



West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Higher Education
News Clippings

Week of January 11, 2009

Committee Recommends Capping PROMISE Scholarship Awards

Story by Walt Williams

CHARLESTON -- An independent advisory committee has recommended lawmakers cap PROMISE scholarships at \$4,500 per year in a move to cut costs and perhaps allow more students to receive scholarships.

Currently, PROMISE scholarships cover full tuition and fees at any two- to four-year public college or university in the state. Costs per student can range from \$2,400 at a two-year institution to \$5,200 at West Virginia University.

The PROMISE Scholarship Ad-Hoc Committee concluded that because tuition rates increase annually and more students qualified for the scholarships than originally projected, the program needs an increasing amount of state dollars to sustain it. The program creates a situation where expenses are difficult to control and fewer funds are available for other forms of state-level college assistance, the committee reported.

The committee was formed in mid-2008 after Gov. Joe Manchin proposed making PROMISE a forgivable loan program requiring students to stay in West Virginia after they graduate. Under the proposal, students who opted to move out of West Virginia after college graduation would have to pay back the money. Many students and parents opposed the suggestion on the grounds that the state doesn't necessarily have the jobs to support students.

When asked if capping the size of the scholarships would generate similar opposition, particularly given the current economic climate, committee chairman Jerry Beasley acknowledged it was a possibility.

"I think there is always going to be opposition when you ask any group of people to make sacrifices for the common good," he said.

Beasley, the former president of Concord University, reported the committee's findings to state lawmakers Jan. 13. The scholarship cap was just one of many recommendations made to reform the program after a study found that PROMISE scholarships didn't seem to keep students in West Virginia after they graduate. The study also found that fewer students are participating in the program.

The latter is likely a result of state officials raising the standards to qualify for a scholarship as a method of controlling costs. According to the study, participation dropped by about 1,000 students since the 2005-2006 academic year.

"Right now if I'm a ninth-grader at Capital High School, I don't know what the PROMISE criteria is going to be when I'm a senior," said Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland, summarizing the committee's findings.

Noland was not on the committee and emphasized that neither he nor the commission participated in drafting the report. Rather, the committee was kept independent of the state's higher education system and had members from both the private and public sectors. Its findings will be presented to the commission later this month, and its members may make a recommendation at that time.

The scholarship program was created by the state Legislature to give West Virginia students the opportunity to graduate from college. It currently costs the state more than \$42 million, up from a total of \$10 million during the 2002-2003 academic year.

Scholarship eligibility is closely tied to a student's score on ACT exams, and Beasley said there has been an increase in ACT performance since PROMISE went into effect. He also said it appears to have given more students the opportunity to go to college in-state, with enrollment increasing perhaps as much as 600 students during the last six years.

While students who receive the scholarships are more likely to do well in school, they appear less likely than their peers to stay in West Virginia after college, he said. There also has been a drop in low-income students heading to college, and while that is part of a nationwide trend, Beasley said the decline in West Virginia has been more rapid than the rest of the nation.

However, the committee chose not to recommend that ACT subscores be eliminated from scholarship eligibility requirements, even though research has shown reliance on subscores often disqualifies poor students.

Committee members said they believed that requirements for PROMISE need to be more consistent and that increasing the eligibility requirements could increase costs by driving up the number of eligible students.

Other recommendations include:

- Requiring recipients to sign a pledge recognizing that they have a "moral obligation" to give back to the state, most likely through community service.

- Extend the time for recipients to receive awards after attending an out-of-state institution.

- Eliminate the 2 percent cap on increases in annual appropriations to the PROMISE program.

- Examine the effectiveness of the PROMISE Board of Control.

- Find new means to meet the financial needs of students across the state.

- Eliminate barriers to data sharing between the West Virginia Department of Education and the Higher Education Policy Commission.

-Activate a financial aid coordinating council that was created by statute several years ago.

The committee also examined requiring internships for scholarships as well as making PROMISE a forgivable loan program. It found both might put financial hardships on students.

The Legislature will likely take up the recommendations when it meets in regular session in February. Beasley said none of the changes would affect students who currently receive the scholarships.

January 14, 2009

Hoppy's Commentary For Wednesday

Nearly ten years ago, the original backers of West Virginia's Promise Scholarship program sold the idea with the concept that paying the in-state college tuition of West Virginia students who meet certain academic requirements would benefit the state as well as the recipients.

The argument went this way: The scholarships will send more students to college, more of them will attend in-state institutions and then they'll stay and work in West Virginia after graduation, which will improve the economy.

Of course, everybody is for that...along with motherhood and apple pie. That's why legislators agreed to legalize the slot machines at small gambling parlors around the state to provide the revenue for Promise.

But a report out this week on the status of Promise prompts what should be some questions about the merit-based scholarship program as it heads into its seventh year.

First, the going-to-college rate for all students has barely budged, up just one percent (56.4% to 57.5%) since before the program began in 2002. Meanwhile, the college-going rate for students from poor families has actually dropped two percentage points (21% to 19%).

Second, it's unclear how many students are actually staying in West Virginia after graduation because of Promise. Higher Education Chancellor Brian Noland says the figure is at least 50 percent, but did Promise keep them here?

It's unclear.

Former Concord University President Dr. Jerry Beasley, who served as chairman of the committee that issued this latest report on Promise, told the Charleston Gazette, "What most of the evidence that we looked at suggests is that the labor market often trumps public policy in the location decisions of college graduates."

Yes, graduates might stick around, but it's more likely they'll go wherever they can find a job. A 2007 report for higher education found that while "many participants plan to stay in West Virginia after graduation, they purport that the scholarship program did not impact that decision."

Third, as the academic requirements for Promise have risen in an effort to limit the number of scholarships and thus control costs, more Promise scholarships are being given to students who would qualify for other scholarships, grants and loans anyway.

And, as the 2007 report found, most Promise students say that even without the scholarship they would have ended up at the same institution.

In short, the Promise Scholarship, while extremely popular, amounts to a \$42 million annual middle class entitlement. That money comes from the mathematically challenged who entertain themselves by pouring money in slot machines.

Or, looked at another way, it's likely that someone on the lower end of the economic scale is helping pay for the college education of a student whose family could afford to pay the bill anyway.

So, what does the state really want to accomplish?

If the goal is to get more students to go to college, then the state can provide more aid for students from poor families who might not otherwise attend.

If the intent is to keep graduates in West Virginia, then taking other steps to improve the state's economic climate, and thus the job opportunities, will have more impact than a college scholarship.

If the objective is to simply reward the best the brightest with a college scholarship at taxpayer expense, then it's working. But that's a luxury that carries a hefty price tag.

January 13, 2009

Other Ways To Control The Cost Of Promise Scholarship

Staff State Capitol

The chancellor of higher education in West Virginia says if the state continues to raise the requirements for the Promise Scholarship fewer students will be able to go to college.

Chancellor Brian Noland and others delivered a Promise Scholarship report to state lawmakers Tuesday at the capitol.

Up until now increasing eligibility requirements for the merit-based scholarship has always been the way to get a handle on the cost of the six-year program, but Noland says that must change. "The report points out that the percentage of high school students that qualify for Promise have declined over time so those increases in standards have come at a price," the chancellor said. "We already have the highest standards of any big merit aid program in the country."

The Promise report instead recommends capping the scholarship at \$4,500 a year, which would not cover total tuition and fee costs at places like WVU and Marshall. The price of the scholarship has grown from \$28 million to \$40 million a year.

Governor Joe Manchin and state lawmakers are expected to further discuss the future of the 9,000-student program during the upcoming regular session.

"I think it's an appropriate time to look at it," Boone County State Senator Ron Stollings said. "One class is out and I think it's a beginning rather than the end of reviewing the Promise Scholarship."

Former Concord University President Dr. Jerry Beasley was the chairman of the study group. He told lawmakers the report also recommends that all Promise recipients sign a moral obligation pledge. "It would indicate that wherever they go in their lives they would not forget West Virginia and would try to give back in some way," Beasley said.

Another recommendation would require Promise recipients to file annual written updates, while in college, on what they've done in the area of public service during the previous year.

Senator Stollings says he's concerned the tuition and fee free ride is causing the students to miss out on federal financial aid opportunities. "If we could somehow change it to not perhaps cover tuition and fees, but cover something else educationally, we may be able to get more federal dollars," he said.

The report shows more than 50 percent of the members of the original class of Promise Scholars are still in West Virginia, but higher education officials a true sense of where Promise Scholars end up living and working needs to be examined after about 10 years.

January 13, 2009

Report: Promise works but favors rich, needs cap

by The Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Slightly more West Virginians have reached college since the state began its PROMISE scholarship more than six years ago, but efforts to control costs by toughening its academic hurdles have apparently come at the expense of lower-income students, a report released Tuesday said.

The findings recommend that the Legislature instead cap annual awards at \$4,500, noting that the merit-based program has more than quadrupled its budget since 2002 to \$42.3 million this year.

But the advisory committee that wrote the report found more harm than good with converting the scholarships into loans for recipients who then leave the state. Gov. Joe Manchin had proposed that change last year, then withdrew it to await the study's results when lawmakers balked.

Among other points, the report notes that none of the 15 other states with such broad-based merit scholarships have such a requirement.

"We are aware of the report and appreciate the committee's thorough and thoughtful work," Manchin spokeswoman Lara Ramsburg said Tuesday.

The report also advises that PROMISE urge community service by its scholars. While outlining barriers to enforcing that, it suggests that recipients sign pledges that treat each scholarship as a "moral obligation" with a "payback" component.

"PROMISE scholars should be encouraged to submit an annual report on their service efforts similar to the report required of Truman Scholars," the report said.

House Finance Chairman Harry Keith White said that while he had yet to read the report's details, he expects the Legislature to address the scholarship's rising costs.

"We can't just continue to sit there while it increases," said White, D-Mingo. "I just don't think we can contribute additional general revenue dollars."

PROMISE relies both on general and lottery revenues. White also said the rules should remain clear and consistent for future applicants.

The scholarships cover full tuition and fees at West Virginia's public colleges and the equivalent amount at its private ones. That amount was around \$4,100 during the last school year.

The study found that the state's overall college-going rate has remained at least a percentage point above its 2002 level of 56.5 percent since PROMISE started.

But while the nation has seen a dip in the ranks of lower-income students attending college, the drop in West Virginia has been deeper, the report said. The state's rate for those students peaked at 22.4 percent in 2003 before sliding to 19.2 percent last year.

The report blames the repeated ratcheting-up of the minimum required ACT test scores, now 22 for the composite result and 20 on all subscores. PROMISE also requires at least a 3.0 overall grade point average.

"An unintended consequence is that lower-income recipients become ineligible at a higher rate than their middle- or upper-income counterparts," the report said.

The study found other signs of modest success: more high schoolers are taking advanced classes and college-entrance tests, and are doing better on the latter; more are staying in the state to attend college; and the overall work force appears better-educated.

West Virginia loses colleges graduates to other states at one of the worst rates in the country. But that loss rate slowed between 2004, when the first PROMISE scholars graduated, and 2007, the report said.

January 12, 2009

Fewer poor students attending college since Promise began

By Alison Knezevich, Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Poor West Virginia students are attending college less frequently than they did before the state's Promise scholarship started almost seven years ago, according to a committee that studied the merit-aid program.

Low-income students' college-going rate has dropped from about 21 percent in 2001 - the year before the program started - to about 19 percent in 2007, according to the committee's report, which will be presented Tuesday to legislators. The national average is about 24 percent.

"Even though we noted that it was a national trend, it seemed to be more of a problem in West Virginia," said former Concord University president Jerry Beasley, who chaired the Promise Scholarship Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

For all income levels, the state's college-going rate has increased modestly, from 56.4 percent to 57.5 percent.

Last year, Gov. Joe Manchin requested a review of Promise after a variety of changes were proposed in the Legislature. The advisory group studied how the program has met its original goals, which include increasing high school and college achievement, increasing access to college and preventing a "brain drain."

Among other recommendations, the committee says the scholarship should be capped at \$4,500 a year to control costs of the \$42 million program. The scholarship now covers all tuition and fees at public institutions.

West Virginia is one of 16 states that offer merit aid, which can become "exponentially expensive" due to its popularity and rising tuition rates, said state Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland. Almost 9,000 students now receive the Promise scholarship.

Among the 16 states that offer merit aid, six guarantee full tuition and fees. The others give students a set amount of money.

"The problem with guaranteeing full tuition without a cap is that when tuition goes up, basically it can break the bank," said Gale Gaines, vice president for state services at the Southern Regional Education Board.

As high school ACT score requirements have risen, to control costs of West Virginia's program, poor students have lost out. Promise scholars are increasingly from higher-income families, according to the report.

Noland said the state is committed to helping students from all income levels attend college. In the past few years, the state has nearly doubled its investments in need-based aid, he said.

Raising eligibility criteria also is confusing to students and parents, Beasley and Noland said. Requirements have changed three times in the past five years.

"We did talk with high school counselors and others who told us that the continually changing standards really were exasperating for students and families," Beasley said.

According to the report, the state has made progress in both high school and college achievement since Promise began. More high schoolers are taking the ACT, and their test scores have risen.

Compared to similar students before Promise started, scholarship recipients earn higher GPAs in college, are more likely to take 30 credits a year, and have higher college graduation rates.

"That I think is an unsung strength of the program," Noland said.

Since the program started, more West Virginians are staying in state for college. But the committee found no evidence showing Promise scholars are more likely to stay after graduation.

"What most of the evidence that we looked at suggests is that the labor market often trumps public policy in the location decisions of college graduates," Beasley said.

State-provided merit aid started in Georgia in 1993. Such programs have become politically popular, but have also garnered criticism about who benefits from them.

Research has shown that much of the money goes to students who would have gone to college anyway, without public assistance - as much as 90 percent in the case of the Georgia Hope scholarship, said Donald Heller, an education professor and director of the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the Pennsylvania State University.

"So if a state's goal is to increase the overall college-going rate, as is the case in West Virginia and many other states, merit scholarships are an inefficient way to do that," Heller said in an e-mail to the Gazette.

It is true that West Virginia has maintained a stronger commitment to need-based aid than other states with merit-based programs, Heller said.

But many merit programs are funded by sources such as lottery proceeds, so they're more immune to politics and the state's fiscal situation, he said. State need-based programs are entirely in the discretionary part of state budgets and are more likely to be cut when times are bad.

Many issues in the Promise report might spark controversy, Noland said.

"I know that there's going to be a lot of debate about this - and there should be," he said. "It's going to be, I think, a great debate for the state to have about post-secondary education."



January 13, 2009

WVU to hire HSC chancellor to fill vice president vacancy Creates Web site to aid in the search

BY CASSIE SHANE, The Dominion Post

WVU will hire a chancellor to oversee the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center (HSC). The new position, to fill the vacancy of the vice president for health sciences, better reflects the position's responsibilities, said the search committee chairman.

National advertisement of the vacancy will follow Monday's launch of a Web site dedicated to the search, WVU spokeswoman Becky Lofstead said.

Witt/Kieffer — an executive search firm hired by WVU to assist with the search at a cost of up to \$200,000, plus expenses — plans to begin national recruitment efforts early next month.

Lofstead said a salary for the chancellor position has not been determined, but WVU's contract with Witt/Kieffer indicated that the firm's professional fee was based on an estimated compensation package of \$500,000.

"It will be competitive to attract a national level of candidate poised to take on the challenges and opportunities this position faces," she said of the salary.

Hank Barnette, chairman of the health sciences chancellor search committee and chairman emeritus of the WVU Board of Governors, said the title was changed to "better reflect the scope and authority of such a very senior officer of WVU with the significant responsibilities as detailed in the profile, including those related to clinical, teaching and research entities, the various hospitals, four educational schools (medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy), a cancer center and other programs" on campuses in Morgantown, Charleston and Martinsburg.

According to the leadership profile, the chancellor will be responsible for re-aligning the HSC mission and resources, planning for future growth and expanding research. Qualifications for the job include at least one graduate-level degree, in-depth knowledge of health research and leadership experience at an academic health center.

The search will follow the timeline for WVU's presidential search, Barnette said. The press release indicated that applications will be accepted through May, and the search committee plans to recommend final candidates for the job to WVU's president in June.

The Web site notes that "some prospective applicants may choose to withhold their materials until after the presidential search has concluded."

The BOG is slated to select a new WVU president on or before April 3. Barnette said the chancellor would likely begin work in fall 2009 and report directly to the president.

At a WVU Faculty Senate meeting on Monday, interim WVU President C. Peter Magrath said the committee will recommend about five or six chancellor candidates for consideration.

“That search is moving ahead on a deliberate, but controlled, pace,” Magrath said.

Dr. Fred Butcher has served as the interim vice president for health sciences since April 2007, when longtime vice president Dr. Robert D’Alessandri left WVU to become president and founding dean of the Commonwealth Medical College in Scranton, Pa.

The chancellor position is one of at least four jobs that WVU’s next president will need to fill. The provost, chief of staff and general counsel are also interim-occupied positions.

And other jobs are waiting, too. Dr. James Brick was appointed to serve as interim dean of WVU’s School of Medicine earlier this year, and Butcher has said the position will not be permanently filled until a new vice president — now chancellor — is selected.

Interim College of Business & Economics Dean Bill Trumbull said last week that the search for a permanent occupant for his position is also on hold until a new president and provost are hired.

It would be hard to attract a dean without knowing who that person’s boss would be, Trumbull said.

“You have to get a president in place first,” Trumbull said. “You have to get a provost in place, and then you can start the search for a permanent dean.”

Monday January 12, 2009

WVU lists expectations for health sciences leader

by The Associated Press

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (AP) -- The next leader of West Virginia University Health Sciences will have a title that better reflects the demands of the job: Chancellor.

The search committee on Monday released a leadership profile for the position, which it aims to fill by fall.

Chairman Curtis "Hank" Barnette says the job requires intensive administrative oversight and holds great challenge.

The chancellor will not only refocus resources and missions, but also build a vision and employee culture that are focused on growth.

Committee members also want a person who can develop a more prominent research agenda, be a visible champion for patient care, and build strong and lasting relationships.

The chancellor will report directly to the next president, expected to be named this spring.

Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

January 15, 2009

WVU mining extension honored for training tools

by The Associated Press

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. -- A mine industry award that typically goes to a person has instead gone to West Virginia University's mining extension service.

The Pittsburgh Coal Mining Institute of America gives the Stephen McCann Award for Excellence in Education for exemplary contributions to mining education.

WVU's extension service was praised for developing extensive training programs for both new and veteran miners, and for developing onsite training for remote locations.

Last year, WVU launched its newest tool, a mobile trailer for training with self-contained self-rescuers, the air packs miners depend on to keep them alive in an emergency.

The trailer is the only one in West Virginia, and extension staff used it to train more than 2,200 miners.



January 15, 2009

Betty Ireland on BOG list Manchin releases nominees

BY CASSIE SHANER, The Dominion Post

Secretary of State Betty Ireland is among the 23 candidates who have been suggested to Gov. Joe Manchin for a vacancy on WVU's Board of Governors.

Morgantown developer Parry Petroplus resigned from the board last month. Lara Ramsburg, a spokesman for Manchin, said the governor has until the end of this month to appoint a replacement to fill Petroplus' unexpired term, which ends in June.

"He's still working on it," Ramsburg said in an e-mail Wednesday.

Ireland was one of 20 candidates suggested by faculty members at WVU, according to documents provided by Manchin's office this week. Ireland, who received a graduate certification from WVU, said Wednesday that she was unaware that her name had been submitted for consideration.

"It just took me totally by surprise," Ireland said. "I'd be interested in talking to the governor about it, but I'd have to know more." Ireland said she will serve two more days before she completes her term as Secretary of State.

Bayer Corp. CEO Greg Babe, a WVU graduate, was also suggested, but Bayer spokesman Bryan Iams said Babe was not willing to comment.

A few other candidates contacted by The Dominion Post said they would be interested.

Donald Brodie, a 1969 graduate of WVU and vice president of operations for Puro-lite Corp. in Philadelphia, said he has served on the advisory board for WVU's Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, and he would also be interested in a BOG seat.

"WVU did so much for me," Brodie said. "It surely started me out in my career. ... I just think the university has moved up and up and up, and I enjoy being a part of it."

WVU Tech alumnus James Butch, president of Eagle Research Corp. in Hurricane, said he would consider serving, too.

"I would have to hear more about the responsibilities and how often they meet, but yes, I would consider it," Butch said, noting that he's a proponent of higher education and engineering education. "I would like to help in those areas."

Ancella Bickley Livers, executive director of the Institute for Leadership & Research at the Executive Leadership Council in Alexandria, Va., said she could offer experience and diversity to enhance the board.

WVU "is an organization that I care about," Livers said. "I know there have been some rocky times, but I think I bring something to the board."

Brodie, Butch and Livers had not been contacted by Manchin's office about the appointment Wednesday.

At least six candidates suggested by faculty members are not eligible to serve on the BOG. Judge Irene Berger, of the 13th Judicial Circuit in Kanawha County, was one of three judges suggested for consideration, but she said state law prohibits public officeholders and government employees from serving on the board.

"I'm really flattered, but I would not be eligible," Berger said.

Sally Smith, an attorney in Charleston, said she would also be ineligible to serve because she sits on the board of governors for the Community and Technical College at

WVU Tech. Smith served on the WVU board previously, but she said state law now prohibits her from serving on both boards.

State code also prohibits “an employee of any institution of higher education” from serving, making two college professors on the list ineligible.

WVU graduates Andrew Richardson, senior vice president for Wells Fargo Disability Management in Charleston, and Thomas Dodd, a retired executive for Consolidated Natural Gas and Dominion, submitted their own names for Manchin to consider, Ramsburg said.

Richardson, who sits on the 2008-'09 advisory board for the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, said Wednesday that he was “not interested” in discussing why he wanted to join the board. Dodd, of Moon Township, Pa., said he hopes to use his 30-plus years of leadership experience to benefit WVU, and as a retiree, he has the time to do so. “I’m really interested in the university and how I can help them at this time,” Dodd said. Dodd said he had not been contacted by Manchin’s office about the appointment. Other names suggested for consideration for the BOG include: Patrice Harris, psychiatrist. Patrice King Brown, KDKATV anchor. Glen H. Hiner, former CEO of Owens Corning. John F. Waters, executive vice president and chief technology officer for Level 3 Communications Inc. John Hoblitzell, attorney for Kay Casto & Chaney law firm in Charleston. Verl Purdy, CEO of AGDATA. Charles Ledbetter, retired dean of professional studies at West Virginia State College. John T. Chambers, CEO of Cisco Corp. Michele McNeill, retired health executive. Joseph M. McGraw, owner of Greenbrier Technical Services Inc.



January 17, 2009

2nd part of WVUH's e-records go live Patient health info accessible across the state

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

The second phase of a \$90-million project to convert medical records for WVU Hospitals and University Health Associates to electronic format takes effect today.

Officials have said the information software system — created by Epic Systems and called Merlin — will improve patient care by making clinical and financial data accessible to all WVU-related medical agencies statewide.

“Merlin is helping WVU to improve clinical outcomes, quality and patient safety,” Rich King, interim vice president of information technology and chief information officer, said in a message to employees. “It’s reducing confusing and repetitive information entry, and eliminating delays due to missing or incomplete records. This is leading to increased patient, provider and staff satisfaction.”

The first phase of implementation for Merlin — Wave 1 — took effect in March. It involved integrating appointment scheduling, registration, medical records, outpatient billing and hospital billing for radiology services.

Wave 2 — which involves clinical data, such as doctors’ orders and nursing documentation — was set to go live at midnight.

“We’re in the process right now of converting data from existing systems into Merlin,” Claudia Wilhelm, director of clinical operations for the project, said Friday.

According to a WVU press release, orders issued by health-care providers and other patient information will be automated in the online Merlin system, which can be accessed by about 5,000 licensed users.

Rather than receiving laboratory test results on paper, for example, about 500 doctors with access to the system can get them through Merlin.

Wilhelm said the system contains built-in privacy protection allowing only those involved in a patient’s treatment to access electronic health records. The system also records the time, date and name of each person who accesses a patient’s records, she said.

WVU has offered 6,043 training classes to prepare employees for Merlin. All WVUH and UHA employees — about 5,100 total, according to Wilhelm — were required to attend training in order to receive a password to access the system.

The \$90-million price tag for the Merlin project includes the cost of the software, training and implementation, though officials expect to recoup that cost in savings during the next seven years.

Officials have said Wave 3, the third and final phase of implementation for Merlin, will begin within the next couple of years. It will deal with things such as advanced clinical data and patient care plans.

WVU spokeswoman Amy Johns said the Merlin project puts WVU ahead of the curve for medical record-keeping, both nationally and statewide.

“Every other hospital in West Virginia will one day have to do this same thing in some form,” Johns said in an e-mail. “We are leading the way and stand with an elite group of hospitals and healthcare groups across the country who have already implemented such a system. Gov. Manchin, President Bush and President-elect Obama have all urged implementation of electronic medical records.”

MU to add physical therapy doctorate

BILL ROSENBERGER, The Herald-Dispatch

SOUTH CHARLESTON -- Marshall University is adding a doctoral degree program in physical therapy, a field that is growing in demand, university officials say.

The Board of Governors, meeting in Charleston, unanimously approved the addition, which also is seen as a way to help boost enrollment at Marshall.

Dr. Charles McKown, vice president of Health Sciences and dean of the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, said a decade worth of surveying found a great need both locally and regionally for people trained in physical therapy.

"The circumstances today and the leadership of (Marshall President Stephen Kopp) ... have put all the pieces in place for us to initiate and found a new school of physical therapy," he said. "Our survey indicates southwestern West Virginia and the greater Tri-State has a tremendous need and interest in supporting this program."

The program would start later this year with the hiring of a director and clinical coordinator to develop the curriculum. It is anticipated that students would start in the summer of 2010, with accreditation kicking in with the first graduating class.

The doctoral program would take 36 months to complete and consist of a minimum of 109 graduate credit hours, only after students earn a bachelor's degree in an allied health or medical program.

A doctoral program is currently considered entry level for all physical therapy programs. Universities wishing to create such a program must do at the doctoral level be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. The 36-month, year-round program, would consist of a minimum of 109 graduate credit hours.

The program would officially start later this year when a director and clinical coordinator are hired to develop the curriculum. It is anticipated that students would start in the summer of 2010, with accreditation kicking with the first graduating class.

The program would admit 40 students annually, with an estimate of 112 at any one time. At its peak, it would employ 10 full-time faculty and three full-time staff.

Starting the program will require about a \$605,000 investment from the university and the medical school, but Dr. Shortie McKinney, dean of the College of Health Professions, said the investment would be returned by the fourth year. She said the program is intended to be self sufficient, supported almost solely by tuition, which is estimated at \$14,000 a year for in-state students and \$20,000 for out-of-state students.

She said the physical therapy field is expected to grow 27 percent by 2016, yet there is a national and local shortage by at least 50 percent, which includes hospitals, skilled care and outpatient private practices.

Kopp said adding such a doctoral program encourages students who want to pursue such a degree to start at Marshall as freshmen and continue into the course.

"When I visit high schools, one of the questions I hear from students is if we have a physical therapy program," he said, adding that students may not choose Marshall for their undergraduate studies if they know they will go somewhere else to complete such a post-baccalaureate program.

"This is important for the people we serve in the state of West Virginia and the region," Kopp said.

The closest university to offer such a program is Ohio University, and there also are programs at West Virginia and Wheeling Jesuit. The median annual salary for someone with a doctorate of physical therapy, according to 2006 U.S. Department of Labor statistics, is more than \$65,000.



January 16, 2009

FSU presidency attracts 33 committed candidates

Deadline Feb. 2; initial interviews planned in March

By Katie Wilson, Times West Virginian

FAIRMONT — The pool of applicants for Fairmont State University's top job has widened.

The FSU presidential search committee held a conference call to discuss an update from the Parker Executive Search firm Thursday afternoon.

While the meeting was entirely conducted in executive session, the university released a statement afterward.

At this time, 33 people are committed candidates for the job. Off-campus, first-round interviews are planned for early March with the intent of conducting on-campus interviews in late March.

Search committee Chairman Andy Kniceley said he feels good about the search process and is confident the talented people on the search committee will be able to judge the candidates on their merits.

"We are continuing on our projected schedule, and with our search process, we feel very confident we will be able to present a qualified and diverse pool of candidates from which to choose," said Dan Parker, president, Parker Executive Search.

"We continue to encourage the search committee and broader campus community to take part in the process by submitting nominations and recommendations. We appreciate your input and look forward to providing additional information as the search progresses."

There are still two weeks to go before the deadline for nominations and applications. Letters of nomination, applications including a letter of interest, complete curriculum vitae and references or expressions of interest may be submitted to Parker Executive Search before Feb. 2.

For a complete position description, refer to Current Opportunities at www.parkersearch.com.

FSU is also maintaining a Web site devoted to the search at www.fairmontstate.edu/presidentialsearch.

Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

January 13, 2009

West Liberty sees 4.3% jump in fall enrollment

by The Associated Press

WEST LIBERTY, W.Va. -- Fall enrollment at West Liberty State College increased by 4.3 percent, including a 9.7 percent jump in the number of freshman.

West Liberty said Tuesday that the number of students from neighboring states who qualify for in-state tuition rose by 21 percent.

The Northern Panhandle school's fall enrollment topped 2,500 students, including 552 freshmen.

West Liberty will change its name to West Liberty University on May 3 to reflect its new status as a university.



January 10, 2009

Profile: Dr. Olen E. Jones Jr.

Under his watch, WVSOM became a top school

By Christian M. Giggenbach, Register-Herald Reporter

LEWISBURG — “My ultimate goal is that when people hear ‘WVSOM,’ they automatically relate it to its quality of students, staff, faculty and physical plant. I’ve always said, it’s not how many things we do, but how well we do them. I see the role of the osteopathic school as continuing to address the mission statement of the institution, and that is first and foremost to provide quality medical education.”

In 1987, those were the prophetic words of then-newly appointed West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine President Olen E. Jones Jr. as written by Register-Herald reporter Vaughn Rhudy. At the time, Jones was leaving a top position at Marshall University to take over a relatively unknown medical school with an uncertain future that was rife with budgeting problems — state funding had recently been cut by \$300,000.

Under his leadership for the next 21 years, Jones systematically helped transform the troubled rural Greenbrier County medical school into one of the top schools in the nation and, along the way, made WVSOM synonymous with the word quality.

In his first year at the helm, the school had about 21 fifth-year students as interns. In 2008, the school’s incoming freshman class was 211 with about 2,500 applying for those vaunted seats.

Back then, students practiced the art of becoming a doctor out of only one building. But over time, Jones and his vision of quality would oversee 13 new campus constructions and several renovation projects, including the Robert C. Byrd Clinic and the recent geriatrics center at the clinic.

Last week, the 71-year-old Jones stepped down as president to begin a new chapter in his life, leaving behind a legacy at the medical school that may never be equaled. But the road that led him there was filled with obstacles, setting up the perfect scenario for a man who welcomes challenges and has a penchant for persistence and details.

Patty, his wife of 50 years, nicknamed him “Bulldog” because “once he gets a hold of something, he doesn’t let it go until he gets the job done.”

In 1980, Jones became WVSOM’s interim president for one year, but returned permanently seven years later. At the time, Gov. Gaston Caperton had received a recommendation that the medical school should become a clinical school only, with the first two years of medical education at Marshall University.

“Gov. Caperton had some interesting points when he first talked to me about closing. He was deeply concerned about what we were doing and how we were doing it,” Jones said. “He said quality had to be emphasized from one end to the other.”

Jones said one turning point in the school's history came when he appeared before the Legislature to make the case to keep the school open.

"I was relatively young at the time, and so when I appeared before a joint meeting of the Legislature, I simply asked them how many of them had a D.O. as a physician," Jones remembered. "A huge number held up their hand. And that answered the question. From that minute on, I believe the governor knew the school had potential."

Two more significant turning points came in the early 1990s when the medical school received a major national grant and Charleston Area Medical Center began accepting WV SOM students as interns, he said.

"For the first time that I can remember, the three medical schools sat in the same room and we jointly wrote the proposal and we received the Kellogg grant," Jones said. "That started a whole new atmosphere here. As a matter of fact, during his last term, Gov. Caperton served as our commencement speaker and received an honorary degree.

"Our students were excellent, but people didn't know how good. An official from Charleston Area Medical Center spent the whole day here, and within three days he wanted our students. Here was one of the most outstanding medical facilities in the state wanting our students. That was another stamp of approval. With those combinations, we began to move forward."

But Jones admits the school's commitment to quality and excellence could not have been achieved without the support of its board of governors, faculty and staff — which he believes are the finest in the country.

"I can't tell you the hundreds of people that have made all of this possible. I just happened to be at the top and getting more credit than I ever deserved," Jones said. "Here, research is second and students are first. We encourage research, but what we are about is teaching, so we have emphasized that teaching is the most important factor and it still is."

In 1997, the medical school began receiving national honors such as being named as one of the top medical schools in the nation by U.S. News and World Report, an honor that would continue unabated for the next 10 years. Along the way, more than \$30 million in new construction, a quadrupling of students, and faculty and staff that tripled helped cement the school as one of the best in the country.

Today, the school is debt-free. Jones said he's seen between 1,800 to 2,000 medical students become doctors during his tenure.

"I think the umbrella was to improve the quality of life for everyone, if you can do that," Jones said. "But in training physicians, if you get up every morning and think I am touching their lives and they are going to touch so many other lives in a positive way, that's an awesome responsibility, and what you want to do is to produce the best physician possible for the public and patients. That's the energy and catalyst that keeps you going. Every day you get up and try to improve on that and assist the student to have the best environment ever.

“Also, try to be as transparent as possible on all items, don’t fool anyone and be straightforward and truthful. In the long run, sometimes the truth hurts, but you have to say it the way it is and people have responded. They may differ with us, but in the long run, they responded to us favorably.”

A self-described health nut, Jones says daily workouts help keep him fit and young. In what some may consider to be their twilight years, Jones is showing no signs of slowing down. Why, then, step down from the presidency at this time? Jones said the timing was right.

“When I reflected upon this a year ago, I knew the national accrediting team would be here at this time and I thought this would be an ideal time to make a change,” he said.

“So from the school’s perspective, it’s an ideal perfect storm to make the change right after going through accreditation. I also looked at finances and where we are with building and where we are with applications and how we are marketing the school. I looked at myself and said things are going exceedingly well, but hey, wait a minute, maybe we need fresh ideas, fresh leadership.

“And then I looked at my own life and my wife’s and knew there has to be some time that I can spend with my grandchildren and do some of things we want to do. The reason I’m leaving is because we’ve taken the school as far as we can. It’s better to go out on top of the game.”

Jones said spending time with his family will be paramount for him, but he doesn’t discount the idea that he could end up as the president of another medical school sometime in the future.

“I guess in reflection I’ve always had trouble balancing how much time on the job versus how much time with my family, and I’m sorry to tell you it was out of balance with time spent with my family because I was too job-oriented, and if I had it to do over again, I would have had more balance. That’s a hard confession to make,” Jones said.

“I’ve got a list of options and one may be getting into some kind of consulting or doing some evaluation or accreditation. I’ve been contacted by head hunters to potentially go to other places in a similar role, and that’s a possibility. Yeah, I’ve got some years left in me.”

And what does Jones think of his own legacy at the school? Besides the numerous awards, being named twice on a “50 most powerful” West Virginians list and having a Robert C. Byrd Clinic room named in his honor, Jones once again talks about the word “quality.”

“I believe I have left here an atmosphere of excellence. If you are not willing to step in here and do it right, then stay away. As a student, as a faculty member or a staff member, because what has made us, I believe, is the quality of graduates and the way we are doing that It’s all about quality. Quality is what is selling this place to students who are paying over \$50,000 a year in tuition. Students want a quality education.”

Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

January 12, 2009

Schools wary of economy fallout as semester begins Administrators worry about dropout rate resulting from downturn

By Ry Rivard, Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- West Virginia colleges are keeping a close eye on how many students return today for the spring semester.

Normally, some college students drop out between semesters, often for personal and academic reasons.

Now college administrators are worried about an increase in those who leave because of financial trouble.

So far, officials at several of the state's public and private colleges say they have not seen a decline in spring registrations among students who attended in the fall.

But just because students have registered for classes doesn't mean they will show up.

Either way, college officials are already beginning to worry about the coming fall semester.

Several things could affect enrollment.

A new administration in Washington could take dramatic new steps to help families pay for college.

The economy could drastically improve, or things could continue to get worse.

Right now, market forces are tearing at colleges. Annual increases in state contributions to public colleges have fallen nationally to below 1 percent. The private foundations that often provide for scholarship funds have lost as much as a fourth of their values. And private donations are likely to decline.

At the same time, more students are likely to need financial aid - and have fewer job opportunities - just as parents who once turned to home equity loans or ample lines of credit will find that those options now are off the table.

Given the grim landscape, colleges are personalizing their recruiting efforts, trying to keep any tuition increases as low as possible and looking at ways to expand financial aid packages.

Another sign of things to come is an increase at some state colleges in applications for fall 2009. Normally a good signal, this year's increase could instead indicate that freshmen are fishing for the best deal and will be finicky when it comes time to finalize their plans.

At Marshall University, the number of applications for fall is up from last year, said Bill Bissett, chief of staff to the university's president.

But Bissett said he's heard from admissions officials that this could create "false readings" on how many students will actually attend in the fall.

The University of Charleston's application pool is nearly identical to last year's, which set a school record. But the college expects it will see students have a more difficult time making final decisions this summer.

At Davis and Elkins, applications have tripled from this time last year. More than 700 students have already applied for fall enrollment. For the past two years, the number of applications received by this time was just over 200.

College President Buck Smith said part of the increase comes from a new scholarship program for students from Randolph County and six surrounding counties. The Highlands Scholar Program makes the small private college's tuition for scholarship recipients the same as tuition at state-run West Virginia University.

"It just seems that given the economic conditions in this part of West Virginia that these students deserve to go to school closer to home," Smith said.

Going nearby could also cut down on transportation and living costs for some students.

"We have the capacity on the campus to do this," Smith said. "I said, 'We're going to be good citizens and take care of the people in our backyard.' "

Another part of Smith's plan is personalized recruiting. He said he plans to meet every single prospective student.

If Davis and Elkins can attract enough new students, the president says it can forgo raising tuition.

For fall, University of Charleston officials say they want to keep the school's tuition increase as low as possible, if there even is an increase.

The university also will try harder to sell families on the idea of college as an investment, said Alan Liebrecht, the vice president for enrollment.

"They're going to want to know, 'Why should I go to the University of Charleston? What is my investment going to provide me?' " he said.

Marshall's chief academic officer decided late last month to reach out to all of the students from the past fall semester who had not yet registered for spring classes.

In an e-mail to the 1,400 students, Provost Gayle Ormiston said, "I am most interested in supporting your desire to complete an undergraduate or graduate degree as you have planned."

At West Virginia University, the percentage of students not coming back is normal, but the financial aid office has been busier than usual fielding calls. Some of them have

been from parents who have students in school but have never needed financial aid until now, said Brenda Thompson, WVU's assistant vice president for enrollment management.

She said the families are now looking to see what kind of help is out there.

While things seem on track for students' return from winter break, the focus already is turning to next fall.

"I think there's just so much uncertainty out there, it just makes it extremely hard for us in higher education to predict where we are going to be in five or six months when so many of these students are getting ready to enroll," Thompson said.

'21st-Century Skills' Focus Shifts W.Va. Teachers' Role

By Stephen Sawchuk, Charleston, W.Va.

Groups of students hunch over laptop computers, each tuned to an Excel budget spreadsheet. They are surrounded by models and blueprints of their building, Horace Mann Middle School, here in downtown Charleston.

It is Donna Landin's math laboratory, and the students are creating formal plans to renovate the front grounds of the school for its 70th anniversary.

In completing their project, the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders will draw on their math skills to calculate areas and revise their budgets. They will gather information about the school and about landscaping from business officials, relatives, school alumni, and online research—from all available sources, it seems, except Ms. Landin herself.

And that's exactly how it's supposed to be.

As West Virginia increasingly emphasizes the teaching of content in application, the shift demands a fundamental change in teachers' roles. Ms. Landin and teachers like her are no longer just purveyors of facts, but also the facilitators of elaborate activities that help students exercise what are often called 21st-century skills.

Business leaders and policymakers more and more say those higher-order, critical-thinking, communication, technological, and analytical skills are the ones crucial for students to master as they enter a service-oriented, entrepreneurial, and global workplace.

After integrating such skills into the state's academic-content standards, West Virginia is now hard at work reorienting the training and professional support of its 20,000 public school teachers to ensure that they are capable of executing such projects.

This morning, Ms. Landin provides some additional food for thought on her students' plans: All the teams have chosen at least some plants that are annuals—ones that will require a lot of maintenance.

"So they die?" she asks. "Now why in the world would a committee pay for flowers that will just sort of croak after it's frosted?"

Project-based learning, such as that exemplified in Ms. Landin's classroom, is one approach to developing 21st-century skills.

The point, says Rachel Hull, a 4th grade teacher at Buffalo Elementary School, in Buffalo, W.Va., is to get students to know how to seek answers when they are faced with an unfamiliar task.

"Parents want to protect their child from failure and take care of them in a nurturing way, and we've transferred that to our students," said Ms. Hull, who has completed several

projects with her students. “We try to make sure [students] are feeling great, and they’re not risk-takers. What this [new approach] is doing is setting them up to be lifelong learners.”

A different group of students displays its working model for the school facade project. —Jeff Gentner for Education Week
In a project-based-learning unit, teachers are no longer the focal point of the classroom or the expounders of information.

For the most part, students rely on their classmates’ expertise, on experimentation, and on outside sources of information to solve the problem at hand. And for even the most seasoned of teachers, that’s a big change.

“I am the traditional social studies instructor,” said Richard Vidulich, a teacher at Morgantown High School, in Morgantown, W.Va., who is completing a state professional-development training series on project-based learning. “I have my PowerPoint. I can talk forever. The biggest challenge is for me to not be the center of attention.”

Allowing for a degree of unpredictability in a classroom requires teachers to unlearn old habits, some of which have long been fostered by teacher-preparation programs.

“It’s a teacher’s nature to be in control,” Ms. Hull said. “We’re taught we don’t want all these extraneous things taking away from our lessons.”

Training in Alignment

West Virginia officials say helping educators make the shift demands a different type of ongoing teacher training.

During an early leadership institute on 21st-century skills, school leaders reported that their professional development was itself not aligned to those skills. Since then, the state has consciously restructured the support to reflect project-based learning.

The shift is evident when a group of 45 educators meet in Bridgeport, a town about two hours north of Charleston, the state capital, for a two-day December training program. Part of an ongoing series of meetings for these teachers, the training is the state’s most intensive professional development to date on project-based learning.

Unlike traditional professional-development sessions, which typically consist of a workshop with speakers, discussion time, and a question-and-answer period, this meeting is almost entirely unstructured. After a short review, the teachers break into content-based teams, in which they work collaboratively to refine their units.

Each teacher is finalizing a framework made up of his or her project idea, the specific state content-area objectives the unit will cover, and the work products students must create as part of the project—both individually and for a group score—to show their learning.

Regina Scotchie, the social studies coordinator for the state education department, acts as a teacher would in a project-based setting: She floats from educator to educator, helping them refine their frameworks without giving them explicit directives.

She moves over to where Mr. Vidulich, the Morgantown teacher, stands at an easel using blue Post-it notes to map out his unit. Designed to reflect a new state emphasis on financial literacy, the unit will require students to prepare personal budgets based on projected career paths that integrate knowledge of banking services, credit, investments, retirement funds, and taxes.

In response to Ms. Scotchie's gentle prodding, Mr. Vidulich decides to devise a "twist"—a complication introduced several days into an activity to keep students engaged after they have mastered one element or concept.

After several days of budgeting, students will draw slips of paper out of a hat, Mr. Vidulich explains. All of a sudden, they'll be married, have children, win the lottery, or face a financial crisis. And they will have to reorganize their budgets accordingly.

Challenges Ahead

Educators at the training session invariably describe this process of crafting units as "frontloaded": The bulk of their work is performed before students are given the assignment. It involves planning, securing the materials needed for the projects, and contacting individuals who will agree to grant interviews to students and serve as resources.

Experts add that the project-based-learning format requires teachers to know their content in more depth than for typical teacher-directed instruction, even after they have launched the projects.

"Basically, if the students are given control over most or at least part of the lesson, you're following their interest," said Daniel T. Willingham, a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, who studies cognitive psychology in K-12 education. "You really need to know your content to evaluate whether a student idea is likely to be fruitful, or needs to be narrowed down, or they need to try something else."

Poor preparation can end up yielding trivial projects, something that worries proponents of the approach. For instance, teachers may resort to crafts or projects that require students to regurgitate facts, rather than ones that force students to apply knowledge, said Ms. Hull, the 4th grade teacher.

"I would rather teachers come in and teach the basics than try project-based learning and botch it," she said.

The question of how to push the instruction of 21st-century skills beyond the state's high-flying teachers without watering down the promise of project-based learning is a "tremendous challenge," according to Steven L. Paine, the state schools superintendent. "We're further along than most states, but we've got a long way to go," Mr. Paine said.

Although most teachers at the training session said they were seeing increasing interest from colleagues in project-based learning, they acknowledged that some teachers remain wary of the concept.

"The newer teachers are the most receptive," said Mr. Vidulich. "Some of the older teachers say, 'I'm retiring soon; I'm not ready to do this.' They want to see how I do before they jump in."

So far, the state has focused on training a cadre of educators who can help disseminate the technique to their peers. More than 1,200 educators have attended summer teacher-leadership institutes, where they are given training on how to integrate 21st-century skills, and are expected to carry those practices back to their districts.

The teachers who underwent the intensive project-based-learning training in Bridgeport will serve as informal regional resources. Their completed units will be peer-reviewed next month and then posted to Teach 21, the state's open-access Web portal on 21st-century skills.

Singular Focus

State officials are also beginning to revise other pieces of the teacher-quality continuum to achieve a critical mass of teachers who can effectively instruct students in 21st-century skills. Next year, West Virginia's 20 teacher colleges will get an additional push when the state's commission for professional teaching standards finishes drafting new standards incorporating the skills.

The college of education and human services at Marshall University, in Huntington, has already started the hard work of updating its programming. Marshall has overhauled course syllabuses and is now conceiving of a "21st century" certification endorsement and master's-degree program, said Rosalyn Templeton, the executive dean.

"I think it's exciting, a way to invigorate and engage faculty that may have been doing the same teaching they had been doing for years," she said.

Still, the state's primary focus is to provide ongoing professional development for teachers, according to Mr. Paine, the state superintendent. In February, he added, each district superintendent will submit plans for moving forward on 21st-century skills, including details on how they will arrange to give teachers common planning time to craft 21st-century skills units.

For the students in Ms. Landin's class, the most pressing issue is already at hand. The teams will present their landscape plans and budgets this month to a panel made up of Principal Mickey Blackwell, parents, and members of the school improvement committee. Right now, all but one of the four teams are running "over budget" on the first phase of their projects. (Putting in a fountain, it turns out, is more expensive than other landscaping alternatives.)

To account for the difference, one student proposes using volunteers to raise money. But how many volunteers will they need, he queries Ms. Landin.

She doesn't miss a beat.

"It depends on how much work you need done," she says with a smile.

Coverage of policy efforts to improve the teaching profession is supported by a grant from the Joyce Foundation.

January 16, 2009

Manna From Heaven (er, Washington)

By Doug Lederman

WASHINGTON — As colleges and students around the country struggle with the effects of the worldwide economic downturn, help appears to be on the way from the nation's capital. And plenty of it, to judge from a draft of a massive, \$825 billion stimulus package released by Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives Thursday.

Calculating exactly how much of the proposed money — \$550 billion in new spending and \$275 billion in tax breaks over two years — could (if enacted) flow to postsecondary institutions, and to students and potential students, is difficult because many of the proposals in the package lack detail. It would also be premature for anyone in higher education (or any other potential recipients of stimulus funds) to start spending it, since (1) budget hawks in Congress and elsewhere blanched at the size and scope of the package, (2) this is just the House's version, with the Senate reportedly drafting its own, and (3) multiple steps remain in the process.

Still, none of those factors are likely to dampen interest in what's in the legislation, and a rough estimate by Inside Higher Ed suggests that tens of billions of dollars could flow to colleges and their students, in the following broad categories:

- Nearly \$30 billion in financial support for students, including \$15.6 billion to increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$500, to \$5,350, in 2009-10; \$490 million in additional federal work study funds; \$12.5 billion to replace the Hope tax credit created in the Clinton administration with a tax credit worth up to \$2,500 a year and structured in a way that is more helpful to students from low-income families; and a \$2,000 increase in federal limits on unsubsidized loans.

- Some share of the \$39 billion that would flow to state governments to “help restore cuts to critical education programs” in both elementary/secondary education and higher education. While it is impossible to know exactly how much of this pool of money would go to two-year and four-year public colleges and universities, as opposed to public elementary and secondary schools, language in the legislation says that governors are supposed to “provide the amount of funds to public institutions in the state that is needed to restore state support for postsecondary education to the fiscal year 2008 level.”

- At least \$8 billion in increased funding of research and researchers, including \$2 billion for the National Science Foundation, \$2 billion in research on energy efficiency and renewable energy, \$1.9 billion in basic energy studies, \$1.5 billion for biomedical research through the National Institutes of Health, and \$400 million for climate change research through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. That number could grow if other R&D funds — \$11 billion for research and development and other

advances related to the electricity grid, \$900 million for cyber security and pandemic R&D — flow in some form to university researchers.

- About \$8.7 billion in infrastructure support at public and private colleges and universities, including \$6 billion to help modernize their facilities and make them environmentally friendly, \$1.5 billion through the National Institutes of Health to help renovate biomedical research facilities, as much as \$900 million through the National Science Foundation to build or renovate facilities or upgrade equipment, and \$300 million for college science facilities through the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

- A portion of \$4 billion in grants for adult education and job training, a significant amount of which could flow to community colleges and for-profit institutions that provide career-related training. (Two-year colleges typically receive about a third of all funds under the Workforce Investment Act, though it is distributed through one-stop job centers and state boards.) It's also possible that some money for job training and education could emerge from the bonds the stimulus package would provide to states or municipalities to create "recovery zones" in areas with significant unemployment, home and business foreclosures, or poverty.

- An array of other monies that could flow to postsecondary institutions and would-be students, including \$600 million to train primary health care workers and \$200 million in funds for additional AmeriCorps national service grants.

Reading through the long list of new spending proposed by the House Appropriations Committee and new and expanded tax breaks suggested by the House Ways and Means Committee, it was hard to escape the feeling that Democrats, in putting together a plan to apply electroshock to jolt the economy out of its stupor, were taking advantage of the opportunity to satisfy the wish lists of many constituents. Indeed, to take the example of higher education, groups that represent a wide range of interests — and don't always see eye to eye on what should take priority — all found a great deal to like in what House lawmakers (in collaboration with the incoming Obama administration) offered.

The Association of American Universities, which represents major research universities, noted in a prepared statement praising the stimulus plan that "[m]any of these provisions reflect suggestions made by AAU and other higher education as well as business organizations." The Institute for College Access and Success, which especially represents the interests of low-income students, said in its statement that the plan was consistent with its own recommendations that the stimulus plan "would help make college more affordable for America's students and families," by emphasizing grant funds and proposing that tax credits be restructured to make them available, at least partly, to students whose families do not pay taxes.

The fact that the plan seems to check off items from so many wish lists was not lost on the Congressional Republicans who tend to be much more skeptical about the wisdom of significant government spending, even though many right-leaning economists have endorsed the notion that a hefty economic stimulus package is needed to keep the country from falling into an even deeper recession.

McClatchy Newspapers quoted Rep. John Boehner, a House Republican leader, as saying "Oh, my God," to describe his reaction to the Democrats' plan. "I just can't tell

you how shocked I am at what we're seeing.... Everything all these agencies want to do is in here. I don't know how this is going to stimulate the economy."

Something for Everyone

The full text of the stimulus legislation (at least the spending piece of it) was released late in the day Thursday, and while it shed light on many of the proposals in the bill, it left an unclear picture of exactly how much money might flow to colleges and students under the legislation.

The biggest pool of education spending would be in the newly created fund that the legislation calls the "State Fiscal Stabilization Fund," totaling \$79 billion over two years. The money would be allocated to states based on their populations, though it would be tilted toward those states with the most people aged 5 to 24. The legislation directs that governors spend 61 percent of the pot of money they receive in each of the two years to restore their K-12 and higher education budgets to their 2008 levels. Governors can use the other 39 percent for "public safety and other government services, which may include assistance for elementary and secondary education and public institutions of higher education."

The stimulus bill dictates that public colleges that receive money through the stabilization fund must use the money "for education and general purposes, and in such a way as to mitigate the need to raise tuition and fees for in-state students." A college may not, the legislation notes, use the money for "construction, renovation, or facility repair" or "to increase its endowment" — the latter a clear nod to recent Congressional concerns that elite colleges are hoarding money while ramping up their tuitions.

Given the pounding that many state budgets have taken so far in 2009 — with further cuts threatened — the prospect of some relief is likely to be extremely welcome to community and public colleges that have encountered major reductions and are facing bigger ones.

Student Aid. The legislation would offer significant help to students and parents. Not only would it increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$500 this year, aiding an estimated 800,000 more students, but it would also eliminate a \$1.4 billion shortfall expected in the program through 2010-11.

The legislation would also increase the annual (by \$2,000) and aggregate (by \$8,000) limits on how much undergraduates can borrow in federal unsubsidized loans. And it would combine the current Hope tax credit and an existing tax deduction for college expenses into a new tax credit, proposed by Democratic Reps. Lloyd Doggett of Texas and Tom Perriello of Virginia, which could for the first time be used to cover textbooks and other course materials.

And perhaps most importantly, up to \$1,000 of the \$2,500 annual amount of the new tax credit would be refundable, which means that families that pay less than that amount in federal taxes could still be reimbursed for the funds they spent on college. Many advocates for low-income students have viewed tax credits as flawed, among other reasons, because they are not available to students from families too poor to pay taxes.

Higher education infrastructure. The college leaders who lobbied hard for significant funds for college facilities, citing tens of billions of dollars of backlogged projects, may

be disappointed by what's in the legislation. The bill would provide \$6 billion in for "higher education modernization, renovation and repair," to be distributed to states in proportion to their share of full-time undergraduates.

The funds could be used for "health and safety repairs, facility modifications to provide access for disabled students, and educational technology infrastructure upgrades, as well as energy efficiency projects," and priority would be given in distributing the money to colleges that "serve high numbers of minority students, institutions impacted by a major disaster" — a boon to the Gulf Coast institutions affected by Hurricane Katrina and, probably, to the University of Iowa — "and institutions proposing to improve energy efficiency."

The bill would also inject significant funds into science facilities through various federal agencies, providing money for a National Science Foundation program (which was created but never funded) designed to modernize science and engineering labs and for a program at the National Institute for Standards and Technology that, according to the Association of American Universities, received 93 proposals last year and was able to fund just three.

Academic research. The stimulus legislation would be a boon, at least in the short term, to advocates for research who have been concerned that federal support for the biomedical sciences has stagnated and that the government has not kept pace on its plan to double funding for the physical sciences.

In describing the legislation, Congressional supporters seem to be somewhat self-consciously describing the proposed research funds as economic drivers. A news release from the House Appropriations Committee describes proposed NASA funds as "\$400 million to put more scientists to work doing climate change research" and \$1.5 billion in funds for the National Institutes of Health as "expanding good jobs in biomedical research." The legislation does not specify whether those funds should be used for research grants, fellowship support or other purposes.

The legislation also includes one other potential gift, this time for lenders. It contains language that would change the way the government calculates the subsidies it pays to student loan providers, as pointed out by the New America Foundation's blog Higher Ed Watch.

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How Can Professors Save Students a Few Bucks (or More)?

By Thomas D. Sigerstad

It's tough to make a buck in textbook publishing. There was a time when textbooks didn't need to be revised into new editions that often, when the used book market was not as pervasive and so easily accessible for any student to be a buyer and seller online, and digital copies or other competitive nuisances hadn't been thought of, or were even possible. Not so today.

Student purchasers of textbooks can be creative before I, as a faculty member, even begin to save them a few bucks. To protect the market for textbooks, and the incentive for authors, publishers and authors have valiantly fought against this creativity, primarily by revising textbooks more frequently, and secondarily by offering bundling and custom packs for instructors.

As I look at various texts on my shelves where I am interested in how the field has changed or developed, I notice texts from the '60s and '70s that had five- to six-year spans between revisions, and in some fields, without much change to content, even longer. Nowadays it seems like every two years is the norm for a new edition. Publishers make the old edition obsolete and allow for continued textbook revenue and author royalties. The argument is that examples need to be fresher, cases need to be current, pictures need to be updated, and so on. Those are excuses as much as valid arguments. I'm also beginning to see content rearranged and chapter order changing more often as another way to make older editions slip into obsolescence. The customized and bundled packs also make material obsolete in that the material is only good for those instructors requiring that packaged material. Students lose the ability to resell, or even buy used material, except perhaps through their own bookstore which might be somewhat reluctant itself to invest in one-of-a-kind course materials.

There's no doubt that fresher content examples make the text more timely for each new cohort of students, but when I think of basic content, I don't see much change. I teach in a college of business, teaching an introductory course as well as a capstone course. In the introductory course I see no major content changes, no major additions to our theoretical understanding (not that we want to introduce too much theory in a business college's applied setting) and the same content we have borrowed from our sister disciplines in the other social sciences that we have been presenting since they were new in back in the '70s and '80s. I do note new textbooks that try to take a fresh approach to "packaging" the information and giving it a new twist, sort of like the old wine in new bottles approach, but when you look at the information, it hasn't changed; it's just been reorganized under some hot new way of looking at something ... that "paradigm shift" that used to be so hot itself back in the '70s.

I note in my strategy capstone course that there have not been any major additions to basic theory in well over a decade. What if I were teaching history, math, biology or another field where, perhaps, content is also slow to change? I could tell my students easily to pick any edition of either of the primary textbooks that I use as long as it is copyrighted after 1985, and they would be at no loss for basic content. The examples would be outdated, but not useless, in that we can still learn from the context of history.

So, what do I do? I send my syllabi to my roster of students three to four weeks before the semester starts with a note that suggests they visit their online used book sellers. I tell them the ISBN of the current edition of the text, and I relate the retail price of that book. I typically give them the ISBN of the prior edition and relate the going price on a major Internet book seller's site, usually about half the price of the new text, as the older edition loses its value quickly when the new edition comes out. I then give them one older edition's ISBN number and often report that this used text will typically cost them less than the cost to have it shipped to them. For one of my courses using a popular textbook, the current edition has a list price of \$124 for the hardback that contains case material I won't use in class, so I suggest the paperback version for \$104, an immediate savings right there that is even magnified in older editions. I tell them that they can purchase that \$104 paperback for \$71 used. I then let them know they can use an older edition that sells new for \$38 and used for \$4 with no loss of basic content. In fact, I give them the opportunity to purchase an even older edition, now a whopping six years old that can be had new for \$8 and used for 1 cent. It will cost more in shipping to get the book. With no loss in basic content, it is hard to rationalize paying \$104.

To be sure, I now look at the order of chapters and major content to see if anyone purchasing an older edition will be at a disadvantage, and then relate these differences to my class. I also refuse to test on the examples that use current stories, names and events, as I believe they are less important than basic content. I refuse to put together custom books that have no resale value for my students because I might be the only instructor using that package. Some of my students find "gray market" imported books for sale that were printed overseas at huge cost savings to publishers to be competitive in those markets but which then find their way back into the U.S. market, a huge savings as lower production costs are passed along.

I encourage my students to save money. I tell them not to waste money on versions that contain cases if I don't use cases. When I refer to something in a text by figure I'll often have students with other editions pipe up and inform those with other versions the page number for their text. And I get notes from students consistently thanking me for making it easier to save money on this growing expense item. Students are even smart enough now that they ask me well in advance for ISBNs so they can shop for value. Students share their secrets like any savvy consumer about where the best deals are and often remark in class about the good deal they found. With textbooks averaging in the neighborhood of \$700 per semester for all their courses, they can easily cut this expense in half or more by requesting ISBNs from their instructors and doing online price comparisons. At the end of the semester, I've had students tell me they also maximize the resale value of that semester's textbooks by reselling all of their textbooks online to get the best price from other students.

In the past, the publisher had more of an upper hand in this publisher-student marketplace relationship. Secondary markets didn't really exist, except within the campus book store. Students knew that used books would save them some money over new ones. They might get a few bucks back at the end of the semester, but resale

values would be low because there was only one buyer, the campus bookstore. So students didn't have the option to be creative. The publishers were also supported by gatekeeper instructors who really controlled what textbooks the students bought. That gatekeeper was a sure thing if the professor wrote textbooks him or herself, but even when the instructor was not the author, the publisher supplied enough teaching materials in the way of PowerPoint presentations, test banks or instructor guides, that there was incentive to upgrade to the newest material, some of which could be specialized just for that instructor, and no real incentive not to. The only cost was borne by the student.

It would be tough to be in the textbook publishing business today. The business model has been attacked by the robustness of the used book market and the creativeness of students trying to get value. Publishing is, at best, trying to keep its product life cycle from declining by using the aforementioned techniques, but you can tell by consolidation in the industry, outsourcing and new technologies that it will remain a struggle based on a savvy consumer and a middleman gatekeeper (instructor) often no longer willing to support price maintenance. It's a little tough for me to stand in front of a class and tell them to purchase something for \$100 or more when the same information to do well in the course can be had for a couple of bucks. Fellow professors, let's stop being gatekeepers – and instead start helping students be smart consumers.

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