



West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Higher Education
News Clippings

Week of September 27, 2009



September 29, 2009

\$4M grant will allow WVU program to help more forensic scientists

Justice Department funds must still be approved as part of federal budget

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

A \$4 million grant from the Department of Justice will help WVU's Forensic Science Initiative provide additional training and resources for forensic scientists nationwide.

Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., announced the funding Monday. According to a press release, it's included in the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2009.

Max M. Houck, director of WVU's Forensic Science Initiative, said the grant must be approved as part of the federal budget. He's not sure when it will be approved, but the money will help WVU continue to provide existing resources and expand others. "We're thrilled," Houck said. "It gives us the ability to really solidify the work that we've done in previous years. In some ways, we've been building to this point. ... Now we're able to take that investment and really get a return." Byrd said WVU's forensic science programs help improve the nation's defense, homeland security and crime-fighting efforts.

"These programs answer the call for cutting-edge forensic technologies and highly trained forensic specialists," Byrd said in the press release. "As we seek to make America's streets safer, WVU's Forensic Science Initiative is a critical component in that effort."

WVU president James Clements agreed. He announced the grant funding at a Faculty Senate executive committee meeting Monday.

"We are one of the best in the entire country when it comes to forensic science," Clements said. "Some more federal support is a very good thing."

The Forensic Science Initiative was created in 2002, and Houck said it's provided training for more than 5,000 forensic scientists since then.

The initiative currently offers 12-15 online training courses, though several more are being developed. At least 40-60 people are enrolled at a time, but Houck said enrollment varies.

The grant-funded Forensic Science Initiative offers most courses at no cost to federal, state and local agencies. Houck said more than 400 forensic scientists nationwide have taken the initiative's online ethics course free of charge.

Additional classes are offered at on-site training sessions held once or twice a year. More than 350 people participated in a June training session in Las Vegas during which 32 classes were offered over the course of a week.

The next training session will be held in Boston this spring.

“We try to move it around the U.S.,” Houck said. “We try to make it so that nobody’s penalized by geography.”

The initiative also provides other resources to assist forensic science labs in meeting their goals. The FORESIGHT project allows forensic labs to enter employee and casework information to see how they compare to other facilities across the country.

In some cases, Houck said, it helps them figure out how to improve.

“There are tips and solutions that we can now start sharing between laboratories,” Houck said. “It makes it easier for them to document their successes.”

September 27, 2009

Swine flu hits at least 30 WVU students

Cassie Shaner, CNHI News Service

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — At least 218 cases of influenza-like illness have been reported at WVU, and Student Health officials have diagnosed about 30 cases of swine flu.

“Most of them are not confirmed, but presumed to be H1N1,” Dr. Jan E. Palmer, director of Student Health, said of the 218 cases.

WVU launched an online survey last week to track the number of swine flu cases on campus.

About 700 students, faculty and staff responded, but only 99 reported symptoms of influenza-like illness.

WVU altered the survey, asking people to respond only if they exhibited all the symptoms of swine flu. Symptoms include sudden onset of illness, a fever above 100.4 degrees and a cough or sore throat.

Another 119 cases of influenza-like illness were reported last week, bringing the total count to 218.

Holly Hildreth, a spokeswoman for the Monongalia County Health Department, said 29 cases of swine flu have been confirmed in Monongalia County, but state officials are no longer testing everyone for the virus. Instead, they are conducting random tests to monitor the spread of H1N1 and other types of influenza.

“H1N1 is the only flu circulating in West Virginia,” Hildreth said. “There are many, many more cases.”

Palmer said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has instructed health officials to assume that anyone who exhibits flu symptoms has H1N1.

People with influenza-like illness should avoid going to the doctor and stay isolated until about 24 hours after their fever breaks. However, anyone with an underlying health condition — such as diabetes or asthma — should consult a physician.

Palmer said anyone with influenza-like illness who comes within six feet of others should wear a mask to keep from spreading the disease. Student Health officials have provided masks to students leaving the office, and housing officials have masks to hand out to sick students to protect their roommates.

Students who live in the dorms have been advised to notify resident assistants of their condition. Palmer is checking with housing officials to identify high-concentration areas on campus, but there aren't any at this point.

“It’s kind of diffused across campus,” Palmer said.

Hildreth said swine flu vaccines should be available in limited amounts starting Thursday.

They will be offered to high-risk populations first, including pregnant women, people with underlying health conditions and anyone six months to 24 years old.

WVU will be responsible for administering the vaccine to its students, and there may be funding available to help. Ashley Schumaker, executive assistant to state Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland, said the HEPC and the state Bureau for Public Health received \$540,000 for swine flu planning and implementation on campus.

September 28, 2009

WVU biometrics, forensics get \$5 million boost

The Associated Press

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (AP) - West Virginia University's biometrics and forensic science programs are getting a \$5 million boost.

The FBI is giving WVU \$1 million in grants to develop and improve evidence-collection technologies and training tools for the agency.

One grant is for research on improving fingerprint analysis. The other is for research in finding better ways to collect human scents.

WVU has also won a \$4 million grant from the Department of Justice for forensics research and professional training, both online and in the classroom.

WVU is the academic arm of the FBI's Biometric Center of Excellence and provides research support to the FBI and its law enforcement partners. It has helped train thousands of officers.



September 29, 2009

WVU may drop 800 inactive courses by end of year Policy would remove classes that haven't been taught in 5 years

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

About 800 inactive courses could be removed from WVU's catalog by the end of the fall semester.

At a meeting on Monday, the Faculty Senate executive committee approved a proposed policy to drop courses from the books that have not been taught in five years or more.

The policy — which has not yet been drafted — must still be approved by the Faculty Senate, but chairman Nigel Clark said he's hopeful it will be implemented and take effect this semester.

"There really is no urgency to implement it, but we'll try over the next few months," Clark said.

About 800 courses have been inactive since 2004, Clark said. A total of 682 courses have been inactive since 2001, and more than 900 courses have been inactive since 2006.

But they're still listed in WVU's catalog, and students might think they are available.

"When our students pick up the catalog and they see a course there, they expect that they're going to be able to take it," Michael Lastinger, associate provost for international programs, said Monday.

Clark said the WVU catalog does not accurately reflect the number of courses being taught by each department. Law professor Marjorie McDiarmid said the number of inactive courses can also affect accreditation.

But there's no procedure in place now to remove an inactive course from WVU's catalog. Clark said the Faculty Senate discussed it at one point, but he cannot find any records to indicate that a policy was ever approved.

The proposed policy calls for posting courses that have not been taught in five years or more on the Faculty Senate Web site. Faculty members and deans would be notified when the list is posted, but only deans would be able to request that courses remain in the catalog.

Deans would have a deadline by which to ask that courses be kept on the books. Otherwise, they would be dropped automatically by the Senate's curriculum committee.

If the policy is approved, the curriculum committee would work with WVU's registrar to conduct an annual review of inactive courses.

Clark initially suggested restricting the review to every once every few years, but WVU President James Clements recommended doing it on an annual basis instead.

“Do it every year, X number of years that it’s been inactive,” Clements said. “People are informed, and they have an opportunity to say keep it or let it go.”

Other business

Also at Monday’s meeting:

Clements provided an update on WVU’s 2020 strategic planning efforts. He said more than 500 people have responded to an online survey launched earlier this month to solicit input about WVU’s future.

“The feedback I’m getting is extremely positive,” Clements said. “People feel good. People have good ideas.”

Interim Provost E. Jane Martin said she’s working to arrange one-on-one meetings with employees for Michele Wheatly, WVU’s new provost. Wheatly begins work Jan. 1, but she has several trips to WVU planned this fall.

“We’re trying to get some of these things out of the way so that when she gets here in January, there won’t be quite the imperative to travel and go see people and where they work and so on,” Martin said.

Martin is also trying to arrange advance meetings with employees for WVU’s new chief information officer, Rehan Khan.

Martin shared WVU’s most recent fall enrollment numbers. About 28,788 students — 52 less than last year’s total of 28,840 — are enrolled at WVU’s Morgantown campus, but that number could go up as more students pay tuition.

About 1,142 students are enrolled at the WVU Institute of Technology. Enrollment was about the same last year, but Martin said freshman and transfer numbers are up.

A record number of students — about 1,793 — are enrolled at Potomac State College of WVU, she said.



September 28, 2009

Report: WVU violated federal act Refers to crime reporting from eight years ago

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

WVU violated the federal Clery Act by failing to properly disclose campus crime statistics in 2001 and 2002, according to a final U.S. Department of Education (DOE) report.

The report said WVU mislabeled some incidents, under-reported others and failed to include crimes reported to other agencies in campus crime statistics.

The findings have been referred to the DOE's Administrative Actions and Appeals Division for consideration. The division could assess a fine or limit, suspend or terminate WVU's eligibility for federal student financial aid programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act.

But S. Daniel Carter, director of public policy for the Pennsylvania-based campus safety watchdog group Security on Campus, said it's not likely to affect financial aid at WVU.

"That has never occurred in connection with a Clery violation," Carter said.

WVU has already implemented policing and safety improvements since the program review began, but the report also requires WVU to document additional changes that will be made to ensure the violations don't occur again.

WVU spokesman John Bolt said the university received the final DOE report earlier this month. It has since been posted by WVU Police.

"The university has always acknowledged that there were errors made, but they were clerical errors," Bolt said. "There was never any intention to hide or misrepresent the incidents. There have been corrective administrative actions taken to make sure that campus crime reporting is done accurately."

Bolt said WVU takes campus crime seriously, and "maintaining a safe, secure environment" is one of the university's top priorities. WVU officials are working with the DOE to ensure that crimes are reported accurately, he said.

WVU cannot appeal the findings in the DOE report, but it will be able to appeal any action taken against the university by the Administrative Actions and Appeals Division.

"We're waiting see what they decide to determine what kind of action we want to take next," WVU Police Chief Bob Roberts said Friday.

Carter said WVU could be fined as much as \$27,500 for each incident that was not accurately reported, each area of noncompliance or each year the violations occurred. Fines can take more than a year to be resolved, but they're typically settled out of court.

The largest fines to date for Clery violations were at Eastern Michigan University and Salem International University in Salem, W.Va. They paid \$350,000 and \$250,000, respectively.

Violations

The DOE investigation into WVU's crime-reporting practices began in 2004. It was requested by Security on Campus after a jury ruled in favor of three WVU Department of Public Safety officers who claimed they had been retaliated against for complaining that dorm-room burglaries were routinely mislabeled.

The DOE first identified WVU's violations in a preliminary program review report sent to WVU last year. It detailed the school's compliance with the Clery Act, a federal law that requires colleges and universities to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses, and gave WVU 90 days to respond.

WVU conducted its own internal review of the crimes investigated by the DOE. WVU Police disagreed with the DOE in some cases, but concurred in others.

For instance, WVU disagreed with the DOE about what should be classified as a burglary. The WVU Department of Public Safety and Transportation — now WVU Police — reported 14 burglaries in 2001, but the DOE found evidence of 39 burglaries. In 2002, WVU reported 29 burglaries, but the DOE found evidence of 57 burglaries.

Last year, Roberts told The Dominion Post that WVU even checked with the FBI to make sure WVU was classifying burglaries properly, but Carter said Clery guidelines are different from FBI rules.

"It's important that the DOE send a clear message that the Clery guidelines exist for a reason," Carter said. "They need to be adhered to, and they are sometimes different than other crime-reporting guidelines."

The DOE indicated that the university failed to report crime that occurred on areas considered part of campus under Clery, too. According to the report, WVU is required to report crime that occurs on campus, on public property or on noncampus buildings and properties controlled by WVU student organizations.

WVU also failed to include arsons reported to the Morgantown Fire Department and other crimes reported to the Morgantown Police Department or the WVU Office of Student Life in its crime reports.

"The Clery Act requires that statistics be disclosed for all Clery crimes reported to any agency with jurisdiction over any part of its campus, including arson," according to the final report.

Roberts said WVU Police have always asked for crime reports from the Morgantown Police Department and included incidents of campus crime in its Clery reports. He added that crime-reporting rules indicated that the information should come from police, not fire officials.

But Roberts said there have been changes in reporting procedures since the DOE probe to make sure that WVU gets the information it needs. A training session with

WVU Police and local law enforcement officials is slated for November to review policies and procedures.

“There was never any intention to cover up anything, and there’s no reason we would,” Roberts said. “Were mistakes made? Sure. Did we correct them? Yes. ... I don’t have anything to hide. The crime is what it is.”

Carter said WVU should make the changes recommended by the DOE to avoid additional disciplinary action. But he’s frustrated by how long it took the DOE to conclude that WVU had violated Clery.

Students shouldn’t have to wait that long for accurate crime information, he said.

“The Clery Act crime-reporting provisions are inclusive to make sure students are as informed as possible so they can make decisions about their safety,” Carter said.

said.

WVU CAMPUS CRIME REPORT		
Offense	2007* Total	2008* Total
Murder	0	0
Manslaughter	0	0
Sex Offense		
Forcible	11	4
Non-forcible	0	0
Robbery	12	3
Aggravated assault	12	13
Burglary	40	37
Arson	0	4
Motor vehicle theft	9	7
Destruction of Property	116	123
Simple assault (Battery)	61	69
Thefts (Larceny)	169	229
NUMBER OF ARRESTS OR PEOPLE REFERRED FOR CAMPUS DISCIPLINARY ACTION		
Liquor law violations		
Campus disciplinary action	895	1,183
Arrest	374	268
Drug law violations		
Campus disciplinary action	43	65
Arrest	126	204
Weapons possession		
Campus disciplinary action	1	0
Arrest	0	3

* Includes incidents reported on and off-campus, as required by the Clery Act.

Source: WVU
Eric J. Tomlinson / The Dominion Post

September 28, 2009

Marshall receives \$1M grant for cancer research

by The Associated Press

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (AP) -- Marshall University has received a \$1 million federal grant for a cancer genetics research project in partnership with West Virginia University.

U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall said Monday that researchers will study the genetic makeup of donated tumor material to establish a cancer genomics network. The goal is to use the information to create customized diagnostics, prognosis and treatment.

The grant from the National Institutes of Health supplements existing funding from the National Center for Research Resources.

September 30, 2009

\$529K for cardiovascular research funding at Marshall University announced

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) announced today, September 23, 2009, that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) approved a \$529,094 grant award for Marshall University's Department of Pharmacology, Physiology and Toxicology, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The grant supplements existing funding for cardiovascular research that is attempting to discover biomarkers that can be used to identify people who are predisposed to heart disease, ultimately improving early detection and preventative measures.

"Marshall University and its talented faculty are once again leading the fight against some of the biggest health concerns in our state," said Rahall. "The key to dramatically reducing heart disease as a leading killer in southern West Virginia is prevention and early detection, which is exactly what the research at Marshall is trying to improve."

The grant will take fat samples from around the heart of patients undergoing heart bypass and heart valve replacement surgeries. Once the biomarkers are identified in the fat samples, the research team will attempt to identify those same markers in blood samples. If the research is successful it could lead to non-invasive testing for heart disease predisposition and allow for preventative treatment.

"The long term goal of this study is to better understand the risk of obesity to cardiovascular disease in the State of West Virginia and Appalachian region. The immediate goal of this translational study is to identify unique epicardial fat specific biomarkers that will help either predict future cardiovascular risk or be targets for future therapeutics," explained Dr. Nalini Santanam, Professor at Marshall University's Department of Pharmacology, Physiology and Toxicology.

Dr. Santanam continued, "This study is a collaboration of basic scientists from Marshall and partner institutions in WV with clinicians and surgeons from St. Mary's Heart Center and Cabell Huntington Hospital. This funding will also provide training opportunities to undergraduate, graduate and medical students from West Virginia to conduct translational research at Marshall. The investigators thank NIH and Congressman Rahall for supporting this study."

"Quality healthcare with preventative medicine as a central focus is key to West Virginians living long and happy lives," said Rahall. "Cutting edge research, aimed at identifying and preventing one of the deadliest diseases in West Virginia could help us to save hundreds of lives a year by preventing dangerous surgeries and expensive treatments."

Continued enrollment increases imperative at MU

BILL ROSENBERGER, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- The 11.5 percent increase in new full-time freshmen was among the most noteworthy achievements at Marshall University this fall.

But President Stephen Kopp said that without a sustained increase in both new freshmen and retention rates, faculty raises will not become a reality.

Kopp, almost apologetically, told the hundred or so faculty members who attended Tuesday afternoon's State of the University Address that state officials have all but ruled out increased funding during the next couple of years.

"There will be no increase in state allocations in 2011," Kopp said. "The challenge we face is unprecedented in our lifetime. State revenues are declining and will likely do so the next two years."

In fact, he said all indications are that there actually will be a 4 percent decrease in Marshall's state allocations. But Gov. Joe Manchin plans to use stimulus reserves to keep Marshall at the 2009 levels.

"That leaves us with a structural deficit of 4 percent," Kopp said. "How do we overcome? Keep increasing our enrollment."

Non-resident student enrollment stayed flat, while West Virginia resident enrollment made up most of the increase. That is surprising, Kopp said, because college-aged residents are a declining demographic in the state.

Faculty Senate Chair Cam Brammer agreed that enrollment increases are likely the only avenue toward increased salaries, though she seemed a bit more callous about the state not giving pay raises.

"Unfortunately the state did not see fit, because of the economic downturn or budget limits, we were not granted raises," Brammer said. "The thing that we can do and have done is increase enrollment."

When that raise will come is unknown. Brammer told her colleagues that it understandably won't come next year because enrollment increases must be sustained. But she said she believes raises could come as soon as two years, while Kopp has told her that he's not as optimistic.

The retention part could be the key to increasing tuition revenue and, ultimately, faculty salary increases. Provost Gayle Ormiston is scheduled to unveil his new comprehensive retention plan at the Marshall Board of Governors meeting on Oct. 15. But Kopp shared a few numbers that have to change under the plan.

He said 88 percent of the freshman class from a year ago came back to school last spring. But just 71.9 percent returned this fall.

"We need to try to find out why they didn't return," Kopp said, adding it may not be related to academics. "We want to try and cut that in half. With that comes additional revenue to do the things we'd like to do."

Kopp said the goals set forth since he arrived in 2005 are attainable because the attitude at Marshall is in the right place.

"I don't work the hours I do, and you don't work the hours you do because you don't care," he said. "(But) we have to work together for the common goals."

It's not just the intangibles that Kopp highlighted. He also pointed to the \$180 million in capital projects since 2005, the establishment of numerous new programs and the \$40-plus million in grant funding attained by faculty during the 2009 fiscal year.

"We're a hell of a lot better than we were four years ago," he continued. "We have made tremendous strides. The key is to keep working together. This is our university, we're all part of the same family."

October 2, 2009

Byrd announces MU funds

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-WV today, 10/1/09, announced that the Department of Justice is providing Marshall University \$5.825 million to continue work for two key crime-fighting/solving research and technology programs. Byrd, who is the senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, had the money included in the Fiscal Year 2009 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Marshall University's Forensic Science Center (MUFSC) will receive \$5 million to expand the Center's role as a model working forensic laboratory in support of the forensic community in conjunction with the National Institute of Justice. As a result of Byrd's support for this program, MUFSC has developed the capacity to quickly respond to the needs of the forensic community and new challenges in a timely and focused manner. With changes in national and state priorities, as well as new technologies and requirements of the courts, this funding is critical for the Center to adapt and upgrade its research to meet these needs. In addition, the Center will continue to provide assistance to forensic crime laboratories by utilizing its DNA lab in technology transfer, research and development, testing and evaluation, and model training.

"Marshall's Forensic Science Center plays a leading role in national forensic research, training, and service efforts. These initiatives are helping to protect citizens, put criminals behind bars, and train the forensic scientists of tomorrow," Byrd said.

Dr. Stephen J. Kopp, president of Marshall University, thanked Senator Byrd on behalf of the University, saying, "We thank Senator Byrd for his steadfast support of Marshall University's Forensic Science Program. This program is a national leader in cutting-edge forensic science research and applied technology. These funds will help further the vital and pioneering work underway in the Marshall Forensic Science program, work that will directly benefit our nation, federal and state law enforcement agencies, our communities and our students."

"The MU Forensic Science Center has earned recognition as a national resource for the forensic science community in the areas of training, research and solving crimes as a result of Senator Byrd's continued support. We are addressing new challenges through our nationally accredited DNA laboratory and our digital forensics unit, said Dr. Terry Fenger, Director of the MU Forensic Science Center. "MUFSC has also served the forensic science community by educating the next generation of laboratory analysts and investigators. Its Master's degree program in forensic science, which originated in 1995, was recently ranked #1 in the nation on a multi-disciplinary student examination pointing to the program's level of excellence."

The additional \$825,000 that Byrd secured will be used for the continued development of and upgrades to the Computer Forensics Science Initiative at MU. The project will

assist state and local law enforcement by providing a working model laboratory as a guide for state and local agencies working with digital evidence; increasing the number of law enforcement personnel with the necessary education and training in digital forensics; and performing testing and evaluation on new and emerging digital forensic techniques and technologies.

“This initiative trains specialized personnel in computer crime investigations at all levels, including terrorist attacks on computer networks; internet fraud; identity theft; child exploitation; drug transactions; and corporate espionage; which enables law enforcement to be more effective in crime-fighting,” Byrd added.

Professor to file grievance

LAURA WILCOX, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- A Marshall University professor says she will take whatever steps are necessary to file a grievance in order to begin an investigation of why one student's grades were recently changed from incompletes to A's.

Professor Laura Wyant said she wants the Faculty Senate to investigate why the grades of Marshall student Emily Perdue, who is West Virginia Treasurer John Perdue's daughter, were changed after she gave the student incompletes last spring in two independent study courses.

Wyant said she already filed a letter which she thought would serve as a grievance, but she will take whatever action is required to file the complaint officially.

The Faculty Senate will not investigate the matter until Wyant has filed the grievance, according to Faculty Senate President Camilla Brammer.

"The procedure is, if she's unhappy with the ruling of the provost, which he investigated the entire matter, if she's unhappy with that, she can file a grievance," Brammer said. "Until she files a grievance, the Faculty Senate cannot do anything. We do not have the power to do it."

Brammer said Wyant must file the formal complaint with Provost Gayle Ormiston, who will then send it on to Brammer as the Faculty Senate chair, who will then charge the Faculty Personnel Committee with the matter of investigating. She said the whole process could be lengthy.

Ormiston said Friday that Emily Perdue's grades were changed after she completed the coursework over the summer under College of Education & Human Services Dean Rosalyn Templeton.

The questions about the grade change at Marshall come two years after West Virginia University became involved in a master's degree scandal involving Gov. Joe Manchin's daughter. Former WVU President Mike Garrison resigned and former Provost Gerald Lang gave up his administrative post after investigators found that Mylan Inc. executive Heather Bresch was wrongly awarded a retroactive degree.

Ormiston said Friday that Wyant mistakenly received two grade change requests forms that should have gone to Templeton after she was assigned as the instructor of record.

Wyant wrote a Sept. 11 letter to Marshall registrar Roberta Ferguson after receiving those forms, and told Ferguson she could not approve the grade changes because she had "not seen any work completed by Ms. Perdue for either course."

Her letter prompted Ormiston's review, which he completed Thursday. After Ormiston released his findings, Wyant sent an e-mail to Brammer, asking for an investigation.

Brammer said Wyant knew Templeton would be overseeing the independent study over the summer.

"That was agreed upon by the parties involved," she said.

She also said she didn't think there was anything unusual about the dean's involvement.

"I don't think that the dean did anything that was out of line for what she has the authority to do," Brammer said.

Wyant, who's been at Marshall for 18 years, said she's never heard of a dean overseeing independent study before.

She said the purpose of the independent study courses were to prepare students to be teachers, instructing them on how and what to teach.

Emily Perdue needed to pass the courses in business education management to gain admittance to Marshall's business school.

The Perdue family has a high profile in state government. Treasurer Perdue has been mentioned as a candidate for governor, and his wife, Robin Perdue, is the executive director of the West Virginia Public Employees Grievance Board.

When The Herald-Dispatch reported on a grievance filed by seven professors in March, a union representative said that 47 grievances had been filed on behalf of School of Education faculty between February 2008 to March 2009.

Templeton could not be reached for comment Friday or Saturday.

Marshall deals with swine flu

By Clark Davis

A Marshall University official says rumors that 200 students are suffering from the swine flu are just that -- rumors.

Marshall Health and Safety Director Brian Carrico says he and the Cabell-Huntington Health Department are tracking cases on campus and in the county.

"Cabell-Huntington Health Department, I spoke with them late last week and they're not experiencing any elevated cases of flu in the area right now. The numbers are in accordance with typically what it is this time of the year," Carrico said.

Carrico says the real number is very few, somewhere below 10 confirmed cases on campus, but says the number could be higher.

He says campus officials have designated floors in the dorms where students who are experiencing the symptoms of flu or potentially the swine flu can move.

"We do have some empty floors within residence services. If someone experiences flu symptoms and they can't make it home, we have made some rooms available for them that they can go to," Carrico said.

Carrico says that so far any cases of potential swine flu have been handled carefully.

"They've been able to stay away and treat themselves as recommended. We have all the guidelines posted on what you need to do as far as keeping plenty of fluids and treating yourself with the right medications. People have recovered and been fine from that," Carrico said.

Carrico says that Marshall has been working with local health officials in developing plans for over a year now.

October 2, 2009

Glenville State eyes old UHC for nursing program

by Billy Wolfe, STAFF WRITER

CLARKSBURG — The president of Glenville State College said the school is indeed interested in moving part of its nursing program to the soon-to-be-vacated United Hospital Center.

Dr. Peter Barr made the announcement during a meeting of the North Central West Virginia Trade Development Association Wednesday afternoon.

Glenville is still exploring its options, and the plan is in its early stages. Barr said the school is interested in pursuing a joint venture with Highland Psychiatric Hospital for use of the facility.

The announcement came as welcome news to local officials. Association Vice President Michael Romano said that if the facility is not put back to use soon after the hospital moves to its new location on Jerry Dove Drive, it may be demolished.

Otherwise, the hospital would face annual maintenance costs of about \$1.5 million just to keep the building in working order, he said.

State Sen. Doug Facemire, D-Braxton, said that Highland and Glenville also hope the state will guarantee that psychiatric patients will be housed at the facility, should the hospital decide to move there.

"We aren't asking for any money from the state," Facemire said. "We're just asking for a guarantee of beds."

Romano said West Virginia spends millions every year to send many of its psychiatric patients and mentally disabled wards of the state to facilities in Ohio and Pennsylvania. He said West Virginia would save money by treating more of its residents in-state.

"It's just a smart move," he said.

Senate President Pro Tem Joseph Minard said the state is lacking in facilities to treat psychiatric patients. He said the need will continue to increase over the next few years as soldiers return home from duty in Iraq.

The decision on where to house patients would ultimately rest with the state Division of Health and Human Resources.

If the plan becomes a reality, Glenville would also try to find housing in the Clarksburg area for the nursing students working at the hospital, Barr said.

While association members seemed pleased about the news regarding Highland and Glenville, their hopes of conducting a summit on the former Waldo Hotel fell flat.

Association members had hoped the Vandalia Heritage Foundation would send a representative to the meeting to discuss how the association might be of assistance to the nonprofit owner of the building.

Instead, Vandalia President and CEO Laura Kurtz Kuhns sent a letter stating that she was unable to attend the meeting.

In the letter, Kuhns said she had a previous engagement in Wheeling, and said she hopes to meet with the association soon.

As previously reported, the city of Clarksburg recently sent a letter to Vandalia threatening possible demolition of the long-vacant Waldo if the organization does not invest \$250,000 in its redevelopment over the course of the next year.

Clarksburg City Councilman Martin Shaffer attended Wednesday's meeting and said he was outraged the city sent the letter to Vandalia.

Local resident Ugo Annibale, who often attends city council meetings to chastise council members on issues, also attended the meeting. Shaffer and Annibale recently met with Kuhns and said they are setting up a committee to save the hotel from demolition.

Clarksburg does not have a hotel in its downtown district, and Shaffer said he believes having one will be a boon for local economic development.

After the meeting, Shaffer said anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact him at (304) 623-0007.

"We are hoping for a good cross-section of local residents," Shaffer said.

The association's top priority has been its efforts to help the Benedum Airport Authority establish a national port of entry in the area. Benedum Authority President Ron Watson said the airport is encountering some difficulty getting the project off the ground.

He said that federal inspectors have asked airport engineers to rework designs several times. The airport must construct a space for a customs agent to work, and the space must meet a number of federal guidelines, he said.

"It's been a lengthy process," Watson said.

He said airport officials will soon tour some other small airports in the region that have national port of entry status. He said all options have not been exhausted.

"We are committed to see this through," he said. "There may be some wiggle room with the regulations and we want to know where it's at."

September 29, 2009

Rahall Urges Vets to Seek Education Benefits Emergency Checks to Alleviate Student Financial Burden

Beckley, WV (HNN) -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, D-WV is urging eligible veterans to take advantage of an education benefits initiative announced over the weekend by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which has authorized checks for up to \$3,000 to be given to students who have applied for but not received their student aid. The checks will be distributed to eligible students at VA regional offices across the country starting Friday, October 2, 2009.

"I truly believe that we have a responsibility to serve those who bravely served us and providing access to education is so important for our veterans," said Rahall. "I worked to pass the Post 9/11 GI Bill in Congress last year to expand educational benefits for veterans to improve the job opportunities available to them."

Eligible students in West Virginia in need of advance payment on their housing and book allowance should visit the VA regional benefit office with a valid photo ID, a copy of their academic course schedule and copy of their eligibility certificate to request an advance check. The VA regional office for southern West Virginia is located at 640 Fourth Avenue, Huntington, W.Va.; telephone: 800-827-1000.

Since not all VA offices are located near students, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki stated that the VA expects to send representatives to schools with large Veteran-student bodies and plans to work with Veteran Service Organizations to help students with transportation needs.

"American veterans are no strangers to hardship, but with the benefits through the new GI Bill, our Veterans have the opportunity to follow their dreams, as they have protected us so we could pursue ours," said Rahall. "I congratulate the VA and the swift action taken by Secretary Shinseki to quickly address and resolve this issue to alleviate the financial burden on our veteran students."

Although VA does not know how many students will request emergency funds nationwide, it has approximately 25,000 claims pending that may result in payments to students. The funds VA will give to students now through this emergency action are advance payments of the earned benefits for housing and books. This money will be deducted from future education payments.

"This is an extraordinary action we're taking," said Secretary Shinseki. "But it's necessary because we recognize the hardships some of our Veterans face."

VA officials announced students should know that after this special payment, they can expect to receive education payments on the normal schedule -- the beginning of the month following the period for which they are reimbursed.

“We thank our West Virginia Veterans for their service, dedication, and patriotism,” said Rahall. “Now, on returning home they have the opportunity to have doors opened for them – by us.”

More than 27,500 students have already received benefits for housing or books under the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, or their schools received their tuition payments.

September 30, 2009

VA to issue emergency education checks to veterans starting Friday

By Alison Knezevich

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Local veterans affairs officials are gearing up to issue emergency checks starting Friday for veterans who haven't gotten their education benefits due to a national backlog of claims.

Across the country, up to 25,000 veterans are waiting on payments as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs tries to process a flood of claims for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which started in August. Some West Virginia veterans have had to drop out of school because of the late payments, state officials say.

In what he called "an extraordinary action," U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki announced last week that starting Friday, the department would issue on-the-spot emergency checks of up to \$3,000 for people who've applied for education benefits but haven't gotten them. Many veterans will receive payments of less than \$3,000, and the advances will be deducted from future benefit payments.

In West Virginia, those checks will be issued at the VA's regional benefits office in Huntington, located at 640 Fourth Ave. Students who live closer to another regional office -- such as Pittsburgh or Washington D.C. -- can get the checks there, said David Allen, acting director of the Huntington office.

A full list of regional offices is available at www.va.gov. Veterans can also apply for the emergency payment there.

Students who don't have transportation can request free van service from their nearest VA medical center, Shinseki announced Wednesday. West Virginia's medical centers are located in Beckley, Clarksburg, Huntington and Martinsburg.

Allen said he couldn't estimate when people who apply online would get their checks. But "if they visit a regional office <t40>...<t\$> the check will be written for them" on the spot, he said.

Veterans must bring a government-issued photo ID to the office, and proof of enrollment such as a class schedule, Allen said.

This fall, about 4,000 veterans are expected to use their education benefits in West Virginia, Allen said.

Skip Gebhart, administrator of the Office of Veterans Education Programs at the state Higher Education Policy Commission, said he's been hearing from worried students since mid-August. Many of them have families to support, he said.

"It has put a lot of students at a real disadvantage...<t40>...<t\$>They're either having to drop out of school to take jobs, or just make do as best as they can," he said. "We've talked to veterans who are extremely frustrated. They don't know what do."

The VA makes three payments as part of the new GI Bill, Gebhart said. One is paid directly to schools for tuition; another to students for their books and other school expenses; and another to students for their housing.

Many schools in West Virginia are waiting on tuition payments from the VA, but they're not holding it against the students, Gebhart said.

"The real problem is, the students aren't getting their monthly living expenses," he said.

Gebhart's office works with colleges and universities to make campuses veteran-friendly and to educate school officials on how to help veterans navigate the system.

"[The schools] are trying to help out, but their hands are tied because the VA processing system is so backlogged," he said. "The VA is trying to get things done, they just are swamped."

It's important for students to remember that most campuses have veterans coordinators and financial aid officers who can help them, he said.

Gebhart added that he hopes protections are in place to ensure that the emergency money goes to the right people.

"I think it's good to do something to get the money to the veterans," he said. "My concern would be that it's going to the right veterans<t40>...<t\$>I assume that they have checks and balances in place."

Allen said department has worked to ensure that only people who qualify receive the emergency payments.

"There are safeguards built into this system, and there's just not any reluctance to [issue the checks] out of fear of fraudulent claims," he said. "Rather, the focus is on, let's get this money to the veterans who are entitled to it."

Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

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UC enrollment grows for fourth year Some officials had predicted private colleges would lose students

by Zack Harold, Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va.--The University of Charleston's enrollment has experienced four straight years of growth, a positive sign for the school in tense financial times.

For the fall semester, the university has 1,436 students. Slightly more than 1,000 of those are undergraduate students, and 384 are enrolled in the school's pharmacy and business graduate programs.

"We're up just a little bit over last year at this time, and it's the biggest enrollment we've had in a long time," said university registrar Mike Levy.

Last year the university had 1,431 students enrolled, far more than it had four years ago: in the 2005-06 school year UC had 1,006 students.

The school's enrollment rose to 1,164 in 2006-07 and to 1,398 in 2007-08.

Higher education officials in West Virginia had predicted that, with the economy down, private institutions would begin losing students to public colleges, but some other private schools also have seen their enrollments rise this year.

West Virginia Wesleyan reported earlier this month that its enrollment grew for the third consecutive year, up 7.8 percent from last year to 1,391 students.

Davis & Elkins College reported a 22 percent increase from last year, to 625 full-time students. The school had more new students this year - 310 - than it has had in 60 years.

Enrollment at UC has grown steadily as the university has introduced new graduate programs. Its Executive Masters of Business program has 60 enrollees, and its downtown graduate school of business has 19 students.

The School of Pharmacy now has 307 students and is accepting 80 new students a year.

Levy said more students are coming to UC because "it pretty much sells itself."

"We're able to say that nine of our 12 buildings on campus have been built within the last 10 years," he said. "Those are certainly good marketing ploys for us."

And the university's education credentials aren't anything to be ashamed of either, he noted.

"It doesn't hurt that we're identified as one of the best schools by U.S. News and World Report," Levy said.

In its 2010 roundup of America's best colleges and universities, the publication named UC the top four-year baccalaureate college in West Virginia. In the Southeast region, the magazine ranked the university 15th best.

In July, UC also was included in the Princeton Review's "The Best 371 Colleges" 2010 guidebook.

"When kids go out and start doing some fact finding on the Internet, those kinds of numbers really jump out," Levy said.

Levy said the university is also recruiting internationally.

UC currently has 100 international students from 23 countries, including China, Nepal, Great Britain, Jamaica, Norway and Serbia.

Of course, recruiting locally is the university's primary goal, Levy said.

"We certainly want to have the kids from West Virginia and the surrounding states to come to the University of Charleston, but (the international program) certainly adds diversity to our university," he said.

The international students' presence helps American students by exposing them to a wide range of cultures and beliefs, he said.

"The more our kids learn about cultures absolutely makes them more employable," Levy said.