



# West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Higher Education  
News Clippings

Week of June 21, 2009

# Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

June 24, 2009

## Fewer than half of university students graduate West Virginia fares poorly among states in Southern Regional Education Board

By Ry Rivard, Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va.--More often than not, all the hard work of going to college - applying and getting in, filling out endless financial aid forms and taking out loans, buying a mini-fridge for the dorm room and nervously moving in with help from mom and dad - will leave students in a position they don't expect: still without a college degree.

More than half the students who start at a four-year public college in West Virginia fail to graduate from it within even six years, according to figures released Monday by the Southern Regional Education Board.

The rest of those students either transferred out of the college to another school or left college altogether, perhaps to take a job, or because they flunked out or ran out of money.

West Virginia's 46 percent six-year graduation rate is substantially lower than both the 52 percent average among the 16 states that belong to the Southern Regional Education Board and the national average, which is 55 percent.

In a Monday speech at the annual board conference in Landsowne, Va., Gov. Joe Manchin emphasized the need to improve graduation rates.

He said state officials are discussing how to improve college graduation rates and high school students' preparation for college and career training.

"In West Virginia, we're not afraid to get out of our comfort zone," he said. "We've got to change. It's not working."

Manchin also was voted chair of the board at the meeting. The board helps officials in its member states work together to improve education. Manchin is the fifth West Virginia governor to chair the board.

The six-year graduation rate is a widely accepted, federally mandated measure of college completion, though it does have limitations.

It doesn't include students who take longer than six years to graduate and students aren't counted as graduates if they graduate at a school besides the one they were a freshman at (so a student who started at Marshall University but transferred to Harvard would hurt Marshall's graduation rate).

Still, a low graduation rate usually means one of two things for college: Its students are either transferring away or dropping out entirely.

It also means that many students and their families who are spending or borrowing thousands to pay tuition, room and board end up with nothing to show for it.

"It's a waste when students who are paying for college and who enroll willingly aren't able to finish what they start," said Alan Richard, spokesman for the Atlanta-based board.

The lower graduation rate in West Virginia and the South in general is partially attributable to the low incomes of students' families and the number of students who are the first in their family to attend college.

The chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, Brian Noland, said that the state's graduation numbers have moved up in recent years, but that the state is preparing to take more action.

One big step is providing money to colleges for each student they graduate.

That would come as part of a revision of the formula the state uses to fund higher education institutions.

"The production of degrees will be incentivized," Noland said.

For example, if West Virginia University produced an average of 3,300 degrees in the past and then graduated 3,800 students, WVU would be rewarded by the state for those 500 additional degrees.

The current college funding system does nothing to provide such an incentive or the accountability that can come by tying strings to the money the state gives and outcomes that universities are expected to achieve.

The new formula could also give colleges more money per head for juniors and seniors than it does for freshmen and sophomores. That would provide an incentive for universities to keep students on track to graduation.

The efforts come amid a national push to make sure all students have a shot at higher education.

"West Virginia and other states need more people to complete four-year degrees, two-year degrees and career certificates," board spokesman Richard said. "So it's not that everyone needs to have a bachelor's degree or higher, but most people these days, as the economy changes, need some type of education after high school."

## WV colleges more affordable but students less likely to graduate

By Cecelia Mason

The newest Southern Regional Educational Board Fact Book on Higher Education shows West Virginia's colleges and universities remain relatively affordable when compared to others in the south, but rank fourth from the bottom in the number of students who graduate.

The Fact Book was released at the SREB <http://www.sreb.org/> annual meeting yesterday.

It provides an in-depth look the progress 16 southern states are making in providing post secondary education to their students.

Brian Noland, West Virginia Higher Education Chancellor, attended this week's SREB annual meeting in Northern Virginia.

Noland said only 17 percent of West Virginians have a college degree, making the state 50th in the nation, and the state needs to find a way to produce more college graduates.

"One of the things that we're focusing on is individuals who started college but never finished," Noland said.

Noland said Suzanne Shipley, Shepherd University President, is chairing an effort to bring more adults back to college and it's hoped that effort will be in place by the spring of 2010.

"What we're going to do is to target adults with 90 hours but no degree, they're a year or less from receiving that degree, to bring them back to our institutions to produce more college graduates immediately," Noland said

West Virginia has a public four year college graduation rate of 46 percent, which is below the 52 percent average for the 16 states that belong to SREB.

Noland said the state needs to put in place a range of policies to get students better prepared for college.

"That's aligning our curricula, aligning our assessments, getting secondary instructors working in colleges and college instructors working in the local schools, and changing our financial aid systems," Noland said.

One year at a public four year college in West Virginia represents about 10 percent of median family income.

But Joe Marks, SREB director of data services, says West Virginia colleges and universities remain more affordable than many of the other southern schools.

“West Virginia prices are in the middle of the pack,” Marks said.

“One year at a public four year college or university in West Virginia for in-state undergraduates in '08 cost about \$4500 a year compared to a regional average of \$5000 and a national average of \$5500.”

Noland said West Virginia does not invest as much as the other SREB states in its higher education system.

“We rely much more heavily upon students and parents to cover the cost of college than any other state in the south,” Noland said.

“When you look at total dollars per student we're ranked 16th out of 16 states. Our faculty salaries are ranked 16th out of 16 states. We have a lot of work to do in that area as well. We've got our challenges ahead of us.”

Noland said the state's colleges and universities need to become more efficient with their money by making more effective use of space, saving on energy, and eliminating programs that don't have many students.

“Our institutions need to focus on niche, focus on those programs that are specific to their mission, and begin to return to the core of their academic enterprise rather than to try to be all things to all people,” Noland said.

# Charleston Daily Mail

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June 25, 2009

## EDITORIAL

### College graduation isn't everything

NATIONALLY, about 55 percent of the people who enroll in college earn degrees within six years. In the southern states, the graduation rate in six years averages 52 percent.

In West Virginia, only 46 percent of those who enroll in one of the state's many colleges and universities come out with a degree six years later.

That's a rough rather than precise measure of what's going on in higher education. As the Daily Mail's Ry Rivard reported this week, students who transfer from one college to another may help the last institution's statistics, but hurt the average of the first college they attended.

Income is one of the challenges facing many West Virginia students.

According to the 2009 fact book of the Southern Regional Education Board, which Gov. Joe Manchin now chairs, West Virginia is 49th in per capita income among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In 2008, the per capita income here was \$30,831. The national average was \$39,751.

That's quite a financial hurdle to overcome.

Preparedness to do college-level work has also been an issue with some students. For years, far too many high school graduates have needed to take remedial education classes in college.

That's terribly discouraging for students, and probably plays a role in college dropout rates. Communicating such data to all schools, and having county schools work with colleges to close the readiness gap, can sometimes help.

But the state is considering taking really extraordinary measures - paying colleges more if they graduate more students - to raise college graduation rates.

"The production of degrees will be incentivized," said Chancellor Brian Noland of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

If an institution that produced an average of 3,300 degrees began graduating 3,800 students, it would get more money.

That seems like an invitation to grade inflation.

Stan Hopkins, assistant state superintendent of technical and adult education, said recently that some colleges and universities struggle with graduation rates because some students might be better served by following a different career path.

He could very well be right.

Just producing more college graduates won't necessarily cause economic development.

Many employers have told the state that what they need are people with advanced technical skills.

Perhaps a fresh look at how well the state is serving students with those interests should be at least of equal concern as college graduation rates.



June 23, 2009

## \$9M plan grows Stroke Center Will bring 25 new jobs to WVU team

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

A planned \$9-million expansion of WVU's Stroke Center is expected to bring 25 new jobs to town, officials said Monday.

Officials at WVU's Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center announced plans to spend \$9 million to expand research, treatment and outreach programs at the Stroke Center.

WVU Hospitals and the state's Eminent Scholars Trust Fund will each provide \$2.5 million. Officials said the remaining money will come from existing funding sources, such as the endowed Ludwig Gutmann Chair of Neurology.

Dr. John Brick, chair of WVU's Department of Neurology, said the money will pay for about 25 people to join the Stroke Center team, including neurologists, clinicians and basic science researchers.

"WVU's Stroke Center is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary team of health-care professionals," said Bruce McClymonds, president and CEO of WVU Hospitals. "When they get the call about a possible stroke, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, that's a call to action."

Brick said the additional faculty and staff will allow the center to provide greater access to treatment at WVU and community hospitals around the state. Patients at rural health centers who need specialized care will be referred to larger facilities — such as WVU, which has earned Primary Stroke Center Certification from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations — to provide top-notch treatment.

Dr. Todd Crocco, chair of WVU's Department of Emergency Medicine, said WVU is working to educate the public about stroke symptoms and prevention as part of its outreach efforts.

Officials are also working to develop a statewide network of health-care facilities to streamline care for stroke patients, Crocco said. Combined with a telemedicine program that allows physicians to evaluate patients remotely and assess their needs, he said it will enhance the delivery and speed of stroke treatment in West Virginia.

"We stand on the cusp of launching a whole new level of commitment against stroke and its devastating effects," Crocco said. "We're going to begin a whole new fight against stroke and make new commitments to the citizens of our state of West Virginia."

Overall, Brick said, the \$9 million investment in the Stroke Center will help the facility's faculty and staff provide better care, make quicker diagnoses and examine the causes and prevention of strokes further.

“Research is vital to improving the outcomes of patients with cerebrovascular disease,” Brick said. “Much of this money will be dedicated to developing our expertise and expanding our programs in research on this awful, awful condition.”

Brick was not sure how many more patients the center would be able to accommodate as a result of the investment. He said about 1,400 people are admitted for acute strokes each year, and about 70 other patients are referred to the facility for treatment each month.

Dr. Ludwig Gutmann, a WVU neurologist, noted that stroke treatment has improved dramatically during his 43 years on the faculty, largely due to innovations discovered through research.

Gutmann said there was little that doctors could do to help stroke patients when he first came to WVU. They spent a lot of time trying to pinpoint the source of a stroke, but CT scans, MRIs and other tests available now have enabled physicians to locate and dissolve blood clots within the brain.

“It is a whole new era, and the reason all this has happened is because we have been part of the national research in trying to make treatment better,” Gutmann said.

Though a portion of the money committed to the Stroke Center on Monday will pay for research, Brick said additional grants and private funding will be necessary to supplement those dollars. Gutmann and others in attendance noted that a gift from Hazel Ruby McQuain helped WVU establish the Stroke Center, and contributions from the Hazel Ruby McQuain Charitable Trust have been instrumental in the facility’s growth and expansion.

According to a press release, state officials created the \$10 million Eminent Scholars Trust Fund in 2007 to bring researchers to WVU and Marshall University. Each school is required to raise \$5 million in private donations to receive matching funds from the state.



June 23, 2009

## WVU med school scores D on test Grade evaluates policies regarding interest conflicts

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

The WVU School of Medicine's conflict-of-interest policies for faculty and students earned a 'D' from the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) earlier this month, but the university is appealing its score.

WVU scored lowest for its rules on industry-funded speaking, pharmaceutical samples and purchasing. Faculty and staff cannot participate in contractual decisions involving a company they have a financial interest in, but "this does not cover all purchasing and formulary decisions," according to the AMSA Scorecard.

Amy Johns, a spokeswoman for WVU's Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center, said the WVU School of Medicine has asked for a reassessment and provided updated information to the AMSA.

"The group has updated the scorecard to indicate that they are reviewing the information and have changed our letter grade to an 'I' for 'In Process' pending review," Johns said. "We anticipate a response in the next 60 days and are hopeful for an upgrade to a 'C.'"

The AMSA PharmFree Scorecard is an annual evaluation of conflict-of-interest policies at the nation's 149 academic medical centers developed by the Pew Prescription Project and the AMSA. A total of 11 factors related to each school's interaction with the pharmaceutical industry are examined, including educational events, consulting work, communication with sales representatives, drug samples and free gifts and meals.

The WVU School of Medicine is one of 17 academic medical centers — or 11 percent nationwide — that earned a "D" grade this year. As of last week, a Pew Prescription Project spokeswoman said nine schools had earned an "A," 36 got a "B," 18 received a "C," and 35 got an "F," including Marshall University's Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine and the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. Policies at the remaining schools are being reviewed.

Allan Coukell, director of the Pew Prescription Project, said more than a third of the schools reviewed earned an "A" or "B" — strong grades that WVU and other schools should shoot for.

"Having a "D" suggests there are a number of areas where the school doesn't have what we would consider best practice standards," Coukell said.

WVU's original score was based on a policy for medical residents established in 2007 and a new policy for School of Medicine faculty that took effect April 1. According to

WVU's scorecard, the new School of Medicine policy is better than the one officials submitted in 2008, but it still needs work.

"The new policy was assessed and their grade did come up, but not enough to tip them into a higher grade," Coukell said. "Their overall score did improve."

Coukell said schools earn points for their policies in each area, and the total number of points determines each school's letter grade.

Speaking relationships are not addressed in the WVU policies posted at the AMSA Web site. Sample drugs and devices can be accepted for patient use only, with proper documentation, but the AMSA said the policy doesn't do anything to restrict their use for marketing purposes.

However, the scorecard indicates that WVU is making progress toward a model policy in seven areas, including rules for industry sales representatives, attending industry-sponsored events, disclosure of potential conflicts of interest, and gifts and meals. The university scored highest for its policy on industry-funded scholarships and training, which requires the Office of Graduate Medical Education to receive and distribute funds.

Coukell said any school can appeal its score or ask for a reassessment by writing to the AMSA. Grades are typically changed to an "I" to indicate that the school's policies are under review during the reassessment, he said.

Reassessments typically take about 60 days.

A total of four reassessment were requested last year, but Coukell said most schools accept the scorecard results. Grades have only changed in a few instances when the AMSA or Pew Prescription Project officials missed something.

"It's more often a case where the school has misunderstood the criteria," Coukell said.



June 23, 2009

## WVU School of Medicine Fights Back Against Misleading Grade School originally given a "D" now it's an "I" for "In Process"

Story by Courtney Dunn

MORGANTOWN -- The West Virginia University School of Medicine says a recent assessment from the American Medical Student Association is misleading.

The school is seeking reassessment from the American Medical Student Association. It is a student association that evaluates conflict-of-interest policies at 149 academic medical centers across the nation.

The group ranks schools based on 11 factors, ranging from educational events to drug samples to free gifts and meals.

WVU previously received a D, but school officials say it didn't take into consideration the school's new conflict of interest policy that went into effect April 1.

The grade now is an I, standing for "in process."

WVU School of Medicine Interim Dean Dr. Jim Brick issued this statement, in response to the report and an article in Tuesday's Dominion Post.

"The WVU School of Medicine put our Conflict of Interest Policy into effect in April, and of course it will continue to evolve," Brick said. "We didn't do it to get a good grade from this student organization, but to do what's best for our patients in West Virginia. For the record, our grade is an I - we're under review - not a D as reported in the newspaper in an incorrect and incomplete story with a sensational headline. And let's put this in perspective - even if it remains a D, that's higher than most medical schools in the country, and the same grade as Duke, Ohio State and Temple."

Another review and evaluation is expected within the next 60 days.

# Charleston Daily Mail

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June 21, 2009

## Marshall professor to build database on residues

By The Associated Press

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. -- Marshall University has received a \$198,000 federal grant for the study of flammable liquids in relation to suspicious fires.

The National Institute of Justice awarded the grant for the two-year study being conducted by J. Graham Rankin, an associate professor of forensic science.

Rankin plans to build a database of kerosene and petroleum distillates commonly sold as charcoal lighters, paint thinners and industrial solvents. These are the second most common accelerants used in arson cases behind gasoline.

Rankin says samples will be analyzed to identify their chemical fingerprint that can be used later to help in fire investigations.

The National Institute of Justice is the research and development branch of the U.S. Department of Justice.



June 25, 2009

## Board approves tuition increase

By Samir abdel-aziz

Marshall University's Board of Governors voted unanimously to increase the tuition for resident students by 7 percent for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. This is nearly double the increase that non-resident and metro students will be paying with each group receiving a 4 percent increase.

The amount of increase in residents' tuition went up is only \$169, compared to a \$241 increase for non-residents. Out-of-state students often pay more to go to Marshall than in-state students. The benefit for them is that it is usually far more expensive to go to college in their own states, Bill Bissett, chief of staff and senior vice president for communications said after the June 18 meeting.

"What's important here is the dollars," Bissett said. "The reason why the amount of tuition that in state students pay is lower is because they pay state taxes."

He said that a portion of those taxes go to help fund Marshall University.

"We increase tuition fairly for both residents and non residents and the amount was more," Bissett said. "Make no mistake; an out-of-state student still pays a lot more than an in-state student to attend Marshall University."

He said that the Board of Governors and the president often try to find a way to raise the tuition as little as possible to meet the required needs.

"Anytime you increase the cost of any product and service, even something so beneficial as education, there is always a concern," Bissett said. "There will be an expected increase in utilities such as water and power, while the nature of the economy right now is why many of the private dollars that Marshall relies upon are not coming in. We want to make up that budget gap so that we, in no way, put any additional fees on students."

The decision to increase tuition came down to providing quality professors and programs over affordability.

"Every time you increase the tuition, you're making it that much more difficult for a student to come to Marshall University," said Michael Perry, Board of Governors member and head of the finance committee. "As someone who has championed first year students, I have traditionally fought tuition increases tenaciously, but I have begrudgingly become a realist who feels that there might be one thing worse than increasing tuition, and that's not increasing tuition."

Perry said if the Board of Governors did not increase tuition, it was going to cheapen the quality of the education that Marshall would provide for students struggling to get proper education.



June 25, 2009

## No increase in state funding

### Marshall University set to receive same amount of money as 2009 fiscal year

By Kyle Hobstetter

Marshall University will not receive any extra funding from the state for the fiscal year of 2010.

Marshall will receive over \$49.3 million from the state, the same as the 2009 fiscal year. According to Chief of Staff and Senior Vice President of Communications at Marshall Bill Bissett, this is very fortunate as the University was expecting cuts of around five to ten percent.

Bissett said when looking at things that affect the taxes in the state, the very publicized nationwide economic decline, the recent production issues from the coal industry and other severances combined with job layoffs and closures an increase was not very likely.

"Expecting an increase would not only be overly optimistic but also would be ignoring the warning signs across the board." Bissett said. "We consider ourselves very fortunate."

While funding was not cut from the state, Bissett said that focusing on what economists are predicting, Marshall could face cuts in the next fiscal year.

"It's concerning cause we have to pay more for insurance more for utilities and everything else going up from our own economy." Bissett said. "It causes quite a great concern."

According to an executive summary of the budget released by Marshall, utility rates are projected to increase for the 2010 fiscal year by \$592,257 an increase of over 18.5 percent from the previous year.

While Marshall University is not losing funding as a whole, The School of Medicine will receive \$13.8 million, which represents a reduction of \$418,196, a 3 percent decrease.

Also Marshall will be paying the former Marshall Community and Technical College, \$3.5 million over ten years. This is compensation for buying back the buildings that the CTC used over the years.

While state funding did not increase, tuition increased for all students. A 7 percent increase for residents and 4 percent for non-residents and metro students.

When asked if this is a way to make up for no increase from state funding, Bissett said that it wasn't a direct correlation with the funding, but will help Marshall.

Bissett said even with the increase, that the price is still affordable and attractive option for students in outlying states. He doesn't expect the tuition raise to impact enrollment rates.

"It is cheaper for those students in closer state such as Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky, going to Marshall would be a more affordable price than going to an in-state college." Bissett said.

With a tuition increase and no rise in state funding the main concern for Marshall appears to private funds and gifts. According to the summary, private grants and contracts will rise \$718,000 to a total of \$14.9 million. But gifts have fallen \$4.5 million to just \$411,000.

"We're concerned about private foundation dollars because of the hardships they are facing because of layoffs in the foundation."

With the tough economic times Marshall is looking into many things to cut costs. According to Bissett Marshall is using energy saving issues and maintaining a soft hiring freeze that could turn into a hard hiring freeze.

June 23, 2009

## Dean of college at center of Marshall storm Report says official at education college has divided faculty

by Ry Rivard, Daily Mail staff

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. -- Morale within Marshall University's largest college is as low as it's ever been and a series of problems have caused matters to come close to physical confrontation, according to an internal review of the college's dean prepared by a five-member university committee.

The review found that Rosalyn Templeton, the executive dean of Marshall's College of Education and Human Services, works effectively with perhaps half her faculty and has alienated the rest. The problems have led to an unusually high number of formal grievances filed within the education college.

Based on interviews with faculty and staff who complain about Templeton's "caustic and corrosive" personality, the committee recommends that the dean learn diplomacy and to manage her anger.

But the report also suggests management and faculty issues are tied to the 13 percent decline in the enrollment at the college during the dean's three and half year tenure.

The 3,600 students in the education college are about a fourth of Marshall's student population.

The enrollment decline since Templeton's arrival "raises concerns about changes in major, institutional transfers and dropouts that may reflect both faculty and student dissatisfaction," the committee's report found.

"Students complained to us that much of the coursework they take is redundant and irrelevant," the committee said.

The committee - made up of another dean, one department chair and three professors - held open meetings in March and met separately with more than 20 faculty and staff members. The committee also talked twice with Templeton and once with a student group.

Though Templeton arrived with an "ambitious agenda," she has since divided the college into two camps, the report said. The camps are "mutually contemptuous," but both agree the current situation is dysfunctional.

Several applaud Templeton's work. She brought in her own team by replacing many of the college's administrators, increased research funding and salvaged the college's consumer science program, among other accomplishments.

One person, who like everyone quoted in the report was not named, admiringly described the dean as a bulldozer. "Faculty can get pushed up the hill with her or, like dirt, they can be pushed aside," the report recounted being told. The person said the dean's leadership is "brilliant" but that the methods have stirred up a lot of dust.

But others say there is no direction and that Templeton plays favorites and is vindictive, the committee heard.

"At times, some implied that matters degenerate to close to physical confrontation, with morale being as low as it's ever been," the report said. "This environment is attributed to Dr. Templeton's personality and management style."

The committee's report is in incredibly frank in repeating anonymously what others told them about Templeton.

"Her 'caustic and corrosive' personality has exacerbated some issues even further and there is a perception because of verbally abusive situations and unprofessional use of language (which sometimes manifests itself through yelling) that she has some anger management issues to deal with," the committee found.

"It's almost like you deal with two people, Dr. Templeton and Mrs. Hyde," one person told the committee.

Templeton's office referred questions about the report to the university's communications office. Marshall Provost Gayle Ormiston said the report was the first stage of a periodic review, but he was unable to say much else because of personnel laws.

Since February 2008, the state chapter of the American Federation of Teachers has filed 47 grievances against the college alleging violations of internal policies, denial of salary increases and other matters.

The report said that faculty and staff cited what seems to be Templeton's "total disregard for university and college policies" and led some to question whether or not she feels she can "just write whole new policies if she doesn't like them."

Chris Barr, a staff representative with AFT-WV who has been involved in the grievances, credits Ormiston with helping to resolve of many of the issues.

"We have not recently had any requests from union members within (the college) to file grievances, and we are hopeful that continued oversight will ensure that policies and procedures are being followed," Barr said in an e-mail.

The committee found that a "fair share" of the people it spoke with believe Templeton's "'clout' on campus and her ability to be an effective advocate for the college have been compromised."



June 23, 2009

## Grant awarded to BSC professor

BLUEFIELD — A faculty member at Bluefield State College has received a \$99,000 grant sub-award from the West Virginia-Idea Network for Biomedical Excellence (WV-INBRE) to sustain and expand biomedical research at BSC.

Dr. Tesfaye Belay, Associate Professor of Biology, received the award.

June 24, 2009

## Beckley college has lowest graduation rate Only 18 percent of students receive diplomas

By Ry Rivard, Daily Mail staff

BECKLEY, W.Va.--Beckley-based Mountain State University has one of the lowest graduation rates for first-time freshmen in the country, according to a national study.

The private university's 18 percent six-year graduation rate is also lowest in West Virginia and the 10th lowest in the country among four-year colleges with a similar pool of applicants, according to "Diplomas and Dropouts," a report released earlier this month by the American Enterprise Institute.

Officials at MSU, which has two campuses in West Virginia and three outside the state, say the university's non-traditional student population accounts for the low rate.

The study was based on a federal measurement that looks at the number of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students who start at and graduate from the same college within six years. So students who come to MSU from another college and then graduate from there aren't included in the data. Nor are students who use classes at MSU to build credits to transfer to another college that they graduate from.

"It's unfortunate that studies like this are still tied to 'old school' education models," said James Silosky, the university's executive vice president of distance education. "This is actually a great example of how this school is achieving its success by working outside the traditional mold. An entering student for us might mean a 45-year-old single mother starting class in March, which doesn't fit with their report, and distorts the results."

Indeed, only 9 percent, or about 270 of the university's 3,100 undergraduates, are first-time, full-time students, according to U.S. Education Department data.

Still, among students who entered in 2001, only 7 percent graduated within four years, according to the federal data.

The chancellor of the state's public college system said MSU's numbers amazed him.

"I am flabbergasted that the graduation rates for Mountain State University are 18 percent," said West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland.

He said if MSU was a public university, "There would be a bright and shining light placed upon the activities of that university."

The graduation rate for the state's four-year public colleges is 46 percent, according to separate figures released today by the Southern Regional Education Board.

# Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

June 22, 2009

## Manchin elected chairman of Southern Regional Education Board

by The Associated Press

LANDSOWNE, Va. (AP) -- West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin is the new chairman of the Southern Regional Education Board.

Manchin was elected Monday during the 16-state organization's annual meeting in Landsdowne. He replaces Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine.

Virginia Board of Education President Mark E. Emblidge was elected as vice chairman and Mississippi state Sen. Jack Gordon was chosen as treasurer.

The organization is based in Atlanta and helps education and government leaders work together to advance education in the region.

June 24, 2009

## Education Dept. Plan Would Make It Easier to Apply for Student Aid

By SARA HEBEL, Washington

Education Secretary Arne Duncan is expected to announce a plan today to make it easier for students and their families to apply for federal financial aid.

Simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or Fafsa, the form the government uses to assess student need, is a goal President Obama repeatedly pitched as a candidate on the campaign trail.

Education Department officials released a preview of their plan on Tuesday, outlining three steps they will take toward that goal.

They say they will streamline the online Fafsa application by allowing people to skip questions irrelevant to their situations, asking Congress to strike dozens of questions from the form about family income and assets that go beyond what families have to report on tax returns, and allowing some aid applicants to easily retrieve tax data to fill out portions of the form.

The Fafsa, created by Congress in 1992, has been widely derided for its complexity. At his confirmation hearing this year, Mr. Duncan quipped that "you basically have to have a Ph.D. to figure that thing out."

Students are asked to answer as many as 153 questions on the application, and Education Department officials estimate that 1.5 million students who are enrolled in college and who probably would be eligible for federal Pell Grants failed to file a Fafsa to apply for that aid.

### **Irrelevant Questions**

Education Department officials will begin this summer to make changes to the online application that will allow individuals to skip more questions that do not apply to them than they can now. For instance, students who are exempt from providing their parents' financial information—such as people who are married or who are 24 or older—will be able to skip 11 questions that are used to determine whether parental information needs to be provided. Men older than 26 will no longer have to field a question about registering with the Selective Service.

By January, the department said, more changes will be put in place. Students from some of the lowest-income families will no longer be asked for information about assets because that data is not used to determine their eligibility for aid. Students who are entering their first year of college will no longer be asked about prior drug convictions because the question is relevant only for returning students.

State governments also use the federal form to determine eligibility for student aid, and some of the questions on the form were placed there at the request of states. The Education Department said it would work with state agencies to make it easier for aid

applicants to answer questions that individual states need answers to but that the federal government does not.

### **Fewer Questions About Assets**

In the second step of the department's simplification plan, officials said, they will ask Congress to pass legislation to eliminate a number of questions on the Fafsa and let families apply for student aid by using the same information they provide on federal income-tax returns.

The Fafsa now requires people to answer dozens of questions about their income and assets that they do not have to answer on federal tax forms. The department said that those questions yield information that is "largely unverifiable" and that adds very little to the process of awarding aid.

The six questions the Fafsa asks about assets, for example, affect the awards of only 3 percent of Pell Grant recipients, the department said. Those questions also penalize families that save for college, the department argued, while opening loopholes that allow sophisticated applicants to "game" the system.

### **Use of Tax Data**

Education Department officials said the proposed legislative changes would "open the door" to using data from the Internal Revenue Service to provide answers to financial questions that remain on the Fafsa, so that families would only need to answer "easy personal questions" to apply for federal student aid.

To that end, the department said the third step of its plan will be to allow students and families who are applying for financial aid for the spring semester to retrieve tax information from the IRS that they can use to answer 18 financial questions that the department plans to keep on the aid form. Education officials said they would work with the IRS to examine whether it would eventually be possible to expand this option to all students.

Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education, said the department's plan is "a middle-of-the-road approach" to simplifying the federal student-aid application process. As such, he said, it avoids the kinds of pitfalls and potential unintended consequences that could have accompanied a more-radical overhaul, such as one that would have pared back the form to just a handful of questions.

He predicted wide support for the department's plan, including in Congress. "There is a lot of political enthusiasm" in both parties, Mr. Hartle said, for making the application process easier. "This is good news for the millions of students and families who wrestle with the Fafsa each year."

## U.S. May Need to Prune Number of Research Universities, Lobby Group Says

By PAUL BASKEN

The United States, at a time of tighter budgets and stronger international competition, may not be able to afford its current crop of research universities, the head of their chief lobby group said Thursday.

The nation may need “fewer but better” when it comes to top research universities, Robert M. Berdahl, president of the Association of American Universities, said in an interview with The Chronicle. “It’s a very serious question that the nation needs to ask itself.”

Mr. Berdahl’s association represents 60 American universities that together award more than half of all doctoral degrees and 55 percent of science and engineering degrees in the country.

The association isn’t making any specific recommendations regarding such a reduction and instead has asked the National Academies to study the question. It also hasn’t said how deeply the number of American research universities would be reduced, though Mr. Berdahl suggested federal spending decisions could play a role.

Mr. Berdahl made the suggestion in a letter in February to Sen. Lamar Alexander, a Republican from Tennessee and former U.S. education secretary. In the letter, which was provided to the The Chronicle, Mr. Berdahl asked a series of questions that included: “How many research universities does the United States realistically require in order to maintain its agenda of innovation and advanced training?”

He also noted in the letter the trouble universities are facing because of the economy, and said that private universities “have seen their endowments seriously eroded” and public universities have been hurt by state budget cuts.

Partly in response to the letter, Senator Alexander joined this week with three other lawmakers from both parties and both chambers of Congress in asking the National Academies to study and report on the “top 10 actions” that the government and research universities could take to maintain the quality of the universities and ensure the nation’s economic growth.

Mr. Berdahl told The Chronicle that the decentralization of the American system of higher education could make it hard to plan a reduction in the number of research universities.

He suggested, however, that at least for public universities, states could be asked to identify priorities for which research universities should be preserved and how that could be accomplished, with a possible federal role “in incentivizing that.”

## **Resistance Expected**

The recommendation to reduce the number of research universities may face some opposing forces on both the state and federal levels.

The Obama administration has emphasized its belief that the nation's economic woes can be alleviated by more spending on scientific research.

And in Texas, state officials are overseeing a competition among seven universities for at least some of them to be designated as top-tier research universities. The 2010-11 state budget includes \$50-million for the seven universities, on top of their normal appropriations, to expand research and recruit faculty members. The allocation reflects Texas lawmakers' goal of making the state's system of research universities competitive with systems in California and New York.

California, however, is facing the possibility of severe budget cuts. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, has proposed cutting state support for his state university system by nearly 20 percent in the 2009-10 fiscal year.

Mr. Berdahl, who served as chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley from 1997 to 2004, said he believes the nation's economic prosperity depends on its investments in scientific research. Those investments, however, need to be targeted as wisely as possible, he said.

California, as an example, might need to free its universities to act more independently in order to save them from their state budget turmoil, through steps that could include creating differentiated fee structures for different universities, and opening enrollment to larger numbers of out-of-state students, Mr. Berdahl said.

## Largest States Should Get the Greatest Share of College-Completion Funds, Group Suggests

By JOSH KELLER

If America is to reach President Obama's goal of having the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020, a \$2.5-billion grant program he has proposed should focus on vastly expanding degree-attainment rates in the nation's largest states, says a report by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

The nonprofit group's report offers recommendations on how to structure the grant program, which Congressional leaders are expected to debate in the next few weeks. President Obama proposed the program, the College Access and Completion Incentive Fund, in February as a way for the federal government to help states increase the degree-completion rates of low-income students.

If the president's college-attainment goal is "in any way real," support from the program will have to go disproportionately to the nation's largest states, said Dennis P. Jones, the center's president and a co-author of the report, "Utilizing College Access & Completion Innovation Funds to Improve Postsecondary Attainment in California." Closing degree-attainment gaps in California, Florida, and Texas alone would account for nearly half of the 1.1 million additional degrees the country needs each year to reach that benchmark, says the report.

"You can't make this work on the backs of states that are there or almost there already," Mr. Jones said. "It's really going to take some very large improvements in some very large states."

States that receive support from the access and incentive program, the report says, should be required to submit a goal for increased degree production, expected levels of tuition and per-student expenditures, and the measurements that will be used to evaluate whether attainment goals are being met.

Money from the program should also be distributed to statewide agencies rather than directly to institutions, the report says. The federal government should use the program as leverage to encourage states to develop new programs that will significantly increase community-college degree-completion or transfer rates before federal stimulus money runs out in 2012, it says.

"In 2012, state budgets are not going to be back to where they were," Mr. Jones said. "So we've got two years to do things quite differently, and if we don't take advantage of that, we're going to go off of a cliff."

The report focuses special attention on California, which faces some of the biggest political and demographic obstacles to increasing its degree-attainment levels. In order to contribute its "fair share" of college degrees to President Obama's national goal, California would need to nearly double the number of college graduates it produces each year, from about 250,000 to about 455,000, the report says.

The fund should be used in part to force California to confront longstanding structural problems that prevent community-college students from graduating or transferring to four-year universities, says the report. Among other things, the state should be asked to develop a common placement examination for entering students and a systemwide approach to developmental instruction, it says.

Mr. Jones acknowledged that such changes would be difficult for a state that is facing a deep fiscal crisis and huge budget cuts for its colleges and universities. But, he said, "if the state doesn't sign on, if they don't tackle some of these issues, then the reality is that they probably won't get the money, or shouldn't."

## Med School 'Senioritis'

By Ben Eisen

Last March, Washington and Lee University's Law School dean told Inside Higher Ed that, "We wouldn't dream of training doctors only from a book," as a justification for his then newly unveiled plan to transform the third year of law school with experiential courses.

Well, medical schools may have taken the hint. In a study and corresponding editorial published Wednesday in the July issue of the Association of American Medical Colleges' Academic Medicine journal, experts are calling for a reform of the traditional senior year medical curriculum. The report -- which was co-authored by six medical school professors, five of whom are from the University of California at San Francisco -- argues that medical curricula often fail to fully utilize the fourth year of medical school, succumbing instead to what some might call "senioritis." With students interviewing for residency programs throughout the year and senior grades usually not a factor in residency applications, many claim that students lose the self-motivation that makes their first three years successful. Moreover, medical students are often close to being done with their core requirements, leaving room for electives that are not related directly to their fields, and thus do not require as much attention.

During residency programs after medical school, "we will get paid almost no money for three to seven years," said Pamela Lyss-Lerman, a resident physician at San Francisco and the principal author of the study. "In an economy like ours, if the fourth year isn't the best it can be, is it necessary to have students spend \$50,000?"

While Lyss-Lerman does not advocate getting rid of the fourth year, she said that it needs to be revised to be more useful. The study suggests a curriculum wherein students "have more authentic roles in patient care," which, she said, will help them to develop their own identities as physicians and collaboratively practice the humanistic elements of medicine. Specific recommendations for fourth year curriculum additions include sub-internships in internal medicine, and rotations for critical care, ambulatory care, and emergency medicine. The idea is to make sure students are achieving competencies -- a movement in medicine to assess students based on critical skills rather than memorized facts -- even as they enter the home stretch of their education. The study suggestions were based on interviews with 30 residency program directors at San Francisco.

Lyss-Lerman brings to light an issue that has long been a source of heated discussion for medical educators. In an editorial published along with the study, Academic Medicine's editor, Steven Kanter, writes that "some of us who engage in these academic dust-ups argue passionately for a predominantly elective senior year with maximal student input and minimal curricular requirements. Others enjoy preaching that students do not know enough to elect what to study, so faculty should simply prescribe it. A few contend that a largely elective year is an unnecessary expense for both students and schools."

This call for a discussion on how best to revise the senior year is a welcome change for many medical educators. Larry Gruppen, a professor of medical education at the University of Michigan saw the report as a worthwhile call to action.

"The problem of the fourth year is a pervasive one," Gruppen said. "When students are interviewing for a residency, it's important, but schools see it as taking away from students' educations. It has to be done, but it gets in the way of medical school. ... It all contributes to a widely-felt frustration."

He added that Michigan has recognized and worked on these issues for a long time, with one tangible result being the movement of more core requirements to the senior year. This has served to combat the "laissez faire pick-your-own elective," approach that can lead to student apathy, Gruppen noted.

Debra Litzelman, associate dean for medical education and curricular affairs at Indiana University, also found the report to be a step in the right direction for combating fourth year issues. Indiana, which does assessments based on core competencies, allows students to take electives but mandates that those courses focus on three upper-level competencies.

"I do think that maybe, based on the article, we are an exception in that we have thought a lot about the competencies, including the fourth year," Litzelman said. "It is something that our school has felt very strongly about."

However, some feel that putting too much emphasis on structure in the fourth year curriculum may limit students' creativity. John Mahoney, associate dean for medical education at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School, who works closely with Kanter, argues that "the majority of students make fabulous use" of their senior year by doing research and developing individual curricula. Furthermore, these students are adults and have the ability to make their own decisions, Mahoney said.

"I think increasing the number of requirements in any one school would rein in the ability to individualize the curriculum," Mahoney said. He added, "Making sure the student has a well-crafted senior year is important. That's different than what competencies all students should have when they arrive at residencies. One size fits all is easy to prescribe. It's more difficult to assure quality in dozens of different packages, but we're preparing these students for different things."

Lyss-Lerman responded that the idea is not to limit the scope of what students can do, it is simply to give students more of a sense of direction.

"If you think about what we do to [students] in their first three years of medical school and then their three years plus of residency when there's no creativity, if there's one year of providing more requirements, or even more structure, it is not going to inhibit them," she said. "We don't want to [impose] all requirements, just a better mesh."

Looking at the current role of the fourth year of medical school has highlighted another question: Why four years? In response to a similar conviction that the third year of law school is often not as useful as the first two, a few law schools have started programs for students to earn degrees in two years. At the moment, medical educators at Michigan are in the experimentation phases of designing a curriculum whose time frame is based on competency completion, rather than passing four years, Gruppen noted.

This would mean that some students could finish their degrees in three years, while others may take five.

"Right now we are in the middle of a six-week target to look at what medical school would look like without a time frame at all," Gruppen said. "We identify competencies of what students are supposed to attain before they graduate. We give them feedback and measurement on how well they are doing and leave it up to them to decide how they want to attain competencies. So if you come in as a paramedic, you should be able to test out some things. Why put everyone through the same lockstep program?"

Litzelman and Lyss-Lerman agreed that this could be an instrumental way to reduce the debt burden for some students while giving others additional support. Litzelman, however, was wary of endorsing a curriculum that could truncate the current competencies as they are taught.

While competency-based time frames are a long way off, many see the focus on a more meaningful fourth year as the next step in improving medical education. As Lyss-Lerman noted, "part of [the fourth year apathy] is inevitable, and part of it is how the school defines the fourth year curriculum, but I do think we can get over this hurdle."