

## The Celtic Tiger

**Ireland invests heavily in higher education, and benefits mightily**

By Jon Marcus

DUBLIN

**I**T'S OPEN DAY at Trinity College, the day when the Irish equivalent of high school seniors come to look the place over. The historic quadrangle is swarming with 17- and 18-year-olds, some in their school uniforms—ruffled ties, tousled skirts—others in the logo-laden gear that is the uniform of teenagers worldwide.

But these students are different from their international counterparts in one important respect: They don't appear nervous or uptight, worried about whether they will be admitted, can afford to pay tuition, or will have a job awaiting them on graduation. They have the calm, self-confident and optimistic look of young people who believe the world is at their feet.

And they're right. It is.

Ireland's extraordinary economic success means these students live in a society with one of the lowest jobless rates and

highest growth rates in the world. Since the early 1990s, Ireland has gone from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the richest. Its gross domestic product grew by a dramatic 9.5 percent a year between 1995 and 2000—nearly 60

*Since the early 1990s, Ireland has gone from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the richest.*

percent in real terms during that period, compared to less than 16 percent for the European Union as a whole. The transformation is evident everywhere, from the Aer Lingus flight to Shannon crowded with Irish families returning from shopping sprees in New York and Boston to the hours-long traffic jams in once-sleepy



PETER MATTHEWS, BLACK STAR, FOR CROSSTALK

*John Hegarty, provost of Trinity College, in Dublin, believes colleges and universities have helped to fuel the Irish economic boom.*

Dublin.

Even through the relative downturn of the last few years, Ireland's economy—dubbed the Celtic Tiger—has continued to outperform those of other western nations. In 2004, for instance, Irish GDP

grew by 5.5 percent, compared to 1.8 percent for the rest of Europe. Unemployment has fallen from 18 percent in the late 1980s to less than four percent today. The students in the Trinity quadrangle can

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## Western Classic

**Nevada's James Rogers is a non-traditional chancellor with a shoot-from-the-hip style**

By Kathy Witkowsky

LAS VEGAS

**E**VERY WEEKDAY MORNING before he goes to breakfast at the Four Seasons Hotel, Nevada System of Higher Education Chancellor James E. Rogers stops by his private auto museum, where he keeps his collection of 275 classic and antique cars.

Rogers doesn't actually drive any of the

*Trained as an accountant and a lawyer, James Rogers is a vigorous supporter of higher education.*

vehicles, which are worth an estimated \$15 million. An unpretentious man who prefers suspenders to ties, and short sleeves to suitcoats, his regular vehicle of choice is a 2005 Chevy pickup truck. But he likes to admire the cars' graceful lines and to talk shop with the museum supervisor who oversees the purchases and the 13 employees who restore the vehicles.

"It's good to have hobbies," said the 68-



AXEL KOESTER FOR CROSSTALK

*Jim Rogers, chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education, takes pride in his collection of 275 classic and antique automobiles.*

year-old Rogers, who prefers to be called Jim. Rogers, who made his fortune as owner, chairman and CEO of Sunbelt Communications Company, which owns 16 television stations in five western states, has plenty of hobbies: In addition to his collec-

tion of antique cars, he has amassed substantial collections of western art, saddles, and original movie posters. Rogers is such a huge film fan—he's especially fond of westerns—that he founded a film museum

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**A**DRIANNA MENDOZA, a graduate student at Eastern Oregon University, says budget cuts and staff reductions have hurt educational quality at her campus. (See page 8.)



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## EDITORIAL



JOHN TROHA, BLACK STAR, FOR CROSSTALK

Patrick M. Callan

**T**HE NATIONAL CENTER for Public Policy and Higher Education was established in 1997 as an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization. Our mission is identification and advocacy of a "public interest" perspective on state and national higher education policy issues. We have focused our work primarily on public purposes, expectations and performance of American higher education with particular emphasis on the convergence of the competitive knowledge-based global economy with major demographic shifts, and the implications for education and training beyond high school.

The National Center's major themes address the educational attainment of Americans, the educational pipeline, college preparation, affordability, completion and student learning outcomes. Our audiences have explicitly encompassed the public and the media, as well as government and education policymakers. The signature projects of the National Center have included the *Measuring Up* national and state report cards, *National CrossTalk* and the National Center Associates program.

The National Center's Board of Directors and staff have determined that this tenth year is an appropriate time to step back and engage in an intensive organizational self-examination. There have been, of course, many evaluations of every aspect of our work, some sponsored by funders and others internally initiated. The pending assessment, however, will look primarily to the future, asking, for example: What is the agenda for higher education policy research over the next five to ten years? What are the most appropriate organizational settings for addressing these issues? How do the approaches to public policy developed by the National Center fit the prospective policy issues?

Whatever the substantive issues and organizational setting, is financial support available to pursue the public policy agenda?

Over the next four months, the National Center will examine these and related issues. The examination will be intensive, and several activities are being curtailed to allow significant time, energy and resources for it – for example, *National CrossTalk* and Policy Alerts no longer will be published during this period. We will, however, continue most

ongoing projects and commitments, including work that supports the Lumina Foundation's college costs initiative, the Associates program, and responses to questions and issues concerning *Measuring Up 2006*.

We plan to complete our process by April and to make our conclusions public at that time. In the meantime, we welcome suggestions and advice on these matters from our readers.

—Patrick M. Callan

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*"Good day, Madam. I'm working my son's way through college."*

# Is it a Shell Game?

## Colorado's controversial new way of handing out its higher education money

By Susan C. Thomson

DENVER, COLORADO

**A**SK YOUR TYPICAL Colorado public college or university students about the vouchers that are supposedly helping them pay for their education, and their brows furrow in puzzlement. Ask them about their stipends, and some of them show glimmers of awareness. But mention College Opportunity Fund, and most of their faces brighten in recognition.

COF (pronounced "cough"), Colorado's roundabout way of funding higher education, now in its second year, has caught students' attention, seeped into their vernacular and become part of their routine.

Vouchers, stipends and COF are three different terms used to describe this payment system, the first—and so far only—one of its kind in the nation. All three terms are imprecise, the first two erroneously suggesting something valuable, portable and negotiable, like checks, the latter open to the mistaken interpretation that students are receiving cash they did not get before. Truth is, rather than getting anything extra, students have merely become conduits for some of the money the state used to send straight to its community college system and its public four-year colleges and universities.

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education, however, persists in implying some sort of state benevolence, referring on one of its websites to "taxpayer-funded" instruments that students "bring with them" to college. Another Commission website goes so far as to proclaim in a headline: "In-State Undergraduates: The State of Colorado is Investing in Your Education. Money has been Put Aside for Your Tuition. Apply Now to Receive this New Benefit."

Online and in presentations at the



**Aaron Wiley, student body president at the Metropolitan State College of Denver, called the new plan "a gimmick."**

state's secondary schools, the Commission is marketing the College Opportunity Fund, encouraging students as young as eighth graders to sign up. As of late last year, 350,000 had done so, according to Jenna Langer, the commission's interim executive at the time.

Nicole Ebsen got the message and put her name on the line two years ago when she was a junior at Greeley West High School. Now a freshman at the University of Northern Colorado, in Greeley, she is among those who perceive that the COF is saving her money. "I can see it online when I pay my bill," she said. "It shows a total, and it shows a credit for the COF stipend."

Given the complexities and the confusion about its name, it is little wonder that most students profess not to understand the COF entirely. Most can at least tell you, though, that it adds up to maybe \$1,000 or so, and that—at the click of a computer mouse—they can electronically deduct from their bills when they register for a semester of classes. Hey, it's "free money," some say gleefully.

Hee Yeon Day, a sophomore at Colorado State University, is among the minority of pooh-poohers. "Some people think they're getting extra money from the state but they're not," she said.

Few students can elaborate the point better than Aaron "Jack" Wiley. As a political science major and president of the Student Government Assembly at Metropolitan State College of Denver, he has studied the political process that brought this new funding wrinkle about. It's "a gimmick," he said, just a way to get around Colorado's budget limits and keep the state's higher education system afloat.

In other words, it's just so much budgetary sleight of hand. And this is not merely students' chronic, sometimes uninformed, skepticism talking. Others with more detached perspectives describe this whole thing in even more negative terms:

- "A money laundry."

That's what John Straayer, a professor of political science at Colorado State University calls it.

- "A different way of packaging and distributing the money...an elaborate process to do things the same way by calling it something different." That summation comes from Frank Waterous, senior policy analyst for education at the Bell Policy Center, a Denver foundation.

- "A huge shell game." That's the considered opinion of Spiros Protopsaltis, Waterous' predecessor at the Bell Center and now a doctoral candidate at the University of Colorado's School of Public Affairs in Denver, who is writing his dissertation on how



PHOTOS BY ERIC LARS BAKKE, BLACK STAR, FOR CROSSTALK

**Frank Waterous, of the Bell Policy Center, in Denver, thinks the new higher education funding plan is simply budgetary sleight-of-hand.**

Colorado came to this new way of handing out its higher education money.

The story begins in 1992, when state voters passed the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR), an amendment to the state constitution that limited the annual growth of state spending to the increase in the Consumer Price Index, adjusted for state population change. By 2001-02, considering its population and per-capita income, Colorado had dropped into the bottom ten states in its financing effort for public colleges and universities in the annual rankings of the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University.

By then, voters had delivered yet another punch in the form of Amendment 23, passed in 2000, which required a basic level of state funding for public elementary and secondary education, plus annual increases. No sooner did public schooling become another mandate, like Medicaid, than the recession took hold, driving available state revenue down. And so, said Hank Brown, president of the three-campus University of Colorado system, "The state was left with no option but to take all of the cuts out of higher education," its largest pot of discretionary cash.

Come 2003-04, after back-to-back annual cuts of nine percent and 14 percent, the state was supporting its public colleges and universities with roughly the same amount of money as it had eight years earlier—for an enrollment that meanwhile had increased 19 percent. A year later, higher education's share of the state's budget had shrunk to ten percent from 20 percent in 1990.

Colorado higher education officials describe this as a period of severe retrenchment. They coped only by increasing class sizes, cutting academic offerings, curtailing faculty and staff hiring and raises, covering more classes with part-time teachers, and deferring maintenance. "Our physical plant was left to rot in the gorgeous Colorado sun," lamented professor Straayer of Colorado State.

Then-Governor Bill Owens responded to the crisis in mid-2001 by appointing a "blue ribbon" panel of legislators, citizens

and representatives of higher education to rethink the state's approach to higher education funding.

A year and a half later the panel came forth with a proposal to fund students instead of institutions. Doing that, the group contended, would "help to encourage increased access for students from the lowest income levels and would increase higher education participation for all students." This market-like approach "would lead to greater responsiveness by all institutions to students' needs, and would increase flexi-

**Colorado's "College Opportunity Fund," according to Colorado State University political science professor John Straayer, is "a money laundry."**

bility to allow for world-class institutions in this state."

Specifically, the panel proposed a student "stipend" that would be worth \$133 per credit hour for an in-state undergraduate and \$267 per credit hour for certain graduate students.

Budgeters bought the student-funding concept in principle, if not those particulars. They tossed out the old TABOR-limited system of a single lump-sum appropriation for each of the public institutions and replaced it, for starters, with a new TABOR-free approach built around a fixed amount of compensation for every student credit hour. The planners were, however, considerably less generous than the panel envisioned, leaving graduate students out of the plan and pegging the credit-hour amount at \$80, not \$133, for undergraduates, no matter where they enrolled.

This was the first of several catches. At \$80 per undergraduate hour, Metropolitan State College of Denver would receive

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## COLORADO

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roughly the same amount of state money it was getting already. All of the other campuses would come up with less than their existing funding, the gaps ranging anywhere from 16 percent for the Colorado Community College System to 74 percent

**In 2001 Governor Bill Owens appointed a “blue ribbon” panel to rethink the state’s approach to higher education funding.**

for Adams State College. The University of Colorado system, the big gorilla in state funding, would wind up with \$84 million less than the \$150 million it was getting already from the state.

Obviously, that wouldn’t fly. So the solution became a supplementary stream of income called “fee-for-service” that technically made the institutions contractors and supposedly paid them according to their various contributions to the state. Except, said Stephen M. Jordan, Metropolitan State’s president, “The fee-for-service was



**Spiros Protopsaltis, of the Bell Policy Center, thinks the plan represents “a foot in the door” for Colorado private colleges and universities to claim state and federal money.**

not set up to accomplish any public political goal. It simply became a filler to make everybody whole.”

When the filling was done, between fee-for-service and stipends, Colorado’s higher education outlay for 2005-06, the new plan’s first year, was calculated to come out to exactly what it had been under the old revenue scheme of the preceding year. And each institution was reckoned to get exactly the same share—no less but no more either, with no provision for inflation.

To ease their continuing financial bind, the schools seized the one financial bone the new deal had thrown them: Unlike the old, it allowed them to raise tuition without having to count it against the TABOR limits.

When students first signed up for classes in the fall of 2005 under the new sys-

tem, they were in for a shock or two. If they thought the stipend money was going to be theirs to spend, they found themselves clicking it away, merely authorizing the state to pay their schools money it used to pay them directly. What’s more, students found themselves, between higher fees and tuition, out of pocket anywhere from six percent at Metro State to 24 percent at the University of Colorado at Boulder, over and above what they had paid the year before.

So, instead of lowering the cost to students, as had been promised or at least implied, the new scheme ended up costing them more that first year. Nor have the “stipends” spared them or provided any relief from smaller tuition increases this year. “I’ve seen both systems,” said Andrew Aitchison, a student leader at CU-Boulder. “I don’t see that [the COF] made any difference.” College just keeps costing more money, students say with shrugs of resignation.

The colleges and universities took pains to inform students about the change a semester or more ahead of time, holding meetings, sending electronic and other mailings, developing brochures about the COF and hiring additional staff to explain it to them in person. The information effort continues with campus websites that detail the COF and avoid overselling it. As Colorado State frankly tells students, one of its purposes was “to heighten awareness that state tax dollars are used to offset the costs of undergraduate education.”

Hector Hernandez, a senior at CU-Boulder, said the COF has done that for him. He is impressed—unfavorably. “There are a lot of other states that pay a lot more,” he said. He mentioned Georgia, which pays full tuition at any state college or university for any state resident who graduates from a state high school with a B or better average.

As for its advocates’ claim that the COF would increase student access, Protopsaltis asks how. In fact, according to his calculations, college participation by low-income students has decreased in Colorado since this went into effect. As for its proper name, Protopsaltis insists on calling this a “voucher system.” “That’s what it is,” he said, because it is also avail-

able to the state’s private non-profit colleges that are not, according to the law, “pervasively sectarian.” By signing up, they can claim for their Pell grant-eligible students half the credit-hour amount that goes to the public campuses.

So far Regis University and Denver University are taking part, and Colorado College has been approved to do so. The inclusion of the private schools is “a foot in the door...that signals a major change in higher education in the state,” Protopsaltis said.

Colorado makes the COF payments up to a total of 145 undergraduate credit hours per student. Beyond that, students must pay the COF amount themselves. Jordan said that students have become aware of that limit and are now being “a lot more careful about the choice of the

credits they take.” Newly this year, basic-skills, or college-prep, courses taught at community colleges are exempt from the cap. And undergraduate students in fields like nursing and dental hygiene at the University of Colorado’s Health Sciences Center in Denver are eligible for the COF for the first time this year.

Last year, an unknown number of eligible students statewide either didn’t get the word or said, in effect, “no thanks” to the COF. Jordan says the holdouts included some students whose employers were paying for their education. Others spurned what they perceived as needless government handouts, said Nancy McCallin, president of the Colorado Community College system. Still, given all the administrative work that went into informing students about the new system and installing new computer software to accommodate it, she said it would take “a significant amount of work” to return to the old pre-COF days.

No college administrators are publicly advocating doing anything of the kind, though none seem entirely satisfied with what they and the state budget refer to as “stipends.” The prevailing attitude is that this new way of collecting state money is here to stay, something they must learn to live with but that, as a work in progress, is subject to fixing more to their liking over time. Tying some state support to students has introduced an element of fiscal uncertainty that was not there before, McCallin said. “You live and die now by your enrollment numbers.” Still, she said she’s holding off on making any suggestions for improvement until this second year of the experiment has ended.

Officials of research universities, meanwhile, are not at all reticent about expressing their special beef—that the state is failing now to adequately reward them for their higher-cost programs. As Boulder campus president Hank Brown pointed out, “Theoretically the stipend is for undergraduate programs, and an equal amount no matter where the student goes.” Theoretically, then, a fee-for-service funding stream would cover the cost of graduate and other high-cost programs, such as the University of Colorado’s medical school in Denver, the only one in the state. But Brown said it doesn’t begin to do so.

Nor, said Colorado State President Larry Penley, does fee-for-service take adequate measure of his school’s relatively costly extension service, veterinary school,

**By 2002, Colorado had dropped into the bottom ten states in its financing effort for public colleges and universities.**

and undergraduate and graduate programs in science and technology. He worries that the result is an incentive for all of the state’s colleges and universities “to offer more low-cost programs because there’s no variation in the amount of revenue you get.”

As solutions, Penley suggests extending stipends to graduate students and replacing the one-size-fits-all undergraduate pay-

ments with variable amounts tied to the cost of students’ academic programs. Some have suggested tying the stipends to students’ financial need. More common are calls to increase the dollar amount. Frank Waterous of the Bell Policy Center said he’d like to see the stipend rise to at least \$100 per credit hour next year.

Jordan proposes raising it as much it takes to make it a true entitlement and force his and all of the other state schools to compete more vigorously for students. As things stand now, he said, “We’re caught between two funding systems...I don’t think it serves the state to be in this mixed model.”

In the first year, when the model was only in effect for 11 months, the state di-



**“Some people think they’re getting extra money from the state but they’re not,” said Colorado State sophomore Hee Yeon Day.**

vided its higher-education funding almost exactly down the middle—51 percent to stipends and 49 percent to fee-for-service. Estimates for the current 12-month year show stipends rising to 55 percent of the state’s higher education spending (the result of that extra month), growth in the number of eligible students, and a \$6 increase in the stipend, or COF, rate—to \$86 per credit hour.

The schools have Colorado voters to thank for that extra \$6. In their fondness for government by ballot box, voters went to the polls once again in November 2005, and produced an outcome that belied their tight-fisted image. They passed Referendum C, which lifted for five years the state spending limits they had approved in the TABOR amendment 13 years earlier.

As a result, the state has been legally free since early 2006 to spend some of the surplus revenue—now running ahead of estimates—that otherwise it would have had to return to taxpayers. As a result of the passage of Referendum C, the state’s public colleges and universities have been spared yet another debilitating budget cut, and they stand to realize, together, an extra \$80 million or so in state funding this fiscal and academic year, about 13.9 percent more than last year, according to the Center for the Study of Education Policy.

All of the institutions are collecting more stipend money as well as more state money altogether this year, but nobody is claiming it is enough. For the University of Colorado system, the extra cash has provided little more than cost-of-living adjust-



Stephen M. Jordan, president of Metropolitan State College of Denver, thinks the new funding approach has “turned the corner in people’s understanding of the importance of higher education.”

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ments, according to Brown. “It has stopped the bleeding, but it hasn’t restored the limb that has been cut off,” he said.

The issue of how best to divvy up this financial pie does not deal with the problem that Brown and other college officials see as the biggest higher education funding issue of all—the small size of the pie.

Support for that view comes from the Boulder-based National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, which in a recent study for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education found every one of the state’s public colleges and universities deficient in state support when compared with its peer schools nationwide.

Based on NCHEMS’ work, the Commission has estimated that Colorado would need to pump \$832 million more a year—more than double its current level of support—into higher education just to bring all of its campuses up to the national average. For starters, the Commission has put in a 2007-08 budget request for an extra \$106 million, with \$10 million of that to go to stipends. Before leaving office, Governor Owens asked for a more realistic boost of \$50 million, including the \$10 million for stipends. Either way, funding would tilt toward fee-for-service in the third year of the new system.

Jordan, while preferring stipends, is hopeful, believing that Colorado has

“turned the corner in people’s understanding of the importance of higher education.”

Colorado State’s Straayer takes heart from what he senses is a new and warmer climate for higher education, partly reflected in Colorado’s recent dramatic turn from red state to blue. Democrats captured both houses of the state legislature in 2004, and Democrat Bill Ritter, the state’s new governor, finished what Straayer calls a “hat trick” for his party by winning the state’s top office by a solid margin in November. Circumstances add up to what Straayer foresees as “an effort to rebuild the fiscal foundation for higher education.”

Governor Ritter has talked that talk. On his campaign website, he called for “doubling the current production of technical certificates and college degrees over the next ten years,” and he pledged to restore higher education funding, increase state support, and “salvage” the community college system, which he described as so financially devastated that ten of its 13 campuses had been at risk of closing. However, other than briefly proposing that the College Opportunity Fund be extended to college courses taken by high school students, Ritter’s website has nothing to say about the funding system.

Ritter also spoke in the same generally positive vein about higher education in a pre-election interview with *ColoradoBiz* magazine. “We need to figure out how to stabilize it going forward,” he said. “Higher education for us will be a priority, and our goal is going to be to try to get it to the national average in (per-student) spending.”

From Hank Brown’s perspective, Colorado’s colleges and universities share with the politicians the onus of reaching that

goal. “We haven’t done as good a job as we should have in making people understand the importance of higher education,” he said. “We have to reach out to the community and involve them in what we’re doing... We’ve done a decent job with the legislature; where we’ve fallen short is with the people who elect the legislators.”

Ultimately, in a state with a history of voters taking legislative matters into their own hands, the people will decide. They’re the ones who approved Referendum C, loosening the state purse strings, but for only five years, making for what Waterous

**Colorado’s higher education outlay for 2005-06, the new plan’s first year, turned out to be exactly what it had been under the old revenue scheme of the preceding year.**

said is just “a temporary timeout,” good only until 2011. What happens then “is a discussion we need to start soon to know what the options are,” he added. Clearly, without a statewide vote to extend Referendum C or enact some other measure to keep TABOR at bay, the old spending limits will come back in full force and shut off the money flow. ♦

Susan C. Thomson is a former higher education writer for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

## NEVADA

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in Lone Pine, California.

Rogers’ interest in those things, though, pales in comparison to his passion for higher education. Trained as an accountant and a lawyer (he earned his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Arizona and a master of laws from the University of Southern California), he is a vigorous supporter of higher education.

“I think it’s the best financial investment you can make. And I don’t know why the public doesn’t understand that,” said Rogers, who said he has donated or

**Taking his philanthropy to a new level, Rogers volunteered to work as chancellor of Nevada’s system of higher education for a dollar a year.**

pledged \$250 million—the bulk of his current net worth—to institutions in several states, including \$145 million to the University of Arizona, \$65 million to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and \$28 million to Idaho State University.



University of Nevada, Reno President Milton Glick says Chancellor Rogers does not interfere with campus administration, as some have charged.

He also has raised millions of additional dollars by heading capital campaigns for all three.

But Jim Rogers wanted to give more. As chancellor for the past two and a half years, he has been devoting his business acumen, political clout and force of personality to try to improve the Nevada higher education system. And he’s been doing it for free.

The system faces daunting challenges: a skyrocketing state population; poorly pre-

pared students; and an economy that lures them away from higher education with relatively high-paying jobs in the gaming and service industries.

Only 28 percent of the state’s 18-to-24-year-olds are enrolled in college. To increase participation, in 2000 the state began offering so-called Millennium Scholarships of up to \$10,000 to any Nevada high school graduate who had a 3.0 grade point average (the standard was raised to 3.1 in 2005, and in 2006 it increased to

3.25). But even many of the Millennium scholars are not capable of college-level work: This year, 28 percent of first-time, full-time freshmen recipients of Millennium Scholarships had to take at least one remedial course, and just under half of the scholarship recipients who enrolled six years ago have graduated.

Overall, the system’s six-year graduation rate is 41.5 percent, according to system officials. Nevada charges relatively low tuition for in-state students: \$2,526 annually at its two universities, and considerably less at its other institutions. But only about a quarter of the aid the state awards to college students is need-based, leaving many of them struggling to pay for their education.

When Rogers first was appointed interim chancellor in May 2004 (he was chosen for the permanent post a year later), the system’s Board of Regents was mired in lawsuits and suffered from a widespread lack of public respect.

“We didn’t want to be throwing our money down a rat hole,” Rogers said (referring to himself and his wife, Beverly). That is how he explained the decision to take his philanthropy to a new level by volunteering to work as chancellor for a dollar a year. Besides, he added, “I don’t have anything to lose.”

His initial buck-a-year proposal turned out to be illegal; instead, Rogers donates his \$23,660 salary, the minimum required

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## NEVADA

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by law, to two student emergency funds at UNLV and University of Nevada, Reno (UNR).

He also picks up all of his business-related expenses, including the tab for his daily breakfast meetings at the Four Seasons Hotel; his secretary's salary; and the use of his private plane to fly himself, his staff and sometimes regents on system business, if a commercial flight isn't available or convenient. In addition, he contributes \$65,000 toward the total \$400,000 salary paid to the president of UNR; and during the last legislative session, he paid half the salaries for the system's two lobbyists.

Rather than attend national meetings or symposiums, Rogers sponsors his own. Every summer, he invites dozens of university and college presidents, higher education administrators, businesspeople and regents from Nevada and around the country, along with staff from both his system office and his broadcasting company, to join him on an all-expenses-paid trip to the coast of British Columbia. For four days, participants stay at an exclusive fishing and wilderness resort where they can share ideas about higher education and brainstorm about how they might better collaborate.

Last summer, Rogers put Nevada's two new university presidents on a boat and told them to figure out how to cooperate on a new health sciences system, which is aimed at substantially increasing and better coordinating the state's healthcare training and delivery.

"It probably isn't what I would have done, but that's okay," said Milton Glick, president of UNR, formerly the provost and executive vice president at Arizona State University. "We got the job done."

Rogers has other idiosyncrasies. He doesn't know how to use a computer or a Blackberry, and rarely carries a cell phone. Nor does he read any documents longer than one page: "I deal in summaries and in trusted people," he said.

Rogers routinely gives out his home phone number and returns all calls the same day he receives them, but his intolerance for long conversations is legendary.

"Whenever you have business with Jim you make it very concise, and you talk fast," said Richard Carpenter, president of the Community College of Southern Nevada, which is the state's largest postsecondary institution, with more than 35,000 students. To remind his new colleagues at UNR and UNLV to keep their conversations with Rogers brief, Carpenter sent them each a three-minute egg-timer. "When the sands are out, you're done," he told them.

Rogers readily acknowledges that he doesn't listen to everything that everyone has to say. "I'm very quick to make deci-

sions," he said. "I don't need to know 100 percent about a subject before I decide whether to go forward or not. I rely on my instincts, and I rely upon sampling."

Rogers is also a neatness freak with a flash temper. "A cluttered desk is a cluttered mind," said Rogers, who once swept everything off a television station employee's messy desk and into the garbage.

But people who work with him said Rogers recovers his equilibrium quickly and can acknowledge when he is wrong. He also possesses a keen sense of humor. Last fall, he agreed to be the butt of jokes at a humorous "roast" to raise money for the health sciences system project; Rogers has promised that the system will raise 30 percent of the total \$210 million cost. "I laughed so hard I thought I'd fall out of my chair," Rogers recalled. The evening brought in \$1.6 million.

To be sure, this is an unusual arrangement. But it appears to be working. Regents, legislators, and business and faculty leaders agreed that despite Rogers' autocratic tendencies, overall he is doing a good job.

"I'm absolutely impressed," said Bret Whipple, a Las Vegas attorney who is chair of the Nevada Board of Regents. "I'd give him an A."

Whipple and many others credit Rogers with pulling together what had been a fractured board and creating a cohesive system out of the state's eight public institutions of higher education, which together enroll about 104,000 students. Rogers also has convinced the board to centralize power in the hands of the chancellor, which historically had been a weak position.

"Jim strengthened the hand of the system and calmed the troubled waters," said Jill Derby, who just stepped down after 18 years as a regent. Initially skeptical that someone from a business background could make a good system leader, she was



"There were some real issues as to who was at the helm of the ship," said Bret Whipple, a Las Vegas attorney and chair of the Nevada Board of Regents.



Former Nevada Board of Regents member Jill Derby says Chancellor Rogers has become "a powerful spokesman for higher education in Nevada."

won over by what she called Rogers' "remarkable" ability to take criticism and incorporate feedback. "I think he's become a powerful spokesman for higher education in Nevada," Derby said.

"I guess if there was any reason to doubt Jim's passion or sincerity, then you could look for a hidden agenda. But everything he does is driven simply by his desire to raise higher education standards," said Bill Martin, president and CEO of Nevada State Bank, and an old friend of Rogers'. "The people I talk to think he's genuinely the right man at the right time to shake up the system and propel it forward."

"He came on board at a time when some strong leadership was needed," said Nevada State Senator Bill Raggio, the majority floor leader and one of the state's most important power brokers. "He is very direct, sometimes abrupt, but certainly effective," Raggio said, adding, "I think he deserves high marks."

Rogers received similarly positive grades—A's and B's, along with some incompletes for ongoing projects—in a recent unofficial report card he asked his staff to prepare. Among the people involved in the grading process was Rogers' predecessor, Jane Nichols, who resigned in 2004 due to health problems that had been exacerbated by the stress of her job. She subsequently agreed to return to the system as vice chancellor for academic and student affairs—the position she held prior to becoming chancellor—because she was so enthused about Rogers' leadership.

"I don't think that there's any question that he has enabled us to move forward on a number of different fronts," said Nichols. As a result, she said, morale in the system is the highest she has ever seen it.

His vision for the system is not much different from hers, Nichols said. But, she explained, "He is much more bold in his vision and is able to communicate with the press and the people in extremely effective ways."

Rogers has a distinct advantage in the latter category. In November, for instance, Rogers delivered his State of the System

address twice: once to a roomful of administrators at the University of Nevada, Reno; and two days later, to a \$35 per person breakfast meeting of the Nevada Development Authority, a non-profit economic development organization for southern Nevada.

Although he introduced the speech in person, Rogers had pre-recorded a videotaped version of the speech itself, and it was shown on two movie screens that morning. That evening, as in years past, he had the speech broadcast on his three Nevada television stations.

This year's speech, like his previous two, covered a range of topics. But he

***Nevada's higher education system faces daunting challenges, including an economy that lures students away from college with relatively high-paying jobs in the gaming and service industries.***

opened with a message he has been sounding consistently for years: Nevada will never have a world-class higher education system without the support of the private sector. "The future rise of Nevada's higher education system is solely in the hands of wealthy Nevadans," he said in the speech. "If we do not rise above our present level, it will simply be because the system has been repudiated and ignored by those who have become wealthy in this state."

Rogers also used his State of the System address to emphasize another of his priorities: linking higher education to the K-12 system and coordinating both their educational programs and lobbying efforts. The elementary and secondary schools are being overwhelmed by the state's enormous population growth, which

is expected to increase another 47 percent by 2020. During the same time period, the number of high school graduates is projected to more than double.

Rogers wants people to understand that the growth has enormous implications, not just for K-12 but for higher education—and the state's future—as well. So he arranged for the public school superintendents from Washoe County (whose district includes Reno) and Clark County (Las Vegas) to give their State of the System ad-

**Only about a quarter of the aid Nevada awards to college students is need-based, leaving many of them struggling to pay for their education.**

dresses in conjunction with his.

In the past, such collaboration was practically unthinkable, said Clark County School District Superintendent Walt Rulfes. K-12 and higher education officials would not even agree to attend the same meeting. With Rogers at the helm, Rulfes said, "We buried the hatchet on all of that."

Contention was the name of the game when Rogers assumed the position of interim chancellor. The Board of Regents was being sued by the state attorney general for allegedly violating the state's open-meeting law. The suit stemmed from a controversial vote of the board to demote the Community College of Southern Nevada's former president and a high-ranking administrator at the school, both of whom were also suing the board.

And those weren't the only problems the system faced.

The presidents of the two universities had a frosty relationship and were unable to work together. Meetings of the Board of Regents were unpleasant and uncivil, sometimes marked by name-calling.

"He came in under really tough circumstances," said Regent Steve Sisolek. "We were the brunt of a lot of jokes. Terms such as 'dysfunctional' and 'disorganized' were thrown around a lot."

Rogers was already well known to most of the regents when, in the spring of 2004, he decided he would like to try to turn things around by taking over for Chancellor Jane Nichols. She had recently announced that she planned to resign.

According to Rogers, he first broached the subject with a couple of the regents whom he happened to run into on an airline flight one Friday. By the following Friday's board meeting, Nichols had given Rogers her blessing, and the regents had a proposed contract in hand.

After a brief interview, the regents voted 11 to one (with one regent absent) to appoint Rogers as interim chancellor, starting that morning.

"He came in as a non-traditional chancellor who already had a position of influence and power in Nevada," Nichols said. "It changed the relationship between the

Board of Regents and the chancellor."

But it wasn't an easy transition.

"There were some real issues as to who was at the helm of the ship," said Whipple, the regents chair. "He's very powerful. With his strength and power comes control."

Rogers didn't waste any time flexing his muscles. He quickly settled the lawsuits, and took to writing weekly memos that he sent to the press as well as the regents. Four months after he was appointed as interim chancellor, he sent out a memo criticizing the 13-member elected board as too large and "unsophisticated in corporate governance." Several regents, he wrote, had so much "personal hatred and animosity toward each other" that they had crippled the board and were damaging the system. He also appeared to question the wisdom of even having an elected board.

The regents were livid.

"He rode in like a cowboy. Shot first and asked questions later," said Jill Derby, who was vice-chair at the time.

"I was very rough on them," admitted Rogers. But he said that was by design. "First of all, I think they needed somebody to grab them and push and pull them together. And the public needed to know that there was somebody in there who recognized that the credibility of the regents was not what it should be. And so the only way I knew how to go about that was not to be their lackey, and to be openly critical of them."

Not surprisingly, Rogers' blunt, outspoken manner and shoot-from-the-hip style sometimes offends people. "The reason people like him is the same reason that people don't like him," said Community College of Southern Nevada President Richard Carpenter, who counts himself among those who do. "If it's a skunk, he's going to say it stinks."

Rogers soon sent out another memo, clarifying that he did not support the idea of an appointed board.

But he did not back down when it came to advocating for more power, and successfully convinced the regents to give him the authority to fire the system's institutional



**Regent Howard Rosenberg, professor of art at the University of Nevada, Reno, thinks Rogers' blunt style is effective in the business world but not in academe.**

presidents. Technically, he has not fired any of them, but he did orchestrate the departure of the two university presidents, UNR's John Lilley and UNLV's Carol Harter, both of whom announced last winter that they were stepping down.

The abrupt resignations prompted six former UNLV faculty senate chairs to write a highly critical letter, published in the *Las Vegas Sun*, saying that they were "horrified that [Rogers'] autocratic management style has apparently become a reality for our educational institutions."

It wasn't that faculty members were particularly sorry to see their presidents go, said Bill Robinson, UNLV faculty senate chair. Rather, he said, the fear was that Rogers would install his own "puppet" presidents and micromanage the institutions.

But, said Robinson, the faculty's fears have proved unfounded. Both of the new presidents—Milton Glick at UNR, and David Ashley at UNLV—are popular with their respective faculties, and both said that Rogers has allowed them to run their institutions.

"He's probably called me fewer than four times—and never once to tell me how to do my job," Glick said.

"He's shown that he recognizes good people and lets them do their jobs. And as long as he does that, nobody's going to worry too much," Robinson said. "We still don't like the method that was employed (to force out the previous university presidents), but pretty much it's hard to find anyone who's unhappy with the end result."

Robinson said that faculty also have been pleased with Rogers' ability to secure cost of living salary increases, and with his staunch advocacy of academic freedom. "We don't think he really takes the time to understand the issues as well as he should, but that's minor compared to the bigger picture, in terms of what he's been able to accomplish," said Robinson.

But a veteran higher education observer pointed out that the same qualities that have made Rogers an effective chancellor—his influence and his generosity—could discourage critics from challenging him.

"It is tough to criticize someone who has pledged millions to higher education and is working for free," said this observer, who requested anonymity. "By all accounts, Rogers has been able to bring new credibility and efficiency to the state's higher education system, but not without raising some questions about his tactics. Few people, however, will criticize him openly, out of admiration for what he has done and fear of what he can do."

For instance, Rogers once temporarily withdrew a \$25 million pledge to UNLV because he was frustrated that lawmakers were not sufficiently supporting Nevada State College, in Henderson. That fledgling institution is meant to absorb some of the state's growing population of college students so UNLV and UNR can raise their undergraduate standards and focus on research.

And not only is Rogers a major donor to higher education, he has been a generous supporter of political campaigns, in-



**Jane Nichols, vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, says morale in the system is high now that Rogers has taken over.**

cluding those of several regents. "If I believe in them, why shouldn't I contribute to them?" Rogers said.

The chancellor also has been an outspoken critic of candidates he dislikes, including the newly elected governor, Jim Gibbons. Rogers, who briefly considered running against Gibbons for the governorship, once publicly derided him as not very bright.

One person who has not been reluctant to criticize Rogers is Regent Howard Rosenberg.

"He is a businessman," said Rosenberg, a professor of art at UNR. "The business model is a model of command. The education model is not." But even Rosenberg acknowledges that Rogers is sincere in his efforts, and "has shaken things up substantially."

"He's trying to do a good job," Rosenberg said, adding, "I think the jury is still out" on whether he is succeeding.

Rogers would agree with that assessment. So far, he said, he has been pleased with the results of his efforts. "I think I've taken out the trash," he said, referring to the internal messes he cleaned up when he was first hired.

"Time will tell," Rogers added, in considering whether he can achieve his long-term goals: building a long-overdue health sciences system that will meet the state's growing demand; garnering more financial support from both the public and private sectors; and creating top-notch universities that will attract the state's best high school graduates, many of whom now choose to attend out-of-state institutions.

"It's kind of like leaning against this building and expecting it to move," he said of his efforts. "Sometimes you get so discouraged, you just want to go home and say the hell with it."

But Rogers, who has announced he will step down in the spring of 2009, after five years as chancellor, said, "I like what I'm doing. And it's something we have to do."◆

*Kathy Witkowsky is a freelance reporter in Missoula, Montana, and a frequent contributor to National Public Radio.*

# "Shared Responsibility"

## Oregon's governor supports a new model for financing public higher education

By Kay Mills

PORTLAND, OREGON

**L**AST FALL Oregon voters had before them two ballot measures that would have dramatically choked off money for state government, especially for higher education. Before the vote, George Pernsteiner, chancellor of the Oregon University System (OUS), recalled the "death by a thousand cuts" to which higher education had been subjected after state voters passed a severe property

**Governor Kulongoski asked the legislature for \$110 million to implement the "shared responsibility" model this year.**

tax limitation in 1990. But this time around, voters overwhelmingly rejected the restrictive measures. Still, Oregon's public universities and community colleges face serious financial problems.

After the 1990 property tax cap passed, "we had to cut 100 academic programs. We had a 40 percent tuition increase," Pernsteiner said a few days before the election last November. "We can't do that again. It would send a bad message." Measure 48, which would have sharply limited state spending, was so "draconian," Pernsteiner said, that he would have recommended the university system change its relationship with the state. There was precedent for such a move. In 1995 the

Oregon Health and Sciences University became a public corporation, with a separate board controlling faculty salaries and revenue sources, although it is still affiliated with OUS.

Oregonians also re-elected Governor Ted Kulongoski, a big supporter of education. He has asked the 2007 biennial session of the legislature for a 12.5 percent increase in general appropriations for OUS—\$827.1 million in 2007–2009 compared to \$735.4 million in 2005–2007. The governor also requested a 12.6 percent increase—an additional \$55 million—in the state contribution toward community college costs. (Oregon community colleges are locally governed but receive about half of their funds from the state.)

Governor Kulongoski, education leaders and business leaders are supporting a new "shared responsibility" approach to the financing of public higher education. Students would be responsible for about half of their total costs, from parental contributions, jobs or loans, while the federal government would contribute through Pell grants or tax credits. State aid would cover remaining need.

Kulongoski has asked the legislature for \$110 million to implement the "shared responsibility" model this year. For the following biennium (2009–2011) the cost to the state is estimated to be \$152 million. The plan now is before the legislature.

The combination of voter initiatives and economic downturns has sent the price of college spiraling. Oregon has no sales tax and, with the cap on property taxes, the state has become increasingly dependent on income taxes for revenue. When the economy is healthy, revenue pours in and spending on state services like public higher education is generous. But when times

are bad, as they have been in several recent years, state spending is severely curtailed.

In 1990 the state paid 62 percent of an Oregon university student's cost, but by 2006 that contribution had dropped to 35 percent. Since an economic downturn in 2001, annual tuition and fees for a student taking 12 credits rose from \$4,071 at the University of Oregon and \$3,621 at Eastern Oregon University, to \$5,349 and \$4,941 respectively. Community colleges increased tuition by \$25 to \$30 per credit hour in that five-year span. For example, Portland Community College charged \$40 per credit hour five years ago; last fall, tuition was \$67, plus \$6 in fees, per credit hour.

Students at four-year universities obtain loans routinely, but increasingly community college students like Cynthia Edison also must borrow to pay for tuition, books, transportation and childcare. Edison has borrowed about \$8,000 during her first two years at Portland Community College as part of her financial aid package, which has included a need-based Oregon Opportunity Grant, a federal Pell grant and money from the federal work-study program.

Edison, 32 and the mother of four children, hopes to transfer to Portland State University, to earn a master's degree in social work. Ultimately, she would like to start a mentoring house for families in which a parent has had an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Edison says she is a recovering methamphetamine addict and has seen families of addicts torn apart when their children were placed in foster care.

People recover in many aspects of their lives, she said, but when they get their children back, "they go right back into treating each other the way they did before, and the cycle seems to repeat itself." To achieve her goal, Edison knew she could not work, go to school full-time and be a mother and a wife, she said, so she and her husband, who lays flooring, decided that she should go straight through school and apply for financial aid.

Oregon ranks 46th in the nation in per capita spending on college students, according to a State Higher Education Executive Officers survey. Yet OUS officials say the state must enroll 37,000 more students in postsecondary education by 2025 (up from the current 81,000) and produce another 4,000 bachelor's degrees in order to meet projected population growth and demand, especially in Portland and in Bend, in the central part of the state. Officials also hope to enroll more of the state's increasing Hispanic population in higher education.

"We have an obligation to educate more students," said Dave Frohnmayer, president of the University of Oregon, the



*George Pernsteiner, chancellor of the Oregon University System, was relieved when voters rejected a cap on state spending, which would have led to further higher education budget cuts.*

state's flagship campus. "I think it's a moral imperative." Or, as Jill Kirk, vice president of the Oregon Business Council, put it: "Every state has economic difficulties. The question is how are we responding? All of the players in education policy are coming together in unprecedented ways. We're looking for new ways to do it. We really have to change, and we have to do it now."

One challenge is to help students avoid burdensome debt. The Project on Student Debt, a foundation-funded organization that provides information about higher education borrowing, said students at Oregon's public four-year universities average \$19,050 in loans.

At Portland Community College, Corbett S. Gottfried, director of financial aid, said last fall 41 percent of students enrolled at least half-time in certificate, associate's degree or transfer programs were receiving

**The combination of voter initiatives and economic downturns has sent the price of college spiraling.**

some form of financial aid—loans, Pell grants or work-study grants. Last year 74 percent of the college's students who were receiving financial aid had loans, compared with 47 percent five years ago. Last year the average loan total was \$4,300; five years ago it was \$3,400.

When Gottfried started working at the college in 1978, tuition was extremely low, and students could get by on Pell grants and perhaps the small state grants. "They did not take out any loans whatsoever," he said. Now, while borrowing may be much more modest at community colleges than



*President Gretchen Schuette of Chemeketa Community College had to trim \$21 million from the college budget over the last three years but expects increased funding this year.*



at four-year schools, the percentage of those with loans has been increasing as tuition rises but Pell grants do not. (Pell grants have been frozen at \$4,050 for five years.) “We’ve been talking about student debt since the 1990s, but we’ve seen a real spike in the last five or six years,” Gottfried said.

Taking on debt provides a powerful incentive, said Chris Ramirez, a student at Chemeketa Community College, in Salem. Ramirez wants to go into sports medicine and already has borrowed about \$6,000. “You have to succeed to get a good job to pay back the loans you’ve taken out,” he said.

Governor Kulongoski revamped the State Higher Education Board by naming seven new members in early 2004, and he directed the board to focus “on ensuring that a college education in this state is not limited to those who have the means to afford it.” Oregon is at the low end among the states in the amount of student financial aid it provides. A report in *The Oregonian* found that neighboring Washington State charges lower tuition than Oregon and spends five times more on student financial aid.

The board created an Access and Affordability Working Group, which reported that state need-based grants reached only about one-third of eligible students, failed to cover part-time and middle-income students and paid only 11 percent of students’ total college costs. The panel also pointed out that tuition increases of 56 percent at Oregon community colleges, and 36 percent at public four-year campuses, between 1999 and 2003, had outstripped the 14 percent increase in median family income during that period.

The working group recommended that the state increase need-based aid, which it

**In 1990 the state paid 62 percent of an Oregon university student’s cost, but by 2006 that contribution had dropped to 35 percent.**

did during the last legislative session. The program grew from \$44 million in the 2003–2005 appropriation to \$78 million for 2005–2007. Part-time students taking at least six credits can also receive these grants, making many more community college students eligible.

Meantime, the governor was considering the establishment of an endowment to expand financial aid. However, this plan stalled after focus group sessions revealed a “public perception that higher education appeared to be for the few but not the many,” said Tim Nesbitt, co-chair of the working group and former president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. “Endowment sounded like entitlement, not just alliteratively but also conceptually.”

As the governor’s education adviser, James Sager, former president of the Oregon Education Association, put it, “It



**Dave Frohnmayer, president of the University of Oregon, says, “We have an obligation to educate more students. I think it’s a moral imperative.”**

didn’t matter if someone was a high school dropout or a college graduate, urban or rural, they said K–12 is a right, but postsecondary education is a privilege.”

The focus group participants believed that students should be able to work their way through college. In years past, that was Plan B for students whose parents could not afford to pay all the bills, Nesbitt said. “Now, Plan B for this generation is borrowing.” In the 1970s, “you could work 20 hours a week at a minimum-wage job and pay your way through an Oregon school,” he added. “Now it would take 50 hours. It’s no longer possible.”

The working group’s recommendations led to the “shared responsibility” model, which has four parts. First, the student’s contribution would be \$4,750 a year for a community college student (including work or loans, but not both), and \$7,500 a year for a four-year college or university student (including part-time work and loans). Nesbitt said the plan assumes some borrowing—about \$2,750 for a university student, but none for a community college student—that is, an amount that could be paid off in a reasonable period of time on a teacher’s salary.

The second part of “shared responsibility” would be the amount paid by a student’s parents or other bill payers—higher amounts for families with means, little or nothing for low-income families. The third part would be the federal share, in the form of Pell grants or tuition tax credits. Finally, the state would pay whatever need remained.

“The beauty of this model is that it’s dynamic,” Nesbitt said. “If federal grants rise, the state can lower its amount. If income increases, the state can lower its contribution.” With increased aid, “you can get more students into higher education and get them through faster.”

“The focus wasn’t just on students at

four-year institutions, as it has tended to be in the past,” said Nan Poppe, co-chair of the working group and president of Portland Community College’s Extended Learning Campus. Community college students need to be covered as well, even when they can’t attend classes full-time, she said. “Our students tend to be older, they have family responsibilities, they work, they go to school, so every dollar counts.”

Nesbitt believes there is “a lot of support in the business community” for increasing the amount of need-based aid. “There are lots of heavy hitters on the higher education board,” he said, for example Donald Blair, vice president and financial officer of Nike, and Howard Sohn, chairman of Lone Rock Timber Company.

Julie Suchanek, who handles governmental relations for the Oregon Com-



**Cynthia Edison, a 32-year-old mother of four, has borrowed \$8,000 to help pay for her education at Portland Community College.**

munity College Association, said a leadership summit in January 2006, sponsored by the Oregon Business Council, “really brought the education issue to the forefront.” As *The Oregonian* reported, “The event convenes more of the state’s business and civic leadership than any other on the state calendar.” At that session, speaker after speaker maintained that improving public education held the key to solving Oregon’s problems, including declining income, loss of jobs, and chronic budget shortages.

The Oregon Business Council includes chief executive officers from Oregon-based companies or divisions of national companies, such as Nike, Weyerhaeuser, Intel and Hewlett-Packard. They are tackling education and public finance issues, said Duncan Wyse, the council’s full-time president.

“We are trying to make it one conversation about pre-kindergarten to 20,” Wyse said. “We want to improve delivery along the continuum.”

“Some of the business people are willing to put their money where their mouth is,” Julie Suchanek said. “But they want their money to go for something specific, rather than just into the general pot.”

The legislature is receptive to proposals to increase need-based aid, said state Senator Richard Devlin, a Democrat from Tualatin, south of Portland. But Devlin, a leader on education finance issues, added, “There is a question of how much money is available. If they can figure out a way to phase this in, I think the legislature will go for it... [But] as long as we fund the state largely from one source—personal income tax—there will always be needs in education, public safety and health that we can’t meet.”

Raising the money will require increasing the corporate minimum tax, which is now \$10 and has been since 1931. Companies paying this minimum claim no income tax liability, even though they might be profitable, because they carry losses forward from one year to the next, or they use tax credits. Sager, the governor’s education adviser, said that with the anticipated spending increases, small businesses would pay \$25 a year, and corporations with more than one million dollars in annual earnings would pay \$5,000, which he said is still low. That would provide \$84 million toward implementation of the “shared responsibility” plan, Head Start and other education programs.

The governor also has recommended appropriating \$14.6 million for enrollment growth in the public colleges and universities. Chancellor Pernsteiner said the OUS system has received no enrollment growth money since 1997. And Kulongoski has asked for \$8 million to increase faculty salaries, along with \$6.9 million to help reduce student-faculty ratios. The governor’s budget also includes spending and bonding authority for \$594.5 million in capital construction costs for 45 projects on university campuses.

Despite continuing fiscal challenges, Oregon educators point to some positive developments. Last year the seven-campus university system awarded a record number of degrees—19,138. Six-year gradua-

**continued next page**

# OTHER VOICES



## Diversity Hypocrisy

### The myriad, and often perverse, implications of admissions policies

By David L. Kirp

**I**N THE CONTINUING DEBATES over who ought to be admitted to America's top colleges, "diversity" has been both a mantra and a moral trump card. In academe, to question it risks being labeled as hopelessly retrograde. I'll take that risk. Contrary to

from preceding page

tion rates continued to improve, from 48.8 percent for freshmen who enrolled in 1987 to 58 percent for those who began in 1999-2000. The ratio of students to full-time faculty declined to 25.7 in the 2005-06 academic year, although that was still higher than the 24.3 ratio of five years ago. Diversity also increased—minorities now make up 14 percent of total OUS enrollment.

"We are doing a lot of things better-funded universities are doing," Pernsteiner said. "But we are only successful if compared to ourselves. We are not doing the job Oregon needs."

The budget cuts of recent years have played out in various ways for both students and faculty. When Adrianna Mendoza started at Eastern Oregon University, in La Grande, it was "a good school for a good price." But at the start of her sophomore year, the "tuition plateau"

**Students at four-year universities obtain loans routinely, but increasingly community college students also must borrow to pay for tuition, books, transportation and childcare.**

was eliminated. (The "plateau" had enabled a student to take 15 credit hours each semester for the same price as 12, making it possible to graduate in four years.) "As the tuition plateau was taken away, tuition was going up," Mendoza said.

Mendoza, a student member of the

State Higher Education Board, graduated from Eastern Oregon last June and now is working toward a master's degree in business administration there. She said the campus offices used to be open early and all day, but not anymore. "The staff has been reduced so its ability to advise students is greatly reduced. Student services definitely took a hit. People say, 'it's faculty that matters—that's how students learn.' But unless students have the support to get them to those classes, they're not going to make it."

The Eastern Oregon philosophy department, which had consisted of two professors, has been reduced to only one. "He's a great teacher, but you'd like to have different viewpoints," said Mendoza, who majored in the subject. "It is philosophy, after all."

At the University of Oregon, the College of Education was "severely decimated," President Frohnmayer said. There also was a government-mandated salary freeze. "In retrospect, I think that was a mistake," he said. "It eroded salaries." And it contributed to what Frohnmayer called a "hiring frost."

Southern Oregon University, in Ashland, still faces budget cuts because of a drop in enrollment since 1999. This month President Mary Cullinan, who assumed her post last fall, announced that 17 people, none of them faculty members, would be laid off and another eight job vacancies



**Julie Suchanek, who handles governmental relations for the Oregon Community College Association, says a leadership summit sponsored by the Oregon Business Council, "really brought the education issue to the forefront."**

the conventional wisdom, many of the winners in the diversity sweepstakes aren't poor or minority students, and many of the losers have powerful justice-based claims.

From the start, the incantation of diversity has been an act of hypocrisy. In the 1978 Bakke case, Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell declared that promoting diversity justified the use of race as one among multiple factors in admitting students. Powell may have envisioned an admissions committee constructing a class composed of would-be Einsteins, Warhols, kids from Appalachia, point guards and minorities, but insiders appreciated that the opinion legitimated quotas. To pass muster the "diversity" formula had to be built backwards. Rather than starting out with a straightforward quota—admit X percentage of minorities—the university simply had to calculate how heavily to weight race in order to admit the desired number.

The 2003 University of Michigan cases enshrined this hypocrisy. An explicitly race-based formula, which the university used to admit undergraduates, was found to be unconstitutional. But it was okay to consider an applicant's race in the context of a tailored, "holistic" review, as the law school did. That's a distinction without a difference since, no matter how nuanced, the process can be rigged to generate the desired racial outcome; the law school's own data indicated as much.

#### The Winners

Minorities win and whites lose—that's how the diversity issue is publicly framed, but the facts are otherwise. Most of the applicants who receive favored treatment are not minorities. Many are the offspring of alumni—"legacies," a quaint term suggestive of feudal entitlement. In an article called "Ivy League Confidential," *Forbes Magazine* advised parents that "the first thing to determine is whether your child will count as a legacy." That's smart counsel, since being a legacy, observed *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Golden in his

**Most of the applicants who receive favored treatment are not minorities. Many are the offspring of alumni, or "legacies."**

academic year she cut administration by 19 percent, faculty by ten percent and support personnel by seven percent.

Nor could Chemeketa, in Salem, the state capitol, accept all the students who wanted to attend. Two hundred applied for the nursing program, but only 54 were accepted. And there is a shortage of nurses in Oregon, as there is in most states.

"But our goal is to open the door, not to close it," Schuette said. So new certificate and associate's degree programs in pharmacy technology and pharmacology will be started next fall, in response to requests from area pharmacists.

Meanwhile, tuition increased from \$38 per credit hour in 2000-01 to \$58 per credit hour this year; in addition, there is an "access fee" of \$6 per credit. "Full-time enrollment declined because we had fewer things to offer and because of the increased cost. I'm absolutely certain of that," Schuette said. "This year we are asking the state for \$1 million more. With that, we could make a modest investment in student support and in our academic program."

Dave Frohnmayer, a former state representative and state attorney general, said, "Our dire funding is not because of any hostility in the legislature. It's not due to a lack of understanding. Higher education is a small constituency. It isn't difficult to make the sale to people intellectually or emotionally—they get it, two-to-one. They understand that if you don't have a college degree, your standard of living will be lower. But turning that knowledge into legislation is sometimes another matter. Education has to be the train. The engine is K-12, but we can't be the caboose." ♦

*Kay Mills, a former Los Angeles Times editorial writer, is the author of "Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case that Transformed Television" (University Press of Mississippi, 2004).*

2006 book, “The Price of Admission,” can be as valuable as 300 or more points on the SAT.

Children of the famous are similarly pampered, most notoriously at Brown, where the arrival of John F. Kennedy Jr., “John John,” helped to put the habitual doormat of the Ivy League on the map. A host of celebrities’ kids followed in his wake. They have been courted with a Don Juan-esque avidity, for the university has figured out that while star power doesn’t translate directly into dollars, it does generate invaluable buzz.

The scions of the super-rich also receive special treatment. They are referred to as “development cases,” a term of art that calls to mind deals made with a third-world country. The transaction isn’t made crassly explicit—a couple of million dollars will buy a place in the freshman class for your son or daughter—because everyone understands the rules.

It’s not just the elite private universities that play this game. The same formula that the University of Michigan used in order to favor disadvantaged minorities also explicitly favored children of alumni and potential donors. In the 150-point “Selection Index” the university constructed, the admissions committee could give 20 points to such applicants—but only if they were white or Asian. Although youngsters from “underrepresented” minorities qualified for an automatic 20 points, they could not be awarded these discretionary points.

What killed the university, constitutionally speaking, wasn’t its pursuit of the wealthy but the paper trail. In 2006 Michigan’s voters barred the use of race as an admissions criterion, but there’s little doubt that the university still trolls for the rich. At Ann Arbor, more undergraduates come from families with incomes greater than a quarter of a million dollars than from families earning less than \$40,000.

Diversity makes for wonderful double-speak. When challenged to explain how her university could admit applicants whose only virtue was having been born rich, Nannerl Keohane, then president of Duke, responded with an homage to diversity. “We are committed to ethnic, racial, cultural, socioeconomic and geographic diversity, to becoming more international, giving particular support to students from North and South Carolina (by reason of our founding indenture and our commitment to our region), admitting students with a range of probable academic commitments (engineers, pre-meds, classicists, historians, etc.), succeeding in athletics, making sure that our drama and music and arts programs have students who will continue and enjoy their traditions, and more.” Only at the end of that 76-word sentence did Keohane acknowledge that “alumni and development concerns” (not students, tellingly, but “concerns”) were “part of the mix.”

Professors are equally good at gussying up their own self-interest. Even as they may decry the dumbing down of their classes because of legacies and athletes, at many schools their own children benefit greatly from preferential treatment. It is a remarkable perk, for not only do they get the same kind of admissions breaks received by other preferred groups, they also receive generous scholarships. Faculty members insist that this favored handling is vital to the institutional culture. And as Tufts president Lawrence Bacow learned to his sorrow, tightening admissions standards for faculty brats risks revolt. Even as Tufts turned down 193 applicants solely because it didn’t have enough financial aid, one professor got his daughter admitted with a full scholarship by threatening that, otherwise, he couldn’t “go about [his] work with [his] wonted energy and enthusiasm.”

#### The Losers

Who loses out? Contrary to popular belief, it isn’t suburban middle class white youngsters like the plaintiffs in the University of Michigan case, beaten out by less well-qualified minorities.

Surprisingly, Asian Americans are among those who fare worst—“the new Jews,” as they are called in “The Price of Admission.” They don’t count as an underrepresented minority, and they are seldom legacies or celebrities’ kids. They’re also all too easy to stereotype. When asked why a Korean applicant named Henry Park, who had a spectacular record at Groton, was turned down, MIT’s admissions director Marilee Jones rationalized that “it’s possible that [he] looked like a thousand other Korean kids with the exact same profile of grades and activities...yet another textureless math grind.” Imagine the brouhaha if Jones had been talking about someone who was, say, Latino or Jewish.

Another surprise is that working-class male athletes also fare badly. When the topic of athletics comes up, most people think of football and basketball, two sports at which disadvantaged kids excel. But universities, obliged by the Title IX requirement to pay equal attention to women’s and men’s sports, have built up programs in areas like women’s golf, field hockey, rowing, tennis and swimming. Those sports are the near-exclusive preserve of girls from well-to-do families, who receive the kind of gold-plated scholarships once reserved for quarterbacks. Meanwhile, wrestling and gymnastics, sports that poor boys do play in high school, are being curtailed in the name of gender equality. Giving athletes favored treatment, often justified in terms of diversity, has become a boon to the well-off.

The biggest losers, of course, are children from poor families. They have neither the

cachet of the rich or famous nor the cossetting that raises grades and test scores. A widely reported study of the 146 most selective colleges by the Century Foundation showed that 74 percent of students came from families in the upper quartile of the income bracket; just three percent came from the bottom quartile.

This issue has attracted lots of attention during the past few years. Most colleges claim to favor “strivers” over more advantaged youngsters with similar academic records, but the facts are otherwise. Poor students actually fare worse than they would under a system of admissions based entirely on grades and test scores.

In the late 1990s, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported recently, the Educational Testing Service halted research designed to help admissions committees identify such strivers with greater statistical precision. While this tool could have increased economic as well as racial diversity, ETS apparently feared it could be used in arguing against explicitly race-based affirmative action. “It seems that higher education would prefer to see race-based preferences be shot down state by state rather than introduce selection processes that would aid poor Americans of all backgrounds,” wrote Thomas Benton, commenting on the news story in a *Chronicle* column.

Thomas Benton turns out not to be the author’s real name. It’s the pseudonym for an English professor at a liberal arts college. The fact that “Benton” feels he can’t show his face when writing on this topic speaks volumes about how hard it is to talk about the myriad, and often perverse, implications of diversity.

*David L. Kirp, a professor of public policy at UC Berkeley, is the author of “Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education.”*



## Who Needs It?

### Identifying the proportion of students who require postsecondary remedial education is virtually impossible

By Michael Kirst

**W**HAT DOES “remedial” mean? While a term that is used so frequently, and so freely, might seem to call for a clear definition, when applied to postsecondary education, its meaning is murky at best.

Standard dictionary definitions cannot provide sufficient guidance to understand college remediation, a complicated multi-disciplinary “process” that differs among institutions all across the country. At most broad-access open enrollment colleges, two- and four-year students take placement tests at the start of their first year to determine who can be placed in regular, credit-bearing courses, and who requires special remedial courses.

Most colleges consider course work that is below college-level to be remedial. But definitions of what constitutes “college-level” can vary dramatically. On one hand, this makes sense, given differing institutional missions, but the current situation is confusing for

everyone involved, and students cannot be well informed about what knowledge and skills will be required in order to avoid remediation.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of different tests are used to evaluate entering students, so it can be difficult for students to understand what is expected of them. California community colleges, for example, use more than 100 different tests. Texas has a required statewide placement exam, but many colleges in Texas also use their own exam for placement. The most widely used placement tests are constructed by ETS and ACT, but many others are designed by higher education

*continued next page*

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***Most colleges claim to favor “strivers” over more advantaged youngsters with similar academic records, but the facts are otherwise.***

***We do not accurately know how many students need remedial education, what it costs, how many take it, and how many complete it successfully.***

*from preceding page*

departments or faculty at individual campuses.

There is a wide range of acceptable student-performance levels, and tracking the proportion of students who need remedial education is virtually impossible. Indeed, estimates of the number and percent of remedial students are all over the place. None of the experts are comfortable with the current definitions.

The most widely cited remedial rates from the U.S. Department of Education, Condition of Education, 2001, are among the lowest: 42 percent of students in two-year institutions, and 20 percent in four-year institutions. Other indicators are much higher. The Academic Senate for the 109 California Community Colleges found far more than half of their entering students were placed at a “level below college readiness.” The U.S. Education Department’s “Principal Indicators of Student Academic Histories in Postsecondary Education, 1972–2000” reports that 12 graders in 1992 had a remediation rate of 61.1 percent for community colleges and 25.3 percent at four-year colleges.

In 2005, only 51 percent of high school graduates who were tested met ACT’s “college readiness benchmarks” for reading. Another ACT study concluded that only 22 percent of 1.2 million high school seniors who took ACT in 2004 met their college benchmarks in college biology, algebra and English composition. These ACT data suggest remediation rates at four-year colleges could be much higher than the 25.3 percent reported by the U.S. Department’s Study of Student Academic Histories.

It appears that, in addition to those who are labeled remedial, there are many more students ages 17 to 20 who are not ready for college. The Southern Regional Education Board declared that “the college-readiness problem is perhaps twice as large as the current remedial program statistics suggest.” Most states have not set a student academic readiness standard for the various segments of public higher education. Moreover, my examination of college course catalogs in six states indicates that many non-remedial regular-credit courses, such as “intermediate algebra,” involve subject matter that should be mastered in high school.

After synthesizing data from many sources, I estimate that 60 percent of students ages 17 to 20 in two-year colleges, and 30 percent in four-year institutions, need remedial courses. But I am not confident that this is correct, because, in sum, we do not accurately know—at the national and state levels—how many students need remedial education, what it costs, how many take it, how many complete it successfully, and what happens to those students after they complete those courses. And students can not prepare for college-level work ahead of time, because remedial and college-level standards are not connected to high school expectations, nor are they advertised to K–12 educators, students or parents. A first step is to separate adults from recent high school graduates, because their educational backgrounds are so different.

There are problems with all the technical calculations of remediation. Some U.S. Department of Education methods probably underestimate it. At the national level, the U.S. Department of Education’s Postsecondary Education Quick Information System is a survey of two- and four-year schools. But the unit of analysis is the institution, not the student. It is very doubtful that college officials include all remedial students in their survey answers, because it is not in their interest to tell the public about high remediation rates. Remediation rates are also derived from the department’s Beginning Postsecondary Education Student surveys, but remediation is self-reported by students, and all ages are mixed together. Aside from a mere reluctance to categorize themselves as remedial, some students might not know, for instance, that an algebra class they are taking is considered remedial or developmental.

Another approach is to analyze transcripts from databases like the National Education Longitudinal Studies (NELS). The U.S. Department of Education’s staff must make decisions about which course titles on transcripts are classified as remedial. Although there

are multiple checks in place to increase accuracy, this is a judgment game. The federal Department of Education excludes students below a minimum number of courses or credits, but some community college students drop out after taking only one or two remedial courses. Moreover, NELS is more than a decade old, and a number of indications suggest remediation has increased since 1995.

Remediation rates are very murky at the institutional level as well. While researching these issues, I found that the remediation rate at Southern Illinois University (SIU) at Carbondale was just 5.6 percent, much lower than San Jose State’s 51 percent. Yet the entering students at these two institutions did not seem all that different. On closer examination I discovered that SIU outsources most remedial education to a nearby community college, so the remedial students show up in the community college reports. And this is a common practice. All analysts agree that there

has been remedial outsourcing by four-year institutions in the last decade.

For students, there are risks attendant to remediation and the burden of taking extra non-credit courses, lengthening the time it takes to complete a degree or certificate, adding to the expense, and increasing the probability of dropping out. Students, for their part, do not seem aware of their position: In UCLA’s 2001 survey of freshmen at the nation’s four-year colleges, only nine percent reported they would need special tutoring or remedial work in English, but, of course, many more students require remedial education once they start at a four-year college.

But how many? The lack of definitive standards leaves it up to question, or even to semantics. For instance, while the University of Wyoming publicizes a new scholarship program for secondary students with a 2.5 grade point average and an ACT score of 17, many other institutions would consider such students to be in need of remedial education.

In sum, we have very little reliable data on remedial or developmental course-taking other than the NELS high school cohort studies. Variations in institutional remedial practices and definitions inhibit the ability to develop a standard definition of what counts as remedial education. So even solid numbers from a particular higher education institution or system cannot be aggregated. All of this makes it difficult for students to assess their own readiness for college.

What can be done about the need for more consistent, reliable and valid remediation rate data? Secondary and postsecondary education systems need to create a process to define and measure remediation based on curriculum content and assessment standards for specific subjects. Remediation standards need to be communicated clearly to secondary students, and linked to K–12 assessments that indicate whether high school students are ready for college. These K–16 standards need to be embedded in college placement tests that are aligned with K–12 tests.

Finally, students need to understand that admission to college does not mean that they will be able to take non-remedial courses; in most postsecondary institutions, the de facto high-stakes exams are the course placement tests. ♦

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## The New Accountability

### The potential of performance compacts in higher education

By William Zumeta

**W**HY ALL THE TALK about accountability in higher education in recent years? The days of the isolated “ivory tower” distanced from the rest of society seem long gone. Although this chagrins some, upon reflection it is hardly surprising. The globalization of fierce economic competition focused on quality, rapid innovation and cost, and fueled by the stunningly fast pace of technological change, have had a profound impact on American business and, more recently, on thinking in government.

This has raised expectations sharply for outcome-based performance by all kinds of publicly supported programs, including human services such as health, welfare and K–12 education. At the same time that performance expectations are ratcheted up, societal tolerance for high costs of operation per unit of output has declined. Increasingly competitive global markets ensure this in the business sector, and market elements play a role in parts of the public sector now as well, but primarily individual and corporate taxpayers are sensitive to taxes. High costs in public services mean high taxes, and taxes are decidedly out of favor.

In this climate one could hardly expect higher education, which still derives a large share of its revenues from tax sources, to be exempt from the pressures and expectations at work in the larger society and economy. Moreover, in higher education the costs taxes do not cover are largely met by students and their parents, and these groups have become

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highly sensitive to the long climb in prices, which have nearly tripled (after adjustment for general inflation) over the two and a half decades since 1980. The fact that the tax share of total higher education costs is down over this period, while the student/parent share is up, widely lamented by higher education insiders and analysts, only enhances the political pressures on the enterprise to find ways to be more cost-effective.

As in the other sectors mentioned, public officials and business constituencies seek both lower per-student costs (or reduced cost growth) and better results. Indeed in higher education there are some special reasons for heightened interest in these because: (a) in many states demand for higher education is growing simply because the “baby boom echo” is swelling the ranks of high school graduates, and (b) these leaders have begun to get the message that post-secondary education—and academic research and development—are strategically important to the economic competitiveness of their regions and states, and higher levels of participation are needed.

These facts plainly point to the need for increased investment in higher education capacity, but leaders facing tax resistance, constricted budgets and many difficult-to-resist spending pressures from sectors like health care, criminal justice and K–12 education, look for indicators of efficiency and accountability as a quid pro quo. Policymakers want to see more graduates as well as greater enrollments, and business leaders often call for better-prepared graduates and more in the fields where workforce needs are greatest. Other outcomes, such as contributions to the competitiveness of local industries and to improving schools, are of interest to states as well.

In this context, the old mechanisms for ensuring social accountability of American higher education no longer seem fully up to the task. One key mechanism for this, dating back to the colonial colleges, and much admired elsewhere in the world as an alternative to direct political or bureaucratic control of academe, has been the lay campus governing board of trustees. (Note that the word itself conveys their position of social trust.) This hoary accountability device has been supplemented since the 1950s and 1960s by similarly conceived statewide policy and governing boards for higher education made up of leading citizens. These mechanisms have certainly had some success historically in buffering the campuses from the worst of political interference and micromanagement, and for a long time they seemed to provide generally adequate assurance that someone other than the academics alone was minding the store.

Professionally based accreditation has also played an important role in institution- and discipline-level quality assurance with federal and state governments long requiring that institutions pass this test to be officially recognized or eligible for various government programs, most prominently financial aid to their students. Now, however, trustees and state boards are often seen as too infused with their charges’ perspectives to be capable of fully assuring public accountability, while accreditors are regarded as similarly partially captured and unable to push hard enough for quality, now seen primarily as ensuring better student outcomes.

These tried and true accountability mechanisms can surely be criticized but they have shown signs in recent years of being capable of responsiveness to societal changes. Boards of trustees, with their heavy tilt toward influential business people, are certainly paying more attention to outcomes and efficiency, and accrediting bodies have been in the main urging colleges and universities to focus on assessing student learning and other outcomes. A leading

example is the recent, widely acclaimed effort by the engineering accrediting group, ABET, to shift much of the focus of its accreditation reviews to student outcomes. These arrangements surely continue to serve an important purpose in the overall social accountability regime for higher education.

State boards of higher education could play a continuing role too. They can produce useful statewide data and can serve as a convening authority for coordinating activities among the institutions. They can also play a role in documenting the results of accountability efforts. Although

hampered if too beholden to institutional interests, not supported well enough to keep quality staff, or if not fully representative of all postsecondary providers, at their best these bodies can provide credible policy analysis and advice to policymakers independent of the institutions. Most of them, however, seem to lack even at the board level the clout, and perhaps the perceived independence, to exercise true policy leadership in and for higher education. Something new is needed in many if not most states.

Turning to the specifics of accountability, the focus over the past decade has been largely on just that—institutional persistence and graduation rates, internal efficiency indicators, and such partial outcome measures as passing rates on occupational licensure exams and, for universities, acquisition of extramural research grants. Also, some states’ accountability efforts have given attention to enrollments or graduation of underrepresented students, and a few to tuition containment.

Quite a few states became fairly aggressive about all this in the late 1990s, but empirical studies—notably the series of annual surveys on accountability by Joseph Burke and colleagues at SUNY-Albany—show there has been a retreat in the present decade from efforts at linking performance on these indicators to substantial amounts of state funding. Indeed, there are sound reasons for not linking large shares of schools’ basic funding too tightly to such inevitably partial measures.

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Yet this has plainly not meant that generous state funding has been easy for institutions to come by recently in the absence of a clear demonstration that they are serving well and efficiently the interests and needs of those who support them. Instead a kind of stalemate seems to have developed. On the one hand there is a growing acceptance that more broadly accessible higher education is critical in the modern economy and society but also a sense that neither simply funding the current structure better nor bludgeoning the current denizens of it with narrowly conceived efficiency mandates are attractive strategies.

A capacity to articulate authoritatively statewide public needs regarding higher education, some of which go well beyond the scope of any single institution, and to envision systemic efficiencies—including the K–12 sector and community colleges—seems called for at this point if necessary new investments in higher education are to be catalyzed. Crucial also are new, broadly acceptable approaches to affordability of higher education for students and to more stability of both tuition and state funding in the face of the inevitable ups and downs of state economies.

One possibility for encompassing the full range of pressing issues and the need for policy leadership in a novel way revolves around an idea circulating across the country under various names, here called the “performance compact.” While there is some variation across states, the basic idea is that state higher education and finance agencies, colleges and universities, other relevant stakeholders such as K–12 education, workforce and economic development agencies, business and other key community interests, and most importantly the governor and key legislative leaders, come together to hammer out goals and performance expectations (and indicators) for higher education, as well as a commitment to adequate plans, support and stability to reach the goals.

Goals and measures—in addition to institution-specific measures like improvement of student retention and graduation rates—would encompass matters that span across institutions and even sectors, like assuring better pre-college preparation of students via alignment of curricula and testing that should reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level; creating more efficient linkages between two-year and four-year college curricula including preparation for specific majors; improving services to underserved communities and regions where a new campus is too expensive; and reducing skills shortages in local labor markets.

Participants must also confront frankly the related problems of higher education capacity, affordability, cost and funding stability, for recent patterns do not facilitate accessibility. A broadly participative, authoritative arena for addressing performance and resource requirements simultaneously may make it possible to get beyond the usual disjointed gamesmanship and short-term thinking that plagues higher education policymaking now. Typically also steps would be taken in a performance compact to free up institutions from cumbersome state controls on management decisions, as has been done in the recently negotiated Virginia compact. This step is based on the idea that public institutions functioning in today’s fast-moving environments need the freedom to be nimble in responding, and need to be able to seek their own efficiencies, but at the same time must be publicly accountable for results.

The crucial outcome of the process should be a new compact among the parties that codifies updated and specific understandings about what results will be achieved, by whose (often interdependent) actions, and with what resource expectations. If well led (probably in most

cases determined gubernatorial leadership is required to move beyond business as usual) such a process has the potential to accomplish several purposes. It should educate the parties to see that current institutionally focused efforts often create a whole that is less than the sum of its parts. It should convey and build common ownership around the interdependent measures required to establish and achieve state goals for higher education, which in turn are derived from goals for the economy and society. And, it should push all parties to confront realities about state finances.

In the end the goal is to produce mutually reinforcing commitments that have some hope of surviving inevitable economic cycles and political turnover. External stakeholder involvement can play a particularly important role on this last point as they can help hold all sides to their commitments. The challenges and constraints facing American higher education, and indeed the states

themselves, in the modern world seem beyond the reach of current institutional structures and standard venues for policymaking. Something new is required, and the contemporary performance compact idea at least provides a framework and an arena to begin creating what is needed. ♦

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***Accrediting bodies have been urging colleges and universities to focus on assessing student learning and other outcomes.***

***A capacity to articulate authoritatively statewide public needs regarding higher education seems called for at this point, if necessary new investments in higher education are to be encouraged.***

## IRELAND

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look forward to almost certain employment. The jobless rate last year for graduates of the school was just 1.6 percent, compared to the United Kingdom, where graduate unemployment exceeds six percent. Since the onset of the Celtic Tiger, the Irish have enjoyed a two-and-a-half-fold improvement in average material living standards. Income has gone from 35 percent below the European Union average to 20 percent above it.

Higher education itself is credited, in part, with this impressive turnaround. In the absence of jobs, or for the training needed to find work overseas, Irish young people have been enrolling in universities in large numbers for decades. "People traditionally in Ireland placed a high priority on education," said John Hegarty, Trinity's provost. "They saw it as a passport to succeeding anywhere in the world." Tuition for undergraduates was eliminated in 1995, and the number of students ages 19 to 24 in college ballooned from 11 percent in the mid-1960s to the current high of 56 percent—projected to increase again to 65 percent by 2015—compared to a higher education participation rate in the United States of 24 percent.

Meanwhile, the combination of a low corporate tax rate, a low-wage English-speaking population, and membership in the European Union (and access to its markets) helped attract the likes of Dell, Intel, Microsoft, Wyeth, Boston Scientific, IBM, Bell Labs, Apple, HP, Abbott Laboratories, and Google to Ireland, where they set up production facilities to make everything from pharmaceuticals to software; by 2002, Ireland produced half of all consumer software sold in Europe. The country had a large supply of well-trained university graduates to fill management and other professional positions at these fast-arriving multinationals. Citing prominent economists, an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review suggests the university education of its population has accounted for almost one percent per year of additional Irish national output.

But there are fears that things are slowing down. In October, the National Competitiveness Council of Ireland said there were signs the Celtic Tiger was losing its momentum. Forfas—a board that provides policy advice to the government on trade, technology and innovation—warns that Ireland's high-tech manufacturing business is particularly threatened by competition from Asia. After 15 years of economic expansion, "Ireland has reached a turning point," reports the nation's Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

Ireland's success is part of its problem. Its rising standard of living has elevated the low wages that drew manufacturers in the first place. "One of the consequences has been a high-income society that needs to be even more competitive internationally if it is to continue to forge ahead in a period of slower economic growth," the OECD said.

So policymakers are turning to the universities again in a unique experiment in

tailoring a higher education system largely—and explicitly—to serve the needs of an economy. That system is to be a major part of moving Ireland from a nation that depends on technology-importing and low-cost production to one that is based on innovation. And it "requires that Irish (higher) education and research ... become the new drivers of economic development," the OECD said.

In the last 15 years, said Jim Browne, registrar and deputy president at National University of Ireland, Galway, "education was important because it provided a skilled workforce. But what got us to where we are won't keep us there." The professionals with undergraduate degrees that the universities turned out before are skilled enough to manage, but they were not necessarily trained to innovate. "Now we need to invest in postgraduate education," said Browne, who advocates churning out Ph.D.s and expanding research and development so that Ireland doesn't only manufacture drugs and technology products, but invents them. "The conversion of knowledge into wealth is valued by universities here," said Hegarty. "We do have to push this along."

Trouble is, as successful as Ireland has been at furnishing undergraduate education, it is only now starting to do research or produce postgraduates in many disciplines, and in collective numbers smaller than some single-major research institutions in America and Europe. Universities are worried about attracting qualified students at all levels. The birth rate in largely Catholic Ireland, once a popular subject of derisive Monty Python skits, has plummeted from 23 per thousand in the 1970s (which was, in fact, twice the European average) to about 13 per thousand, meaning the number of students ready to enter college will have declined from 70,000 in 1990 to a predicted 53,000 by 2015. This at a time when two-thirds of new jobs Irish employers will create are expected to require a university education, compared with one-third in 2001. The estimated

***Ireland's extraordinary economic success means that its college students live in a society with one of the lowest jobless rates and highest growth rates in the world.***

number of university graduates needed to meet demand is around 37,200 a year, while Irish universities are now producing only 32,500.

Computing and engineering programs are especially hard put to attract students. Increasing numbers of secondary school graduates don't do well enough in math and science. Of the 51,000 who took the so-called leaving certificate exam last year, only 11,000 got honors in math, the prerequisite for most university engineering and technology courses. That was down eight percent from just the year before.



***Jim Browne, registrar and deputy president of the Irish national university's Galway campus, believes there should be more emphasis on research and graduate education.***

More than 20 percent failed math altogether, 16 percent failed chemistry, 13 percent failed biology, and nine percent failed physics.

The Royal Irish Academy calls this a crisis threatening the very future of Ireland's information-technology industry.

Ireland's supply of Ph.D.s is also low compared to those in other European countries, including Switzerland, Finland and the UK. The number of Ph.D. graduates in Ireland per 1,000 people ages 25 to 29 is 1.8 percent, much lower than the European Union average of 2.9 percent. The total number of doctoral students in all of Ireland, while it has begun to climb, is only 4,500—again, not much more than at some major universities in other countries. Research has, until recently, been almost an afterthought.

As recently as 1997, the research budget in the Department of Education was zero. Ireland spends barely 1.4 percent of its gross domestic product on research and development, compared to 3.1 percent in Japan, 2.7 percent in the United States, and the European Union average of 1.9 percent. In another measure, only 70 of the 1,056 applications to the Irish patent office in 2004 came from higher education institutions. In all, Ireland submitted 86 patent applications to the European patent office per million population, half the European Union average and far fewer than Finland (338) or Germany (310).

Yet rather than collaborate, some Irish universities (there are seven, plus 13 institutes of technology) have been competing for faculty and are accused of duplicating costly research efforts. Government spending on higher education has remained constant at about 1.3 percent of gross domestic product, compared to 2.7 percent in the United States, 2.5 percent in Canada, and 1.7 percent in Finland.

And many faculty and students protest that administrators and the government are neglecting the humanities in favor of science and technology, and are converting universities into factories to fuel industrial growth—in Ireland, of all places, where the humanities have such historic cultural

value. "Underlying these changes is an increasingly dominant view of the university system as a strategic component of the Irish economy and its development," complained Gerald Mills, vice president of the Irish Federation of University Teachers.

"Ultimately, the question for all universities is simple," proclaimed a report by the students' union and graduate students' union at Trinity—alma mater, after all, of Samuel Beckett, Edmund Burke, Jonathan Swift and Oscar Wilde. "Does the university serve knowledge and education as an end in itself—in other words, constitute an academic institution—or does the university perceive knowledge as a means to an end, in other words exist as a market-driven institution?"

Through the endless traffic and across the city, at University College Dublin, a degree-conferring ceremony is getting under way for mid-year graduates dressed in their academic robes and finery—saffron for Celtic studies, scarlet for health sciences, St. Patrick's blue for science—in front of an audience of beaming relatives with flashing cameras. At the center of the stage stands Hugh Brady, an accomplished nephrologist who returned to the university from a ten-year stint at Harvard, and has since become its president.

It is the largest university in Ireland, with 22,000 students, but one that was widely seen as underachieving. Its own strategic plan, released in 2004, concluded that UCD had "significant unrealized potential." A vast number of departments (90) and faculties (11), many of them tiny and often overlapping, led to an evident duplication of academic effort and discouraged interdisciplinary collaboration. Promotion procedures were archaic.

The sweeping changes Brady has already made at UCD symbolize the shift in Irish higher education—and the tensions it has been causing. He has adopted the American-style semester system, added a popular menu of electives, taken administrative responsibilities away from academic faculty, streamlined the route to promotion, begun a 15-year modernization of the bland 1960s- and 1970s-style campus,

launched a branding and advertising campaign, and merged the 11 faculties into five colleges with new graduate divisions, and the 90 departments into 35 schools with five principals in place of the former academic chairmen.

In the future, a quarter of UCD's students will be postgraduates, up from just under a fifth today. The university will be "research-led," Brady has proclaimed, and will rank among the top 30 universities in Europe—a huge ambition considering that UCD does not currently make it to the top 300 of the influential Shanghai Jiao Tong rankings of world universities or the top 200 of the *Times Higher Education Supplement* international league tables, where the only Irish institution that does appear is Trinity. Brady said he intends to make UCD Ireland's premier graduate-level institution.

These changes may have gone over well with prospective students—the number who made UCD their first choice among Irish universities is up ten percent—but they have caused a drop in the morale of faculty, many of whom were stripped of administrative titles and power and merged into larger departments. There was no other choice, Brady said; within the kind of tiny enclaves that existed previously, "you develop bunkers and silos, and the more entrenched they become the harder it is to get people to talk to their neighbors. I think that's true of universities in general." Brady's intention to make UCD into the top graduate university in Ireland didn't do much to win the goodwill of other Irish university heads, either—especially when he started hiring star faculty away from National University of Ireland, Galway, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, and University College Cork.



**Sean Barrett, a senior lecturer in economics at Trinity College, is critical of the new emphasis on graduate education and research.**

The so-called "poaching" episode grew so heated it ended up embroiling the prime minister. Education minister Mary Hanafin scolded that poaching by the universities would jeopardize the nation's economic plans. "Rather than competing on the small stage, we should be winning on the international stage," she said. Brady finally signed on in September to an anti-poaching protocol that calls for open recruitment of faculty and contracts with senior researchers, including minimum periods of appointment.

Brady concedes that collaboration is fine, but still insists competition has its place. "You'll never get rid of it, nor should you," he said over coffee in a conference room after the conferral ceremony. "Institutions will still compete for the best academics. That does not obviate the development of trans-institutional research programs and research clusters," an area in which UCD actually has been very active. "But if you try and force collaboration, it will fail. Some of the language (of Irish policymakers) suggests that collaboration is an end in its own right. The question is whether it adds value."

The reason for the national government's power over universities in cases like the poaching feud is simple: It accounts for 86 percent of their funding. And it is using money to steer policy. Spending on education in Ireland has soared from 1.74 billion euros a year in 1990 to six billion euros a year today, of which about 1.5 billion goes to the universities. (One euro was worth \$1.29 at press time.) And more money has begun to flow since higher education was put at the center of the national economic development strategy, much of it for research.

First there was the Program for Research in Third-Level Institutions, which from 1998 to 2002 committed 605 million euros to research infrastructure. Then came the Technology Foresight Fund of 711 million euros over seven years, mainly for information and communications technologies and biotechnology, which is administered by the Science Foundation for Ireland, or SFI (modeled after the U.S. National Science Foundation). The SFI has already awarded more than 250 million euros for research and has invested 42 million euros in three new centers for science, engineering and technology to connect Irish universities with communications and biotechnology companies.

Other annual government funding for research has increased to 680 million euros, up from 334 million in 2000. Higher education's share of that has helped the universities increase their research and development spending from 322 million euros a year to nearly half a billion, more than a 50 percent jump. In exchange, the government expects the number of doctoral students in sci-



**Education minister Mary Hanafin occasionally must tamp down the competitive fires of Irish universities, especially in the bidding for new faculty members.**

ence, engineering and technology to double by 2010.

In all, the government has earmarked 2.5 billion euros in the last five years for research, technology, innovation and development, a five-fold increase compared to the five years before that. In June, a 30 million euro fund was set up to improve technology transfer from universities to industry. "With our new strategy, what we're saying is we want to take this idea of commercialization and translation of ideas and make that an equal part of the teaching and learning," said Ned Costello, former assistant secretary of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (itself an indication of the tightening link between the economy and higher education), and the new head of the Irish Universities Association.

The best example of how money is being used to pull the universities into line with government economic policy is the new Strategic Innovation Fund, which will spend 300 million euros over five years to promote inter-institutional collaboration. In December, the government approved the first 14 projects under the fund, totaling 42 million euros.

Irish universities are not big enough to do the scale of research that is needed, policymakers say. UCD's ambitions notwithstanding, "None of us are big enough by ourselves," said Browne, in Galway. Ireland can not afford seven universities if each of them tries to be world-class in every discipline, but it can create a network of collaboration, he said. "There are 105,000 students in the whole country. There are universities in other countries with that many students. If we all try to do everything, we won't get anywhere."

NUI-Galway, one of four constituent, but largely independent, universities of the National University of Ireland (the others are UCD, University College Cork, and NUI-Maynooth), has been making changes more quietly and with less turmoil than UCD and Trinity. "Galway and other Irish universities are relatively intimate. People already know each other," Browne said in his office in the university's quadrangle, a replica of Christ Church College

at Oxford. "Change is always painful. But there's more support for collaboration than people realize. If you talk about a public university, which is supported by the taxpayer, it has an obligation to society, to its stakeholders. It won't be neat, but I believe there's an imperative for change here."

That change requires each university to specialize in a selected area, with the others as its partners, Browne said. "We could lead biomedical engineering, and others could be involved. Trinity could lead genetics, and we could be involved, and so on." Given its location on the North Atlantic, Galway has already staked its claim to marine research. It also has made a priority of biotechnology, considering the

***As successful as Ireland has been at furnishing undergraduate education, it is only now starting to do research or produce postgraduates in many disciplines.***

large numbers of medical and biomedical companies—Medtronic, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Boston Scientific—in and around Galway, the fastest-growing city in Ireland. "We've been very strategic in the areas we've chosen," Browne said. Research income has shot from eight million euros in 2000 to 42 million this year.

Outside the old quadrangle, the gleaming marine science building, built in 1991 along the River Corrib, already has a new wing under construction. The nearby National Center for Biomedical Engineering, built in 2000, is linked with the information technology department and other of the university's divisions through bridges—physical manifestations of the interdisciplinary work Browne is talking

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about. In the sparkling lobby are artists' conceptions of 20 more planned projects, including a 50 million euro engineering and human biology building and an expansion of the Clinical Sciences Institute, all part of a 400 million euro "campus of the future" unveiled in December.

The government strategy for forcing universities to focus on their research

**Many faculty and students protest that administrators and the government are neglecting the humanities in favor of science and technology.**

strengths has had an extraordinarily quick impact. "The strongly individualistic streak in the Irish psyche perhaps makes us not as good at collaboration as other countries, but the fact is that this is a small country with fewer resources than some others, making collaboration a necessity," said Costello, who, before he left the government to take over as head of the Irish Universities Association, authored a policy-shaping plan to increase research by 2013.

"Competitive funding is going to start to bring about a natural clustering," Costello said. "That's going to give universities an idea of where their main strengths are. In pure Darwinian terms, that's going to start to happen." Added Trinity's Hegarty: "The fundamental principle of how we move forward is to draw disciplines and institutions together. We're searching for a model for collaboration. I guess we're inventing one: inter-institutional collaboration, which gives you scale."

UCD's Conway Institute of Biomolecular and Biomedical Research, for example, which Brady was instrumental in establishing on his return from Harvard, has made the university an authority in these areas. Housed in a gleaming new building, the institute is a model of interdisciplinary cooperation. "As people started to think of how the building would work, they almost demanded that they be co-located with their collaborators," said Brady. Wyeth Research has since agreed to locate a new 13 million euro discovery research group there.

The Center for Synthesis and Chemical Biology is a 26 million euro, UCD-led collaboration in the chemical sciences that also involves Trinity, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and has attracted 17 million euros in funding for medical research projects. In all, research projects at UCD last year totaled 80 million euros, and the university filed 11 patent applications. Its most successful spinoff was for a mad cow disease test that has earned almost two million euros in royalty income.

The university also is developing a 30-acre "innovation park" adjacent to the campus, where incubation space is already

occupied by 23 startup companies, and where the new National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (funded by the government to the tune of 90 million euros over seven years) will conduct pharmaceutical research in conjunction with Trinity and the Institute of Technology, Sligo. Ireland's pharmaceuticals industry employs 20,000 people and accounts for nearly 30 billion euros a year in exports.

Trinity College has claimed genetics, immunology and neuroscience as its priority for research, declaring that it will become a world leader in the field. It has collaborations with Galway in the humanities and bioengineering, with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in medicine, with University College Cork in science and technology, and with seven other Irish higher education institutions and Bell Labs in telecommunications.

Research income at Trinity rose from 57 million euros in 2004 to 64 million in 2005, the last year for which the figures are available. A 372 million euro strategic plan announced in October, aimed at making it one of the 50 best universities in the world, calls for emphasizing research, boosting the number of postgraduate students by 25 percent to 5,000, and recruiting 225 new faculty.

This has only worsened opposition from among the current faculty and students. Provost Hegarty, the school's former dean of research and the head of physics who also studied, worked and taught in the United States, has already pushed through a restructuring program similar to UCD's, despite resistance, including a new management system that allows for more interdisciplinary work while also tying the allocation of resources to the capacity of departments to generate funding.

"Trinity College is not an institute of technology, we are a university," groused the report by the Trinity students' union and graduate students' union. "The Industrial Development Agency, Enterprise Ireland, and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment are responsible for creating economic development, not Trinity College."

Change is difficult in any organization, Hegarty responded, but harder in universities, which "are about ideas, and ownership of ideas, and can be supremely competitive. But this university has survived revolutions, uprisings, changing of regimes. The question is, how has it survived all of those things if universities are so monolithic? Everybody accepts that you have to prioritize research. There is a recognition that we have to change as society changes."

Trinity senior lecturer in economics Sean Barrett is not convinced of this. One of the harshest critics of the changes at Irish universities, he believes they could actually increase costs and lower standards—not to mention shortchange graduates, given that salaries in areas like research and development and computing, careers into which the government is trying to push more students, are relatively low in Ireland. "There is no evidence from earnings data that increasing the budgets of

physics and engineering departments will enhance either national economic growth or the earnings of graduates," Barrett concluded in an article in the *Journal of the Institute of Public Administration of Ireland*.

What really angers Barrett is the comparison of such things as Irish patent applications and research and development spending with those of countries like Finland. Despite the fact that Finland greatly outpaces Ireland in both categories, he points out, it has a 9.1 percent unemployment rate compared to Ireland's 3.9 percent, and Irish annual growth rates over a decade were three and a half times those of Finland.

"Other countries should adopt Irish economic policy rather than Ireland adopt other countries' R&D policies," Barrett fumed in shotgun

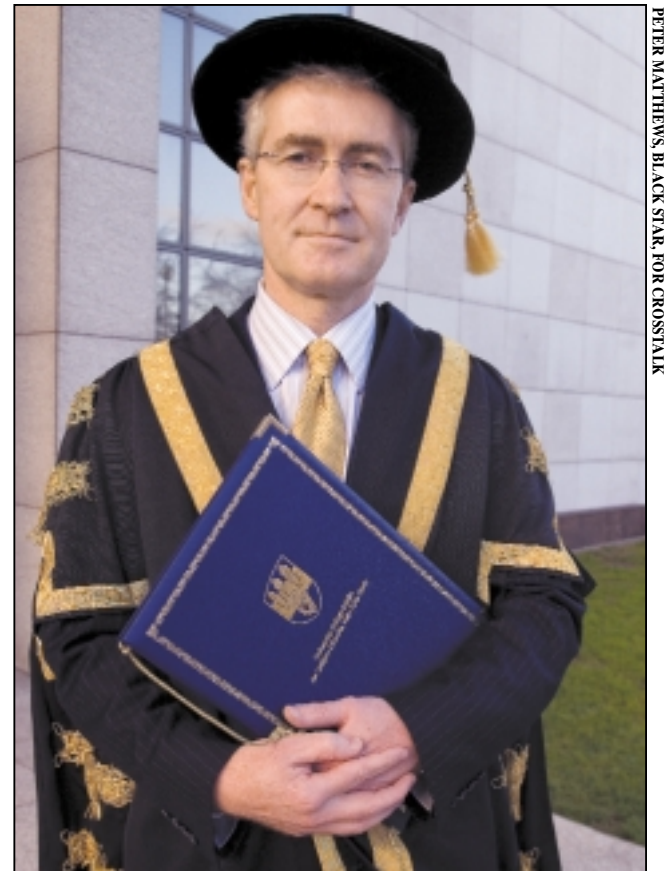
bursts. "This is an incredible success story except in the minds of the heads of universities. I don't know what crisis these guys are dealing with other than the one they've contrived. Did we get here by being stupid? We were doing extremely well; there's no need to start dismantling the university system."

At Trinity, the dismantling that Barrett speaks of has included merging his department with education, law, social sciences, philosophy, social work and psychology into a new Faculty of Social and Human Sciences. But he is not alone in decrying the apparent emphasis on science over the humanities.

"It's a bit like the Unionist Party that used to run Northern Ireland: minority rule. The bulk of resources goes to the

**Spending on education in Ireland has soared from 1.74 billion euros a year in 1990 to six billion euros a year today.**

smallest cadre of students who are in science and technology instead of the humanities," Barrett said. Because secondary school graduates have lower leaving certificate scores in math and science than in the humanities, Barrett reasons, pushing them into science and technology courses will bring down the average quality of university students. "University students in Ireland are university students in the purest sense, to get an education, not just to get a job," Barrett said. University administrators and government officials who he sees as tailoring Irish education to feed the needs of the economy "are old-



**By concentrating on research and graduate studies, President Hugh Brady of University College Dublin hopes to build his campus into one of the top 300 universities in Europe.**

style mercantilist philistines," he said.

Not true, say the officials. "Our humanities scholars point out, and they're right, that all of our Nobel prizes have been in the humanities," said Brady at UCD, whose graduates have included James Joyce. "One could form the impression from the public debate of late that the economic dimension is the principal preoccupation of our society," Hegarty admitted in an opening address to the Irish Universities Association Conference on the Humanities and Social Sciences on his campus in October. But he added that, especially at a time when great changes are transforming Irish society, "there is now a pressing need to rearticulate the critical importance of the arts, humanities and social sciences."

In the high-ceilinged office of the 1760 provost's house, hung with oil paintings of Edmund Burke and John Pentland Mahaffy (an earlier Trinity provost who was also Oscar Wilde's tutor), Hegarty said the humanities are important to Ireland's economy, too. "Foreign investment involves people, and companies are looking at the quality of the society they're coming to," he said. ("He may be saying he values the humanities," Barrett countered, "but he's been doing everything he can to undermine them.")

Hanafin, the education secretary, repeated this idea. "Our universities are more critical than ever in helping us to make sense of these changes," she said. "It is absolutely fundamental that we preserve a balance between the humanities and science. Failure to do so would be to ignore the essential responsibility of our institutions of higher learning in a civilized society." ♦

*Jon Marcus is a freelance writer based in Boston.*