Behind the News

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By University Business Staff
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CURTAILING CREDIT CARDS

Student debt is always a topic of interest, especially now that the weak job market might make it harder for recent graduates to repay that debt. Although student loans get most of the attention, credit cards are also cause for concern. Eighty-four percent of undergraduates had at least one credit card in 2008, according to the Sallie Mae report "How Undergraduate Students Use Credit Cards," released in April 2009. The federal government took steps to protect students from "deceptive marketing tactics" used by credit card companies with the passage of the 2009 Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act, which goes into effect on February 22.

“The law is important for a variety for reasons,” says Ed Mierzwinski, consumer program director at U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

“First, it requires verification of ability to re-pay or a co-signer for young consumers. This will limit the number of young people who get credit cards that they cannot afford. Second, it restricts marketing on campus and, although the provision is not perfect, restricts free gifts that might entice consumers to take on excessive debt. Third, it requires schools to report relationships with credit card companies; transparency will improve the ability of researchers to analyze the impact of campus credit card marketing.”

“We will not be affected by the new federal restrictions on credit card marketing to students on campus,” says John J. King, Vice President of Student Affairs at Roger Williams University (R.I.). “We do not allow credit card companies to solicit on our campus, nor do we provide our students’ contact information to credit card companies for direct solicitation.”

Also, a financial literacy component was added to the First Year Experience Seminar in fall 2009. More than a dozen states had similar laws in place prior to the federal legislation, Connecticut and Illinois being the most recent additions. The Connecticut law covers much of the same territory as the federal law, but also requires credit card issuers to offer debt education materials.

“The University of Connecticut already has several of these [regulations] in place,” says spokesman Michael Kirk. “We will of course comply with the new regulations, as well.” UCONN seniors can take a one-credit Senior Year Experience class, which covers life skills ranging from resume writing to personal financial management. And when they are ready to get a Husky-emblazoned credit card, the Alumni Association’s affinity partners page clearly states that revenue from the programs support the association.

Private institutions in Connecticut are not bound by the new state law, but are aware of it. “By our own choosing, we do not have any credit card affiliations or allow for marketing on campus,” says Thomas C. Pellegrino, associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students at Fairfield University. The Career Planning Office provides general guidance to students about assessing their economic future after graduation.

Regulations aside, it seems that credit card marketing issues are on the minds of campus administrators. —Ann McClure

COLLEGE DOES AN ABOUT FACE WITH BAN

After getting flak about a new institutional policy to ban all head coverings at its three campuses, including veils worn by Muslim women, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences has modified it to allow medical and religious exemptions. The announcement came shortly after a Muslim civil liberties group asked the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to investigate whether it was illegal for the college to ban face coverings, under federal law that bans employment discrimination. Referring to the change, a statement released by the college explains,

"Based on a constructive dialogue with our extended community, and an intensive review of safety and security measures with advisors, we have amended our identification policy. As always, our primary concern is the security and safety of all our students, faculty, and staff."

The college's ID policy was revised this past fall as a result of a regular review of security measures so that campus security officials could visually identify people inside campus buildings. "It was not directed at any groups or individuals," explains Director of Communications Michael Ratty, about the policy, "and would have applied to all faculty, staff, and students."

MCPHS officials identified two Muslim students that the policy might affect and discussed the matter with them and their families prior to the policy implementation. Both students agreed to comply with the measure, according to Ratty. Administrators also discussed the policy with several officials within the Boston Muslim community. The policy, adds Ratty, would have referred to any kind of clothing that covered the face such as face veils, scarves, or ski masks. It also is reported the policy had no connection to last year's arrest of a 2008 graduate on terrorism charges. —Michele Herrmann

SOCIAL MEDIA
CATCHING A (GOOGLE) WAVE

When a preview version of Google Wave became available last September, some higher ed users dove right in to try the real-time collaboration tool. Google defines a "wave" as equal parts conversation and document, allowing users to work with richly formatted text, photos, videos, maps, and more.

The University of Illinois at Springfield's Center for Online Learning, Research and Service (COLRS) is an early adopter. Last semester, students taking "Internet in American Life" built a wave with peers at the Institute of Technology Sligo (Ireland). Ray Schroeder, director of COLRS and a co-teacher of the course, hopes to create a matrix where faculty can post their interest in creating a wave with people at other institutions.

Also, UIS faculty and staff used Google Wave as part of a Sloan Consortium online workshop on Web 2.0. Scott Testa, a professor at Cabrini College (Pa.), has his marketing and business students develop business plans in Wave. A group at Western Technical College (Wis.) is experimenting with how Wave can be used to share marketing practices among 16 technical colleges statewide, according to spokesperson Julie Lemon.

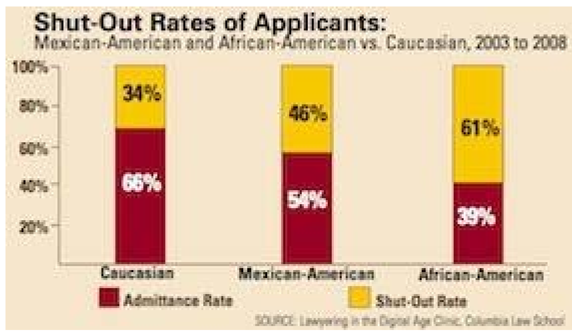
At Roanoke College (Va.), David Mulford, director of instructional technology, likes that Wave "blips" keep track of each user interaction. This could be useful in seeing "how students flesh out the concept via individual blips or comments over time," he says.

Pace University (N.Y.) CIO Ganesan Ravishanker, who belongs to an EDUCAUSE wave, isn't sure yet how Wave might be better than more familiar collaborative tools, but adds that it can be a way to centralize them. Fully integrating it with learning management systems will also bring value. “This is where I think a tool like Google Wave can make a difference.” —M.H.

MODELS OF EFFICIENCY PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

At campus offices across the country, new approaches are streamlining operations to deliver superior service to students in less time and at lower cost than previously possible. Innovative models of efficiency are replacing the resource-draining, time-consuming practices of yesterday. University Business has launched Models of Efficiency, a new national recognition program honoring administrative offices at colleges and universities that meet the higher education business and technology challenges of today. Does your department measure up? If you believe it does, this is your opportunity to stand out from the crowd. A model of efficiency is an administrative practice or procedure that uses technology and smart business processes to provide superior service to students, while optimizing resources. Those recognized as Models of Efficiency by University Business not only do more with less, but do it better. For more details on the program and to apply, visit www.universitybusiness.com/modelsofefficiency.

STATS WATCH
LAW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: MINORITIES GROUPS PREPARED BUT REJECTED



African-American and Mexican-American law school applicants are more prepared than ever to embark on that step of their education. Since 1990-1991, both their undergraduate GPAs and their LSAT scores have risen steadily. And law school enrollment has increased by nearly 3,000 seats between 1993 and 2008, thanks to larger law school classes and there being more law schools.

In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “student body diversity is a compelling state interest,” affirming that race may be taken into account in law school admissions. Despite all of these positive factors, the percentage of African-American and Mexican-American students enrolled at U.S. law schools has declined in the last 15 years. And until now, the scope of the problem has not been made clear.

The numbers have typically not been reported longitudinally nor within context, explains Conrad Johnson, who oversaw a new study that’s detailed on a website titled “A Disturbing Trend in Law School Diversity.” Johnson, a clinical professor of law who oversees the Columbia law school’s Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic, and his team collaborated with the Society of American Law Teachers to examine minority enrollment rates from 1993 to 2008.

The representation of blacks in the entering 2008 class dropped 7.5 percent compared to 1993. Mexican-American representation declined 11.7 percent in that time period. The law profession is already 89 percent Caucasian, Johnson notes. With the growing diversity in our nation, “you want the legal system representative of that,” he says. To illustrate the growth in law school seats, he explains that the auditorium at Carnegie Hall seats 2,804. “Imagine that, plus 200, and not one African-American or Mexican-American is let in.”

The study also found that a higher percentage of Mexican-American and African-American applicants are denied acceptance by all the schools to which they apply compared to Caucasians. Johnson advises using the law school admissions cycle for this coming year to help turn the trend around.

“We’d like people to be aware of this and keep this in mind as they go about filling their classes,” he says, adding that institutions can “put pressure on law schools to look at the whole applicant.” Institutional leaders can also provide pre-law students with good, strategic information about when and how to apply to law school, he suggests.

Universities could also consider bringing a review course and related services to students, particularly those who can’t afford a Kaplan course. He emphasizes that “good pre-law counseling is essential.” For more information and data on law school diversity, as well as suggestions for taking action on the issue, visit http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/salt. —Melissa Ezarik

GROWING GROUP FOR BOTH TOWN AND GOWN

With state budget cuts, municipal spending and tax limits, and concerns about rising tuition, as well as positive trends such as alumni returning to college towns, strong town-gown relationships are more crucial than ever.

A few years ago, a group from some university towns began discussing best practices in town-gown relations. In 2008, the International Town-Gown Association (ITGA) was chartered, with the aim of being the main resource for related issues. With more than 200 institutional members (both campuses and communities), it’s been growing strong.

Kim Griffo, who began work as the ITGA’s first executive director in November, was previously town-gown coordinator for Murray State University (Ky.). She was based in the president’s office as opposed to a community relations office—an idea that’s catching on, she notes.

Griffo has set up shop at Clemson University (S.C.), thanks to funding from both the school and city and a shared belief by its leaders that positive relationships are important and impact the student experience, she says. Besides its annual conference, the organization is working on joint grant initiatives and launching an annual weeklong institute for local officials and college presidents, trustees, and students.

“If something affects the community, it affects the campus, and if it affects the campus, it’s going to affect the community,” reminds Griffo. As Doug Whitlock, president of Eastern Kentucky University, points out, “It is very much to our advantage for our home community to be as fine a place to live as it can possibly be.” The joint ITGA membership that EKU and the City of Richmond have “gives us a chance to learn from others and share our successes and less than successful experiences,” he says, adding that dialogue with other university towns “will only lead to a more efficient, responsive, and community-minded university.”

For more information or to contact Griffo, visit www.town-gown.net. —M.E.

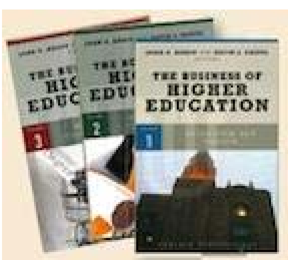
PEOPLE WATCH

As president of Middlebury College (Vt.) from 1992 through 2004, John McCardell headed a strategic planning effort that projected a 15 percent increase in enrollment, added 30 new faculty members, and shaped a $200 million facilities plan. He also initiated the founding of a residential commons system, similar to one found at Sewanee: The University of the South (Tenn.), where he will become the 16th vice chancellor and president. McCardell is also known for spearheading a movement to reexamine the collegiate problem of underage drinking. In December 2006, he founded Choose Responsibility, a nonprofit organization encouraging informal public discussion on the counter effects of legal year age. In 2008, he co-sponsored the Amethyst Initiative, a group of higher ed leaders who signed a statement questioning the effectiveness of current drinking age laws. He was the second Middlebury

John McCardell

president to be chosen from faculty ranks. … Also getting attention in the press is Robert Felner, former dean of the University of Louisville's (Ky.) College of Education and Human Development, who pled guilty last month to federal charges due to funneling money through nonprofit centers he helped create at UofL and the University of Rhode Island. An April 16 sentencing date has been set. Felner and Thomas Schroeder, a colleague, were accused of defrauding the UofL and URI out of $2.3 million. As part of his plea agreement, Felner will pay UofL $510,000 and URI $1.64 million in restitution. At press time, the agreement was pending approval. … In March, George Ross takes the presidency of Central Michigan University, following his leadership at Alcorn State University. At that Mississippi institution, he oversaw plans for a $47 million, 1,002-bed residential student housing complex expected to open this fall. The complex will feature four new residence halls, a fitness center, computer lab and convenience store, as well as classrooms. … David Wilson will become Morgan State University's (Md.) 12th president, expected to begin July 1. With more than 31 years of higher education experience, Wilson is the first chancellor in state history to lead two University of Wisconsin institutions simultaneously: the University of Wisconsin Colleges and University of Wisconsin-Extension. … William Randolph "Randy" Woodson, executive vice president for academic affairs and provost at Purdue University (Ind.), will become chancellor of North Carolina State University by May 1. … Barbara Couture, formerly senior vice chancellor for academic affairs at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is now New Mexico State University's first female president. … Deborah Sontupe is now vice president of institutional advancement at Mercy College (N.Y.). For the past three years, she was campaign manager at the Rutgers University Foundation, guiding the largest campaign in its history. —M.H.

BETWEEN THE LINES



THE BUSINESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION EDITED BY JOHN C. KNAPP AND DAVID J. SIEGEL; 2009, PRAEGER; 3 VOLUMES; $184.95

We've often said a university may not be a business, but to survive and thrive, its leaders must think that way. The pros and cons of applying business methods to university operations, tempered by economic realities, is at the heart of these books. In a series of 35 essays, academic and corporate experts discuss nearly all aspects of higher education, from leadership strategies, labor issues, and crisis management to rankings, marketing, and sports. In a foreword, Ohio State University President Gordon Gee writes, "Change is a chain reaction, and by casting out old dogmas, we necessarily must reinvent our practices." This set represents a thoughtful and highly useful starting point. —Tim Goral

FUTURE SHOCK

A COLD GREEN WINTER

Sitting in traffic on campus before the Christmas break, we were counting hybrids purchased with cash for clunkers. Reflecting over the last year, we learned some hard truths while developing our forthcoming book on sustainability in higher ed. Once word spread we were collecting "green myths," we received a year's worth of columns.

This month, we offer a list of hanging questions about sustainability, with a final perspective for future thought leaders: •

Myth: Hydrogen can't be harnessed. Truth is, BMW has already developed a 150-mph prototype just waiting for retail hydrogen distribution. •

Myth: Auto emissions are the key. Truth is, the lion's share of emissions are from buildings, not cars. Consider China's score of bituminous-based power plants. •

Myth: Coal can't be cleaned. Truth is, GreatPoint Energy demonstrates that coal, Coke, and biomass can be processed into clean burning bluegas. Now China is looking west for new eco-friendly energy sources. •

Myth: Oil is out and tax credits will change our behavior. Truth is, the preponderance of homes in the northeast are still heated by oil.

We now realize that sustainability will not be achieved in our generation through tax policy or overnight technological innovation. Clearly, the future is in educating our children in sustainable behaviors. That is why we visited Sprouts Academy, a preschool with a sustainable education mission in Chicago, where the children are modeling green behavior for their parents.

Sprouts' founder, Jason Walsh, tells us that "today's children will be leading industry, politics, and social initiatives of the future. If we can help them develop healthy and eco-friendly habits in the early stages of their lives, we can achieve global sustainability. Think small and we can accomplish great things!"

—James Martin and James E. Samels, Future Shock columnists, are authors of Turnaround: Leading Stressed Colleges and Universities to Excellence (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). Martin is a professor of English at Mount Ida College (Mass.). Samels is president/CEO of The Education Alliance.

CALCULATING SAVINGS ON INVESTMENT

Student success programs can have a strong return on investment, since students who do well are most likely to stay in school. But what exactly is the relationship between your program costs and retention outcomes? Investing in Student Success (ISS), a pilot project that ran through spring of 2009, helps answer that question.

Using Walmart Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education funds, the project team developed a cost-return calculator to help administrators evaluate if they're using their resources effectively by comparing the cost of student success programs to their impact on student retention.

Those programs could include any services offered to help students make the transition to college and/or help them succeed academically. Studies show that focusing on student success does improve student success, but "there is almost no mention of what these programs cost to operate," says Jennifer Poulos, senior project manager for Jobs for the Future, one of the pilot's managers.

The calculator compares outcomes for students who participate in a particular student success program versus those who did not. It also considers the direct costs of a program annually, with additional revenue the institution receives in relation to an increase in retention associated with participation.

A geographic mix of 13 two- and four-year as well as public and private colleges tested and helped refine the calculator. Participants had programs that focused on first-to-second-year retention and served underrepresented student groups, such as first-generation students, as well as had successful common program models.

A team at Delta Cost Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity and Accountability analyzed the data. Findings were shared and discussed with participants along with how results could be applied. For the seven pilot institutions where an increase in retention was documented, Poulos says, "program costs were recouped and, in some, cases a revenue gain was seen."

To download the free calculator, visit www.makingopportunityaffordable.org or www.deltacostproject.org. —M.H.

THE PRICE OF PRIDE

Photo: Cole Camplese via Creative Commons

With College Bowl Games recently wrapping up and March Madness gearing up for next month, it's no wonder that high compensation for college and university sports coaches has been a topic of conversation. And there's a lot to talk about, with 38 percent of public institutions and 43 percent of private institutions reporting they are paying coaches amounts greater than $500,000, according to 2006 tax year data reported on the "IRS College and University Compliance Questionnaire."

The December 2009 report, which analyzed data provided by 146 institutions, also revealed that coaches represented 13 percent of the top five highest-compensated college and university employees in the analysis.

The report was released by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). While the economy obviously underwent some big changes between 2006 and 2009, coaching salaries didn't.

According to research by USA Today on current coaching contracts at 120 institutions, many head coaches have million-dollar base salaries. "I think the issue hasn't really changed. The issue isn't coaches' salaries as much as it is constraint on spending in athletic departments in each of the three divisions," says John Walda, president and CEO of NACUBO. "The big news is that athletic departments are having to cut back on expenses across the board, including salaries, facilities, even programs."

He points to NCAA data that shows 25 Bowl Championship School programs generate more revenue than expenses. Division 2 and 3 schools don't tend to be self-sustaining because they just don't have the opportunity to generate the ticket revenue that larger programs do.

Walda praises steps the NCAA and the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics have taken to examine spending on college athletic programs and their calls for restraint. "There is also the issue of what students want. Schools are in a competitive atmosphere with each other and a big sports program can be attractive," he says. Sports programs bring value to institutions through opportunities for student athletes and the ability to build affinity with alumni and donors.

"These issues aren't going away," Walda cautions. "I think the recession has accelerated the call for change. It's an ongoing concern and will [continue to] be after we recover." —A.M.