



West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Higher Education
News Clippings

Week of August 23, 2009

August 24, 2009

Crunching The Enrollment Numbers

By Charleston Staff

Classes begin today on many college and university campuses in West Virginia and state Higher Education Chancellor Brian Noland says some enrollment numbers may prove to be interesting because of the economy.

"So much has been written in the press over the course of the past six to eight months, with the downturn, of more students deciding to attend in-state institutions or more students deciding to attend public institutions," Noland said.

So more students are either staying closer to home for college or choosing cheaper in-state schools over private ones.

That rethinking could have a dramatic impact on some of the state's smaller private schools that depend heavily on out-of-state student enrollment.

"That's critical for many of the private institutions that are on borders, like Shepherd (University), where a third to as much as a half of their undergraduate populations may be out of state," Chancellor Noland said.

Places like West Virginia State University or Bluefield State may not see that much of an impact according to Noland.

"It's going to be very interesting to see how our out-of-state enrollment patterns for students may or may not change," Noland said.

The chancellor expects overall enrollment to end up close to last year's level of 86,000 students.



Aug 25, 2009

WVU enrollment higher than initial expectations 4,700 freshmen are among '09-'10 class

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

WVU expects to boost enrollment by about 250 students this fall, officials said Monday.

A total of 28,840 students enrolled at WVU last fall, exceeding WVU's 2010 goal of 28,500 students two years early.

But WVU is on track to beat that total this fall, adding another 250 students, Senior Associate Provost Russ Dean said at a Faculty Senate executive committee meeting on Monday.

Dean couldn't provide exact numbers, but he said about 360 additional graduate students are expected this fall and transfer numbers are up, too.

"Overall, enrollment looks pretty good, and for the budget, that's pretty good," Dean said. "We're really pleased about that."

WVU initially expected about 4,500 freshman this fall — about 600 less than last year's record of about 5,100. But Dean said Monday that it now appears WVU will achieve its goal of 4,700 freshmen.

Dean said about 80 more students than expected showed up for an orientation session last week, and WVU's residence halls — which can accommodate more than 5,800 students — are nearly full.

"People were waiting until the very last minute to make a commitment," Dean said. "On all fronts, it's looking very good for the first day of classes."

WVU's regional campuses also expect an increase in enrollment, Dean said. About 1,760 students are signed up for classes at Potomac State College this fall — about 160 more than its previous enrollment record of 1,600 students. And the WVU Institute of Technology expects enrollment to increase by a few hundred students.

WVU President James Clements said it's hard to compare enrollment figures to the same day last year, because classes started a few days later. But he's been keeping an eye on enrollment figures, and he's been encouraged by the improvement, though the numbers will change as the first week of classes continues.

"It changes by the minute this time of year," Clements said. "Over the next couple of days, the numbers will fluctuate."

Clements said he's particularly encouraged by the influx of graduate and transfer students, however.

“Our peers are much more heavily weighted towards graduate programs and Ph.D. programs,” Clements said. “To see a little boost in graduate numbers, I think, is a positive sign.”

Other business

Also at Monday’s meeting, the executive committee:

Received an update on WVU’s searches for a provost and chief information officer. WVU has invited three finalists for the provost job to visit campus during the next two weeks, and Clements said the search committee narrowed the list after interviewing 10 candidates or so.

“I’m really excited...,” Clements said. “I think we’ve got some topnotch candidates.”

Dean said WVU could make an announcement about the chief information officer position by the end of this week. The search was reopened after Joe Norris, chief technology officer at East Carolina University, opted not to take the job this summer.

“This will really give us permanent administrative ranks so we can plan and move ahead,” Faculty Senate chairman Nigel Clark said, commenting on the searches.

Received a report on summer classroom renovations from Dean. He said WVU renovated nine classrooms this summer for about \$2.1 million, upgrading technology in some and adding technology to others.

Three rooms each were renovated at Percival, Stansbury and Woodburn halls.

Discussed revisions to the Faculty Constitution. Clark said changes are needed to clarify how faculty representatives to the WVU Board of Governors will be selected and rules for meetings of the University Assembly, among other issues.

Past chairman Steve Kite will draft the changes. They’ll be presented to the executive committee and the Faculty Senate for consideration, but Kite said the changes may not be finalized until next year.

Grad students propel WVU to record enrollment

by The Associated Press

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. -- West Virginia University has 400 fewer freshmen than this time last year, but a 7 percent jump in the number of graduate students still makes for record-breaking fall enrollment.

Overall, enrollment is up 235 students to 28,839.

The freshman class is about 4,600 students, compared to 5,000 last fall.

But Brenda Thompson, an associate vice president, says growth in graduate programs helps WVU grow in the right direction.

The university has been focused on expanding its research programs, which is also a priority of its new president, James Clements.

Thompson says this recruiting cycle has been challenging because of the recession, but the final figures show students and parents still recognize the value of a WVU education.



August 24, 2009

Clements has posts to fill

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

WVU President James Clements crossed another position off the university's long list of vacancies last week, and a university spokeswoman said he's working to fill additional jobs — either directly or indirectly — in the coming months.

Several jobs on campus have been occupied by interim appointees since WVU President Mike Garrison and other key administrators left or stepped down last year. Others at health sciences have been on hold since longtime Vice President Dr. Robert D'Alessandri left WVU to become president and founding dean of the Commonwealth Medical College in Scranton, Pa.

Officials said some jobs were waiting on a permanent president, and others were on hold until the new president could appoint other administrators.

Clements began work June 30. He was involved in several searches before he started, but he made his first big hiring announcement last week when he introduced Dr. Christopher C. Colenda, dean of medicine and vice president for clinical affairs at Texas A&M Health Science Center, as WVU's new chancellor for health sciences.

However, WVU still has several high-ranking positions to fill, including provost and chief of staff. Jay Cole served as interim chief of staff for interim WVU President C. Peter Magrath, but Clements has asked him to remain on board indefinitely.

"There is no search and there is no set timeline for him to serve in that role," Lofstead said in an email to The Dominion Post. "The president has said he values Jay greatly and wants him to be a part of his administrative team."

Three finalists for the provost job were announced Friday. They are slated to visit campus during the first two weeks of the fall semester.

WVU spokeswoman Becky Lofstead said Clements got involved with the provost search before he took over as president, and he will likely select someone for the job by mid-fall.

But she wasn't sure how soon the new provost would start. Interim WVU Provost E. Jane Martin has said she could be on the job until January 2010.

"The start date for Dr. Colenda is two months away, so it's just hard to say how much notice someone needs to transition from one job to another," Lofstead said.

Interim College of Business & Economics Dean Bill Trumbull said deans report to the provost, and those vacancies are likely on hold until a provost is hired.

“It would be up to the provost to launch a search for a dean, so that won’t happen until a provost is hired,” Trumbull said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if once a new provost is identified, that provost would then initiate the process for a search for a new dean.”

Amy Johns, a spokeswoman for WVU’s Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center (HSC), said Colenda will be responsible for hiring new deans for the School of Medicine and the School of Dentistry. But Lofstead said WVU officials may begin the search for dean positions, leaving it up to Colenda and the new provost to make the final decisions after they arrive.

Clements participated in the search for WVU’s chief information officer before he began work, but Joe Norris, chief technology officer at East Carolina University, opted not to take the job. Lofstead said that search “was reopened and may be coming to a conclusion soon.”

Clements is also working to find a permanent general counsel and vice president for legal affairs. Ads for the position appeared in The Dominion Post earlier this month. Lofstead said the search committee has already begun reviewing applications and nominations.

Finalists for the job will likely be invited to campus for interviews early this fall.

“The final selection will be made by both the president and the Board of Governors because of the unique nature of the reporting structure,” Lofstead said, noting that the person hired will report to Clements and the board. “No timeline has been set, but I would imagine it will be filled by mid-fall.”

Lofstead said interviews are under way for an assistant vice president for Student Affairs, and that decision will likely be made early this fall. Ken Gray serves as vice president of student affairs.

The search for an associate vice president for research position has been put on hold, however.

“A great number of research opportunities presented themselves with the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act that demanded the full focus of the research office staff,” Lofstead said. “With that work load expected to continue, I’m told the current interim, Mridul Gautam, will continue in the interim position.”

Curt Peterson, WVU’s vice president for research and economic development, oversees the university’s research office.

One position Clements won’t be working to fill — either directly or indirectly — is president and CEO of University Health Associates (UHA), the university’s clinical practice arm for School of Medicine faculty. Gary Marano has been serving as interim president and CEO since Dr. Jeffrey Neely stepped down last fall, but Johns said it’s up to UHA’s board of directors to fill that position.

“It wasn’t that long ago when Dr. Neely stepped down,” Johns said. “They did announce that they’re just starting the process of finding a permanent person.”



August 22, 2009

WVU provost candidates to visit campus Forums for first of three people to be this week

Staff, submitted reports

WVU has narrowed the list of provost candidates to three.

Dr. Michele G. Wheatly, dean of the College of Science and Mathematics at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio; Dr. James S. Coleman, vice provost for research at Rice University in Houston; and Dr. Jeffrey D. Armstrong, dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University, have been invited to campus for interviews and forums.

The candidates will visit campus during the next two weeks, participating in two public forums each.

One forum will focus on research and outreach, and the other will be devoted to academics and the university community.

Each candidate will also meet with WVU President James P. Clements, Interim Provost E. Jane Martin, associate provosts, campus leaders, the Faculty Senate executive committee, senior officers, deans and the search committee.

A 14-member search committee was appointed in April to identify finalists to replace former provost Gerald Lang.

Lang resigned as provost after an investigative panel concluded that WVU had retroactively awarded Heather Bresch, the daughter of Gov. Joe Manchin and now chief executive officer of Mylan Inc., an executive MBA degree she did not earn.

Rudolph Almasy, chairman of the search committee and interim dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, said WVU received more than 60 applications for the job.

They narrowed that list to an unspecified number of semifinalists, all of whom were interviewed in person.

"We had an excellent pool of applicants," Almasy said. "We are very excited about the caliber of individuals that will be coming to campus."

Wheatly

Wheatly, who will visit campus Thursday and Friday, has been dean of the College of Science and Mathematics at Wright State University since 2002 and professor of biological sciences since 1994.

Prior her to appointment as dean, Wheatly served as chair of Biological Sciences at Wright State from 1994-2002.

From 1984 -'94 she was a professor of zoology at the University of Florida.

She earned a bachelor's degree in biological sciences and doctorate of comparative physiology at Birmingham University, held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Calgary in Canada and participated in executive training at Harvard.

Wheatly's research has focused on comparative physiology, and she has been the principal investigator (PI) or co-PI on approximately \$21.5 million in grants with 24 years of continuous National Science Foundation funding.

She has written or contributed to more than 100 refereed journal articles and book chapters.

She has also taught courses in biology, marine animal physiology, women in science and human computer interaction, among others.

Under Wheatly's leadership, annual research expenditures for the college more than doubled from nearly \$7 million to \$15 million, graduate enrollment has increased by 68 percent and undergraduate enrollment has increased by 10 percent.

She implemented a comprehensive development plan that has resulted in a 15-fold increase in gifts annually.

Coleman

Coleman, who will visit campus on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1, has been vice provost for research and a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Rice University since 2007.

Prior to serving as vice provost, Coleman was vice chancellor for research and professor of biological sciences at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

He earned a doctorate and master's degree in forestry and environmental studies with a focus in plant physiological ecology from Yale University and a bachelor's degree in forestry from the University of Maine.

Coleman's research has focused on the ecological effects of environmental change. He has been the principal investigator (PI) or co-PI on about \$40 million of grants and cooperative agreements.

He has written or contributed to more than 70 scientific journal articles, including co-authoring a cover article in the journal Nature last year.

He has also taught courses in biology, plant physiology, population biology and environmental sciences, among others.

Overall grant activity grew more than 25 percent during Coleman's time at University of Missouri-Columbia, and new grants increased about 20 percent during his first two years at Rice.

He helped to secure and played a leadership role in implementing a \$3 million gift to foster biomedical research collaboration between Rice, Texas Children's Hospital, and the Methodist Hospital Research Institute, and an \$8.5 million gift for the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment Disorders at MU.

Armstrong

Armstrong, who will visit campus on Sept. 2 and Sept. 3, has been dean at the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and professor of animal science at Michigan State University since 2001.

Prior to his appointment as dean, Armstrong was head of the Department of Animal Sciences at Purdue University from 1997-2001.

He earned master's and doctorate degrees in physiology and endocrinology from North Carolina State University and a bachelor's degree in biology from Murray State University.

Armstrong's laboratory-based research focused on nutrition and reproduction in bovine and porcine females and more recent work has been in the area of social responsibility in the food chain.

He has been the PI or co-PI on more than \$4 million of grants and cooperative agreements and has made substantive contributions to institutional grants and agreements worth well over \$50 million.

He has written or contributed to more than 45 scientific journal articles. Armstrong has also taught courses in agricultural and life sciences, mammalian endocrinology, and reproductive lactation and behavior, among others.

Under Armstrong's leadership, overall grant activity increased by 100 percent, with international grant activity increased by over 200 percent; and more than \$178 million (\$58 million in endowments) was raised as part of MSU's capital campaign.

He was instrumental in establishing joint turf-grass degree programs with four universities in China.

Feedback

Feedback will be solicited via online and paper forms. Paper forms will be available at public events, and online feedback forms will be accessible from 9 a.m. on the first day of each candidate's visit through 9 a.m. the morning after the candidate departs.

Comments can also be submitted by e-mail anytime through 9 a.m. Sept. 4.

President Clements will select a new provost after the finalists have been to campus and feedback from the campus community and search committee has been received and reviewed.

WVU spokeswoman Becky Lofstead said Clements selected WVU's new chancellor for health sciences about 10 days after the final candidate's visit.

But she wasn't sure how soon he would make an announcement about the provost or when the new provost might start.

"His style has been to evaluate all the feedback, check references personally, and then reflect on his impressions before proceeding with a decision," Lofstead said in an email to The Dominion Post.

"It's just hard to say how much notice someone needs to transition from one job to another. But I would imagine the decision would come early to mid-fall and the new person would start as soon as he/she could transition from one institution to another."



August 28, 2009

Research, continuing education should be WVU focus **First provost candidate addresses her plans**

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

If Michele Wheatly is chosen as WVU's next provost, her leadership lens will reflect the importance of research and access to education to help WVU build a bright future.

Wheatly, dean of the College of Science and Mathematics at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, compared the opportunities at WVU to points of light during a research and outreach forum at the National Research Center for Coal and Energy. Those opportunities are filtered through a leadership lens that includes administrators, faculty, staff and students, she said.

"This lens focuses the light on a focal point, and that place, of course, is West Virginia University, but more broadly, the future of this great state of West Virginia," Wheatly said.

Wheatly is the first of three provost candidates to visit campus. James Coleman, vice provost for research at Rice University, and Jeff Armstrong, dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University, will each be in town next week.

Each candidate will participate in two forums during two days. One forum will focus on research and outreach, and the other will be devoted to academics and the university community.

Wheatly said she will build on her optical metaphor during her second forum today at the Mountainlair. More than 50 people — mostly faculty members — attended Thursday's forum.

Wheatly said she was raised in London and learned the value of lifelong education from her parents. After developing an interest in biology, she came to the U.S. because of its international reputation for research in science and engineering.

Wheatly began her professional career at the University of Florida, where she first learned about land-grant institutions and their value to the state.

"When we talk about outreach and the land-grant mission, what we're really talking about is taking the discoveries and using that information to try and improve the quality of life of the residents of the state," she said. "We're talking about healthy communities, communities that have economic opportunity."

At Wright State, Wheatly said she helped develop a "very strong research portfolio" in a relatively short amount of time. According to a WVU press release, annual research expenditures at Wright State's College of Science and Mathematics more than doubled under Wheatly's leadership — from nearly \$7 million to \$15 million.

Physics professor David Lederman asked Wheatly about improving WVU's national research ranking.

WVU is one of 103 institutions nationwide recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as having a high amount of research activity, a midlevel classification. But Wheatly said WVU's goal is to achieve a "very high" ranking.

Hiring talented people, paying competitive salaries and working together in teams will help boost research, she said.

"It's been my experience that incrementalism won't get you there," Wheatly said. "You've got to have an ability to get over the hurdle. That's going to come from people who have vision, people who can work with teams of faculty."

But Judy Abbott, assistant dean for teacher education, asked how WVU can conquer geographic barriers to improve education and outreach at county schools.

"Reaching out to the teachers across our state is a challenge," she said.

Wheatly said WVU has to offer education and outreach programs that are flexible. If teachers can't make it to Morgantown to continue their education, she said WVU should meet them where they are — both geographically and in intellectual interest.

Wheatly later added that online programs enhance educational opportunities and access. Expansion of online education will vary by discipline, but Wheatly said "it's a great way to connect to other parts of the state."

Andy Hafs, a graduate student studying wildlife and fisheries, said he was impressed by Wheatly's background and her global perspective. He said she was a strong speaker, and she had good answers to the questions.

"I like how strong she is in science and that she still has Ph.D. students," Hafs said. "She has the same experience as normal professors. That's good."

Ilkin Bilgesu, an associate professor of petroleum and natural gas engineering, said the provost search committee picked three strong candidates to bring to campus, but he was reluctant to comment on Wheatly without hearing what the others had to say.

"This is our first candidate," Bilgesu said. "We'll look at each candidate and see who fits more for our programs and our culture. ... We have a long way to go, and this is our first meeting."

The Daily Athenaeum

"Little good is accomplished without controversy, and no civic evil is ever defeated without publicity."

August 25, 2009

HSC chancellor will earn \$435K

By Melanie Hoffman, Associate City Editor

West Virginia University has authorized the posting of Health Science Center Chancellor Christopher C. Colenda's employment letter agreement.

Colenda will earn \$435,000 annually and must work until June 30, 2011, according to his contract.

A Chancellor's Discovery and Development Fund will be established in order to assist recruiting deans, chairs and faculty, among other things.

Colenda will be a nonclassified employee, and his salary will be on the faculty tenure track.

Because of his nonclassified employee status, Colenda is entitled to retirement, insurance and other benefits that nonclassified WVU employees receive starting Oct. 30.

Colenda was announced as WVU's Health Sciences chancellor Aug. 19 and will begin his term Oct. 30.

The Daily Athenaeum

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August 28, 2009

WVU named third tier school in US News & World Report

By Travis Crum, Staff writer

West Virginia University was ranked as one of "America's Best Colleges," by the 2010 edition of the U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges List, released Thursday.

The University ranked within the top three tier, placing within the 51st to 75th percentile, according to the Web site.

U.S. News & World Report releases the Best Colleges List every year, ranking universities based on admissions standards, peer surveys, student retention, financial resources and graduation rate, according to the Web site.

Harvard University and Princeton University tied for No. 1.

WVU's rival colleges placed significantly higher on the list within the top one tier. Marshall University ranked 45th, the University of Pittsburgh ranked 56th, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute ranked 71st.

"A school shouldn't be ranked highly just because it's hard to get in," said senior physics major Kylee Underwood. "I did a summer program partnered with Stanford. They didn't care about WVU's party reputation or where we ranked on the list."

WVU's Student Government Association President Jason Zuccari agreed, saying the low ranking on the list was not a reflection of students' intelligence.

"We are a great institution. You can tell by the number of Truman Scholars, Goldwater Scholars and Rhodes Scholars," Zuccari said. "The smartest of our University can compete with the smartest of other universities."

The Parkersburg branch of West Virginia University broke into the top 100 list for colleges in the South.

The college placed in the highest acceptance rates, most campus commuters and most students over the age of 25 lists.



August 23, 2009

Get a job!

WVU services help students find employment during, after college

BY CASIE FOX For The Dominion Post

Employment opportunities abound for WVU students. From federal work study positions and regular hourly work to odd jobs, there is something for everyone.

The university has two main offices that help students find jobs. The Career Services Center is designed to help graduating students find permanent careers and educate them on how to prepare.

By contrast, the WVU Office of Student Employment seeks to help students find jobs while they're in school.

"Our goal is to help students find jobs so that they can continue their education," said Susan Lantz, Assistant Director of the Office of Student Employment.

For some students, finding work is just about some extra spending cash for weekends. That's great, too, but for other students, finding employment really makes the difference of being able to continue with school or not, she said.

Lantz and her two co-workers, Franny King, and Mary Alice Dunn, work with students coming from either type of situation. Both serve as counselors, King handling offcampus employment, and Dunn focusing on campus jobs.

The two are definitely committed to their jobs, as King said she'll sometimes even spontaneously park her car along the street when she sees a help wanted sign so she can go inside and acquire details about the job.

Jobs such as these and openings posted by employers are added to the Student Employment listserv. There are about 6,000 students on the listserv, which goes out three times a month with new job listings, according to Lantz. In addition to the listserv, new job postings are also available on the Student Employment Web site.

Last year, just before Thanksgiving, Lantz was contacted about a one-time, four-hour job working at a kiosk at Walmart. While the job paid \$16-\$17 per hour, Lantz was concerned that the position wouldn't be filled due to students going home for the holiday. Within a single day, 25 students had called about the job.

"We know the listserv works," Lantz said.

The Office of Student Employment has been open for only about a year. Despite that, they were able to help over 1,000 students find employment and make more than a cumulative \$4 million last year.

Katy Pelton, a recent WVU graduate, testifies to the efficiency of the Office of Student Employment, even in their early stages.

“I think it was a pretty brand new thing, and they were still very well-prepared and very capable with assisting me with my intern search,” Pelton said.

She went in to speak with Student Employment last summer, very soon after they opened their doors.

“I was referred to the office through an individual who I had inquired about a job with. They didn’t have anything and sent me there. Franny King and Susan Lantz were the ones I spoke with,” Pelton said.

Lantz said she sees the Office of Student Employment as a great opportunity not only for students but also community employers.

“People hiring don’t know where to find students,” she said.

When an employer posts a job with Student Employment, 6,000 people see the position posted through the listserv. Still, more students can see the posting on its Web site.

Lantz also wants employers throughout the community to know that they can hire WVU students. They do a good job, she said.

One particular company that, according to Lantz, is very satisfied with their student employees is Contemporary Services Corporation (CSC). They hire students for jobs like ushering and ticketing. These types of jobs are great pick-up jobs, Lantz said.

Last year, the Office of Student Employment helped CSC hire about 75 students. CSC was so excited that they donated \$500 last year for the summer job fair.

“They really value our students,” Lantz said.

Pelton said the experience she gained during her internship was even more important than the pay.

“I had not worked in the human resources department before, and I wanted to make sure I had that experience under my belt before I graduated,” Pelton said. She believes that her internship with SM Stoller Corporation helped to give her a competitive edge.

She has now found a full-time position in Texas and is finishing her Master’s in human resources and industrial relations via distance learning. Pelton already has her Master of Business Administration.

Pelton also serves as an apt illustration of the overlap between the Office of Student Employment and the Career Services Center. Both offices deal with internships, because internships are both focused on long-term career goals and yet take place during a student’s education.

David Durham, director of WVU’s Career Services Center, wants students to be more aware of the services provided by his department, too. While there is no additional fee

for the services offered, Durham points out that students have already paid for them simply by being enrolled.

Students should start coming in as early as possible, as soon as their freshman year, Durham said.

“We can help seniors better if they come in early,” he said.

The Career Service Center hosts seven career fairs each year, two that are universitywide, and five that are program-specific.

The center also boasts Mountaineer Trak, an online system students can use to post resumes, transcripts, letters of recommendation and cover letters.

Employers can also use Mountaineer Trak to post job vacancies and look at a whole pool of potential employees.

And, every student has a Mountaineer Trak account already. They have only to activate it.

As part of Mountaineer Trak, the center has purchased 10 electronic kiosks students can use by swiping their student ID to show a listing of job openings. Five are already up and running around campus, and Durham said he hopes to have at least nine, if not all 10, available for use by fall.

Pelton said she would have been able to find a job on her own, but having several opportunities listed through student employment made it easier and more time efficient.

“I would say at the very minimum to go to get on the listserv, because it comes to your e-mail and you can see what’s available,” Pelton said. “[It’s] good for money, but also good for networking and experience so that you have that under your belt when looking for full-time positions.”

August 23, 2009

More Students Going Green

By MetroNews Huntington, Cabell County

More students are on Marshall University's campus for the start of the Fall Semester on Monday in Huntington.

Marshall officials say overall enrollment is up 3.5% from last year.

There are hundreds more freshmen this year as well. Marshall's first year class alone is 11% larger than it was last August, an increase of about 200 new students.

"We are extremely pleased that, despite tough economic times, Marshall University is seeing an increase in both our overall and freshman enrollment," Marshall President Stephen Kopp said.

Kopp, though, says his school needs to do better at keeping those students through their entire college careers.

"We must be committed to do everything we can to ensure that students who start at Marshall University complete their education and their degrees."

Enrollment increases have also been reported this year at Potomac State College of West Virginia University, Davis and Elkins College, West Virginia Wesleyan and Alderson-Broaddus.

For the first time in ten years, enrollment is down at West Virginia University.

Marshall University faculty members get stimulus grant

The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- A group of faculty members at Marshall University has been awarded \$750,000 by the National Science Foundation to continue an initiative aimed at increasing the number of women teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Dr. Marcia A. Harrison, professor of biological sciences and the principal investigator on the grant, will use the funds to work on recruitment, retention and policy efforts undertaken by the university during the past three years. The grant was made possible through the federal stimulus package.

The Marshall University ADVANCE program was established in 2006 with a \$1.2 million grant awarded through NSF's Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (ADVANCE) program. The new funding will extend the program for two years.

Harrison's co-investigators include Dr. Beverly C. Delidow, associate professor of biochemistry and microbiology; Patricia Y. Logan, associate professor of information technology and engineering; Elizabeth E. Murray, associate professor of integrated science and technology; and Judith A. Silver, professor of mathematics.

During the initial phase of the project, Harrison and her colleagues worked with teams of faculty, staff and administrators to analyze and review existing barriers to the success of female STEM faculty, and to develop new programs and policies to increase the representation and advancement of women.

"The ADVANCE program nationally is quite competitive, so this extension demonstrates that NSF believes what we are doing here at Marshall is working," Harrison said. "We now plan to turn our attention to sustaining our efforts long term by ensuring continued growth and institutionalization of the program."

The National Science Foundation says women continue to be significantly underrepresented in almost all science and engineering fields. Although 41 percent of all faculty members at Marshall are women, only 27 percent of STEM faculty members are female.

Harrison said increasing the number of female faculty members in science and technology fields provides much-needed role models for West Virginia's young, female students and an additional economic development stimulus.

"Our programs help female faculty members balance and integrate their teaching and service commitments, while building competitive research programs," said Harrison. "This additional research activity has the potential to increase external funding, providing the region and state with economic development advantages."

August 28, 2009

Manchin Cuts Ribbon At New WLU Facility

By JOSELYN KING

When the doors opened this week at West Liberty University's Highlands Center, the opportunity for higher education also materialized for wheelchair user Elliott Stache.

Stache, the grandson of former West Virginia Secretary of State A. James Manchin, is also the nephew of Mark Manchin, the current executive director of the State School Building Authority. Stache was present Thursday as his cousin, current Gov. Joe Manchin, cut the ribbon to officially open the WLU Highlands Center.

The new facility is on the second floor of the building, but it is nevertheless handicap accessible.

"He really wanted to go to college," said Stache's mother, Rosanna Manchin. "He went to West Liberty, but (the main campus) is on a hill, and that just wasn't good."

Stache told Gov. Manchin that he is majoring in communications and has hopes of going into radio broadcasting. Manchin expressed surprise that Stache wasn't majoring in political science.

"He's going to be a great politician and community leader," Manchin said of his cousin.

The Highlands facility officially opened for classes on Saturday and will house the new master of arts in education degree program, accelerated business classes and a number of undergraduate courses.

State funds totalling \$800,000 account for most of the initial \$1 million investment in the facility.

University President Robin Capehart commended Gov. Manchin for his commitment to improving education in the state as a means to upgrading West Virginia's economy.

"You know, Governor, if we had a job in West Virginia for every time a West Virginia politician promised a job, there wouldn't be any unemployment," Capehart said. "In fact, we'd have too many people working. But there's been a long leap between promising jobs and actually proposing, passing and implementing policies that actually contribute to the economic growth of a state."

Capehart added that he is often amused by the all the politicians and pundits who "state with confidence" that growing an economy starts with spending.

"Most economists will tell you that spending is, in fact, actually at the end of the wave of economic growth - not at the beginning," he said. "Economic growth actually begins with

one thing - good ideas. These ideas produce a better product at less cost or are ideas that create more efficient and more effective systems of production and delivery."

And Manchin understands the key to great economic ideas is education and establishing a foundation for economic growth, Capehart noted.

He made reference to Manchin's "Bucks for Brains" program that sets aside matching money for dollars raised for research at West Virginia University and Marshall University.

"If West Liberty doesn't succeed, West Virginia doesn't succeed," the governor told those present. "If you're not able to provide the leaders of tomorrow and the work force we need today, forget it. ... we've had it. If your staff doesn't understand that, and they think it's a job and not a mission in life, we're in trouble.

"So we're here supporting you. You've got the vision, and you've got the leaders," Manchin added.

August 24, 2009

WLU Classes Begin Today at Highlands University wants its education to be accessible

By SHELLEY HANSON

WHEELING - Today is West Liberty University's inaugural day of classes at its new Highlands Center.

Tom Michaud, dean of the School of Professional Studies at the Highlands Center, said two accelerated business program classes are slated today - the first at 8 a.m. and the other at noon.

"It's spectacular," Michaud said of the center. "The classrooms are high-tech, and it's very tastefully decorated. It will serve the community extremely well. Visitors and those taking classes will be impressed with how well-appointed it is."

The Highlands, an Ohio County Development Authority-owned retail development, is located near Dallas Pike.

Michaud noted a total of 25 students today will be attending classes at the center. Main campus classes begin Monday. WLU President Robin Capehart said the university is anticipating its largest freshman class in 20 years, but he said related numbers would be released next week.

The Highlands Center is replacing the Warwood Center. A deal to sell the Warwood Center to Steel Valley Properties is slated to close Aug. 31, said Jack Wright, the school's chief financial officer.

"They plan to keep the building and rent it out," Wright said.

He noted WLU will also rent some space at the Warwood Center for its RESA 6 partnership site. Wright noted the YMCA ended its lease at the Warwood Center when the university announced it was going to sell the building. And the university's SMART Center has closed, he said. Wright was not aware if a privately owned child care center would remain there.

Capehart noted that in decades past, WLU has placed extension centers in areas of commerce. And at The Highlands, there are now 3,000 to 4,000 people working at various stores and restaurants. "We have traditionally provided that kind of accessibility for individuals," he said.



August 29, 2009

Preliminary figures show enrollment up at FSU, Pierpont

By Katie Wilson, Times West Virginian

FAIRMONT — There's a few more students at Fairmont State University this year.

Preliminary figures indicate enrollment is up at FSU and Pierpont Community & Technical College. FSU President Thomas Krepel cautioned the figures are not official and may well fluctuate for the next few weeks, but for right now, it's looking like there are a few more students at the desks.

As of last Sunday, the full-time equivalent enrollment at FSU for undergraduates was up 3.31 percent. The enrollment at PC&TC was up 8.13 percent.

The head count, the number of actual students in the seats, is also up. At FSU, the head count is up 2.16 percent, while at Pierpont, it's up 4.19 percent.

August 27, 2009

College, of Course

With state's educational attainment lagging, institutions seek to attract, retain students.

Story by Walt Williams

MONTGOMERY -- Their four most exciting years may be ahead of them, but the incoming freshman students at the West Virginia University Institute of Technology got their start Aug. 23 through one of higher education's most time-honored traditions: standing in line.

Dozens of students lined up outside the campus bookstore as they waited to get their student IDs. Looking bored and mostly not talking to the strangers surrounding them, the students waited silently as they slowly inched ever so closer to the room where their IDs would be processed.

They were among the 400 new students that campus officials said they likely would welcome this school year. The students come from every county in the state and from many surrounding states. One was Chris Vorman of Virginia, who gave a practical answer when asked why attend college.

"Because I need an education," he said.

WVU Tech didn't have final numbers as of the writing of this story, but it appeared that undergraduate enrollment at the school may have increased for the first time in at least a decade. The campus has seen its student population plummet from nearly 2,600 students in 1999 to just 1,200 in 2008, according to figures from the state Higher Education Policy Commission.

Other public universities have seen similar drops, while a handful have seen their enrollment numbers rise, thanks in part to out-of-state students. Marshall University lost roughly 2,000 undergraduate students during the past decade. At the same time, WVU's main campus added 6,000 students, although half of the college's student body comes from somewhere other than West Virginia.

That trend may have ended, with Marshall and other colleges reporting substantial increases in enrollment for the coming school year. But the number of high school graduates in the state has been shrinking as the state's population grows older and younger residents move out, forcing colleges to look elsewhere for students.

At the same time, West Virginia ranks last in the nation in educational attainment, with U.S. Census Bureau figures showing that fewer than one in five residents 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher. Only 6 percent of residents have a two-year associate's degree.

Those figures have been noticed. Forbes.com listed the lack of college education as a major reason why it named West Virginia the worst place in which to do business in 2008. You can't expect to run a successful business with an uneducated work force, so the thinking goes.

"Recruitment" and "retention" currently are the two buzzwords among local college officials. Many talk about recruitment given the fact that they are going to need to bring in more bodies simply to survive. They talk about retention in recognition that fewer than half of college students in West Virginia graduate from college, a figure well below the national average. The strategies to address both vary by campus.

WVU Tech, for example, has a new dean of student development whose focus is keeping students in school. At the same time, campus officials brought in a new enrollment manager who implemented a more targeted recruitment effort than in the past, with each academic unit adopting an enrollment business plan for their departments.

"This year we're going to be more organized in our efforts in enrollment management because we will be including the input from the academic (departments) in that plan, which is something that hasn't occurred here ever," campus Provost Scott Hurst said.

There are 10 four-year public universities in West Virginia and another 10 two-year community and technical colleges. At the same time, there are at least nine private universities, and that number seemingly is increasing with the growing availability of online courses.

Many local colleges focus recruiting not just on West Virginia high school students, but also older, nontraditional students and out of state students.

WVU relies heavily on out-of-state recruitment to keep its numbers up. About half of its 22,000 undergraduate students are from other states, particularly Pennsylvania. That is high compared to many major universities in the surrounding area, such as the Ohio State University, where out-of-state students make up about 11 percent of its population.

WVU President James Clements said in a recent interview the shrinking number of high school graduates is a nationwide trend and something he had to contend with as a university administrator in Maryland. His answer to getting through that potential bottleneck was casting as wide a net as possible in recruitment, not just looking at neighboring states but abroad.

"I think we have an opportunity to increase our recruiting, to increase international educational partnerships for joint degrees, for research programs, for study abroad -- we've got to start thinking that 10 years down the road it is going to be very different," he said.

WVU and the state's public universities have an advantage in that their tuition rates are low compared to peer institutions. It sometimes may make more economic sense for an out-of-state student to attend school in West Virginia than a public college in his or her own state.

Marshall hasn't been able to tap into that pool of out-of-state students as successfully as WVU. Its population of undergraduates shrunk from 11,700 students in 1999 to 9,300 in 2008.

Marshall President Stephen Kopp said he believes that trend will soon change. He noted the university has launched an aggressive construction program to make the campus more attractive to prospective students. The campus is boasting roughly \$200 million in new construction, including a new student recreation center with swimming pools and other amenities.

That new construction coupled with reinvigorated recruitment efforts may be paying off. Marshall recently reported seeing growth in enrollment for the first time in nearly a decade, with a 3.5 percent increase over last year.

"You have to look across the entire spectrum of what has been happening in the last few years," Kopp said. "We have laid the foundation for growth, and we are beginning to see that pay off."

Less than 20 percent of Marshall's student body comes from out of state. Kopp would like to see that increase to 30 percent in the future.

Attracting new students is one thing. Keeping them in school is another. About half of WVU students graduate, a rate close to the national average and one that Clements said was respectable, although he thought the university could do better.

Marshall's retention rate hovers from 46 to 48 percent. It is a figure that university officials hope to change in the future with a renewed emphasis on early intervention programs for those students at risk of dropping out.



August 30, 2009

In a recession, is college worth it? Fear of debt changes plans

By Sandra Block, USA TODAY

Darla Horn, 26, acknowledges she didn't give much thought to the cost of college when she enrolled at State University of New York in Purchase.

"My plans were to get out of Texas, and college became incidental," says Horn, who grew up in Nacogdoches, a city of about 32,000 near the Louisiana border. Because she didn't qualify for financial aid, she took out student loans, graduating in 2005 with a double major in journalism and anthropology and more than \$80,000 in debt.

Her loan payments were manageable until this year, when she lost her job as an information technology recruiter earning about \$100,000 a year. Currently self-employed, she's behind on her loan payments. In April, she organized an exhibition in Long Island that featured artwork by graduates who are trying to raise money to pay their student loans.

"To this day, I have yet to see the complete value of my education," Horn says.

For years, an article of faith in this country has been that college is the gateway to a better life. So deeply held is this belief that many students, such as Horn, borrow tens of thousands of dollars to attend prestigious public or private universities. But as the worst recession since World War II trudges into its 21st month, many graduates are discovering that the college payoff could be a long time coming — if it comes at all.

New and prospective students, meanwhile, are abandoning their "dream schools" in favor of more affordable options, forcing many colleges to work harder to justify their price of admission.

In July, the unemployment rate for college graduates was 4.7%, up from 2.8% a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's still considerably lower than the 9.4% rate for workers with only a high school diploma.

But unlike out-of-work high school graduates, many unemployed college grads face the additional burden of student loan payments. Two-thirds of bachelor's degree recipients last year graduated with an average debt of about \$23,000, according to Finaid.org, a financial aid website.

Total debt for borrowers with graduate or professional degrees ranges from \$30,000 to \$120,000, Finaid.org says.

New graduates face an even more unforgiving job market. Employers expect to hire 22% fewer graduates from the class of 2009 than they hired from the class of 2008, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

The economic downturn is affecting the choices that students and their parents make:

- Community college enrollment is soaring. More than 90% of community college presidents said enrollment was up in January from the previous year, and 86% reported an increase in full-time students, according to a survey by the Campus Computing Project, which studies the role of information technology in higher education.

Alyssa Griffin, 19, of Columbus, Ohio, would like to obtain a bachelor's degree in interactive media from Capital University, a private school in Bexley, Ohio. But to save money, she plans to spend her freshman and sophomore years at Columbus State Community College and live at home.

This strategy means Griffin will miss out on a traditional four-year college experience, but it will significantly reduce the cost of her college education — by more than \$40,000. Tuition at Capital runs more than \$27,000 a year, vs. about \$6,000 at Columbus State.

"I have no issues with starting at Columbus State and then going on to Capital," Griffin says.

Community colleges have long provided a way for adults to learn new job skills, often by attending part time. But these days, they're seeing a big increase in students such as Griffin, says Will Kopp, vice president for institutional advancement at Columbus State.

The median age of new students at Columbus State is 19, he says. By attending their first two years at a community college, Kopp says, "they're paying maybe a third of the tuition at state universities; maybe a tenth what they'd pay at a private school."

- Students who attend traditional four-year colleges are paying more attention to costs. More than two-thirds of students who applied for college this spring said the economic downturn affected their choice of colleges, according to a survey by the Princeton Review.

The survey also found "a great concern around financial aid," with 85% stating that they wouldn't be able to pay for college without it, says Robert Franek, vice president, publishing, for the Princeton Review.

Similarly, 70% of high schools reported an increase in the number of students who abandoned their "dream schools" in favor of more affordable options during the 2008-09 academic year, according to the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

More than 65% reported an increase in the number of students planning to apply to a state instead of a private school.

Nearly one-third of private colleges expect freshman enrollment to decline in the 2009-10 academic year, according to a survey by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU).

Overall undergraduate enrollment in private colleges is expected to increase by 0.2%, the association said. In the past 10 years, enrollment at both public and private schools has increased by an average of 1% to 2% a year.

Private colleges are well aware of the financial difficulties facing many families and have increased student aid by an average of 9%, says Tony Pals, spokesman for the NAICU.

"Nearly nine out of 10 students at private colleges pay less than the list price," Pals says. "You also need to consider that students at private colleges are twice as likely to graduate in four years than their peers at public institutions."

A long-term investment?

Few would argue that college is a bad investment, but the economic downturn could diminish the value of that investment.

Those who graduate during a recession tend to start at smaller and lower-paying companies or firms, forcing them to change jobs more frequently than those who graduate during better times, according to a 2006 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

The study found that college students who graduate during a recession suffer an average 9% reduction in annual earnings initially, and that the discrepancies don't disappear until about 10 years after graduation.

Even before the recession, the value of a college investment was inflated, says Marc Scheer, author of *No Sucker Left Behind: Avoiding the Great College Rip-Off*.

Often-quoted reports that college graduates earn \$1 million more over their lifetimes than workers with high school diplomas help encourage students to take out unmanageable levels of debt, Scheer says.

"No debt amount seems steep compared to a \$1 million payoff," he says.

'Less likely to struggle'

The College Board, a non-profit association of more than 5,400 colleges and universities, estimates the lifetime "earnings premium" for a college graduate is \$450,000 in today's dollars, or \$570,000 for workers with graduate degrees.

"That's a much more accurate" estimate than the \$1 million figure, says Sandy Baum, senior policy analyst for the College Board.

But Baum argues that a college education is more valuable during a recession, not less.

In a downturn, she says, "Most of the stories that say maybe it (college degree) isn't worth it any more find some unemployed college graduate," she says. "But unemployment among college graduates is still half that of high school graduates. A college education payoff is at least as high as it was before the recession. You're so much less likely to struggle if you have an education."

Laurence Kotlikoff, an economist at Boston University and developer of ESPlanner financial software, says his analysis of median earnings shows that college graduates nearly always fare better than those with just a high school diploma. But the amount students borrow can significantly reduce that advantage, he says.

Brenda Jaeggi, 26, of Galveston, graduated last May from Texas A&M University with a degree in maritime studies and more than \$39,000 in student loans. About \$22,000 of her loans are private loans, which are costlier and carry less flexible repayment terms than federal student loans.

Now, Jaeggi is struggling to make her \$400 monthly payments. She's considering moving to a less-expensive apartment, although that likely will mean living in a neighborhood that isn't as safe as the one she's in now.

"I don't have any regrets about going to Texas A&M," Jaeggi says. "I'm proud to be part of that school and that culture. I very much regret how easy it was to get a student loan. Now, I'm stuck in this really bad pickle."

Graduates of elite schools contend that attending such a school gives them an edge in a tough job market.

Michelle Talbert, 39, has more than \$90,000 in student loans from her undergraduate studies at Cornell University and law school at the University of Pennsylvania.

She recently was laid off by a law firm in Fairfax, Va., where she was a corporate associate specializing in mergers and acquisitions. Talbert says the connections she made in college helped her obtain contract work. Her current salary varies from month to month.

"I'm really enthusiastic about not letting circumstances that could appear to be a hurdle stop you from achieving a dream," says Talbert, a mother of two who got her undergraduate degree when she was 30. "For me, my dream was to go to college and go to law school."

College financial aid specialists say students should take a hard look at average salaries in their chosen profession before taking out student loans.

"If you think you want to be a preschool teacher, you should be more hesitant about borrowing than if you think you're going to be an engineer," Baum says.

Darla Horn says that if she had to do it all over, she would have taken a year off to figure out what she wanted to do with her life before attending college.

"Some kids know what they want — they want to go to medical school, or become doctors or lawyers," she says.

"But for someone that doesn't know what direction they want to head in, I would say, take a break, get to know yourself a little more, before you spend thousands of dollars on an education."

Contributing: Michelle Walbaum

August 24, 2009

Before the Fall

By Scott Jaschik

It may seem the distant past now, but there was actually a recovery going on in state and local support for higher education until the economy tanked last fall.

The State Higher Education Executive Officers on Friday released its annual study on higher education financing, finding that in the 2008 fiscal year, which in most places ended just before the economic mess became fully visible, state and local funding for higher education reached \$89.2 billion, a 5.7 percent increase over 2007, in current dollars.

Those figures marked the third year of a recovery in state and local support for higher education following the 25-year low in per student public funding that occurred in 2005, when state and local support totaled \$72.6 billion. That recovery was almost certainly lost in most states by the current recession and its impact on government support.

While there was a recovery in actual dollars, the period was also one in which enrollments were increasing -- 7.5 percent across the board over the last five years (predating the recent, economy-related enrollment spikes). SHEEO found that, after adjusting for enrollment increases and inflation, the increase in per-student appropriations was only 0.6 percent from 2007 to 2008. This suggests (and is no surprise to public higher education leaders) that there wasn't much of any cushion to fall back on when the cuts of the last year started.

Paul Lingenfelter, president of SHEEO, said that even though the recession shows signs of ending (according to the economists), "full recovery will take several years. When federal stimulus funds are gone, the budget holes in states could well grow even deeper."

In terms of tuition, the study found that constant dollar net tuition per full-time enrollment increased by 1.7 percent between 2007 and 2008, about the same as in the previous year. Nine states (Delaware, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Vermont) had more revenue for higher education -- despite below average appropriations -- because of above average tuition increases. The opposite was true in Arkansas, California, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada and New Mexico.

The following table shows state and local support and how it was used, in current dollars in millions, over the last six years.

Sources and Use of State and Local Funds for Higher Education, Current Dollars in Millions

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008

Source of Funds						
--State	\$64,427	\$63,552	\$65,972	\$70,992	\$76,961	\$81,138
--Local	\$6,374	\$6,675	\$6,656	\$6,969	\$7,313	\$8,043
--Total	\$70,801	\$70,227	\$72,628	\$77,961	\$84,274	\$89,181
Use of Funds						
--Research	\$9,462	\$9,324	\$9,456	\$9,670	\$10,406	\$11,234
--Student aid (public institutions)	\$3,252	\$3,631	\$4,029	\$4,471	\$4,827	\$5,186
--Out-of-state student aid	\$31	\$33	\$35	\$36	\$38	\$35
--Student aid (private institutions)	\$1,925	\$1,969	\$2,026	\$2,105	\$2,260	\$2,308
--Aid to private institutions	\$266	\$267	\$259	\$264	\$287	\$295
--Operating support at public institutions	\$55,864	\$55,003	\$56,823	\$61,415	\$66,456	\$70,124

Competition vs. Learning

By Scott Jaschik

Another admissions season is revving up, with the annual avalanche of rankings, the release of data on standardized test scores -- and colleges and high school seniors working to court one another. These days, each year brings reports of an increasing frenzy in admissions -- with more stress for students and their families.

Three scholars of education and economics on Monday released a study designed to get at some of the key issues related to that competition. Using a range of data, they show first that the increased competitiveness isn't imaginary and that it is indeed more difficult to get in (at least at some institutions) these days than it was in previous generations.

But they go on to explore whether or not this is a good thing in terms of learning. After all, high school students could respond to the pressure by taking more rigorous courses and studying more -- or they could focus their attentions on gaming the system and trying to impress.

The study found some evidence of the former, with more high schoolers -- during the time period in which admissions became much more competitive -- taking calculus or Advanced Placement courses. But the analysis found considerable evidence of the latter -- with more students taking multiple standardized tests, more students taking test-prep courses, more students (in states where admissions frenzy is highest) seeking special accommodations when they take standardized tests. Given that many of those behaviors relate to test taking as opposed to learning, the authors question whether the admissions frenzy is encouraging learning.

The study -- released by the National Bureau of Economic Research -- is by John Bound and Brad Hershbein of the University of Michigan and Bridget Terry Long of Harvard University. (An abstract and ordering information may be found [here](#).)

On the issue of how competitive it is to get into college, the scholars say that it's important to distinguish among institutions and students. The most competitive colleges, which generally have not increased their size significantly, have seen dramatic increases in applications, meaning that they are much more difficult to get into. But this trend doesn't apply in the same way to most colleges. Further, the scholars note that -- if one goes back to the '70s and compares applications then to now -- the period covered starts when top colleges still had a deficit of female applicants. So the reality that women who can get into top colleges now apply in greater numbers shouldn't be viewed as a bad thing or a sign of admissions frenzy, the authors suggest.

With those caveats of perspective, however, the authors use College Board data to show that the percentage of students accepted by top private and public universities has indeed declined. The private figures in the following table come from both universities and liberal arts colleges (a pool of 20 each), while the public figures come from universities (a pool of 20).

Acceptance Rate of Top Colleges and Universities

Year	Private	Public
1986	38.58%	63.15%
1991	38.39%	56.78%
1996	37.55%	58.98%
2001	31.49%	50.55%
2002	30.72%	48.81%
2003	29.85%	47.72%

Faced with those odds, are students doing more to prepare themselves for college -- or for the admissions process?

The authors, using data from the National Center for Education Statistics and elsewhere, find a mixed verdict. In terms of academics, they note significant gains from 1992 to 2004 -- generally a period when admissions frenzy is believed to have heightened -- in the percentage of high school students who took calculus (to 15.2 percent, from 10.3 percent), and in the percentage who took at least one Advanced Placement exam (to 30.9 percent, from 16.5 percent). But on average, the percentage of high schoolers who did at least 10 hours a week of homework fell during that period, from 26.7 percent to 20.4 percent.

Among those students applying to selective colleges, a greater proportion took calculus and AP, and a greater proportion did more than 10 hours of homework a week, but the trend lines are the same.

Studying and Course Taking Among High School Students Applying to Selective Colleges

	Applying to Selective Private	Applying to Selective Public
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Took calculus, 1992	43.6%	29.4%
Took calculus, 2004	52.3%	36.8%
Took an AP exam, 1992	60.0%	39.7%
Took an AP exam, 2004	77.9%	60.8%
Spent at least 10 hours a week on homework, 1992	49.5%	40.0%
Spent at least 10 hours a week on homework, 2004	45.2%	33.7%

The authors call the decline in homework time "somewhat mystifying," given that the focus on college acceptance and the more rigorous courses would presumably require more study time. Further, they note that some of the positive educational trends, such as more students taking an AP course, were most pronounced outside the Northeast (where admissions frenzy is strongest) and for students outside the top academic ranks (for whom Ivy applications aren't likely).

What are students spending more time on? Testing. For instance, one way to improve one's chances of getting into college might be to take both the SAT and the ACT and to submit the score that makes you look best -- a strategy that may take some time as such students are probably those who will prepare extensively for each test. The scholars found that from 1972 to 2004, the percentage of students who took both tests increased from one in eight to one in five. Among those applying to selective private colleges, the jump was from 15 to 35 percent.

Another strategy is for students to request "special accommodations" (such as extra time) on the SAT, an approach that has increased since such scores are no longer "flagged" for colleges. The scholars note that in states where more students are applying to highly competitive colleges, the percentage of students taking the SAT under such conditions is about 5 percent, more than twice the percentage in states where smaller shares of students apply to competitive colleges.

Other data in the paper suggest that more of students' time in high school is being spent with test-prep coaches. Some test preparation is the norm for students now and increasing shares, especially of those applying to competitive colleges, have private tutors or private classes.

Shifts in Percentage of High School Students Using Test-Prep

	Private classes/tutoring	Test-prep in any form
National average, 1992	14.1%	59.7%
National average, 2004	18.1%	62.6%
Applying to selective privates, 1992	32.8%	80.4%
Applying to selective privates, 2004	36.4%	83.0%
Applying to selective publics, 1992	18.0%	74.0%
Applying to selective publics, 2004	27.0%	76.8%

The authors acknowledge that some educational value is possible from test prep, as students may learn words or concepts. By and large, however, the authors are dubious, and note not only that lots of time is going into non-educational activities, but that all of the approaches that are taking up the time of college applicants are more readily available to the wealthy (test-prep services and so forth cost money) than to other applicants.

"The increased competition that currently exists for admission to a more selective college might have real benefits if it were to increase learning amongst high school students," the authors write. "However, our analysis suggests that there are reasons to be suspicious that this congenial outcome might not hold true. Moreover, the increased resources parents and students are able to use to improve their odds of admission at top colleges put low-income students at a disadvantage."