberal education were simply unattainable within the parameters of a public research multi-campus system that he himself had encouraged. Reluctantly, if at all, he finally accepted the irony of this conclusion.

The holistic character of his thinking baffled those whose own views about higher education were more limited. Aiso, he did not wear his heart upon his sleeve for days to peck at. Yet those with whom he closely worked were loyal, affectionate and admiring. When the burdens of office were removed, the freedom from day-to-day affairs allowed the moralist side of him to flourish. If anything, his national and international reputation rose, and his university remembered him with tributes, buildings and prizes given in his name.

These were not tardy gifts, compensation for past deeds. They were the recognition of an active life, disinterested in the best sense, a continuous effort to explore the moral limits of the modern university. Was it accessible to all who were qualified? Was it just? Was it publicly legitimated? Was it genuinely committed to education and learning? Did it respect history? Could it triumph over greed and self-interest?

He did not wish to live in a university without poetry. Was he, after all, more considerate than Bencham?

Jean MacGregor (left) and Barbara Leigh Smith, winners of the 2003 Virginia B. Smith Award.

Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean MacGregor received the Virginia B. Smith Inno-

vative Leadership Award for 2003 at a ceremony in San Diego last November. The award, which carries a stipend of $2,500, recognizes individuals who have brought about successful change in higher education.

Smith and MacGregor are co-directors of the Pew Charitable Trusts’ National Learning Communities Project. Learning communities link courses around them and enroll a common group of students.

The award is named for, and honors, Virginia B. Smith, President Emerita of Vassar College. It is administered by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CA E L) and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

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Lumina Foundation for Education has awarded the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education a one-year $72,000 grant to learn more about students who enroll in postsecondary education, particularly those who borrow student loans, but fail to complete their educational programs. Lawrence E. Gladieux, consultant to the National Center, will serve as principal investigator, and Joni E. Finney, vice president of the National Center, will oversee the project.
A Helping Hand
The Community College of Denver reaches out to first-generation students

By Kay Mills
DENVER, COLORADO

EFORE ENTERING the Community College of Denver, Jacob Garcia wasn’t much interested in school. Now he is. The reason is the school’s program that helps first-generation college students succeed by combining the efforts of case managers, counselors, tutors, classroom instructors and fellow students. “People e-mail you to let you know about things,” Garcia said.

The Community College of Denver program provides help with financial aid applications, registering for classes, finding tutors, plus other academic and emotional support.

“Teachers support you. Before, I didn’t want to go to school. Now that I’m here, I don’t want not to go.”

Garcia, 22, had dropped out of high school, worked for a supermarket, cut hair for awhile and eventually earned a high school equivalency diploma. Now that he has custody of his five-year-old daughter, Garcia “has to think of her future,” he added. “My mom freaks out, seeing me do this.”

The Community College of Denver program is eight years old. Students who sign up receive help filling out financial aid applications, registering for classes, and finding tutors if needed, plus other academic and emotional support. Since these students are the first in their families to attend college, their parents or spouses may not understand the complicated forms, the deadlines, the need for time to study, free of distractions.

“My families don’t believe it is financially possible” for their children to go to college, said CCD president Christine Johnson. Their children help support their families and the families need money.

“When you don’t have food or might get evicted, the rent takes priority over college tuition,” she said, adding that newer immigrants might feel insecure about college. “There’s a confidence barrier,” a lack of tradition, Johnson said. “You don’t just give them a financial aid form—you help them fill it out. We have to demystify all this paperwork.” There’s a lot of hand-holding, she said, “but we call it purposeful hand-holding.”

Each entering student is tested for placement in English and mathematics courses. Remedial work is mandatory for those students who need it, and some students must take four developmental math courses to get to the level they need for their degree.

Virginia Jimenez, 51, who serves as a “student ambassador,” working with about 35 first-generation community college students, tells them, “I understand the problems with taking the math.” When Jimenez began classes at the college in 1997, she had just been laid off as a community worker because of state budget cuts. She had not taken math since ninth grade, and the prospect of getting up to speed was daunting. Jimenez did it—with the help of this program—and completed an associate’s degree. Now she is working toward a bachelor’s degree at neighboring Metropolitan State.

“We have to start at the bottom. Our high schools didn’t prepare us,” Jimenez said. “So many students are really embarrassed at having to start with fractions. They don’t want to do it. But I tell them that’s exactly where I started. It’s so stressful.” But the college’s instructors are very helpful, she said, adding that with them, “I would have given up a long time ago.”

This support from students like Jimenez who have made it through the community college is a key element in the school’s work with newer students, according to Peggy Valdez-Fergason, director of the Access and Success Project at Brown University.

“What Denver has done has more effective than others is reaching out to these students,” Newman said. “Information is key. Remedial education is key. Financial aid is key. And very often for many of these students, child care is key.”

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“First-generation students tend to go to college near their homes,” Valdez-Fergason said. Students at the community college have the advantage of familiarity with the campus they share with the four-year schools, so transferring to one of them isn’t as intimidating as it might otherwise be, she added.

The program began in 1995 with a $1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education under Title III of the 1965 Higher Education Act, aimed at strengthening colleges serving a high percentage of Hispanic students. By the time M.C. McIenney, who was the college’s president then and later headed Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, said that it was one of a set of initiatives to reach the poorest people of Denver, disproportionately Hispanic and African American students (CCD’s current student population is 33 percent Hispanic and 17 percent African American).

A school must not only seek out minority students, McIenney said, “but also must figure out how you ensure once you’ve got them in the front door that they have a chance for success.” Students must be engaged so that they feel part of a family, so that they feel comfortable, he added.

Toward that end, said Valdez-Fergason, the college not only hired the case managers and developed the “student ambassador” aspect of the program, it also set up what are called “learning communities.” These are, in effect, two courses in one—and credit is given for two courses—as two instructors teach their subjects together. A first-generation students in the program are required to take at least one learning community class. In these smaller settings, students have a chance to get to know their classmates and instructors, while receiving the help they need to succeed academically, Valdez-Fergason said.

David Flores and Jose Puertas teach one of these linked learning community courses, combining advanced academic achievement with introduction to computers. Flores’ part of the course covers self-awareness, the importance of diversity, goal setting, time management, critical thinking and note-taking. A final examination, each student must talk about a career he or she might want to pursue, with the research done on the Internet and the report made as a Power Point presenta-
care of his two-year-old son several morns a week. "I was ready to just walk away." But his instructors told him to do what he could. "You come here to learn," they said, "don't worry about your grade." Now I don't have that pressure.

Rivara said that when he started at CCD, he "didn't even know about financial aid. I thought I was going to pay for it myself." Staff at the first-generation students program suggested he apply for financial aid, and he got it. The money covered his tuition and book costs.

Once its first grant ended in 2000, Valdez-Fergason said, the program was absorbed into the college’s own budget with the new name, the First Generation Student Success Program. But school officials saw that once the students finished their first year at CCD and moved into the major subject areas, the college was losing them. "Students sometimes experience academic culture shock" as they move from introductory courses into specific academic disciplines, Valdez-Fergason said. Retention was lacking in such fields as college-level algebra, biology, chemistry and information technology. So Valdez-Fergason and others at the college knew they had to take steps to increase the number of graduates.

A second federal grant of $19 million for 2000–2005 pays for what now is called the Access and Success Project, under Title V of the Higher Education Act. Valdez-Fergason said this project aims at infusing into the college’s four academic centers—language arts and behavioral sciences, business and technology, educational advancement, and health, math and science—the concepts developed for helping the students through case managers.

The idea of education case managers came out of the social services model, she said. "To some people that’s a negative, but at our college it has always been a value-added service.

Two case managers work with first-year students, and each has responsibility for about 300 students. These case managers know firsthand the kind of apprehension students may face. Debra Valverde started at CCD in 1989 and said she would just attend her classes and go home. "I had no guidance when I came in. I was an introvert." One of the counselors asked her to help with an orientation program for high school students. "I think that was what hooked me, her getting me involved with the school. That helped me come out of my shell," and eventually into a job as a case manager.

Once the students finish their first year, or 12 college-level credits, and begin an academic major, they are picked up by a case manager like Petiska. Her parents had attended college, and she earned a degree at the University of Sofia in Bulgaria, did some freelance interpreting and taught, then came to Denver to study business. "The system was so different. I felt isolated. In Europe, we had always been with the same group. I suffered from serious depression," she said. In essence, she was a first-generation student because the American system was totally new to her.

Then she was hired to work in CCD’s writing center, which provides tutoring for students who are having problems with essays and other forms of composition. She later became a case manager for students in business and technology. European students gravitate toward her for advice when they are confused. "I had some women from the Czech Republic. You give them a book, they’ll get an A, but the different processes throw them.

Ouzounova’s colleague Michael Johnson said that the first-generation college students with whom he works face many barriers. For example, in the Hispanic culture, if someone’s grandparent dies in Mexico, the student needs to be gone for two weeks in order to pay proper respect. "In the traditional system, if you miss two weeks of college, you’re gone," Johnson said. But in these cases, and another in which a student’s younger brother was killed, Johnson was on the phone and sent e-mail messages to professors “to get them to cut them some slack. We’re seeing as enablers who want to keep people in college who don’t belong there. But we can’t let all of the problems of life knock these students off the track. We’re an advocate. We’re representing them. These are not just another case of ‘the dog ate my homework.’

The student ambassadors help as well. Cindy Mora, 41, and a junior majoring in criminal justice at Metropolitan State, works with 30 to 40 students at a time, making sure they take academic improvement courses, e-mailing them, trying to keep them on track. "A lot of times you don’t realize how much affects students’ lives," she said. Mora had not been to school in some time when she came to CCD in 1999 and had to refresh herself on many things, so she knows that in counseling students “you have to remember where you were coming from when you started.”

Making sure that students keep current on financial aid deadlines is a task shared by the case managers and student ambassadors. A told me that if students can get money off their minds, they can concentrate on their classes. A second-year student—taking 12 credit hours—$944.65 per semester in tuition and fees. This fall about two thirds of CCD students transferred to four-year institutions, almost half of whom were from underrepresented groups. The first-generation programs are just beginning to track their students to four-year institutions, so there is not yet any information about how well they are doing.

The college’s work with first-generation students has won national recognition. For example, the Policy Center on the First Year of College named CCD one of 13 “institutions of excellence.” This center, based at Brevard College in western North Carolina, seeks to encourage colleges to redesign their first-year programs so that students have better experiences. "The beginning student experience at many campuses isn’t given much thought," said the center’s executive director, John Gardner. When students are bored by their classes or not engaged, they quit. "From the public policy point of view, there’s the issue of student attrition—the drop out and flunk out rates. That’s costly to the state, the institutions, the families and the students.”

Gardner said that if he had to point to one reason for CCD’s success, “it would be that people at that college are incredibly proud of their mission, and their mission is remediation—developmental education. Most American colleges are embarrassed about that. They want to hide it.” But CCD, he added, “is just extraordinary in this aspect—so respectful of their students and so proud of them.”

Valdez-Fergason is constantly pushing for improvements in the program—such as doing more to help students find what careers might be right for them. And she is still trying to “reform the academic culture” by encouraging development of more of the linked-learning community courses. But she is concerned about what Colorado’s large budget deficit, and the resulting cuts in higher education spending, might mean for the program.

Despite growing enrollment, CCD received a 17 percent cut last year and another 14 percent this year, leaving the college with a $32 million operating budget, $12 million of which comes from federal contracts and grants. To cope, the college increased class size and eliminated classes for which fewer than 14 students enrolled. Some vacancies in student services went unfilled until this year. “I’ll students and all programs felt the impact of fewer staff and more students,” said CCD president Christine Johnson, but the college has continued to provide financial support for the first-generation student initiatives.

Johnson wants to strengthen what existed when she took over as CCD president in 2000. A first-generation college student herself, Johnson is a former English and Spanish teacher and high school principal in the Denver schools. She hopes to see more of that system’s graduates go on to college. Fifty-six percent of Denver high school graduates need remedial work, she said, so CCD, working with the school board and superintendent, is giving students a basic assessment test as juniors. This allows time for students to improve their English and math in the senior year. "They ought to be remediated in high school so that when they graduate they are ready,” she added.

Johnson said that she is aggressively raising money to support the first-generation programs. "The worst thing we could do is fill the students with hope and then say we don’t have quite enough money for you."

Kay Mills, a former editorial writer for the Los Angeles Times, has written four books, including one on the Federal Head Start program.
Ambitious Agenda
Michael Crow has brought an entrepreneurial spirit to Arizona State University

By Kathy Witkowsky

TEMPLE, ARIZONA

LAST OCTOBER, on the sort of pleasant evening that helps explain the Phoenix area’s phenomenal growth, Arizona State University President Michael Crow led a procession of university boosters carrying flickering candles and high hopes up “A Mountain,” on the edge of campus. The event was part of homecoming weekend, and when the crowd amassed in front of the oversized stone and concrete A for which the mountain is named, Crow obliquely talked a little trash about the University of California, Berkeley, whose football team the A SU Sun Devils were to face (and ultimately suffer a crushing loss) to the next day.

Crow spent many a Friday night playing nose tackle for his high school team in Gurnee, Illinois, so he is no stranger to football. But it was strategy board games that consumed the rest of his weekends, games he found so engaging that he and his opponent often played straight through until Monday morning, without bothering to sleep.

Now the 48-year-old Crow has brought that same intensity and drive to ASU, where, as president for the past year and a half, he has focused his formidable strategic skills on creating what he calls “A New American University” — a research institution not separate and distinct from its community, on the traditional European model, but one that is firmly embedded in it: not only physically, but socially, culturally and economically.

So, as he gazed out upon a ASU’s main Tempe campus and the carpet of lights that spread into the Valley of the Sun beyond, Crow was thinking about a lot more than the upcoming contest at Sun Devil Stadium. He was thinking about his own bold game plan.

“I don’t look just at the campus—that’s too narrow,” said Crow, as he took in the enormity of the sprawl from his vantage point on A Mountain. “I look at the whole valley and think about how we can impact everything.”

To Crow, the fact that metro Phoenix is growing at the fantastic rate of 100,000 or more new residents each year and is projected to be home to some 8 million people within 30 years isn’t a daunting liability. It is a compelling asset. So, too, is the fact that A SU itself didn’t become a full-fledged university until 1958.

“It’s a brand new city with a brand new university on a huge scale,” said Crow, who came to A SU from Columbia University, where he was executive vice provost. That might seem like a poor trade, but not to Crow. It’s true that Columbia, Harvard and a dozen other prestigious institutions have become the model, the “gold standard” by which other American research universities measure themselves, he said. But, as he added, “They are insufficient to alter the trajectory of the world.” A nd that is exactly what Michael Crow wants to do, beginning with Phoenix.

The economy. The environment. Housing. Health care. Technology Education at all levels. You name it, and Crow intends to have A SU involved. “The university is a critical catalytic force for the evolution of a successfully evolving creative city,” Crow said. “If you build a university disconnected from the community, both will fail to achieve greatness.”

A nd Crow doesn’t want to settle for anything less.

His ambitious approach starts by embracing the massive influx of population flooding the area, building programs at three satellite campuses—including a new downtown Phoenix campus—to increase total enrollment from 57,500 to about 95,000 by 2020.

Simultaneously, he plans to improve the school’s lukewarm academic reputation by strengthening and creating selective high-quality programs, as well as its honors college, within the larger university setting. He also intends to more than double annual research expenditures, from $150 million to between $300 and $400 million, generating more overhead dollars for the university as a whole while targeting issues that affect the region, such as health care and environmental sustainability. Much of that research will take place at Crow’s brainchild, the A rizona B iodesign I nstitute, a $500 million interdisciplinary enterprise focused on the life sciences, which is already under construction and which Crow believes has the potential to spawn a whole new industry in Arizona.

In short, Crow declared, A SU “is not going to be a place. It’s going to be a force.” And if A SU hasn’t yet earned that moniker, Michael Crow, certainly has.

A most invariably, Crow is described by those who work with him in terms associated with awesome natural phenomena. Hurricane Crow. Energy in human form. A whirlwind. It is not just his energy and the furious pace at which he works that impresses people; it is also his keen intellect, and his commitment to building an entrepreneurial university that truly serves its community.

“He’s what we need more of in higher education,” said D avid Longenecker, executive director of the Western I nterstate Commission for Higher Education. Longenecker met Crow in the summer of 2002, shortly after Crow had taken office. “I was expecting an uppity guy from New York who didn’t know much,” said Longenecker. Instead, he said, he was bowled over by Crow’s charisma, vision and strategic thinking.

“I think he will reshape A SU into this new image of a great American urban university,” Longenecker predicted. That’s more, he said, “I think there’s a very good chance that it will be a new model—a model that others will follow.”

Crow may have spent 11 years at Columbia, but he is as multi-faceted and anti-elite as the university he seeks to create. He is mother died when he was nine, and he and his four siblings were raised by their father, who was a crewman on Navy airplanes, and by an assortment of relatives. They moved constantly, all across the country, and Crow attended some 17 schools before he graduated from high school and enrolled at Iowa State University. There, he majored in political science and environmental studies but dabbed in science and engineering and lettered in track and field.

Crow went on to earn his Ph.D. in public administration with an emphasis on science and technology policy from Syracuse University, but unlike many academics, he is an unapologetic consumer of popular culture, including television. He is also an avid outdoorsman, who has led backpack trips in Montana, has done some orienteering in the mountains of New York state, and still tries to mountain bike at least once a week. This past fall, he hiked the Grand Canyon rim to rim.

Crow believes that schools like A SU have a moral imperative to improve the world. A SU is “a knowledge factory,” but producing knowledge for its own sake isn’t good enough, said Crow, adding that he once directed a project whose title, roughly translated, was, “Why Does Science Always Screw Poor People?”

He encourages his administration and faculty to work together across disciplines to transform both themselves and their communities. “We better get to work because our job is to attack these problems. Not just study them—attack them,” Crow told a roomful of faculty at the kickoff workshop for A SU’s new Stardust Center for A dvanced Energy, Science and Technology.

This is one of half a dozen interdisciplinary centers founded on Crow’s watch that are largely focused on addressing regional needs.

Crow’s innovative yet practical approach to his job is one of the reasons why the A rizona B oard of R egents is so delighted with him. “Michael Crow has brought an entrepreneurial spirit to Arizona State University, and at the same time he has energized the entire Phoenix community around A SU and its future,” said Chris H erstam, president of the A rizona B oard of R egents. “It is energy, his intelligence and his ability to articulate a vision for A SU and the state of A rizona has been remarkable.”

Crow took over as A SU president in July 2002. He replaced the much-beloved
from preceding page

and highly respected Lattice Coor, who re-
tired after what is widely acknowledged to be a successful 12-year tenure at A SU. Still, said regents president Hestam, “We were facing enormous obstacles.”

The three state universities—A SU, the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University—were at capacity-straining enrollments and were facing state budget cuts and private competition. Talented faculty members were leaving, and infrastructure was crumbling. “Business as usual should not suffice,” Hestam said.

Crow had not been included on the original list of presidential candidates, but his name cropped up because he had worked as a consultant for A SU’s research planning during the previous decade. The regents were impressed both with his record at Columbia, where he had turned the science and technology departments into money-makers, and by his innovative ideas for A SU’s future. He quickly became the regents’ top choice, even when they had to pony up $468,000 for his annual compensation package. That was a big jump from the $320,000 that Lattie Coor had earned.

“You get what you pay for,” said Hestam, adding that the regents gave Crow a “glowing” review in his first-year performance evaluation last September.

By all accounts, Coor had set the university on the right road. But Coor was an incrementalist, whereas “Mike fired up second, third and fourth gear and put the pedal to the metal,” said Rob M Elnick. A SU’s associate vice president for economic affairs, who has worked closely with Crow in quantifying the university’s potential economic value to the state and the region.

Right off the bat, Crow took advantage of the regents’ desire to end their cookie-cutter approach to the state’s three public universities. A SU, he said, would welcome growth, leaving selectivity to its historic rival, the University of A rizona, which is preparing to cap enrollment and allowing Northern A rizona University to focus on undergraduate education.

But to grow, A SU needed money.

Crow didn’t waste any time finding some. First, he helped convince the regents to approve a sorely needed 39 percent tuition hike, bringing annual in-state undergraduate tuition to $3,500. (Despite the increase, A SU is still less expensive than two of the state’s three public universities; the impact of the increase has been partially offset by a 14 percent set-aside for financial aid.)

Then, last spring, Crow shocked longtime education watchers when he offered $440 million for research infrastructure out of the conservative, cash-strapped legislature; $185 million of that is earmarked for A SU, the rest for U of A and N AU.

Crow’s quest for dollars has not stopped there. He has secured $120 million in private donations—including two record-setting $50 million gifts. And he has prepared budgets that include requests more than $300 million worth of construction projects that will add a million square feet of research space to the university.

The idea is to make A SU less dependent on state funding by allowing it to generate more of its own revenue— to move it from a state “agency” to a state “enterprise.” But all along, Crow has insisted that money was simply a way to improve the entire university and by extension, the Phoenix community.

He has put to rest early concerns that he was too focused on science and technology, with such diverse interdisciplinary projects as the Stardust Center for A fordable Homes and the Family; the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict; the Center for Law, Science and Society; and the Center for the Study of B cylystic Urbanizing Regions. By steering a $10 million gift to the creative writing program last fall, Crow showed his willingness to support educational excellence in all forms, even those that generate more ideas than revenue.

He also has become personally involved in the faculty tenure process, which has been tightened; given raises to the top 10 percent of faculty in an attempt to retain them; offered early retirement to long-term faculty in order to free up funds and spots to hire new talent; and hired several highly regarded administrators. One of these is former SmithKline B echam executive George Poste, an internationally renowned scientist who is directing the Biodesign Institute.

Perhaps most importantly, Crow has created a buzz and an excitement about A SU that reaches far beyond the campus, into corporate boardrooms and the halls of the state capitol.

When I see what Michael wants to do for this state, I just get goosebumps,” gushed Phoenix home builder and philanthropist Ira Fulton. Fulton has long been a generous supporter of education, but though he had studied at A SU, he had never given a penny to the place until Crow was hired. “I can read people, and I know Michael is a really unusual, talented person,” said Fulton. “I instantly liked him because he’s a do-it-now guy. No nonsense.”

So when Crow asked for Fulton’s help implementing his vision, Fulton didn’t hesitate. In January, he gave the university’s Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering, and shortly afterward gave another $5 million to endow a chair in the College of Education.

That’s just a starter. He’ll be hearing more from me down the road,” said Fulton, who has pledged to use his influence to raise another couple hundred million from the business community.

Crow is no stranger there. Shortly after arriving in Phoenix, he joined the executive council of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, and “from the first executive council meeting he attended, we have been forever changed,” said Council CEO and President Rick Weddle. “Our discussions about significant matters was immediately elevated.”

What Michael Crow is doing at A SU “is not only significant. It’s embedded. It’s symbiotic,” said Weddle. “We see the university and the regional economy changing; shifting and evolving in lockstep. Our goals, our vision, are fundamentally aligned.”

And there may be no better spokesman for those goals than Michael Crow. He is not a great orator, and he can sometimes appear defensive, arrogant and humorless. But one-on-one or in small groups, he is said to be extraordinarily personable and inspiring.

Nowhere was that more apparent than at the state capitol last spring. Most long-time education observers were stunned when Crow defied naysaying skeptics and persuaded the Republican-controlled A rizona legislature, which faced a deficit in excess of a billion dollars, to invest $440 million in research infrastructure at the three state universities. His pitch was simple: Give the universities the money for the state to use; in turn, they will use the money for the state.

“Frankly, I bought it. I bought his philosophy,” said Jake Flake, A rizona’s conservative Republican Speaker of the House. A lifelong rancher, Flake puts money into corporate boardrooms and the halls of the state capitol. “I was told we had no chance of success,” said Jake Flake, Arizona’s conservative Republican Speaker of the House. “I was told we had no chance of success,” said Jake Flake. “I know I’m going to win. I’m going to win.”

Throughout, Crow eschewed a social-equity argument for university funding in favor of one emphasizing the potential financial payback. Crow and his team predicted an 11-to-1 return on the state investment, through research and development it would spawn. The economic-engine argument was not a completely new

structure bill. He became a common sight at the capitol, lobbying alongside U of A president Peter Likins and N AU president John Haeger. A SU also hired lobbyist and former Republican congressman Matt Salmon, a highly respected member of his party and a former state legislator who had recently lost a narrow gubernatorial election.

The university enlisted the support of business, labor and trade groups, which stood to gain substantially from the construction boom the bill would finance.

Meanwhile, Crow unleashed a barrage of paperwork. Every lawmaker received a copy of his “New A merican University” white paper, which details his vision for A SU, and a copy of “Investing in A rizona’s Future,” a half-inch-thick report in which Crow makes his case for investment in science and technology. He also wrote letters to each and every lawmaker, even those who had gone on record against the bill.

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Rick Weddle, president of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, thinks Arizona State University and the Phoenix area are “evolving in lockstep.”

Crow has secured $120 million in private donations including record-setting $50 million gifts.

(continued on page 10)
big-time football has come to dominate so much of college life in America. But there are no apologies offered for that on this campus. Because if the university celebrates its athletes lavishly, it also spares no expense in giving them the best academic support that money can buy.

"Quite frankly, in most of these programs, the objective is not graduation, it's keeping them eligible so they can compete."

—FORMER UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESIDENT JAMES J. DUDERSTADT

And, according to the latest tally from the U.S. Department of Education, it's paying off.

For most of the season, the Georgia Bulldogs had the best graduation rate—67 percent—of any team in the A's Associated Press top-ten poll of Division I football. Athough graduation rates tend to fluctuate from year to year, that was 13 percentage points higher than the national average of 54 percent, and put the Bulldogs well ahead of such football powerhouses as Texas, with a 19 percent graduation rate, the University of Southern California (45 percent), and Michigan (50 percent). With a ranking by U.S. News and World Report as one of the nation's top-20 public universities, Georgia prides itself on being an institution that increasingly excels in both academics and athletics.

It offers some evidence that the NCAA is justified in claiming that athletics and academics can coexist to the benefit of both. Whether the subject is blocking or book learning, Georgia doesn't settle for anything less than the best. The NCAA A has already imposed tougher requirements for academic progress by athletes who entered college last fall, the NCAA A is expected this spring to approve a major change in how graduation rates are calculated, a change that is expected to sharply increase graduation rates for schools in which the past lost players to the professional leagues or because of coaching changes.

The experience here at the University of Georgia demonstrates that athletics and academics can coexist to the benefit of both. Whether the subject is blocking or book learning, Georgia doesn't settle for anything less than the best. The NCAA A has already imposed tougher requirements for academic progress by athletes who entered college last fall, the NCAA A is expected this spring to approve a major change in how graduation rates are calculated, a change that is expected to sharply increase graduation rates for schools in which the past lost players to the professional leagues or because of coaching changes.

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Responding to the Crisis in College Opportunity

Last year and this, the major burden of reductions in state higher education budgets has been borne by students and families in the form of reduced college opportunity, steep tuition increases and higher levels of student debt. In this supplement of National CrossTalk, there is an appeal to governors and legislators to protect college access and affordability during the budget crises that plague almost every state, along with profiles of students across the country who are struggling to complete their educations in the face of rapidly rising costs and dwindling course offerings.

In fall 2003, it is estimated that at least 250,000 prospective students were shut out of higher education due to rising tuition or cutbacks in admissions and course offerings. Mid-year restrictions on enrollment and transfer in some states could increase this number. In addition, many more students are accumulating substantially larger debt as a way to pay for the unpredictable and steep hikes in tuition.

In 2003, many states reduced funding for higher education disproportionately to overall state funding cuts. Few would argue that higher education can or should be exempted from reductions required by state financial problems, but disproportionately large cuts in state higher education appropriations were the principal cause of the steep tuition increases and the rolling back of higher education opportunity. Reducing college opportunity is a short-term reaction that is counter to the nation’s long-term need for greater numbers of highly educated citizens.

In 2004, governors and legislators should recognize the long-term educational needs of the country and its citizens. They should give the highest priority to student opportunities to enroll in college and to complete college programs, including transfer from two-year to baccalaureate-granting public institutions. In 2003, states (directly or indirectly) and public colleges and universities replaced most lost state revenues by increasing tuition. The consequence was that the major burden of reductions in state higher education budgets was borne by students and families in the forms of reduced college opportunity, steep tuition increases, and increased debt. The highest priority for state budgets in 2004 should be to protect college access and affordability for students and families. Governors and legislators should deliberately and explicitly seek feasible alternatives to what has become an almost automatic shifting of state revenue shortfalls to students and families.

Ultimately, the long-term solution to financing higher education requires shared understandings among taxpayers and their elected representatives in local, state, and federal governments, students and families, and colleges and universities. In 2004, however, governors and legislators are on the front line. While they must plan for long-term solutions, they must devise short-term strategies that prevent the further erosion of college opportunity.

Short-Term Recommendations (Emergency Measures) for Governors and Legislators

If the state must cut higher education funding in 2004…

- Do not cut higher education disproportionately to overall state funding cuts, as was the case in many states in fiscal year 2003.
- Do not make cuts in state appropriations to those colleges and universities that serve primarily students from low- to middle-income families.
- Temporarily freeze tuition at community colleges and public four-year colleges that serve predominantly low- to middle-income college students.
- Increase or at least maintain funding for need-based state financial aid programs, even if it means reallocating resources from colleges and universities.
- Increase tuition moderately at public research universities to the extent that the state can make a commensurate increase in need-based financial aid.

If the state can increase funding for higher education in 2004…

- Invest new state resources in institutions accommodating enrollment growth.
- Give funding for enrollment growth a higher priority than funding for inflation adjustments.
- Hold tuition increases to the rate of growth in family income in each state.
- Invest new resources in state need-based financial aid programs, even if this requires reallocation of state resources that support higher education.
To prepare for the nation’s long-term needs, each state should…

- Begin a process to achieve major productivity increases in higher education—that is, maintain or decrease the costs of delivering high-quality education.
- Assure transfer opportunity to four-year colleges for all qualified community college students.
- Initiate a process to specify and implement long-term higher education goals that would increase college access and completion.

Principles to Guide Short-Term (Emergency) Decision-Making

Capacity: Provide a space for every eligible student to enroll in higher education.

Safety Net: Protect the higher education “safety net”—that is, low tuition at open access institutions and state need-based financial aid.

Transfer: Assure the transfer of qualified students from two- to four-year public colleges and universities.

Emergency Priorities: Establish policies to deal with the short-term emergency (the erosion of access and affordability for low- and middle-income families).

Differentiation: Consider differential policies (by sector/institution/region) to preserve access and affordability. In other words, do not treat all colleges/universities the same.

Unintended Consequences: Avoid short-term solutions that create structural dependencies that are not in the state’s interest—for example, recruiting high percentages of out-of-state students for increases in revenue.

Statewide Policy: Establish and support statewide financial aid policy. The state cannot effectively delegate to colleges and universities its ultimate responsibility for adequate and equitable student financial assistance.

Interdependent Policies: Assure all state finance policies for 2004—those related to state higher education appropriations, tuition, and state financial aid—are consistent with these principles and priorities.

Conclusion

Ultimately, state leaders must invest significant time and attention to plan for the future of higher education opportunity. No other entity—not the colleges and universities, not the students and the families—can effectively address these issues without the sustained attention of governors and legislators. While the federal government has a critical role in supporting higher education opportunity, the states have the principal responsibility and cannot expect a federal “bailout.” The strategies and principles recommended here are initial steps needed to stop the hemorrhaging of college access and affordability in 2004. In the long-term, new policies are needed to respond to the rapidly evolving global and technological marketplace. New policies can raise the educational attainment levels of the states and the nation by assuring college opportunity for all Americans who are qualified and motivated.

The need for governors and legislators to articulate new policies for higher education is an urgent one. This urgency is dictated by two factors.

- First, state budgetary structures put higher education at a disadvantage as it competes for state support against other equally important public services. The current state economic difficulties differ from those of the past: Over the past twenty years, state support for higher education has increased. It has done so, however, through the “boom and bust” cycles that saw disproportionate cuts during fiscally difficult times and generous increases during prosperous times. The disproportionate cuts of 2003 follow this pattern, but a “boom” in 2004—or even the next decade—is unlikely to see the generous increases of past cycles. Few believe that state financial resources available in the late 1990s will return soon.

- Second, current financial difficulties facing the states will likely dominate their agendas for the next few years. Over the long-term, the state and the nation face far greater challenges in the era of intensifying international economic competitiveness: the challenge of assuring educational opportunity for the nation’s growing and diverse high school graduating classes; and, increasing the number of college-educated workers to replace retiring baby boomers. The “No Child Left Behind” principle must be expanded to “No Child or Adult Left Behind.” All Americans must share the task to realize this vision. But only governors and legislators have the authority and primary responsibility for making this vision a reality.
Marianna Melik-Bakhshyan
Los Angeles City College

MARIANNA MELIK-BAKHSYAN pressed ahead with her education after emigrating from Armenia to the United States with her family two years ago—attending Hollywood High School and Los Angeles City College at the same time. But her ambition to transfer to the University of California at Los Angeles or the University of Southern California for a pre-law program has been stymied by the fallout from the state’s budget cuts.

Melik-Bakhshyan had earned her high school diploma in Armenia, but when she moved to this country she was told it would be best, since she wanted to attend an American university, to get an American high school diploma. So during the day, she took English, U.S. history and other classes at Hollywood High while enrolled in math and English classes at night at the community college. “Sometimes I wondered how I made it,” she said.

Thus far, Melik-Bakhshyan had planned to complete her required courses and transfer to one of the four-year schools this fall. But several of the political science classes she needs have been cancelled, so it will be fall 2005 before she can go to either UCLA or USC.

She will be able to get a required philosophy class during the winter session, which lasts five weeks in January and February. And she may be able to take one of the political
she needs at Los Angeles Valley College, which is farther from her home but still in the Los Angeles Community College District. But one of the other political science classes is not being offered this spring at Los Angeles City College.

When California was drowning in red ink early last year, LACC suffered a $5 million mid-year budget cut. After months of wrangling, the Legislature passed and Governor Gray Davis, who has since been recalled, signed a budget that cut the state’s 108 community colleges by $250 million, or 9.4 percent. The net reduction was $86.8 million, because the budget also increased student fees at the community colleges from $11 per credit hour to $18, and because of anticipated growth in property tax revenues.

LACC, which had a budget of $52.5 million in 2001-02 and $49.65 million in 2002-03, received $51.68 million for this school year, but a spokesman said its costs had gone up “astronomically.” Because of $3.7 million in cost increases—for pensions, health insurance, contracted pay increases, electricity and gas bills, among other things, the college cut half its athletic program, instituted a hiring freeze, eliminated some administrative positions, and reduced library and counseling hours.

Class offerings were especially affected. Last spring, 1,518 class sections were offered, compared with 1,624 in the previous spring, a decrease of 6.5 percent. Last fall, 1,553 class sections were offered, compared with 1,758 in fall 2002, or a 12.1 percent decrease. In November, the state’s former community colleges chancellor, Thomas J. Nussbaum, reported that course section offerings throughout the system were down 8.7 percent. Enrollment in the college system dropped 5.2 per cent in fall 2003 compared to fall 2002, or approximately 90,700 students.

“The cuts have postponed my transferring” and then going on to law school, Melik-Bakhshyan said. She said she has a 3.7 grade point average and so seemed confident that she could transfer once she has the necessary courses.

She is not certain what area of law wants to pursue, but said she is drawn to the subject because she felt it was important that “people know their rights and how to protect them.” Her parents left Armenia with Marianna and her three younger sisters, Melik-Bakhshyan said, because of the political and economic conditions there. Her father and mother were dentists in Armenia; now he works as a dental technician and she as a dental assistant.

Melik-Bakhshyan estimated that English is a second language for about 45 percent of the people who come to the center. The center’s hours were severely curtailed last year because of the college’s hiring freeze and 44 percent cut in its English program, said department chair Alexandra Maeck. “We’re struggling” to keep the center alive but on a reduced basis, said Maeck.

“Budget cuts really affect students,” said Melik-Bakhshyan. “Some drop out because they can’t afford the higher fees. Because of the cutting of sections, others are postponing their transfers.” Nonetheless, she said, she feels that “getting an education is very important for society so that there are people to lead and develop the country.”

— Kay Mills

During the day, Melik-Bakhshyan took English, U.S. history and other classes at Hollywood High while enrolled in math and English classes at night at Los Angeles City College.

When 26-Year-Old Denise Brown completes her graduate work at Emerson College in May 2005, she expects to have amassed a daunting $56,000 in student loans. For Brown, the only child of a single mother, getting a college education always meant taking out loans and working. That is what enabled her to earn a bachelor’s degree from Bentley College, in Waltham, Massachusetts. And the pattern continues at Emerson College, in Boston, where Brown juggles her graduate studies in integrated marketing and communications with a full-time job at a public relations firm. Both Bentley and Emerson are private colleges.

“It’s a big deal to put me through college,” said Brown, the first in her family to attend. “My mom did the paperwork, sat me down, and I knew going into Bentley that I’d come out owing $30,000. At 18 years old, $30,000 was just a number to me.”

At Bentley, a school focused on business, Brown took public relations classes, as well as business core requirements such as accounting, finance and marketing. She minored in computer information systems. Brown took out $30,000 in federal subsidized Stafford loans over the four years. She also worked during her freshman and sophomore years in the Bentley alumni relations department, earning $6 per hour. She did not work during her junior and senior years.

In summer, Brown worked 40 hours a week as a temporary employee at Cellular One and several other companies, to gain office experience.

For Denise Brown, the only child of a single mother, getting a college education always meant taking out loans and working.
Brown’s four years at Bentley, including tuition, room and board, cost $120,000. The non-loan balance of $90,000 came from her work earnings, grants from the college and some help from her mother, who owns a furniture refinishing business.

After graduating from Bentley in 1999, Brown took the summer off and then began to work full-time. Her current job is at Blanc & Otus, a Boston public relations firm. She began paying off the $30,000 in undergraduate loans in 1999 and still makes payments of about $250 a month. Her graduate school Stafford loans, which will amount to about $26,400 by the time she finishes, do not have to be paid until after graduation. At that time, Brown expects to be paying about $450 a month for both the undergraduate and graduate loans.

As an undergraduate, Brown lived on campus. In order to save money while going to graduate school, however, she gave up her apartment and moved back home with her mother. “I save about $900 a month on the rent, utilities and food I was paying with my two roommates,” she said. “I am aware that I’m on a budget. The $250 a month for loans now doesn’t seem that outrageous, but it would have been a lot worse if I still lived in an apartment.”

Brown works 40 hours a week and is a full-time student at Emerson, taking eight credits per semester. She has no grants from the school, so she pays for tuition and fees with the loan money. “There’s no other way I could have gone to graduate school except loans,” she said. “The $26,400 didn’t stop me from going for it, though.” Brown said she could have deferred her undergraduate loan repayments, but with the debt load she is facing after graduate school, she decided to start paying them down right away.

Brown’s work and school schedule can be challenging. She leaves work right on time in order to get to class, which runs three hours and 45 minutes. “It’s hard to keep my concentration after working all day,” she said.

Although tuition has increased steadily during her years in college, Brown says she really hasn’t felt the impact immediately because the loans covered the costs. “If Emerson raises tuition next year, I’ll get bigger loans,” she said. “You don’t really feel it until it hits you when you write out the loan checks later. Then reality hits.”

Brown believes the costs and looming debt are worth it. “I hope a graduate degree takes me further,” she said. “I’m learning things now that I wouldn’t see in my work environment until further down the road.”

— Lori Valigra

“I knew going into Bentley College that I’d come out owing $30,000. At 18 years old, $30,000 was just a number to me.”
— Denise Brown

Bridget Burns
Oregon State University

BRIDGET BURNS aspires to a career in politics, and, as a former student body president, debate team star, and member of the State Board of Higher Education, the 23-year-old Oregon State University student is well on her way. A transfer student familiar with the finer points of tuition policy and financial aid, she has become an outspoken advocate for low-income students, often using her own experiences as Exhibit A.

“Board members and legislators don’t share the perspective of a low-income student,” she said. “There are different types of student leaders. I’m not one of the student leaders who becomes friends with the administration. I was notorious for saying it like it was.”

A Montana native, Burns left home at the age of 18 to attend North Idaho College, a two-year school in Coeur d’Alene. She moved to Oregon initially for a job, and then ended up transferring to OSU. Now Burns is 36 credits away from graduation. When Burns was cut by 18 percent. Amid the threats to higher education, new Democratic Governor Ted Kulongoski has embarked on a shake-up.

To make up the difference, Burns has accrued about $30,000 in loan debt in the last five-plus years. She acknowledges that her current six-year graduation plan is “considered excessively long,” but believes her circumstances justify it.

“Realistically, with the leadership I’ve taken, it’s not that long. And when you transfer, you automatically lose a year.” Of the 70 units she completed at North Idaho, Burns said only about 30 transferred to OSU.

She came to Oregon during better budget times, but in the last year, in a pattern seen by all of the state’s universities, OSU’s state budget was cut by 18 percent. Amid the threats to higher education, new Democratic Governor Ted Kulongoski has embarked on a shake-up, continued next page
JASON DIXON is a 20-year-old junior business major at the University of Iowa and captain of the men's gymnastics team. Like many others, Dixon faces a middle-class family dilemma: His parents make enough money to disqualify them from financial aid but not enough to pay for an entire four-year education.

Unlike many of his teammates, Dixon, whose specialty is the rings apparatus, does not have an athletic scholarship. Over the years he says he has applied for about 20 scholarships of all types, and hasn’t qualified for any of them. As a result, he has had to work during summers and semester breaks, take out loans, and, for the first time this year, work while going to college. But Dixon is not bitter, because he already has achieved his hard-fought dream: to compete as a collegiate gymnast. His love of gymnastics, a sport at which he was not skilled enough to get a scholarship, left him with the choice of either going to an in-state school that offered discounted tuition to residents or to a community college.

“In-state tuition was one of the biggest considerations in going to the University of Iowa,” said Dixon, who started gymnastics at age four, along with his two sisters. “Plus my gym coach had ties to the university to help me get in.”

Dixon’s parents helped substantially during his first two years at Iowa City. First-year tuition, room and board cost $8,741, of which $2,000 came from a job at a local Dairy Queen during high school in his home town of Council Bluffs. Second-year charges for tuition, room and board rose to $9,712, with Dixon again contributing $2,000 from summer work at a concession stand at a local lake and as a Little League baseball umpire. He worked those jobs again after his sophomore year. But then a previous agreement with his parents kicked in: Dixon was to get a taste of the real world by paying his own way the last two years of college.

“I didn’t think that was a good idea, because it’s really tough to do that,” Dixon said. “But if I had everything handed to me, I wouldn’t like it as much as if I worked for it.”

If real world experience is what Dixon’s parents had planned, they picked the right time. University of Iowa tuition and fees rose 19.4 percent this year—to $4,993 for full-time resident students, one of the largest percentage increases in the nation. Books and supplies cost about $840 a year. University officials estimate that for two semesters, a reasonable budget for a student like Dixon, who is living off campus, is $14,933, up $1,072, or 7.7 percent, from a year ago. That includes tuition, fees, room, board, personal expenses, books, supplies and transportation.

For his junior year Dixon has taken out two loans totaling $10,750. Of that amount, $1,750 is a federal Stafford subsidized loan and $9,000 is a private loan. His work coaching boys from a local gymnastics club brings in $30 per week, which he uses for personal expenses and supplies. Dixon also has some of the money left over from his summer jobs, and lives close to a budget, which he has detailed on a computer spreadsheet. If tuition goes up again next year, which seems likely, Dixon says he will just have to get a bigger loan.

“For more news on Bridget Burns, watch the Oregon State Senate in 2025. —Pamela Burdman
since I came here,” he said. “It’s because of the good coaching, equipment, and being around such high-caliber gymnasts.” Dixon is making enough of a contribution to the team’s score to get him considered for at least a partial gymnastics scholarship next semester or next year, although he expects to take out another loan as well.

Of his experience after several months of paying his own way, Dixon said, “It causes you to be more responsible, to better understand the money you have and to realize the value of time.” After graduating next year, Dixon plans to return home, invest in real estate, and continue coaching gymnastics.

—Lori Valigra

Kimberly Silvers
University of Illinois-Chicago

KIMBERLY SILVERS, a 28-year-old single mother, is a senior at the University of Illinois’ Chicago campus. She lives with her ten-year-old son Eric in a two-bedroom campus apartment and is one semester away from graduating with a bachelor’s degree in political science.

Little of her college experiences has come easily. Silvers worked for several years after high school, then enrolled at Western Illinois University, where she made the dean’s list, despite working at two minimum-wage restaurant jobs and getting little or no child support from her son’s father. Getting by was a struggle. Silvers describes times when she had no phone and the only electricity in her apartment came through a generous neighbor’s extension cord.

Feeling isolated at Western Illinois, she transferred after two years to the University of Illinois-Chicago and almost immediately encountered a variety of academic and financial difficulties. The course work at UIC was much harder, she says, the commute to campus was 90 minutes each way, and the commuter-oriented urban campus seemed cold and unfriendly. Also, Silvers changed her major from education to political science. “It was pretty much like starting over as a freshman,” she recalled.

Since then, Silvers has been in and out of school, either for enough to pay her university bills or because of academic probation. Facing academic and financial obstacles that seemed increasingly insurmountable last year, Silvers decided to join the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), which has turned out to be a wise decision.

“I did it because of the uncertainty,” she said. “ROTC pays tuition for school and a (monthly) stipend. They’re willing to work with you more.” As long as Silvers keeps her grades up and continues to make academic progress, the money keeps coming.

Getting through school has been an ongoing struggle and will leave Silvers $30,000 to $40,000 in debt.

For the first time, Silvers has a group of friends and teachers within the university who know and care about her, she said, and a place on campus where she can hang out and get her work done. “They get on me about my incompletes,” she said one day in the ROTC computer lab, “but if it wasn’t for the ROTC, I wouldn’t be in school.”

ROTC is no free ride, however. Silvers has early morning training sessions three days a week and regular weekend activities. Eric gets himself up and off to school by himself most days.

In addition to her classes and ROTC training, Silvers currently has two part-time restaurant jobs. She works three shifts a week at Chili’s, a job that gives her less-expensive health and dependent coverage than the university offers. She also picks up one or two shifts a week at a downtown Chicago bar. Still, she usually manages to watch her son’s basketball practice after school and even play a game or two with him afterward.

Budget cuts at UIC have delayed her progress, Silvers said. “It seems like they’re cutting courses or professors all the time.” Also, sometimes all the upper-level political science courses, which Silvers needs to complete her major, are scheduled for the same days and at the same times. “You have to take what you can get, not what your focus is,” she said.

Students with past-due bills or academic problems are not allowed to register for the next semester, making it even more difficult for Silvers to get the courses she needs in order to graduate. “Every semester it seems like I’m calling a professor and begging them to register me late,” she said.

Silvers’ face is flushed, and her eyes tear up when she talks about all the challenges and setbacks she has faced. Getting through school obviously has been an ongoing struggle and will leave her $30,000 to $40,000 in debt. “It has been quite a ride and I am not quite done yet,” she said.

Despite the obstacles, Silvers has been able to hold her life together. “My focus is on trying to feed my son and make his life as normal as possible,” she said. “I will graduate and commission from Army ROTC in May. At that time, I will go active duty as a second lieutenant, branched to military intelligence.”

Silvers said one of the main lessons she has learned is to ask for help. “You have to make yourself known,” she said. “If you don’t get noticed, you can just float through the system. If you don’t fight for an education, you’re not going to get it. You really have to work hard. It’s not just about getting good grades but about knowing people, talking to people, making your face known.”

—Alexander Russo
Matthew Zepeda
Mt. San Jacinto College

MATTHEW ZEPEDA needs one required mathematics class in order to transfer from Mt. San Jacinto College, where he is student body president, to the University of Southern California. But because of California budget cuts, Math 135—calculus for social science and business students—wasn’t offered last fall semester at the 13,000-student campus in Riverside County, east of Los Angeles, nor did it appear on the spring course schedule. So Matthew is driving 51 miles each way two afternoons a week to take the class at Santa Ana College, in Orange County.

Zepeda, 26, qualifies for the state’s Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS), which provides counseling, tutoring and book and meal vouchers for low-income students. But students must take 12 credit hours to remain eligible. Zepeda is taking 12 credits, but three of them are for the math class in another district, so he expects to lose his book voucher, worth about $250. He calculated that the extra driving will cost him $25 to $30 a week in gasoline as well.

The class meets at 7 pm, and it takes Zepeda up to two hours in rush-hour traffic to get there because, as he described his freeway route, “the 91 is nasty.” That means “two hours of study time that’s basically taken away,” he said, or two hours he could be working on student government business, or “just two hours I could have to myself.”

Still, Zepeda considers himself fortunate in that he has already taken most of the courses he needs. Students who could not get in to the University of California or California State University systems, or could not afford to attend those universities, are turning to community colleges, and “with that kickdown from the UCs and CSU, they need classes that they would have taken on those campuses,” Zepeda said. For that reason, classes with lower enrollment, such as his math course, lost out.

This year’s operating budget for Mt. San Jacinto is $34.1 million, $1.4 million below last year’s. The reduction came on top of a $1.1 million mid-year cut because of the state’s budget crisis. To handle the cuts without turning any students away, the college reduced its office supply, service and equipment accounts, delayed maintenance projects, and laid off temporary employees.

Zepeda could not afford to go to college right after high school graduation, so he worked at a variety of jobs, mostly as a laborer. His mother, a single parent, is a respiratory therapist who earned too much money for Matthew to qualify for financial aid, but not enough to help him pay for college. Once Zepeda turned 24, he said, his mother’s income no longer needed to be included on the aid forms. He receives a statewide Board of Governors waiver of tuition and has a federal Pell Grant, which pays for such expenses as parking, gas and books, beyond what is covered by his EOPS voucher.

Tuition at USC last fall was $14,346 a semester. Room and board was $4,316, plus books and transportation costs. Community college tuition is only $18 per credit unit (up from $11 a year ago), so it was “way better” for him to start college closer to home at Mt. San Jacinto, Zepeda said. He hopes to attend the Marshall School of Business at USC and is optimistic that USC will help with financing his education there.

When he has the opportunity, Zepeda tells politicians not to cut funding for schools and colleges. “Schools are turning out higher-bracket taxpayers,” he said. “The government is going to get out what it puts in, and studies show that people with education make a better living.”

—Kay Mills

Matthew Zepeda could not afford to go to college right after high school graduation, so he worked at a variety of jobs, mostly as a laborer.
With all the attention being lavished on athletes, critics argue that graduation rates for athletes should be higher than they are for the rest of the student body.

“Some schools have no ‘Mickey Mouse’ majors for University of Georgia athletes,” said Couvillon. “There are no majors for athletes here, like some schools have. They’ve got to pick a major that currently exists, and they’ve got to show progress toward a degree or they’re not going to remain eligible.”

While the athletic department does not provide a breakdown of majors chosen by athletes, a compilation of majors listed in the Bulldogs media guide indicates which are most popular among its football players. Of those who had declared a major last year, the leading choice was sports studies, followed by business or pre-business, consumer economics, education and child and family development.

With all the attention being lavished on athletes, critics of the system argue that graduation rates for athletes should be higher than they are—higher, in fact, than for the rest of the student body. It is a charge that evokes strong emotions on both sides of the academic-athletic divide.

Murray Sperber, an Indiana University professor who has written and lectured widely on the disproportionate influence of athletics in college life, sums up the argument: “It’s like comparing apples to alligators. The main reason most students don’t graduate is financial—it’s not academics. A tiny percentage of students actually flunk out—it’s harder to flunk out than stay in. But the cost of college keeps going up and up. Many students leave because they just can’t afford it. Whereas, I never met an athlete who couldn’t pay his tuition bill, or dorm bill, because I could not find them as part of their athletic scholarship. Tutoring tends to be expensive for average students, whereas athletes have the best tutors on campus. They have wall-to-wall tutoring. So you can’t compare reasons why athletes leave school with why regular students leave school...because athletes don’t have to work all night delivering pizzas the way a lot of my students do.”

Sperber bears no animus against athletes: “One of the things they (athletes) have learned is discipline,” he said. “Over the years, I haven’t met many dumb jocks. The athletes I’ve had after their eligibility is over have often been excellent students. They’re often much better than the sort of frat-rat, beer-drinking students. In that sense, I never blame the athletes. They’re caught up in a system that’s much bigger than them, and that the adults have worked out.”

“To try to pretend that the majority of them are getting a meaningful education, as the NCAA pretends, and as the new graduation statistics will pretend, seems to me a disservice to a vast majority of athletes, who are really underachieving academically.”

At UGA, officials from Athletic Director Dooley on down reject the notion that athletes are getting an easy ride. “There’s an incredible time demand on athletes, pressure demands that could make up for the lack of other demands that students have,” said Dooley. “Athletes have a full day; there are demands on them that other people don’t quite understand.”

A statistician and athletics director Susan L. Layhey, who was head football counselor for 12 years and now counsels UGA’s Olympic athletes, says that paying athletes’ tuition and room and board still leaves them with expenses that the university does not and can not provide. “To say that student-athletes have no financial problems would be very inaccurate,” Layhey said. “Their part-time job—being an athlete—pays them tuition, board and books, but they can’t get a job; they don’t have time to make money to buy pizzas and go to the movies and that sort of thing.”

A d AIDS Layhey’s successor, Rhonda Lahey’s successor, Rhonda Lahey, assistant athletic director at UGA, offers a further defense of athletes: “They’re held to a higher standard than regular students because they’ve got to show continuing progress. They’ve got to decide on a major and show progress on that major by the time they’re juniors. Other students don’t have to do that. They have to maintain certain other standards in order to maintain their eligibility.”

Eligibility is just one of several issues now in flux as the NCAA moves to reform the rules in ways that seem somewhat contradictory.

For example, graduation rates themselves could rise dramatically over the next few years because the way in which they are calculated is changing. Since the U.S. Department of Education began requiring schools to publish their athletes’ graduation rates in 1990, coaches and athletic directors have complained that they were penalized because student-athletes who transferred to another school or turned pro were counted against a school’s graduation rate.

That way of calculating “really doesn’t give a true picture, unless you go behind the scenes and look at it,” said Oregon State University Athletic Director Bob De Carolis. He cited 2002 as an example: “Our basketball graduation rate was zero percent. That was a byproduct of having six recruits who came in that year (six years earlier), and I believe five of them transferred—in good standing—to other schools, and all of them graduated. And the other one went pro, but we hit the black mark at zero because of the way it’s calculated.”

The new NCAA rule says that athletes who leave a school early in good academic standing will not count against the graduation rate of that athlete’s class. Students who transfer in from other schools can also be counted in the graduation rate.

Meanwhile, the NCAA has loosened requirements that scholarship athletes must meet in order to play as freshmen, and at the same time tightened requirements for academic progress in order for athletes to remain eligible. It’s a sort of carrot-and-stick approach.

For all intents and purposes, the NCAA is scrapping the SAT by allowing freshmen to play with a minimum SAT score of 400 if they have a high enough grade point average from high school in core subjects. The move is seen as a way to avoid lawsuits claiming that standardized tests discriminate against minorities.

The looser admission requirement—

“All athletes are mainstreamed into the general student body. They’ve got to pick a major that currently exists, and they’ve got to show progress toward a degree or they’re not going to remain eligible.”

—Gary Couvillon, University of Georgia
meaningful standardized test like the SAT, universities will admit athletes who are not prepared for college-level work, and that keeping them eligible to play will put an additional burden on academic support staffs. Some worry that it will prompt colleges to offer easier majors for athletes or to inflate their grades to keep them eligible.

The “stick” in the new scenario is that scholarship athletes must make faster progress toward achieving the 2.0 grade point average required for graduation. And the amount of credit that remedial courses are given toward eligibility has also been cut, meaning that first-year students might have a harder time meeting the 40 percent requirement the next year.

That is a big jump in requirements, especially for second-year athletes. “The goal is fair, and if they get to that fourth year, the odds are good,” said UGA’s Kilpatrick. “But that 40 percent requirement (after two years) doesn’t give them a lot of lee-way.”

This gets to the heart of the matter, in the view of those on the academic side who say that, despite all the focus on graduation rates, many major sports programs are more concerned with retaining athletes than graduating them.

Many college sports leaders insist, not surprisingly, that athletes will meet whatever challenge is thrown at them. But U. D. Underdast, the former University of Michi-
gan president who laid out a scathing indictment of college athletics in his recent book, Intercollegiate Athetaics and the American University, makes a different argument.

“You’re bringing in kids with very weak (academic) background, you give them precious little time to study anyway, and when they do have the time they’re bated and bruised and worn out. A nd what happens is these kids move into their classes in the first few weeks and suddenly realize they don’t have a snowball’s chance in hell of competing academically. So their academic aspirations go out the window and survival takes over, and at that point they come back into the athletic fold. A nd, quite frankly, in most of these programs, the objective is not graduation, it’s keeping them eligible so they can compete.”

In the end, then, the pressure to win in a commercial-entertainment world power-
I about 30 percent lower. Their SAT scores aren't even recorded, and for good reason: Most
diversity generally. Compared with those admitted to Berkeley as freshmen, slightly more
into the transfers' high school records, they might have cause to rethink their position on
the campus as freshmen is taken as confirming the wisdom of the policy.

lic universities serve as engines of mobility. The fact that, at Berkeley, these transfer stu-
his skin, that hard work pays off, that there are second chances in American lives, that pub-
character (to borrow the felicitous phrasing of Martin Luther King Jr.) and not the color of
bodies iconic American values—that judgments should be based on the content of a man's

A admissions judgments don’t, and shouldn’t, rest on the results of a three-hour test,
Berkeley officials argued; the process of “comprehensive review” properly takes into
account high school academics, life experiences and the like. However, when an analysis
of 2001 admissions data showed that minorities with low SAT scores were nearly twice as
likely as whites to be admitted, Moores and fellow regent Ward Connerly went after
Berkeley (and UCLA, where the figures were similar) for doing an end-run around Pro-
position 209, the California measure authored by Connerly that bans affirmative action.

This controversy took on the appearance of a food fight when Robert Berdahl, Berke-
ley's departing chancellor, sent Moores a blistering response. “You have done a disservice
to the university and shown contempt for the reasoned discourse about complex issues,”
write the normally mild-mannered administrator, a riposte that Connerly called “impertin-
ent.” Berdahl “should be grateful he works for a university.” Connerly added, “where he
is protected by academic freedom.”

The University of California has led the way nationwide in demonstrating that, com-
pared with high school grades and scores on subject matter-oriented tests (the "SAT 2s"),
SAT 1 “aptitude” tests do a bad job of predicting academic success, while favoring students
have outstripped state funding, many campuses have been forced to cut courses and put a
cap on enrollment. To balance the books, the community colleges raised their fees this year
by more than a third, from $11 to $18 a unit. That’s only about $100 a term, but community
college students are especially sensitive to tuition increases. Many come from poor families
that haven’t sent their offspring to college and don’t take the benefits of higher education
for granted—the higher the cost, the less they’re willing to risk a job now for uncertain
prospects later.

At Berkeley, the percent of transfer students who say that financing their education is
the toughest challenge they face nearly doubled, to 86 percent, between 1997 and 2002 (the
year before the 30 percent tuition hike). A nd while Berkeley freshmen are becoming increasingly cost-conscious, there’s still a noticeable gap in the proportion of the two
groups who report that money is their major concern.

A cross the state, community college officials estimate that fall 2003 enrollment was
more than 10,000 less than they had expected and because of the loss of state rev-
neture, they had to turn away 50,000 students. What’s most characteristic about these stu-
dents isn’t their race or ethnicity but the fact that, whether they’re white, black, A sia or
Hispanic, they often come from poor and working class families.

The same pattern is replicated nationwide. A study by the Century Foundation estimates
that if the nation’s 146 most selective colleges, which enroll about ten percent of under-
graduates, abandoned affirmative action, about 5,000 black and Latino students would have
to enroll elsewhere. U sing a broader definition of selectivity that includes the 379 col-
leges and universities classified by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as
Research I, Doctoral I or Baccalaureate-Professional A rts Colleges, affirmative action
affects just .05 percent of all college slots—even making the unrealistic assumption that
every minority student benefits from the policy.

This is an important half a percent, to be sure, since many of the nation’s future leaders
will come from this group. But while the fate of the new minority elite grasps the attention
of Right and Left alike, across the country hun-
dreds of thousands of students, a majority of whom are white, are being locked out of higher
education. What William Julius Wilson described a quarter of a century ago in "The Declining
Significance of Race" is truer now than it was then, and as true for higher education as for any
segment of the society—the size of one’s bank account, not the color of one's skin, has the biggest
impact on an individual's life chances.

In California, the transfer students who have been held up as an example of the promise of higher education are among the chief casualties of higher tuition and declining state support. The Master Plan’s promise of mobility—d o well in community college and you can enroll in a university like U C L A or
Berkeley—has fallen victim to the state's fiscal woes. To keep pace with the growing num-
ber of transfer applicants, the state agreed to underwrite four percent annual growth for
the university, but during the budget negotiations in spring 2003, the lawmakers broke
continued page
 Californiare's Master Plan for Higher Education hasn't officially been repealed, but its guarantee of universal higher education is history.

from preceding page

The Business We’re In
When standard formulas fail, the work of policymakers has got to change

By Gordon K. Davies

The impact has been as disheartening as it is predictable. The University of California closed off enrollment for the spring 2004 semester, and more than 2,000 transfer applications were returned unread. The California State University system, facing the same pressures, has turned away as many as 30,000 students. The picture for next fall looks grimmer.

During last fall’s recall election, California’s politics made perfect fodder for the late night TV talk show hosts. When it comes to higher education, though, the state’s dismal story is being repeated across the country. If John M. oreil and others who are stuck in the affirmative action quagmire want a real cause, they should take up the cudgels for these educationally disenfranchised students.

David L. Kirp, professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley, is the author of the recently published Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The MarkETING of Higher Education (Harvard University Press, 2003). Research assistance for this article was provided by Bryan Quevedo.

The work we have done in our professional lives is changing, has got to change. Our great opportunity is to re-define that work. We can help people in higher education, and those who provide support for it, to stay focused on the importance of the work they do, even as they prepare new maps to replace those that are out of date by years.

Ken A shaw, who was then Texas state higher education executive officer, liked to say that state coordinating bodies were “speed bumps” on the road of institutional ambition. We promoted fair and equitable distribution of resources. We mediated conflict. We slowed down, but never really stopped, mission creep. If we try to do the same work in the 21st century, we shall fail those who depend upon us.

This is not a time for business as usual. It is an opportunity to define our work in ways to improve the quality of lives in our states.

This is not a time for business as usual. It is an opportunity to define our work in ways to improve the quality of lives in our states.

Physical health, family health, economic self-sufficiency and educational attainment are all closely correlated.

In Kentucky, we created the maps by county that I described earlier. We showed the highest incidences of lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, children living in poverty, unemployment, and low per-capita income. The maps looked very similar to one another because physical health, family health, economic self-sufficiency and educational attainment are all closely correlated.

The Collaborative for Postsecondary Education Policy, a project funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, is working now with five states to improve policy by focusing on how well the educational needs of a state’s citizens are being met. We lay out these maps for policymakers and influential citizens, trying to show them that a skilled and knowledgeable population is not only essential to the economy but to the very social fabric of the state and its communities.

The Collaborative’s members are the Education Commission of the States, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Together, they bring significant resources to each of the states with which we have entered into partnership.

Good labor economists, statisticians and others have told me that there is no “causal nexus” between universities and the quality of children’s lives. That may be true but the correlations are undeniable. And if there is no causal nexus, I believe we should assert one. We should say that it is not acceptable—that it is unconstionable—to build a great university system in a state that is in the bottom ten or fifteen in how well children live. The well-being of individuals, families and communities should be included in our work and in our performance standards.

A hundred years ago, Henry A dams was coming to the end of both his life and an account of his education. He had undertaken, in The Education of Henry A dams, to explain the place of everything in the historical record and to demonstrate the progress of hu-
mankind through the ages. He had failed, but he would not give up. He had not developed a verifiable uniform theory of history, so he would try once more.

In “The Education,” Henry Adams wrote, “To the tired student, the idea that he must give it up seemed sheer senility. As long as he could whisper, he would go on as he had begun, bluntly refusing to meet his creator with the admission that creation had taught him nothing except that the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle might for convenience be taken as equal to something else. Very man with self-respect enough to become effective, if only as a machine, has had to account to himself for himself somehow, and to invent a formula of his own for his universe, if the standard formulas failed...

The effort must begin at once, for time pressed. The old formulas had failed, and a new one had to be made, but, after all, the object was not extravagant or eccentric. One sought no absolute truth. One sought only a spool on which to wind the thread of history without breaking it.”

The old formulas have failed; the maps are out of date. We need to begin again, recognizing that institutions of higher learning are means to an end, not ends in themselves. Correlations between educational advantage and decent, accountable and responsible lives are important. Education is not a trivial pursuit but a deeply ethical work that will determine the future of our society.

Our work involves great attention to details because good policy decisions are grounded in good information about what’s really going on out there. There is a lot of bean-counting, a lot of negotiation, a lot of mediation and compromise.

And there is a lot of teaching. Primarily, we are teachers. Every time we attend a meeting or appear before legislators, editorial boards, the Rotary, or any other group, we can try to leave people with one new thought, one provocative idea about higher education and its place in our lives. We can try to leave them with one thing they want to tell someone else later that day.

Once on a climb in Italy, I grabbed a piece of rock that came off in my hands. I fell about 20 feet until the rope caught me, and I bounced a bit and settled down.

Then I discovered that I still was holding onto the piece of rock that had come off in my hands. It was the last piece of security I had, so I’d hung on to it even though it was entirely useless.

We need to let go of the useless things ourselves and help others to do the same. That’s teaching. It’s also leadership.

Gordon K. Davies is executive director of the National Collaborative for Postsecondary Education Policy. He is a former president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, and directed Virginia’s State Council of Higher Education for 20 years. This article was adapted from remarks made at a SHEEO meeting last summer.

“Policy Speak” in the Crosshairs
Jargon-heads face friendly fire

By Todd Sallo

Benchmarking a recent proactive paradigm shift has revealed a curriculum model (of a model curriculum, modeled on a fully articulated student-oriented effort-based system) that represents the wave of the future, even as it remains mired in the past.

Data-based inquiries of demand-driven, civic-minded initiatives that are market-based, choice-based, technology-based and segmentally neutral, have incentivized education practitioners and pedagogical personnel to pursue selective flexibility in the utilization of evaluative instruments and assessment tools in learning-oriented, community-level functional analysis.

Knowledge-producing organizations can leverage developmental assets as knowledge products by championing a targeted, learner-centered, knowledge-intensive, cross-sectional centerpiece initiative that impacts and empowers the at-risk demographic without systematizing comprehensive role strain.

A blue ribbon panel has determined that this model bottom-lines as revenue neutral, with a dollar-cost-analysis that reveals both weak power and negative growth.

No doubt some of you are still trying to make sense out of the paragraphs above. You can stop now. Perhaps a “policy work” somewhere has actually divorced an unintended meaning in all that gibberish. If so, please notify the editor immediately.

For anyone who is well schooled in the language of policy organizations, foundations and “think tanks,” this kind of writing has a familiar ring—some of it even sounds cliché. In fact, though taken out of context, all of the terms and expressions above were culled from actual reports, papers and articles in the field of higher education policy. A nd with a little tweaking, those paragraphs could even be mistaken for this genuine article, virtually indistinguishable from the barrage of buzzwords that comes out of many policy organizations.

Some linguists refer derisively to this type of jargon-laden language as “policy speak” or “foundationese.” This is not unique to higher education, of course. Many fields have their own trademark lingo, and some terms take on a life of their own, finding use in unrelated fields, like viruses that jump from one species to another. Much of the jargon regularly employed in the field of higher education policy, for instance, is borrowed from finance and economics, or from the military.

A recent Doonesbury cartoon makes great sport of this. In a commencement address, the president of mythical Walden College is attempting to reassure the graduating class that the economy is not a “denied environment,” and that their “high-value assets” prepare them well for the future. “Will there be challenges on the way? Blowback, mission creep, friendly fire? Ro ger that, graduates!” he says. “But never forget: Your education is a force multiplier, effects-based training that will allow you to stay on plan! You’re ready, people, so lock and load!”

The military has long been a leading purveyor of this type of abstract language, and the recent war in Iraq provided a perfect opportunity for them to confer and disseminate a lot of jargon which was dutifully repeated, sometimes ad nauseam, by a pliant press.

One of the more common reasons for using jargon is to cushion the impact of the message—hence the invention of such euphemisms as “collateral damage” and “friendly fire.” In the modern parlance, we do not “fight the enemy,” but rather “engage combatants”—as if a tea party were about to break out. In policy speak, this often takes the form of substituting words like “funding,” “investment” and “resources” for the harsher variations of “money.” Urban black kids become “at-risk youths.” He lp becomes “assistance” or, better, “empowerment.”

But some jargon serves no such purpose. It is not only unnecessary to the task of communication, but actually obscures the message. A good example is “boots on the ground,” one of the more entertaining bits of military jargon that recently gained popularity (and attendant overuse). Does “200,000 more boots on the ground” represent another 200,000 soldiers, or must we divide by two, on the assumption that each soldier has two boots? Have the soldiers walked so many miles that their worn-out boots need to be replaced, thus requiring more boots on the ground?

A CNN report from last April began, “With U.S. boots on the ground at Saddam International Airport, sustained explosions rocked Baghdad on Friday morning.” Was anyone wearing these U.S. boots? Did the boots have to sustain the explosions without human reinforcements? Did Ronald Rumsfeld did not clarify.

Of course, the real reason for using this expression, and many others like it, has nothing to do with conveying useful, specific information—in this case, about troop deployments. Rather, its use says, “I am an expert in this field, an insider. I am someone who knows the lingo, so you should listen to me.”

It is the equivalent of the secret handshakes used by benevolent societies and fraternities, in that it has no inherent meaning or value on its own (and could even seem bizarre to the uninitiated), but it gets you in the door. Its use seeks to invoke a shared legacy or point of view. It says, “I’m a member of the club; I’m on your side.”

Higher education organizations have their equivalents of “boots on the ground.” (In fact, some of them have probably already appropriated that term for their own use, perhaps as a way to dramatize renewed calls for more K-12 teachers.) A djectives such as “proactive,” “comprehensive” and “intensive” are commonly applied, even though their meaning is nebulous at best, because their use confers the appearance of expertise and proficiency. Expressions such as “high-stakes” and “new paradigm” lend a sense of drama and gravity continued next page
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to otherwise ordinary run-of-the-mill issues. "Benchmarking" implies a serious, scientific analysis. And why form a committee, when you can establish a "blue ribbon" panel?

Language of this type can sometimes be used to announce a political point of view, party affiliation or other bias. In education policy speak, words like "underrepresented" and "diversity" tend to reveal a left-leaning attitude, while expressions like "family values" and "back to basics" usually show the opposite. If the purpose is pure communication, then this is not all bad. When used by the intended audience, it can be useful in conveying a great deal of information succinctly—like technical language among experts.

But much of the time, language of this type is not used for such high-minded reasons, but rather merely to impress people. While it pretends to communicate grand ideas broadly, its primary purpose is simple puffery.

In his book, "Plain Style," Christopher Lasch argues that "esoteric terminology" appeals especially "to those who wish to impress others with a display of special learning." Lasch recognized the fact that each craft or profession tends to evolve a special terminology of its own, but, "since outsiders can make no sense of it," he wrote, "jargon kills a general conversation, serving merely to identify the speaker as the possessor of secrets inaccessible to the multitude."

Lasch decried "the clotted jargon we see in print" as being largely "pompous and pretentious," and advised the use of ordinary language whenever possible. "A bstractions are often indispensable, of course," he allowed. "Sipped in small amounts, they may have a slightly intoxicating effect, not inconsistent with verbal clarity. Over-indulgence, however, leads to slurred speech and eventually destroys brain cells."

It is a diplomatic way of saying what we all know: A lot of what passes for serious writing is just plain bull. A nd literature from the field of education policy is full of examples:

"The standards are to embrace change when change holds promise for bringing us closer to our vision. Much of T E R C s innovative, inquiry-based curricula requires changes in teacher practice, including acquisition of content knowledge, ability to lead project-based learning, skill in creating 'team engaged' rather than 'teacher instructed' learning experiences, and ability to support and assess student progress using several assessment tools."

— Hands On!, a publication of T E R C, Spring 2001

"Jeffrey A. Fromm, the president of K nowledgeQ uest E ducation Group, a New York-based firm that provides consulting and financial services to education-related businesses...describes these entrepreneurs generally as 'mission driven' and motivated by a 'dual bottom line'—concerned about making a difference as well as making money."

— Education Week on the Web, December 1, 1999

"Participants will use the High Schools That Work (HSTW) key practices and indicators to assess the state of current practices in their high schools...and brainstorm a set of actions that the school can take to shift from an ability model design to an effort-based system."

— Description of a workshop, 11th international conference of Connecting Classrooms, Communities and Careers

"Written for those working with young people on building their 'developmental assets'—factors that can impact success in life. Provides hands-on, experiential activities and worksheets aimed at helping young people discover their abilities and understand their responsibility in nurturing their own assets."

— Description of 'Building Assets Together: 135 Group Activities for Helping Youth Succeed'

"In a piece called 'The Soul of a New University,' Arthur Levine calls on higher education to recognize the convergence of knowledge-producing organizations joining television and publishing in creating an array of technology-based knowledge products that would make the contemporary place-bound campus obsolete."

— Edward Zlotkowski, American Association for Higher Education Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards, January 2002

"This series overview introduces Dr. Judith Langer's theory of literary envisionment and envisionment-building classrooms and invites us into real classrooms of real teachers to see how this the-
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THS BUTLER, a Texas school official, worries that the new admissions policies exclude many talented students who come from suburban high schools.

At Austin and College Station, minority enrollments trail far behind their respective shares of the Texas population, which is about 12 percent African American and more than one third Hispanic.

and Hispanic backgrounds will be considered as one of 12 factors used in evaluating as many as 35 percent of freshman applications. That will reinstate affirmative action for the first time since 1996, when the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals banned racial preference policies in Texas, because they discriminated against whites.

Protests may be forthcoming from parents, legislators and others, because restoring affirmative action very likely will require changes in the seven-year-old, race-neutral admissions law for this overcrowded campus, which has more than 52,000 students. The law, which is intended to circumvent the Fifth Circuit ruling, guarantees automatic admission for the top ten percent of graduates from each Texas public high school, without regard for the quality of the school. Currently nearly three of every four Austin freshmen are “ten percenters.”

While the law applies to all public campuses in Texas, only two—UT-Austin and the main Texas A&M campus at College Station—must deal with far more freshman applicants than they can handle. Austin received more than 24,500 freshman applications this year, admitted 11,000 and enrolled 6,544.

In contrast to UT-Austin’s plans, Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates has made it clear that his campus will not consider race in deciding which students to admit. In a statement last fall, he made only passing reference to the Supreme Court decision but did announce plans to increase efforts to diversify enrollment, which is now only two percent African American and nine percent Hispanic.

But UT-Austin has chosen a different course. After months of discussions, bolstered by the survey of 3,600 undergraduate classmates, President Larry R. Faulkner released a campus statement, warning that a critical mass for the two underrepresented minorities requires a “holistic, individual assessment of each student’s background and record.” Besides ethnicity and race, the admissions office next year will also review academic strength, written essays, leadership, honors, special circumstances, family responsibilities, awards, socio-economic status of the family, community service, experience in overcoming adversity, and work experience.

“I increasing the size of the entering freshman class, as has been done in the past, can no longer sustain race-neutral alternatives,” the Faulkner statement said. While the ten percent admissions policy had provided “some modest improvements in diversity, it now threatens the quality of the educational experience because of the rising number of students being admitted using only one criterion.”

The UT-Austin policy was found to be unconstitutional by the Fifth Circuit in 1996 did not use a point system to help minorities qualify for admission as undergraduates, as the University of Michigan policy did, but did employ a quota system designed to achieve the same result. While details of the new approach have not yet been formulated, it will require additional staff to review test results, essays and personal histories, Walker said.

It is clear that the proposed changes, which are expected to receive endorsement from the university’s board of regents later this year, will not leave room for all ten percenters who want to enroll. Between classes, students crowd the walkways of the Austin campus, often slowing progress to a crawl.

“Instead of the hours and hours of work it used to take, you can now do it all in the comfort of your home,” Walker said. “This university is the largest single-campus institution of higher education in the United States.”

He and other campus officials favor limiting automatic admission to the top five percent of each high school’s graduates, but only the state government can make that change. Governor Rick Perry has called a special legislative session for this year, probably in the spring, to deal with funding for public schools, and there is speculation that he will expand the agenda to include the college admissions issue. Interviews indicate legislators are divided on the question, with views ranging from eliminating the ten percent rule entirely, to leaving it untouched.

The affirmative action ban cut sharply in minority enrollments at A&M and College Station. Several years of recruiting, financial aid and summer courses at the A&M campus, directed mostly at high schools with large numbers of African American and Hispanic students, helped restore black enrollment last fall to four percent of the incoming freshmen, the same level as before the ban.

The percentage of Hispanic freshmen last fall climbed to 16 percent, two percent more than in 1996, but both totals trail far behind their respective shares of the Texas population, which is about 12 percent African American and more than one third Hispanic. The latter are expected to become the Texas majority in another 20 years.

At the Texas A&M campus in College Station, half of each freshman class will continue to come from the top ten percent in their high schools. Beginning in fall 2005, one third of the other half will be admitted on the basis of “individual merit, based on academic achievement, extracurricular activities, unusual experiences, leadership potential and special talents,” a campus statement says. The rest—about 17.5 percent of the admitted freshmen—will be eligible if they graduate among the top 25 percent of their high school classes and score at least a combined 1300 on the SAT, with minimum scores of 600 on both the math and verbal sections.

To help the campus find more minority students, Texas A&M President Gates has opened student recruiting centers in the Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio and Dallas. More personal contacts will be made to persuade qualified African American and Hispanic students to enroll, because in the past, less than half of those who have been accepted actually enroll. These tactics parallel the successful moves made by the Austin campus several years ago.

Gates recently hired James A. Ander- son, vice provost for undergraduate affairs at North Carolina State University for the past 11 years, as the campus’ first vice president for diversity. “The expectations are for me to work directly with department heads involving hiring a diverse faculty, including (more) women,” said Ander son, who is African American. The campus plans to hire 400 new faculty in the next four years.

The switch back to affirmative action is bound to confuse parents and students, Bruce Walker, the UT-Austin admissions director, conceded. Since the latest ruling,Walker and his staff have had to overcome widespread misunderstanding among parents, students and counselors, about how to get into the state’s most popular campus.

“The ten percent was a clear, simple message to every high school how to get automatic admission,” Walker said. “Now the message gets muddled. We haven’t done affirmative action for seven years. Now we have to explain another change in policy.”

That reflects similar uncertainties around the country, said Travis R. eind, director of state policy analysis for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. “The good news is that parents will kill themselves to get their children” into the University of Texas-Austin, says campus administrator David Laude.

Between classes, students crowd the walkways of the Austin campus, often slowing progress to a crawl.
To help the campus find more minority students, Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates has opened student recruiting centers in the Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio and Dallas.

predict that there would be a significantly different court before the next time."

Most faculty leaders at UT-Austin welcome the Supreme Court ruling but are concerned about space problems and availability of courses on the overcrowded campus. Increasing numbers of applicants are being turned away from the colleges of architecture, business, communications and engineering because the ten percent policy applies to the Austin campus as a whole but not to its individual units. For example, the business school faculty recently reduced enrollment of undergraduate majors from 10,000 to 5,000. Increasingly, students must choose alternative majors.

“We have about a thousand English majors now, and from what I can see, the liberal arts probably are bearing the brunt of this,” said Larry Carver, an English professor and director of the liberal arts honors program. “Forty percent of the liberal arts students are majoring in something that's not their first choice.”

Like many of his colleagues, Carver has mixed views about current admissions and what is to come. “We get some really good students who probably wouldn't have thought of coming here (before the ten percent policy took effect),” he said. “If you really wanted the best students, you would probably recruit them from 20 high schools, and, yes, they’d graduate in four years. But we really can't be that kind of institution. I don't think the faculty wants it. We wouldn't get the kid out of the (Rio Grande) Valley and the Panhandle.”

Carver’s comments reflect the two prevailing and conflicting views among many faculty members, according to David A. Laude, associate dean for undergraduate education and a professor of chemistry. One wants the campus to be an elite university and get the very best students. The other, toward which Laude leans, wants diversity, “representing what the university should be. But, we have limited capacity, and therefore I’d like to see a modified, nice, practical compromise,” Laude said with a dubious grin.

“Complaints about squeezing out strong students below the top ten percent have been much exaggerated, but the squeeze is beginning to happen and can only get worse,” said law professor Douglas Laycock, who helped to represent the university in its losing appeal against the 1996 court ban. That case had focused on the law school’s point system, used to admit more African Americans and Hispanics.

“Toward post we will get authority to resume consideration of race, and I assume we’ll get critical letters,” said Laycock, who teaches constitutional law. “But I think we’ve carefully thought through what we need to do and will be able to defend ourselves.”

A related issue concerns public scholarships designating race. Laycock is confident that such financial support will incorporate language suggested by the Supreme Court, to enhance diversity by taking the individual, not numbers or race, into account. Such help can make all the difference, he said.

“When I was a kid from a blue collar background, I had no doubt about the value of (going to college), but I was petrified about going into debt to do it,” Laycock said. “We have to find ways to meet that need without simply using race.”

African American and Hispanic students who were interviewed for this article strongly supported the ten percent admissions policy; they criticized the use of SAT scores as a measure of eligibility, and seemed unsure about the virtues of restoring affirmative action.

“Ten percent admissions is non-racial and good for south Texas,” said Francine Rocha, 20, a junior and Hispanic from Laredo, majoring in biology. (South Texas is predominantly Hispanic). “Minorities generally have lower SAT scores, and fewer standardized test skills. If all grew up in white suburbia I would have had better teachers,” said Layron Livingston, an 18-year-old African American freshman, who graduated from a small public high school east of Dallas. “I believe the SAT is overrated. It reflects what you have been doing in high school, but doesn’t predict college work. My SAT score was bad, but I’m one of those who can do the work.”

Legislators have decidedly mixed feelings about the ten percent policy, and many are unsure about how affirmative action will fit.

State Senator Teel Bivins, chairman of the finance committee, strongly endorses the ten percent law. “It’s racially neutral, creates geographic equity for small towns and increases black and Hispanic enrollments,” said Bivins, who represents a minority from A marillo, in the mostly rural Panhandle. “A my proposal for change will require advocates well armed with arguments,” he said.

A representative Norma Chavez, a Democrat from El Paso and a member of the House higher education committee, is not certain whether she favors changing the law. “We need to relook at the ten percent, but I’m not ready to pull it out,” she said. “I would agree to affirmative action; I do not think the public universities are enrolling enough minorities. Unfortunately, institutional racism still exists.”

State Senator Jeff Wentworth, a Republican from San Antonio, calls the law “flawed” because it does not require colleges to prep courses and shut out students from good high schools with high test scores who do not make the top ten percent. “In light of the recent Supreme Court ruling, the top ten percent law should be repealed, and I have drafted a bill to that effect,” he said in a press release. Wentworth proposed that the campuses be given the option of considering race and ethnicity as factors in admitting students.

Interviews with several directors of statewide associations indicated that most public high school officials support the ten percent policy but have reservations similar to those expressed by Senator Wentworth.

“I understand and support ten percent admissions, but believe many talented students deserve the opportunity to go to UT-Austin and are being excluded,” said Jess Butler, superintendent of a school district west of Austin that includes Westlake, a highly regarded public high school.

“A majority of our kids are looking at private schools and out-of-state colleges,” said a district official who would only speak as a background source. Increasing numbers of Westlake graduates now enroll at two Texas private campuses: Southern Methodist and Texas Christian universities, or at out-of-state public campuses such as the University of Colorado and the University of Georgia. Similar trends are under way at other affluent suburban schools around Dallas and Houston, other officials told the newspaper.

A different kind of challenge prevails in poorer districts, such as one in San Antonio, which has many students from poor, Hispanic families. A n official there said most who seek college training enroll in nearby campuses because they are poor or because their parents do not want them to go far from home.

State Demographer Steve M urdock agrees that the rapid increase of the Hispanic population requires urgent efforts to increase their numbers at degree-granting campuses. A latest count, a third of Hispanics in Texas were born in the U.S. did not graduate from high school.

“There's a desperate need to insure that Texas has the skills and education to compete with what has become an increasingly international society, a very daunting task,” said M urdock, a sociologist at Texas A&M.

“The alternative is that Texas will become a third world country,” said Senator Bivins, a strong supporter of a statewide effort titled “Closing the Gaps,” which helped gain support for upgrading required high school courses, beginning next fall.

But for many Texas parents and their children, who fervently seek entrance to the Austin campus, any clear or simple solution seems beyond hope at present.

“What do you do about these kids in poor schools, being born in a small town or a central city?” asked M urdock.

Several officials interviewed here spoke enviously about the University of California, which has several nationally prominent research campuses. Freshman applicants to UC list several alternate campuses, and, at least until the current state budget crisis, most of those who were qualified were accepted by one campus or another. “We need two or three more UT-Austins tomorrow,” Professor Carver said. Mark G. Yudof, chancellor of the University of Texas system, estimates it would cost at least $100 million to transform a campus like UT-Arlington or UT-E I Paso into a nationally prestigious research university, and the money to do that is simply not available. “Vision without resources will leave us only with unfulfilled dreams,” he told an alumni audience.

For now, the competition to enter UT-Austin, or to a lesser extent Texas A&M, will remain fierce, and the debate over who deserves to enroll at these schools will continue to rage.

“This campus means a great deal more than just a place to get an education,” said D avid Laude, the associate undergraduate dean at UT-Austin. “One of the reasons I think people aren’t willing to go out and build better colleges elsewhere (in the state) is because it’s not UT-Austin. Parents will kill themselves to get their children here.”

Carl Irving, a Bay Area freelance writer, is a former higher education reporter for the San Francisco Examiner.