Higher Education News Clippings

Weeks of February 17, 2008
'Bucks for Brains' advances in Senate

By Phil Kabler

A Manchin administration proposal to create a $50 million endowment to hasten high-tech research and development efforts at West Virginia and Marshall universities drew unanimous support and high praise in the Senate Thursday.

The so-called "Bucks for Brains" initiative advanced to the full Senate from the Senate Finance Committee Thursday.

"This is, I believe, the most important single piece of legislation before the Legislature this year," said Sen. Brooks McCabe, D-Kanawha. "It is absolutely critical."

Modeled after a highly successful program in Kentucky, "Bucks for Brains" would allocate $35 million for WVU and $15 million for Marshall for research endowment trust funds, to be matched by contributions from each institution's foundations.

"This is the seed kernel, if you will, for creating the kinds of jobs that will keep Promise scholarship graduates in the state," Marshall President Stephen Kopp told the committee.

"This says the state of West Virginia is serious about investing in the kind of development that requires brainpower," Kopp said. "It says to the people of West Virginia that brains matter, and we want to put these brains to use."

As envisioned, the principal funds in each endowment would not be touched, but the interest income from each account would fund research grants in specialized fields such as biotechnology and biometrics.

The goal is to create new spin-off businesses and high-paying jobs as the research results in new breakthroughs, patents and products.

"It makes an investment in the future that will create high-paying jobs and stimulate research-based development in the state," Kopp said.

A Manchin administration proposal to create a $50 million endowment to hasten high-tech research and development efforts at West Virginia and Marshall universities drew unanimous support and high praise in the Senate Thursday.

The so-called "Bucks for Brains" initiative advanced to the full Senate from the Senate Finance Committee Thursday.

"This is, I believe, the most important single piece of legislation before the Legislature this year," said Sen. Brooks McCabe, D-Kanawha. "It is absolutely critical."
Modeled after a highly successful program in Kentucky, "Bucks for Brains" would allocate $35 million for WVU and $15 million for Marshall for research endowment trust funds, to be matched by contributions from each institution's foundations.

"This is the seed kernel, if you will, for creating the kinds of jobs that will keep Promise scholarship graduates in the state," Marshall President Stephen Kopp told the committee.

"This says the state of West Virginia is serious about investing in the kind of development that requires brainpower," Kopp said. "It says to the people of West Virginia that brains matter, and we want to put these brains to use."

As envisioned, the principal funds in each endowment would not be touched, but the interest income from each account would fund research grants in specialized fields such as biotechnology and biometrics.

The goal is to create new spin-off businesses and high-paying jobs as the research results in new breakthroughs, patents and products.

"It makes an investment in the future that will create high-paying jobs and stimulate research-based development in the state," Kopp said.

Also Thursday, the Senate Finance Committee advanced another bill that would have significant economic development ramifications locally.

The bill (SB280) would expand current law that allows downtown development efforts through sales tax TIF projects.

Under the bill, up to 25 percent of funding from sales tax TIF projects of $50 million or more could be used to pay for remediation of landfills or hazardous waste sites.

Locally, the legislation could help finance plans for an upscale shopping plaza in South Charleston - to be built on the former FMC site, which includes an industrial drainage pond.

Senate Finance Chairman Walt Helmick, D-Pocahontas, said that while the initial interest is in the South Charleston site, other locations in the state could qualify for the funding plan.

"This is not the only site," he said. "There certainly are many locations in the northern panhandle that could use this process," he said.

Sales tax TIFs allow localities to sell development bonds, to be paid off with sales tax collections that the new retail districts generate.
Stanford Set to Raise Aid for Students in Middle

By JONATHAN D. GLATER

SAN FRANCISCO — Stanford University on Wednesday became the latest prominent university to expand financial aid well into the middle class. It announced that students from families earning less than $100,000 a year would not be charged tuition.

Under the new system, which takes effect in the fall, families earning less than $60,000 would not pay for room and board.

Tuition next year is $36,030. Room and board add $11,182.

The move follows announcements of expanded aid by Harvard, Yale and many others that provide tuition breaks to families with incomes well above average as tuition increases have become an issue in Congress.

Yale said in January that it would sharply increase financial aid for undergraduates, even for families with annual incomes up to $200,000.

Karen Cooper, director of financial aid at Stanford, said the university would allot $21 million to financial aid, raising the aid total to $114 million. Ms. Cooper said the increase was the largest in the institution’s history.

“We heard very clearly from our parents, especially parents that considered themselves middle income, that the amount that we expected from them was very difficult,” Ms. Cooper said.

Students whose tuition, room and board are paid for will be expected to contribute about $4,500 a year from summer earnings and on-campus work, she said. For students whose tuition is waived, the university will continue to judge family assets and circumstances in determining aid.

Lawmakers in Washington have criticized wealthy colleges for continuing to increase tuitions even as their endowments swell. The lawmakers have raised the possibility of requiring colleges, which benefit from tax exemptions on donations, to spend at least 5 percent of their endowments a year, as private foundations are required to do. The Stanford endowment exceeds $17 billion.

“I hope we’re seeing a trend and a shift in thinking,” said Senator Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, the senior Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, which has a central role in setting tax policy. “Spending a little more on students won’t break the bank for well-funded schools.”

The Stanford endowment is the third largest of American universities.
Ms. Cooper said the Stanford board approved last summer increasing the share of endowment spent annually to 5.5 percent. She said the current average aid package, including loans and on-campus work, totals about $32,000, meeting most of the cost of tuition.

If the wealthiest universities have been extending aid to families well into the reaches of the upper middle class, others have concentrated on reducing student debt by replacing loans with grants. Washington University in St. Louis on Wednesday became the latest in a parade of colleges replacing need-based loans with grants for students from families earning less than $60,000. Princeton University announced such a step a decade ago.

Overall, the actions are reshaping the financial aid landscape for students entering college next year and could mean that in some cases, attending some of the nation’s wealthiest and most elite private colleges could cost less than going to public universities.
February 21, 2008

Glenville State College focuses on working with area schools

GLENVILLE — Working with local school systems to strengthen curriculum and increase the number of high school and college graduates are among programs Glenville State College plans to build on in 2008.

Dr. Peter Barr, president of the college, said the college also continued to see growth in enrollment.

“One thing we continue to work on is increased enrollment,” he said. “We were able to increase enrollment from 1,381 to 1,441 from fall 2006 to fall 2007.”

Barr said the college will continue to work on student retention.

“We take a team approach on this that it is everyone who contributes to the retention and graduation of students,” he said.

Barr said the biggest initiative the college started last year and will build on this year is the K-12 initiative, a consortium of 13 county school systems to begin communication between the faculty of the college and the schools. Late in 2007, Glenville State College and the schools in Barbour, Braxton, Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Gilmer, Lewis, Nicholas, Ritchie, Roane, Upshur, Webster and Wirt signed a memo of understanding which states that in the next five years they will work for higher graduation rates, surpass the average ACT scores for West Virginia and decrease the need for remedial courses in college.

“Basically most of us believe the true promise for West Virginia is in its people and specifically in the youngsters,” he said. “The higher the level of education and better prepared they are for the workplace, the more they will enjoy an enriched life.”

In the 13 counties, Barr said a survey found only 10 percent of those aged 19 to 64 had a college degree. For West Virginia the percentage is 17 percent and for the United States it is 25 percent.

“If we are going to be competitive in the 21st century, we need to initiate efforts that will increase that percentage to state and national averages,” he said. “Getting a higher percentage of college graduates is really a national problem, not just a West Virginia problem or a central West Virginia problem.”

One thing they have been able to do is to jointly hire a math coordinator to work with math teachers to reduce the need for remedial courses at the college level. Barr said they have also asked the superintendents to identify five students each in grades 8-12 called the hidden scholars.
“We want to establish a dialogue between them and a mentor on campus, go visit them, bring them on campus, work with them after school and try to build a relationship with them,” he said. “This summer we will have summer camps for each of those students by grade.”

Barr said the activities for the camps are under development. He said the College Summit program has agreed to do a program this summer with the rising high school seniors.

GSC has received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to build what Barr called a world-class curriculum in criminal justice.

“We had an expert in criminal justice come in and went through two days of discussions with faculty and students on how to build that program to focus on not only a generic criminal justice program but specifically in the areas of corrections, law enforcement and applied technology,” he said. “We will design a proposed new criminal justice curriculum that will be approved for our fastest growing program. We want it to be the best it can be but also that our students pick up certification, special training and experiences.”
WVU-P still experiencing growth

By WAYNE TOWNER

PARKERSBURG — West Virginia University at Parkersburg has continued to experience growth and change over the years as it has evolved to meet the changing needs of the Mid-Ohio Valley.

A regional campus of West Virginia University in Morgantown, the college recently celebrated its 45th anniversary in the valley.

Dr. Marie Foster Gnage, president of WVU-P, said the past year has been a positive one for the college, with the addition of new programs, personnel and other changes. College officials are looking at plans for the future in all areas of growth and development.

“We’re in line with our strategic plan that we started in 2004 and it’s probably just about time to begin thinking about the next five years,” Gnage said.

The college has seen changes in staffing for the administration and teaching staff through retirements and other turnaround. Gnage said the administration has focused on recruitment of faculty and staff, with 10 to 12 new people hired in the last year at various levels.

In terms of students, for the past several years WVU-P has seen an increase of fall enrollment of about 2 percent over each previous year. Gnage said the 2007 fall enrollment did not reach that point this fall, but she believed overall enrollment for the entire year will reach that 2 percent increase at some point.

College officials have continued working to refine and update the college’s programs and offerings, Gnage said. Officials are looking at using more online resources, including full courses, and how to schedule programs to best meet the needs of the community. They are also looking at ways to enhance and enrich students’ educational experiences with special speakers and programs brought to the campus, she said.

In other areas, Gnage and her staff are looking at ways to increase grant funding to the college and bring more state dollars into the school, allowing the school to keep student tuition as low as possible. She said there are only two colleges currently in the state with lower tuition, at a time when WVU-P is on its way to becoming the fifth largest college in the state.

“We want people to know this is the college the community built,” she said.

In recent years, WVU-P has been working on several campus improvement projects, including a $3.1 million renovation project to the school’s central classroom tower, which was completed in 2006. The tower had suffered from several structural problems since it was built in 1968. The renovation project stabilized the classroom tower and added some classroom and office space.
Crews have worked to plant trees and make other minor improvements throughout the campus over the past couple of years. As an example, Gnage’s Office of the President and the Admissions Office, two of the first places seen by people entering the college’s southern entrance, have been renovated and given a new, more modern look.

Many other areas of the college have seen improvements of some degree or other and Gnage also plans to look at improvements to the less-visible infrastructure systems of the facility.

Looking at the future, the college is also interested in new bricks-and-mortar construction on the campus. WVU-P has been working to raise money to build a new child development center. The college’s plans for the center go beyond simply offering child care to incorporating the proposed center into some of the educational programs and degrees offered at the school, she said.

The college is also looking into the construction of a new advanced technology facility. Gnage said the school will learn more in 2008 about the possibility of such a project. She also wants to make improvements at the college’s Jackson County campus, possibly with the acquisition of some currently available buildings adjacent to that campus to allow it to grow.

Over the past several years, WVU-P has continued to add more two-year programs and now offers several baccalaureate programs, with the anticipation of continuing to add more such four-year degree programs.

“Our goal is to be the regional college of choice, for the Mid-Ohio Valley and beyond if we can,” she said.

Gnage believes WVU-P, throughout its 45-year history, has become intertwined with all aspects of the community, at all kinds of levels. Thousands of people have touched — and been touched by — the college, from four-year degrees down to single classes or special programs taught at the college over the years.
West Virginia University journalism professors strongly supported a colleague who was threatened with contempt of court by a federal judge for refusing to reveal her sources Tuesday.

"As a journalist she's showing a lot of courage," said Bonnie Stewart, an associate professor in WVU's Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism. "Being able to protect your sources is very critical to what we do as a journalist in seeking and finding the truth. She's holding true to the code of ethics that most journalists adhere to."

Locy's case "is very upfront and personal" for students because they know her and she is part of the school, Stewart said.

"I've used [Locy's case] in my class as an example as to what journalism is all about," she said.

Locy took the Shott Chair of Journalism with WVU in July, said Steve Urbanski, the school's director of graduate studies. She was very upfront and told the school's administration she may have to leave for a hearing or possibly go to jail, he said.

He said the school's faculty and students are rallying behind Locy and are concerned about the outcome of the case.

"We're all behind Toni because she's such an advocate for freedom of information and she's proven that with her outstanding reporting over the years," he said.

"She's an outstanding journalist and an outstanding faculty member here and her stand on freedom of information is an inspiration to all of us," said George Esper, a journalism professor and longtime Associated Press correspondent.

"I think it is very serious any time the government tries to threaten and intimidate, but this won't happen with Toni. She won't allow it," Esper said.
WVU adds almost $4 billion to state, study says

By Veronica Nett

West Virginia University contributed nearly $4 billion in various ways to the state's economy in 2007, according to a study released Tuesday by WVU's Bureau Business and Economic Research.

That's a $19 return for every dollar the state Legislature spends on the university, WVU President Mike Garrison said at the state Capitol Tuesday.

"What we are highlighting today is the tremendous return WVU gives to this state," Garrison said.

The most important investment the Legislature can make is in higher education, he said.

According to the study, WVU, along with its regional campuses and medical facilities, accounted for 35,700 jobs and $1.15 billion in employee compensation.

That includes 19,678 people directly employed with WVU or one of its affiliates.

The study includes business volume, employment, employee compensation, output, value added and assorted state taxes in its estimate of "economic impact."

In 2007, WVU and its affiliate organizations received $203.2 million in state appropriations," said Tom Witt, director of WVU's Bureau Business and Economic Research.

"It is well-known that WVU has a major impact on West Virginia through its education, economic development, research, health care and service programs," Witt said in a news release. "This report shows that WVU and affiliated organizations also have profound economic impact on the state - nearly $4 billion annually."

West Virginia University contributed nearly $4 billion in various ways to the state's economy in 2007, according to a study released Tuesday by WVU's Bureau Business and Economic Research.

That's a $19 return for every dollar the state Legislature spends on the university, WVU President Mike Garrison said at the state Capitol Tuesday.

"What we are highlighting today is the tremendous return WVU gives to this state," Garrison said.

The most important investment the Legislature can make is in higher education, he said.

According to the study, WVU, along with its regional campuses and medical facilities, accounted for 35,700 jobs and $1.15 billion in employee compensation.
That includes 19,678 people directly employed with WVU or one of its affiliates.

The study includes business volume, employment, employee compensation, output, value added and assorted state taxes in its estimate of "economic impact."

In 2007, WVU and its affiliate organizations received $203.2 million in state appropriations," said Tom Witt, director of WVU's Bureau Business and Economic Research.

"It is well-known that WVU has a major impact on West Virginia through its education, economic development, research, health care and service programs," Witt said in a news release. "This report shows that WVU and affiliated organizations also have profound economic impact on the state - nearly $4 billion annually."

In 2007, Witt noted, the state's $203.2 million investment in WVU also generated at least $57.4 million in taxes paid back to the state.

By comparison, in a study of the economic impact of the university for the fiscal year 2004, WVU had an impact of more than $2 billion and accounted for 28,603 jobs with salaries and benefits totally $818.5 million.

As the university continues to grow and as it brings in more students, its economic impact on the state will continue to increase, Witt said. The state and individual communities affiliated with the university are and will continue to benefit from what the business WVU generates, he said.

WVU on-campus students in Morgantown spent about $14,000 each, and off-campus students spent about $16,000 each.

Money spent on WVU football and men's basketball tickets were also included in the study. Total season attendance to the university football program was 411,408 with ticket prices about $35 each.

WVU men's basketball games brought in 169,557 people during the season and spend about $20.50 a ticket.

Witt said the study is a conservative look at the university's economic impact on the state. He said the university conducts the study about every three years. The next study will come around 2010, he said.

In 2007, Witt noted, the state's $203.2 million investment in WVU also generated at least $57.4 million in taxes paid back to the state.

By comparison, in a study of the economic impact of the university for the fiscal year 2004, WVU had an impact of more than $2 billion and accounted for 28,603 jobs with salaries and benefits totally $818.5 million.

As the university continues to grow and as it brings in more students, its economic impact on the state will continue to increase, Witt said. The state and individual communities affiliated with the university are and will continue to benefit from what the business WVU generates, he said.
WVU on-campus students in Morgantown spent about $14,000 each, and off-campus students spent about $16,000 each.

Money spent on WVU football and men's basketball tickets were also included in the study. Total season attendance to the university football program was 411,408 with ticket prices about $35 each.

WVU men's basketball games brought in 169,557 people during the season and spend about $20.50 a ticket.

Witt said the study is a conservative look at the university's economic impact on the state. He said the university conducts the study about every three years. The next study will come around 2010, he said.
RIPLEY — Although 2007 brought little growth in the area of student population or program expansion at the WVU-P Jackson County Center, John Gorrell, JCC director, said those numbers have remained consistent and significant improvements were seen in other areas.

“It (2007) was a very successful year in that we are operating near capacity,” he said. “Our retention rate of students is strong and we were able to realize a majority of the goals that were established for the year.”

Gorrell said student enrollment remained approximately the same as it was in 2006, with 749 students attending the center in 2007 taking a total of 83 different courses. Although Gorrell said growing student enrollment and expanding programs is a goal of the center, currently its size limits that expansion.

However, as the center enters into 2008, he said the physical expansion of the facility as well as the number of offered programs continues to be a main focus.

He said the center is currently working with the West Virginia State Legislature as well as the Federal Government in an attempt to secure funding that would facilitate that expansion.

One area which saw significant improvements in 2007 were in regards to campus safety, Gorrell said. He the administration was in the process of revising safety procedures last year when the Virginia Tech tragedy occurred.

“Two thousand and seven was a year of emphasizing campus safety,” he said. “We recognize that we have been fortunate thus far and we owe it to our students and employees to maintain as safe a campus as possible.”

Improvements included the implementation of a paging system, which allows all classrooms and offices to communicate with each other in the event of an emergency, removal of unnecessary chemicals, employee badges, a memorandum of understanding with the Ripley Police Department and the establishment of building coordinators.

Gorrell said the area of student involvement has also seen a vast improvement, which he labeled as a “concern” after last year. However, currently the student government recently approved a charter to bring about a Campus Activities Board, which has already “generated a lengthy list of activities,” Gorrell said.

Plans already on the horizon for the board include activities with the Farm Bureau as well as the Ronald McDonald House, he said.
As 2008 goes along, Gorrell said there are plans to continue campus activities such as Heritage Days and the International Luncheon, which have both become annual events.

In addition, he said a community educational needs survey will be completed in Roane County in order to determine the area of greatest need. Currently 10 percent of the center’s student population is from Roane County.

“As we look into 2008, we want to continue to expand our on-line course offerings through partnering with other institutions and organizations in order to allow us to offer more classes off-site,” he said.
College Students Leaving Their Mark at the Legislature - Nineteen interns help write laws

Story by Kimberly Beary

CHARLESTON -- Tomorrow's leaders are helping craft today's laws as the West Virginia Legislature becomes a classroom for college students.

Behind the scenes at the 2008 legislative session there are 19 college students who are leaving their mark on West Virginia.

"I presented a bill to a committee where I was the counsel part of the bill and they were asking me questions about the bill," said Marshall University student Brooke Atchison.

Atchison thought her internship with Senator Robert Plymale, D-Wayne, was going to involve making coffee. She was wrong.

"You're a good writer," one delegate told Sarah Leonard on Wednesday.

Leonard helps write up the weekly wrap up among other journalistic duties at the Legislature. The West Virginia University law school-bound student says the session long internship will put her ahead of the class.

"Going to law school, it's a great experience to learn how laws are made and see it first hand," Leonard said. "I think it's going to be an excellent experience for my future goals."

While the legislative session is open to the public but the interns have unprecedented access to senators and delegates, some have even met with the governor.

"They are real people," said Adam McChesney."I don't think people understand they come from every background and they try to take all issues and balance them which is truly difficult to do."

It's a lesson the West Virginia University graduate student hopes to take into international relations one day.

While some of the interns think they may run for office first, there's work to be done here and college papers to write about their experiences.
Bill allows better college recruitment competition

A bill could allow smaller state universities to better compete with West Virginia and Marshall universities in student recruitment.

The bill, introduced in the state legislature on Monday, gives all publicly funded state institutions of higher education more flexibility.

Similar measures were enacted at the state's two largest universities several years ago. The trial period at WVU and Marshall has proven the changes can save money and help schools operate more effectively, said Sen. John Doyle (D - Jefferson), who sponsored the bill.

"It was intended to be a pilot project, and the pilot has proven itself," Doyle said. "The unintended consequence is it has given the two biggies an unfair advantage over the smaller institutes."

WVU and Marshall have autonomy to make decisions on some financial and scholarship information that other universities must do through the Higher Education Policy Commission.

Because of this, smaller schools are at a disadvantage for recruitment.

"Other schools can't answer everybody's question about scholarships right away, where Marshall and WVU can," Doyle said. "Students have gone to Marshall and WVU simply because Shepherd hasn't been able to give them an answer in time."

Doyle said the changes have saved money across the board, for the institutions and for the state. Legislators are concerned about leveling the field between all institutions now that the cost-saving measures have shown to be effective.

"Any cost-savings benefits the student because in the long run, student tuition can be kept from rising faster than it would've risen," Doyle said.

— kmh
Promise still has potential to improve

By Kellen Henry, Staff Writer

West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin’s decision to table his proposal to convert the Promise Scholarship into a forgivable loan hasn’t stopped discussion about the scholarship improvements in the state legislature.

The proposed change to keep university students in the state after graduation were met with mixed reactions. The controversy has succeeded in drawing attention to the scholarship, according to Laura Ramsburg, a spokesperson for the governor.

“We got the message out, and it seemed like the best next step was to take a step back by doing this study. If we’d done it the opposite way, people wouldn’t have been paying attention,” she said.

Manchin directed the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission last week to form a committee to study all aspects of the scholarship.

The study will receive feedback from people with an interest in the scholarship – students, parents and taxpayers.

“The governor is not kidding when he says we have a workforce shortage. This gives us a vehicle to put qualified people together and involve the Promise Board,” Ramsburg said.

The Promise Board operates under the HEPC. The findings will likely be reported by the end of the year for possible legislative action.

One of the problems facing the state is how to adequately finance the scholarship. The budget for the scholarship has ballooned to $41 million since its creation in 2002.

In the past, raising the academic standards to qualify has reduced the overburdened scholarship. If the requirements continue to rise, however, the scholarship may cease to be an effective merit reward because only a small number will actually qualify, Ramsburg said.

There has also been talk in the past of capping award amounts based on family financial contributions.

“This is really not going to go away as tuition rises,” she said. “We need to look at what the intent was and what we’re doing today. Promise has become more restrictive, more difficult to obtain, and there are some socioeconomic issues, as well.”
Monongalia County Sen. Mike Oliverio said he had been uncomfortable with the governor’s proposal at the State of the State Address in January.

“I’m pleased to see the governor stepping back from that proposal and taking some time to re-evaluate the next best step for Promise Scholarship program,” Oliverio said.

Oliverio said another option for changing the scholarship that was considered was adding an internship component that would help students find employment in West Virginia, instead of punishing them for leaving.

Sen. John Unger (D–Berkeley) was expected to propose a bill with an internship component yesterday, the final day for submitting legislation.

“The main point in introducing Promise legislation this year was to raise awareness of the issues that we’re facing both now and in the future with Promise to a level that would, at the very least, start a substantive discussion about the program and how best to move forward with it,” Manchin said in a statement.
Building opportunity: New CU center looks to foster W.Va.’s future

By GREG JORDAN

ATHENS — New education opportunities and the potential for new jobs in the technology field for southern West Virginia were celebrated Tuesday with the dedication of a new Concord University facility.

A structure with three stories of technology classrooms, a business incubator, facilities for an entrepreneurial program and other assets now known as the Nick Rahall Technology Center was open for tours before the morning’s dedication ceremony. Named after U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., the center is an important asset, Dr. Jerry Beasley, president of Concord University, said.

“If not for Congressman Rahall’s endorsement and energetic work, we would not be here,” Beasley said.

Rahall said that the entrepreneurial program and other programs the center has to offer will help keep West Virginia’s students in the state after they graduate. The university’s students are the “secret ingredient” that can help enterprises at the center’s business incubator succeed.

“That is our goal, to keep our students here, to keep their families here, and to keep them producing here,” Rahall said.

Seven companies will be using the incubator, said Ron Basini, director of the incubator and the Entrepreneurial Studies Program.

“This is not just a building, it’s an engine,” Basini said. Thirty students divided into seven teams will work with the businesses using advanced computer technology.

Dr. Beasley then presented the university’s President’s Award to Bill Baker, a former vice chairman of the West Virginia Education Development Grant Committee. Appointed by then Gov. Bob Wise, Baker was among those who reviewed 196 grant projects from across the state for funding. The Rahall Center was among the 46 projects to receive grant funds. The Concord project was aided with a $2 million grant.

“I think it was deserving,” Baker said of the new center after the award presentation. “The money was to go into projects that would create jobs and try to bring jobs to West Virginia.”

Supporters for the new center include the West Virginia Economic Development Authority, the West Virginia Higher Education Commission, Appalachian Regional
Commission, the Hugh I. Shott Jr. Foundation, the Katharine B. Tierney Charitable Foundation and the Maier Foundation, Inc.
Big Research, Small College

By Karen M. Markin

When scientists at small colleges and universities seek research grants, they often run into challenges not faced by their colleagues at major institutions. It is, nonetheless, possible to maintain a research program at a small institution -- if you have a great deal of passion and a little ingenuity.

Here are some issues to consider at various points in your career as you navigate the grant landscape:

Campus culture. If you are still looking for a tenure-track position, especially at teaching-oriented colleges, pay attention to campus culture. Faculty members at small institutions say a supportive culture is crucial to their success as researchers. It's important that the administration "get it," said one department head.

Among the clues that an institution will not just encourage but will also support faculty efforts to win outside grants: Grant writing counts as scholarly activity for promotion and tenure; the college has a seed-money fund for work that could lead to a large grant proposal; some indirect costs, or "overhead" dollars, are funneled back to the investigator or the department; and workshops on writing or managing grants are offered.

Workload. Whether the teaching load at a small institution is an impediment to grant-financed research depends on the circumstances. You will need to assess your own work style and situation. Some faculty members say that, with a teaching load of four courses a semester, release from some classroom responsibilities is essential to meeting their grant obligations -- the summer just isn't enough.

Other professors say the teaching load sometimes looks worse than it is. The small size of their classes, they say, makes up for the large number of courses they have to teach. Still others say they can succeed in their research if they are able to hire students to work in their laboratories in the summer.

Faculty members all seem to agree, though, that you must be passionate about your research program and that you must anticipate that it will require some long days in the lab.

The Nature of the Work. If you are at a small institution with modest lab facilities, consider research topics that you can tackle in that setting. Don't overreach.

For example, if you do not have a Biosafety Level 3 facility on the campus, your life will be easier if you avoid the study of yellow fever or West Nile virus. One researcher I know at a small institution has successfully focused on yeast genetics, which is relatively inexpensive to study. So pick a topic that is doable, given the facilities available to you.
Administrative support. Faculty members at all types of institutions complain about procedures for submitting grants and spending grant money. They want to do their research, not get bogged down in federal regulations. But the federal government wants to see its rules followed when you are spending its money.

Large research universities have staff members who know the complex rules and can guide scientists through them. Smaller institutions that do little research can't justify the expense of a large staff of grant professionals. That can be frustrating to faculty members, but you can work around the dilemma.

At a small institution, someone from the fund-raising office can probably help you write grant proposals to private foundations. If you want to move beyond that, consider collaborating with a scientist at a larger institution. For example, if you want to work with animals or human subjects but your university does not have the necessary federal assurances, you may be able to get the appropriate reviews performed at a nearby research institution.

Collaboration need not relegate you to second-string status. If you control half of the grant budget, you have half the power.

Nor is there any need for you to feel like a supplicant when looking for a collaborator. First, most scientific research these days is multidisciplinary. Someone will need your expertise. Second, federal agencies are serious about fostering a culture for research at predominantly undergraduate institutions, since they are a source of tomorrow's scientists. Finding someone with whom you can collaborate is about finding the right fit.

Facilities. Besides lacking grant-writing office, many small universities have lab facilities that are less extensive than you would find at a major research university. Scientific equipment is expensive to acquire and maintain. The solution may be for you to find another lab to use. One assistant professor arranged to spend the summer in a lab where she had worked as a postdoc.

In addition, both the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation have major programs designed to aid states that lag in scientific research and education. The NIH program is called the Institutional Development Award, or IDeA. Twenty-three states and Puerto Rico are now eligible to participate (see the complete list here). The NSF has the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitiveness in Research, more commonly known as EPSCoR (pronounced as a word rather than a string of letters). Twenty-five states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico are included (see the full list here).

Both programs provide large multi-institution grants aimed at improving a state's scientific research infrastructure. They're not something you apply for on your own; how the money is used is determined at the local level. Projects vary from state to state, but they often include seed-money grants to hire new faculty members, purchase equipment, and involve undergraduates in research. If you are in a state participating in one of those programs, it is worth tracking down the local leaders to see how you and your institution might benefit.

Other federal programs. Several other NSF programs seek to encourage research in teaching-oriented academic departments. For example, the Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) program supports individual and collaborative projects as well as the purchase of shared instrumentation. NSF's definition of a predominantly undergraduate
institution is broad enough to include two-year and four-year colleges, as well as institutions that have small graduate programs. All disciplines at NSF participate in the program.

The RUI program also provides grants for a specific type of cross-institutional collaboration. Research Opportunity Award (ROA) supplements are available to faculty members at predominantly undergraduate institutions, including community colleges, to allow them to conduct research as a visiting scientist with NSF-funded investigators at other colleges and universities. Those awards, usually for about $25,000, can provide summer support or partial support for a sabbatical.

Also available to those at community colleges and four-year institutions are Research Initiation Grants and Career Advancement Awards to Broaden Participation in Biology (RIG CAA BP). Projects submitted to that program must increase the participation of scientists from underrepresented groups as well as the number of people who can serve as role models for the scientific work force. The projects are slightly smaller in scope than standard NSF grants, and are limited to a total of $150,000 for a two-year period, with the possibility of an additional $25,000 for equipment.

Other federal agencies also support professors who are not at large research institutions. The U.S. Department of Energy's Faculty and Student Teams (FaST) Program places professors and undergraduates at six of its national laboratories. The agency encourages faculty members from institutions with limited research facilities to apply. The faculty member works with two or three undergraduates and a laboratory scientist on a project of mutual interest. The program’s Web site lists the laboratories and the projects available for possible collaboration. One of the best known is Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. Six other facilities in various parts of the country also participate.

Although the energy department's labs began with the development of atomic weapons, today their programs are not limited to nuclear physics. Current projects involve environmental biology, computer science, materials engineering, and the human brain. Those programs are posted at www.scied.science.doe.gov/scied/fast/about.html.

I have included the program acronyms here for a reason. Before you dismiss them as confusing jargon, keep in mind that they are helpful to know when you are searching for information online. It is highly unlikely, for example, that you will get much irrelevant material if you search for "EPSCoR." Use the unique acronyms to your advantage.

No matter what programs you apply for, the most effective way to ensure support for your research at an undergraduate institution is to involve your students. Those institutions pride themselves on teaching and nurturing students; when you seek a big research grant, you may face concerns that the research will be done at the expense of personal attention to students.

Demonstrate that your students’ education is enriched by assisting in your lab. Frame it as an experiential learning opportunity. Administrators will be thrilled if your budding young scientists can participate in scientific poster sessions and similar activities. It will pay off for you as well: A well-trained cadre of students can be helpful as well as self-sustaining if you have the experienced students teach the newer ones about lab procedures.

Karen M. Markin is director of research development at the University of Rhode Island’s research office.
Moving Through The House

By Staff State Capitol

The 60-day regular session of the legislature is less than three-weeks from its conclusion and several committees are beginning to pick up the pace when it comes to passing bills. The House of Delegates Finance Committee has approved a bill (HB4074) that would create a new state Office of Oral Health. The bill provides for a full-time director. Some have said the state has an oral health crisis.

National Board Certified teachers who become principals or assistant principals would be allowed to continue to receive their $3500 annual bonus under legislation approved Tuesday by the House of Delegates Finance Committee. The bill (HB4341) also provides language that would allow qualifying teachers to renew for the National Board bonus after the initial 10-year cap.

The two boards overseeing higher education in the state would have more purchasing power if state lawmakers approve a bill okayed by the House Finance Committee Tuesday. The measure (HB4449) would allow the Higher Education Policy Commission and the Council for Community and Technical College Education to enter into lease-purchase agreements for the purpose of bulk purchasing.

The House Finance Committee has also voted in favor of a bill (HB4482) that would continue to require the state Parkways Authority to allocate money to the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreational Authority. The allocation is set to sunset this summer. The bill would make the allocation $250,000 annually.
Every parent today worries about how they will be able to put their child through college. The cost of tuition is becoming increasingly more expensive, yet furthering one’s education is more necessary than ever.

A plan proposed by Gov. Joe Manchin could relieve parents of this concern, but instead cause them to worry about their child’s future. In this plan, students who receive the PROMISE Scholarship would be required to work in state once they graduate. This is an attempt to turn around the economy in a very poor state, but it is a terrible plan.

Although Gov. Manchin has pulled the legislation that would have changed the program, he has set up a committee to study the PROMISE Scholarship program, so the proposal could be revived.

Is there any reason that we should force students to stay in-state for a set number of years when their dream job is not even a possibility? It seems to me that this plan would force students to settle and give up on their dreams. I personally do not think that it is fair to students.

Plus, there is a far more pressing issue caused by this scholarship. Every year, West Virginia is cutting the funding that is being directed toward the public universities in the state. Colleges are raising their tuition rates and dropping beneficial student programs because of their lack in funding. The state must then pay the tuition money for every PROMISE scholar in the state. So in turn, by cutting funding to the colleges, the state is raising the amount of scholarship money it is forced to pay.

Our state has created a giant circle of spending that, unless a drastic change is made, will send us further and further into debt. This being said, I believe there is a group of people who can be targeted to pay this money back, which will allow students to work where they choose after graduation as well as allow the requirements for the scholarship to be moved back to where they were when the program was first introduced.

There are currently no repercussions in place for those students who receive the scholarship and then do not keep it and every year, PROMISE scholars drop out of college or do not get the grades to keep the scholarship. This is a huge problem. Our governor is proposing that we punish the students who have worked hard to keep the scholarship throughout their schooling, but not those who slack off.

This group of students has received tuition money that could go to someone else. I have several friends who are going deeper and deeper in debt because they did not get the scholarship, missing it by one point, while others who had received the scholarship drop out after one semester. How is this fair? If students who drop out or drop below the
required grade point average were forced to pay back the money for their tuition, it would help the problem more than the governor’s proposed plan.

The state would be receiving money from students who are not continuing their education. This could even possibly allow the state to increase funding to schools, lowering the overall cost of tuition for everyone.

You may be asking yourself, “Why is she so concerned over a plan that wouldn’t even affect her?” Well, as a PROMISE scholar, the scholarship was influential in my decision to stay in-state. However, if I had been told that I had to stay in-state after graduation, I am not so sure that I would have taken it.

After a recent epiphany that caused me to change my major, I realized that jobs are certainly difficult to find in most places in West Virginia. Also, if job availability was not a problem in itself, the location of my home would cause a problem. We live in an area that is large in job opportunity, but some of that is caused by the proximity to other states. I may choose to move home after graduation, but there are two other states that may be able to offer better job opportunities.

It just seems to me that Gov. Manchin should worry more about creating jobs that students want to take, instead of forcing graduates to take jobs that do not fit with the years of schooling the state has paid for.

— Arianna Price is a community columnist. After growing up in southern Berkeley County, she is currently a student at Marshall University in Huntington
Verizon awards MCTC grant for biotech camp

By Staff

HUNTINGTON -- Verizon of West Virginia has awarded the Marshall Community and Technical College a $62,000 grant. Keith Cotroneo, president of MCTC and Jean Chappell, dean of the Division of Allied Health at MCTC accepted the grant from B. Keith Fulton, CEO of Verizon West Virginia. The grant award from Verizon is in support of the highly successful biotechnology camp for local area high school students known as Project DACE.

Project DACE was a successful collaborative effort between MCTC and Marshall University's Integrated Science and Technology Department in May 2007. In this day camp, students and their instructors participated in activities such as DNA isolation, amplification, and sequencing. Students also learned about the various professional tracks a biotechnology student can pursue.

A portion of the grant money will be used to begin development of an Allied Health program. When fully developed, the Associate in Applied Science Degree in Biotechnology will graduate technician-level workers for a variety of biotechnical and biomedical industries. In addition, MCTC is working with Marshall University's Integrated Science and Technology Program to create an avenue for students from the Biotechnology, AAS, to transition into the B.S program.
Eastern’s accreditation process open for public comment

By Staff reports

MOOREFIELD - Eastern WV Community and Technical College will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit April 28-30 by a team representing the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

A similar visit two years ago led the commission to approve Eastern’s initial accreditation candidacy status. That decision in September 2006 followed a two-year, self-study process conducted by the college’s staff, students, faculty, partners and other community constituents that addressed the commission’s requirements and criteria for accreditation.

The Higher Learning Commission, one of six accrediting agencies in the United States recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, provides institutional accreditation on a regional basis.

Accreditation is voluntary, and the process evaluates and accredits an entire institution as a whole. The commission accredits approximately 1,100 institutions of higher education in a nineteen-state region.

After Eastern achieved initial candidacy status, the college began a second comprehensive process of self-study, again addressing the commission’s accreditation requirements and criteria.

The evaluation team that will visit the college this spring will gather evidence that the new self-study is also thorough and accurate, and will recommend to the commission a continuing status for the college.

Following a review of that recommendation, the commission itself will take the final action.

The public is invited to submit comments regarding the college to:
Public Comment on Eastern WV Community and Technical College
The Higher Learning Commission
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60602

All written, signed comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs, and should include the name, address, and telephone number of the person providing the comments.
The commission will not treat submitted comments as confidential, and cannot guarantee that it will consider comments received after the due date of March 28, 2008. (Note: Individuals with a specific dispute or grievance with an institution should request the separate ‘Policy on Complaints’ document from the commission office. The Higher Learning Commission cannot settle disputes between institutions and individuals, and will not consider complaints as third party comment in this accreditation process.)
Bill would give $13.5 million to MCTC

By BEN FIELDS

CHARLESTON -- A bill that would provide nearly $80 million for West Virginia community and technical colleges is now in the hands of the Senate Finance Committee.

Senate Bill 682 was introduced Friday and cleared the Senate Education Committee before being sent on to finance.

Under the proposal, Marshall Community and Technical College would receive $13.5 million from a bond issue, which the school would have to spend within three years, said Sen. Robert Plymale, D-Wayne, the bill's lead sponsor.

"It's similar to what we did last year when the Legislature was looking into a bond for the community and technical colleges," he said.

That bond issue secured $4.2 million for MCTC.

The money is being used for the development of facilities at the college.

Specifics on the bill were not immediately available from the Legislature on Friday.

Keith Cotroneo, president of MCTC, called news of the bill's introduction and rapid movement through the Senate "excellent."

"As you know, the community college doesn't really have its own facilities," said Cotroneo, referring to the fact that MCTC exists on Marshall University's campus. "What's critically important for our development is having appropriate teaching space, and lab space particularly.

"We're very, very limited in that regard, and having those facilities would help bring us up to standard."

Cotroneo said MCTC has been working with an architect on a building plan.

"Up until now that's mostly been speculative, because the funding wasn't secured," he said.

Plymale said he's confident the bill will pass the Senate and the House of Delegates.

"It's been endorsed by the governor and the Legislature, so it's just a matter of running it through," he said.