



West Virginia  
Higher Education  
Policy Commission

**Higher Education  
News Clippings**

**Week of June 14, 2009**

June 19, 2009

## **Higher ed official calls waiting on tuition increases wrong**

State's higher education chancellor says late announcement of hikes could mean some won't be able to pay

by Ry Rivard, Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- The chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission says it's wrong for the state's major universities to wait so long before deciding tuition rates for the coming school year.

Marshall and West Virginia University each announced their annual tuition hikes so late in the year that most of their students left campus not knowing what it would cost them to return in the fall.

"To me it's nonsensical that parents are just now learning the cost of tuition for the fall and the fall is in three months," said Chancellor Brian Noland said. "It's ridiculous that we wait as long as we do to set tuition and fees."

The Marshall University Board of Governors on Thursday approved tuition and fee increases.

The increases, of at least \$169 a semester for in-state undergraduates and \$240 for those from out of state, conclude a round of price hikes from the state's public universities that have been announced later than at any time in recent memory.

Since most of the deadlines for state and private financial aid have come and gone, Noland said some students and their parents will find out too late that they don't have enough money to pay for college.

"You may have thought you had a sufficient level of resources in hand to cover tuition," he said.

Marshall and WVU announced their fall 2009 tuition levels weeks later than usual. Since at least 2003, neither university has waited longer than the middle of May to announce tuition increases and some announcements have come as early as the first week in April.

Marshall's announcement Thursday and WVU's announcement on June 5 also trailed the May 14 decision by the Higher Education Policy Commission on tuition rates at the state's other public four-year universities. The Community and Technical College Council decided the prices at the state's two-year colleges on May 8.

Noland said this year's economic situation was unique for all the higher education institutions, which may have led to the delays.

"Everything this year was complicated by the late arrival of the budget and the uncertainty over use of the stimulus funds," Noland said.

WVU's interim president, C. Peter Magrath, said publicly in mid-April that the university's tuition increase would be around 4 percent, which it was. That amounted to an extra \$102 a semester for in-state students and \$316 for non-residents.

Marshall appears not to have provided a figure until its decision Thursday.

Marshall's chief of staff, Bill Bissett, said he understands Noland's position, but that it would have been irresponsible for Marshall officials to attempt to accurately increase tuition without a clear understanding of the budget picture.

"There are number of factors that were responsible for the timing of our board's reluctant decision to increase tuition," Bissett said. "First was the approval of our budget by the West Virginia Legislature, which was understandably late this year due to concerns over projected loss of tax revenue. Fortunately, Marshall University's funding remained mostly flat except for our school of medicine, which did receive a 3 percent cut."

He said a final number for one element of the funding, which amounted to more than \$1 million, came as late as Wednesday from the Legislature.

"I would also add that the April announcement by WVU was only a speculative one and was based on the current budget projections at that time," Bissett said. "It was hardly definitive."

While the timing may be late for West Virginia universities to announce tuition levels, universities across the country are still announcing tuition increases for fall.

But in the future, Noland wants West Virginia students to know nearly a year in advance what they will be paying for college, instead of waiting until just before or even after school lets out in the spring semester.

For next year, as early as October, schools should be able to give students a sense of how much their tuitions will go up, Noland said. The number would represent an "at least" tuition level as opposed to a final one, but it still would give students a sense of what's happening.

Elements of tuition and fee increases - which now happen almost every year at nearly every college here and across country - can be anticipated by inflation and other long-term forecasts.

But West Virginia faces other obstacles, including being dead last in per student spending in a 16-state region even though tuition and fees have risen by 80 percent or more over the past decade at all 10 of West Virginia's state-run four-year colleges and universities.

During that period, state lawmakers have increased budgets for those same 10 institutions by less than 2 percent.

To close the gap, education officials have been leaning on students to foot a greater share of the bill at universities. Even that, however, may not be enough, Noland said.

"What we've been doing here for the last five or six years is just simply treading water in last place," Noland said.

He said tuition increases for the 2010-2011 academic year could be "much higher," but could be announced much earlier, so at least people will know well in advance what they have to get together.

"If we were to inform students and parents and families about college costs in October or in November that provides greater opportunities for those students and parents to more fully explore financial aid opportunities and to make sure they have not left any potential sources on the table," Noland said.

June 18, 2009

## **Magrath advises new WVU chief**

Interim president urges successor to focus on research, campus diversity

by Ry Rivard, Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- C. Peter Magrath, the outgoing interim president of West Virginia University, passed the torch to his successor Wednesday and left him with a list of challenges.

Magrath urged Jim Clements, the current provost at Towson University in Maryland who takes over at WVU on June 30, to increase the university's business partnerships, its research and diversity on campus.

Magrath, a veteran higher education administrator, arrived at WVU last summer in the wake of a scandal involving a graduate degree inappropriately and retroactively awarded to Gov. Joe Manchin's daughter that forced the departure of then-president Mike Garrison.

Delivering the annual State of the University address in Washington, D.C., Magrath said WVU had moved itself beyond that "recent and very brief past."

The university "is very good and it will get, as it must and will, much better," he said.

But Magrath laid out a list of "worthy challenges" for the university.

He said while WVU can become a world leader in energy and clean coal research, the university needs to become more research intensive.

The university also needs to find more "win-win" partnerships with businesses and other organizations, Magrath said.

He also said the health sciences system - which includes separate organizations that govern and budget for the hospitals, doctors and academic medical work - needs to become more efficient and effective.

Clements, who also spoke at the event for alumni and top university officials, said he was making that one of his new priorities.

"We will bring a new chancellor in and move that forward," he said.

Interviews for the new health sciences chancellor are expected to begin in coming weeks. All of the current finalists are said to be candidates from outside WVU.

Magrath also said the university's population needs to become more diverse.

"We have diversity," he said. "We need to have more diversity."

Magrath's tenure at WVU has been notably smooth sailing.

The president, known for his openness, blunt assessments and sense of humor, won praise in a video presentation shown after his speech from Ben and Bonnie Jo Statler, who committed \$25 million to WVU, the largest single donation ever to the university.

Bonnie Jo Statler called Magrath a "healer."

"He's been very, very instrumental and helpful in pulling the community back together," Ben Statler said.

It is traditional for the State of the University address to be given in the nation's capital. Each year, the National Capital Area Chapter of the WVU Alumni Association hosts the event. It honors the state's congressional delegation as well as alumni and friends of WVU.



June 20, 2009

## **Law benefits WVU students**

Act aims to protect their credit

BY ALEX LANG The Dominion Post

Some incoming WVU students and their parents applauded Congress for taking steps to protect their wallets and future financial states.

In May, President Barack Obama signed the Credit Card Act of 2009 into law. The law carries many rules to help regulate the credit card industry.

Some of the biggest changes those 18-20 years old will notice is that credit card companies can no longer offer them freebies for signing up for credit cards around campus, and those under 21 must have a co-signer unless they show they can repay the amount of credit issued.

Most of the law would go into effect in February.

"I am very pleased," said Tom Sloane, senior associate dean of students at WVU. "It's an important step in the right direction."

Under the new law, a card issuer on or near campus, or at any event sponsored by the school, may not offer any item to encourage a student to sign up.

The law does not specify what "near the campus" means.

According to the WVU Board of Governors Policy on Credit Card Solicitation, WVU already bars credit card companies from offering tangible gifts, such as T-shirts or beach towels, without approval from the Alumni Association and the vice president of student affairs. Sloane said the cases where gifts are allowed are rare.

"Those freebies make a difference," Sloane said. "It's a way to get [students] hooked."

Incoming WVU freshman Connor Mullikin said the freebies frequently caught his eye, but when he found out he had to sign up for a credit card, he backed off. He added it is good that the companies are no longer going to be allowed to offer gifts for signing up.

Mullikin's father, Steve, said he was happy Congress took action to protect people the same age as his son. Many kids get in trouble with accumulated debt when they leave college, and Steve Mullikin said he hopes this will help stop that trend.

WVU does allow credit card solicitation on campus with prior approval, but the company must provide students with information about credit card debt, according to the BOG policy.

Through the Credit Card Act, Congress suggests that colleges and universities offer debt education and training as part of orientation. It also suggests limiting the locations on campus where credit cards may be marketed.

Sloane said that through the University 101 course, debt education is part of the curriculum. All freshman and many transfer students must take University 101 to learn the basics of college life and living on their own for the first time.

WVU also offers credit card debt information through its Office of Financial Aid and other places on campus. Without the education part of the University 101 course, incoming WVU freshman Zach Haines said he felt he might become another college student that owes too much money on his credit card bill.

“If I didn’t get that I feel like I would [have gone] into debt,” Haines said.

Haines said he doesn’t feel he was mature enough to handle a credit card right now and he doesn’t plan on signing up for one.

Sloane said it is important for students to be aware of the dangers of credit cards, but he didn’t want students to completely avoid them. Being responsible with credit cards can be a major step in securing a good credit score. A student will need a good score when it comes time to buy a home or make other major purchases.

But, he said, too many students are getting caught up in the allure of purchasing with credit and it causes problems for them later in life. “Too many students make mistakes early on,” Sloane said.

The goal of the Credit Card Act is to protect American consumers from their ever-growing debt.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., voted for the act.

“It is time for credit card companies to stop ripping off consumers — including college students — by hiding their fees and practices in term sheets that are impossible to understand,” Rockefeller said.

“Credit card companies must be stopped from using deceptive practices that push American families further into debt.”

## Students dive into engineering

By DAVE LAVENDER, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- Yellow caution tape lines part of the exterior of Smith Hall, and up on the roof, you can see an engineer's playground of catapults, cranes and other devices.

That must mean it's time for the future engineers of the region to get their play-filled camp started at Marshall University.

Sunday afternoon, 36 students from high schools in seven states were welcomed to Marshall University's Huntington campus to take part in the ninth annual Exploring Engineering: Academy of Excellence (EEAE), which runs through Friday.

Addressing a packed house of parents and students in Smith Hall, Dr. William Pierson, chair of the Weisberg Division of Engineering and Computer Science at Marshall, said it's a whole lot of learning wrapped around a whole lot of hands-on fun.

"We know some people call it Nerd Camp," Pierson said, getting a big laugh from the crowd. "We call it fun. ... We hope to get you to understand how engineers play a role in everyday life."

To get that understanding, Pierson and a staff of teachers and students at Marshall have a packed week of activities that includes lectures in the brand new Weisberg Engineering Lab, introductions to GPS, work on landscape design, a robotics competition with Legos and field trips to the West Virginia-American Water Plant in Charleston, the Toyota Plant in Buffalo and J.H. Fletcher in Huntington.

Oh yeah, and on Tuesday, building catapults to see who can launch tennis balls the farthest.

"It's a lot of hands-on activities and teamwork and a lot of learning by doing," Pierson said. "We're also able to really showcase Marshall and what it has to offer."

Beth Wolfe, MU's director of recruitment, said not only is the academy a great way for students to explore the field of engineering, it is a wonderful opportunity for them to explore Marshall University and all it has to offer.

"By living in our residence halls and interacting with our faculty and students, they get a real sense of life at Marshall," Wolfe said in a release.

The academy is funded through donations from individuals and corporations. This year's premier sponsors, Chesapeake Energy and the Nick J. Rahall II Appalachian Transportation Institute (RTI), contributed a combined \$50,000, allowing the academy to expand activities.

"RTI and Chesapeake are proud partners in supporting a program that allows students to actively participate in such a valuable learning experience," RTI Director and CEO

Bob Plymale said. "The additional funding allows the academy to increase the number of students participating and enhance the learning experience."

Students are selected for the camp based upon their interest in and aptitude for engineering. Grades, courses taken and letters of recommendation are taken into consideration. The camp primarily tries to attract rising high school juniors.

To give students an intro into how engineers impact the world, Sunday's opening ceremony guest speaker was Rodney Holbert of Burgess & Niple.

Holbert, who started his presentation by showing slides of him dangling in climbing gear hundreds of feet up inspecting bridges, really hammered home the one of the major themes of the 2009 academy: "Engineers Make a Difference."

Holbert shared his profound experiences with Engineers Without Borders, a group that helps communities around the world solve problems to better the world

Holbert and his wife have made two trips and are traveling again later this year to Rancho Grande in Nicaragua, where he has helped that city properly chlorinate the town's drinking supply that had been making all of its children sick.

"This camp will change your life," Holbert said. "One way or another. It may cause some of you to really want to become an engineer and for others it may make you think, 'Nah, I want to do something else.' "

Betsy Dulin, dean of Marshall's College of Information Technology and Engineering, said the engineering academy is one of the highlights of summer for the college.

"We've been pleased and honored during the past eight years to host the students participating in the camp," Dulin said in a release. "We look forward to meeting the outstanding students participating this year as well."

## Marshall approves tuition increase

BILL ROSENBERGER, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- In-state Marshall University students will pay \$338 more during the 2009-2010 school year.

The Board of Governors unanimously approved the 7 percent increase at its Thursday meeting in the Memorial Student Center.

"It's with great reluctance I support this," said finance committee chairman Mike Perry. "(But) maybe the only thing worse than increasing tuition is not increasing tuition. This isn't enough money, but it keeps us from going into the wrong direction."

The increase is the same for metro students and \$240 per semester for out-of-state students. School of Medicine tuition will increase by \$400 per semester for residents and \$1,000 per semester for nonresidents.

Full-time graduate resident and metro student tuition was increased by \$178 per semester, with graduate nonresident tuition increased by \$266.

Perry, who said he's always looking for other financial resources to avoid increases in tuition and fees, told the committee and later the entire board that there simply is nowhere else to turn. There are only three sources of revenue for the university -- the state, investment profits from the Marshall University Foundation and student tuition.

Board of Governors chairman Bob Shell, who lives most of the year in Florida, said the Sunshine State has experienced dramatic repercussions as a result of the economic downturn. One of those, he said, is the higher costs in the education sector. State legislators mandated double-digit percentage increases after years of steady tuition.

"You have to adjust prices every year, because you don't want to raise it 12 percent at one time in a down economy," Shell said.

He also was quick to remind the committee that West Virginia University, which increased its tuition by 4 percent, will still be more expensive.

"WVU only increased by 4 percent, but if you go back and look, they have generally had larger increases than we have," Shell said.

Shell said this budget should answer a question many people have been asking as of late about the possibility of a baseball stadium.

"People are asking if we don't have the money or just don't like baseball," Shell said. "We don't have the money to build a baseball stadium."

According to the 2009-2010 fiscal year budget, Marshall will receive approximately the same amount from the state that it did last year -- around \$49.3 million, with \$100,000 going to the Luke Lee Listening and Language Lab on campus.

Couple that with the poor return on Foundation investments, and student tuition was the only source to pay for expenses that cannot be managed otherwise.

Among those is the state-mandated Annual Employee Increment and Staff Reclassifications. That gives raises to individuals based on promotions and service anniversaries, with a projected cost of about \$350,000. However, Marshall President Stephen Kopp reminded the board that there will be no compensation increases to any employee group.

There also is an increase of \$385,000 to the Public Employees Insurance Agency, another expenditure that Marshall has no control over. Add to that the projected increase of \$592,000 for utilities; \$207,000 for the start of the new Doctorate of Physical Therapy program; \$350,000 per year over the next 10 years to the community and technical college as part of the separation agreement; and \$1.4 million loss in contract revenues.

Perry said each percentage increase or decrease is equal to about \$400,000, and it didn't take long to figure out that 7 percent was about the bare minimum.

"When you look at the dollar increase, this will offset what we expect to be some substantial operating costs," Perry said.

Room and board also will see an increase of 4.6 percent, with a 3.5 percent for the first-year residence halls. That equates to an additional \$66 to \$186 per semester, depending on the dorm hall and meal plan.

While it will undoubtedly create some burden, new student body president Sean Hornbuckle said students, parents and the community need to look at it from a broad standpoint.

"The increases they are talking about are minimal, in relationship to the services we get here," Hornbuckle said. "(It will) be easy to relay the message (to students), but there may be some combativeness. I'll be a good liaison and break it down. Marshall is not getting over on us."

Maybe the biggest indicator of how badly under-funded Marshall University is came when classified staff representative Michael Dunn introduced Kimberly Lawson. She earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Marshall and has worked as an academic adviser for five years. Friday is her last day because she can't afford to stay.

"I'm leaving because of salary, because the salary schedule was not fully funded," she said, adding that she thought she'd be in the \$30,000 range by now. "Twelve have left in the past two months."

Lawson and Dunn said the Board of Governors needs to recognize that the classified staff salary schedule has not been updated since 2001 and is now one of the worst of the four-year higher education institutions in the state. According to Dunn, it would take \$1.6 million to fully fund the classified salary schedule.

"Right now, our staff is underpaid," Hornbuckle said. "And they are staying on for our students. I don't think students know (the salary situation). I didn't know.

"People associate the university with unlimited sources of money," he added. "We have to educate everybody about these economic times."

There were other changes as part of the new \$234 million budget that affects students. The special equity fee of \$150 was rescinded and added onto an existing \$139 standard auxiliary fee. Students who have been taking a full load on the Huntington campus will not see an increase, while part-time students will see a pro-rated amount. New students taking a full course load on the Huntington campus will realize the added costs.

The \$150 per semester recreation center fee increased by \$19.50 to offset costs that are exceeding long-term projections. Also included is the \$5 green fee that the student body approved in the fall.

Anyone using a credit card on campus also will be charged a 2.75 percent convenience fee as a way to recoup credit card costs the university incurs annually. Last year, it was approximately \$325,000.

Board members expressed concern over how the increases would impact the recruitment and retention rate, but they also warned of the negative impact on Marshall if it had to cut programs or staff rather than increase tuition.

"If this university is going to continue to grown, this kind of flat budget that produces no cash for investments is unsustainable," said member Michael Sellards.

## **Medical school recommending 5 percent tuition increase**

By BILL ROSENBERGER, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- While Marshall University is getting slightly more money from the state than last year, the medical school is slated for a decrease.

According to the state budget, funding will drop about \$400,000, or roughly 3 percent, to \$11.9 million. Even if federal stimulus money is used to fill the gap, medical school leaders are recommending a 5 percent increase in tuition and fees.

Jim Schneider, the senior associate dean for finance and administration, said increases over the past few years have been in the 2 percent to 3 percent range.

"I'm sure the medical students notice the increases," he said. "And 5 percent is close to \$1,000. It's a noticeable amount."

This year's tuition was \$16,888 for in-state students, still only 80 percent of the national average, he added. But instructor salaries are lower than the national average, and there will be no general salary increase this year.

Out-of-state student tuition is about \$40,000, and Schneider continues to encourage students to choose a specialty based on their desire and need in the field.

"We don't want people choosing a specialty based on the debt they'll have after medical school," he said. "It's an investment."

The medical school, which opened in 1977, also has very little endowed scholarship money, Schneider said, when compared to the more-established institutions in the country.

June 16, 2009

## **Shepherd hopeful about funding**

By Jillian E. Kesner, Journal staff writer

SHEPHERDSTOWN -Suzanne Shipley, the president of Shepherd University, is hopeful that funding for phase two of the Center for Contemporary Arts could be just around the corner.

The CCA, which is being built in three phases, currently houses the school's digital photography studio, printmaking studio and the offices for the Contemporary American Theater Festival. The remaining phases are contingent on funding.

Funding for phase two was incorporated into a bond proposal by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and was approved during the spring legislative session.

The Legislature approved \$90 million in higher education bonds, which will be prioritized by the HEPC.

"A recommended list of projects is going to the Higher Education Policy Commission board and will be approved in January by the governor," Shipley said. "We're still not at the end of the process, we're still in the middle."

Shipley said that the project is moving forward.

"It looks very promising," Shipley said.

The overall cost of phase two is \$13.9 million. Shipley said that University officials are hoping the bond will be between \$10-11 million with a match from the institution.

"We're hoping for \$10.4 million and \$2.5 million in matching funds from the institution," Shipley said.

Currently, Shepherd has raised just over \$1 million toward the project.

Phase two of the project would include the studio theater, an area for set design, sculpture and office and creative space for graphic design and mass communication classes.

"The goal would be to get graphics and media together next to art and theater," Shipley said.

After construction of phase two is finished, Sara Cree Hall, which formerly held the Wellness Center and currently houses campus security and the studio theater, would be vacant. The addition to the CCA would also empty out the Frank Arts Center, leaving only the music department in that building.

"It allows us to draw people into music and graphic arts in the CCA," Shipley said. "It's a really great combination and we're very excited about the potential."

At the same time, Shipley is trying to secure funding for a parking garage.

"We appreciate the support very much," Shipley said. "Many people are working towards getting a parking garage."

Shipley said that they are working to construct a parking garage at the same time they would be demolishing Sara Cree.

"Our goal is to keep traffic and parking away from the downtown area," Shipley said. "The question is if we can get it done in a timely manner and that's what we're trying to do now."

The ideal timeline for all these projects is the next two years, Shipley said, and a bond sale can't take place until a year from now.

Shepherd is growing without going too much into debt, Shipley said.

And that means not building too soon or too late, Shipley said.

"This is another indication that Shepherd relies on a strong partnership with the town," Shipley said.

Shipley said that the Eastern Panhandle benefits from having Shepherd and its facilities in the area and there is the added benefit of stimulating economic development for the whole area.

"We want to make that partnership as strong as possible," Shipley said.

June 15, 2009

## **Strayer U. to open 1st W.Va. campus**

by The Associated Press

SCOTT DEPOT, W.Va. (AP) -- Strayer University is opening its first West Virginia campus.

The Washington, D.C.-based university will hold a grand opening Wednesday for its new campus in Scott Depot.

President Sondra F. Stellard is a West Virginia native whose family lives in the Teays Valley area. Stellard says the university decided to open a campus in the state because there's a demand for the type of programs it offers.

Strayer's programs, including online courses, are aimed working adults and nontraditional students. Its programs include business, education, information systems and public administration.

Strayer has 65 campuses in 14 states.

June 17, 2009

## **WVa lawmakers pass extra spending bills, adjourn**

by The Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) - West Virginia's Legislature ended its second special session of the year Wednesday after voting to increase state spending by \$39.1 million.

The House of Delegates approved all six supplemental appropriation bills proposed by Gov. Joe Manchin and unanimously passed by the Senate on Monday. The House votes were unanimous or nearly so.

The new spending includes \$15 million for roads and bridges, \$7.4 million for higher education and \$3.8 million for flood relief.

At least \$7 million will restore cuts to the new budget that takes effect July 1, but only as one-time funding. Beneficiaries include public schools, which will get \$5 million for student enrichment program. Another \$1 million goes to domestic violence programs, while free clinics and in-home family education can expect \$300,000 apiece.

Some of the measures passed during the three-day session reassign \$6.1 million already in the budget. Those changes would allow improvements at community and technical colleges, debt payments by the Department of Administration, and for the Division of Rehabilitation Services to draw down federal matching funds.

When lawmakers completed the new budget last month, they cut \$197 million from what Manchin had initially proposed because of a projected decline in future revenue. The supplemental measures rely on lottery proceeds, the State Road Fund and surplus general tax revenue.

## **Obama Administration Joins Efforts to Fix Remedial Education**

By ASHLEY C. KILLOUGH

The Obama administration has thrown its weight behind a growing movement to fix remedial education — one of the main barriers between millions of students and college degrees.

The U.S. Department of Education indicated this new focus in its guidelines for how states can use education-related funds provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. While the department does not specify ways to allocate the money, it instructs states to raise standards consistent with the 2007 America Competes Act, which set a goal to reduce, and even eliminate, the need for remediation.

Remedial education "is such a drain on state dollars," says Julie Davis Bell, education-program director for the National Conference of State Legislatures. "The number is so awful in terms of students going into remedial ed who don't graduate."

According to a study by the Education Department, 61 percent of students who attended two-year public colleges from 1992 to 2000, and a quarter of those enrolled in four-year institutions, needed remediation. And studies show that students taking developmental classes are far less likely to complete their degrees, with only 30 percent to 57 percent doing so, depending on how many remedial courses they must take.

Most of the stimulus money will go toward plugging holes in state budgets, but Ms. Bell says reforming remedial education is a top priority for many states.

The need for remediation among recent high-school graduates has been a national dilemma for years. The debate centers on which institutions should be responsible for bridging the gap between secondary and postsecondary curricula: the high schools that graduate students, or the colleges that accept them?

In many states, both seem to be stepping up to the plate. Experts highlight growing cooperation between community colleges and their surrounding school districts to make students more prepared for college. Also taking part are nonprofit projects like Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, and Achieve Inc.'s American Diploma Project. The College Board's National Office of Community College Initiatives also began looking into the issue about a year ago.

"The government's on the right track thinking about alignment," says Stephen J. Handel, national director of the College Board's community-college office. "It's the right thing to do."

### **Working Together**

El Paso Community College and the University of Texas at El Paso work closely with their area's 12 school districts to reduce the number of students enrolling in remedial courses. Using the College Board's Accuplacer test, the colleges evaluate high-school

students for college readiness in their junior and senior years. Those with low scores can take short intervention tutorials, offered jointly by the high schools and colleges, in reading, writing, and mathematics.

The tutorials have produced results: The percentage of new graduates ready for college-level English and reading has increased significantly, and far fewer of them are placing into the lowest levels of remedial math.

"Sometimes students need only a few hours of refresher lessons to test into college-level work — not an entire semester," says Richard M. Rhodes, president of the community college.

This year the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board called for the Legislature to provide \$30-million to offer those short classes statewide. Because of tight economic conditions, the state built in only \$5-million to get the project started. "We're glad that it got the state's attention," Mr. Rhodes says. "But our stance is that we're beyond piloting. We're ready for implementation."

Raymund A. Paredes, the state's commissioner of higher education, says the project would not have received any money had the federal stimulus dollars not freed state funds.

As Texas works to overhaul remedial education, Mr. Paredes says, the early data on community-college and high-school partnerships have proved promising. "We'll probably encourage other community colleges to do the same, but it's not the only solution," he says. "It's not the magic bullet."

Other plans include providing better curricular training, and hiring more permanent faculty members, rather than adjuncts, to teach remedial courses. Texas also intends to experiment with developmental curricula by combining courses in reading, writing, and English — a method it hopes will be both innovative and cost-effective.

"There is nothing more important in higher education than developmental education. These students have high potential, but they aren't ready," Mr. Paredes says. "Every teacher at every level has a responsibility for these students."

In Florida, where 55 percent of students who entered public colleges in 2003-4 needed remedial courses in math, reading, or writing, the Legislature passed a law in 2008 requiring high schools to work with colleges to provide remedial instruction to seniors who test below the state's standards on the SAT, ACT, or the Florida College Entry-Level Placement Test.

In California, private foundations and the state's Department of Education have worked with the California Community Colleges and California State University to improve precollege education.

Some experts cite the America Diploma Project, started in 2005 by Achieve Inc., a nonprofit education-reform organization, as a leader in the momentum to advance college readiness. The project coordinates governors, state education officials, college leaders, and business executives from 35 states in aligning high-school curricula with college demands.

Remedial education could get another boost from the Obama administration through the proposed College Access and Completion Fund, which would allocate \$500-million annually over five years for student retention.

The program would encourage grants for college readiness, says Daniel J. Hurley, director of state relations and policy analysis at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. "There is potential that states and institutions will use some of the resources to facilitate college completion for students who are underprepared academically," he says.

### **No Adult Left Behind**

As policy makers work to increase college readiness, they must focus on improving remedial education, not just eliminating the need for it, says Bruce Vandal, director of the Postsecondary and Workforce Development Institute at the Education Commission of the States. "It is often seen as a redundancy, a failure in the system. And they hate investing money in a failure." Instead, he says, remedial education should be seen as an economic-development investment.

That's particularly true when it comes to adults returning to college after years — or decades — out of school, he says. Improving the high-school curriculum will not necessarily reduce the need for remedial education among those students.

Mr. Vandal suggests that states tap into the federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, which awards competitive grants totaling \$4.35-billion from stimulus funds to promote educational and employment opportunities. At least \$200-million will be designated for upgrades in technology at public computing centers, including community colleges.

That money could be used, in part, to pay for technology-based remedial courses. For example, Cleveland State Community College, in Tennessee, and the National Center for Academic Transformation have seen success with a project that replaces traditional lectures in basic math, elementary algebra, and intermediate algebra with self-paced work in computer labs.

The stimulus package has also directed \$3.95-billion toward Workforce Investment Act programs, which the Department of Labor expects work-force-investment boards to use to help postsecondary institutions, particularly community colleges, provide retraining for adults seeking to improve their occupational skills. Mr. Vandal says some of that money could be used to improve remedial education for returning students.

Colleges will need to make such improvements, he says, for the country to reach President Obama's ambitious goal of making the United States the nation with the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020.

"We can't get there from here if we rely on the number of high-school students alone," Mr. Vandal says. "We have to work with adult re-entering higher education."