

# Dean & Provost

## Building and Leading Successful Learning Communities

Volume 3, Issue 2

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## How likely is it for your campus to be targeted for terrorism?

'Chances are low, but consequences high,' says disaster expert

There should be more experts on campus terrorism prevention, according to **Lee Clarke**, associate professor in sociology at **Rutgers University** and terrorism expert.

"I've been telling people that universities are perfect targets: They're open, low-security, high-visibility places," he says. "We welcome all kinds of folks — diversity is one of the strengths of the university."

"Terrorism on campuses would have a devastating effect on our culture because school is a place where we're supposed to be safe."

Clarke has found few chief academic officers proactive about violence prevention or planning what to do if terrorism occurs.

"My sixth-grade son has evacuation drills at school, but I know of no college or university that has them," he says. ■

#### MORE ON PAGES 4, 5

- DO PROACTIVE PLANNING.
- 8 STEPS TO A DISASTER PLAN.
- ACTIVITIES HELP STUDENTS COPE.

## Admission criteria, procedures differ for adult degree programs

Our survey reveals adults with marginal records accepted

Adults seeking a college degree like to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Allowing them to move through the curriculum at a quick pace is quite an incentive to enroll.

That's why an increasing number of institutions are creating accelerated undergraduate degree programs. It makes sense to court this population, since those over age 24 now compose approximately 41 percent of the total student population,

But one of the biggest stumbling blocks in starting accelerated programs is determining admis-

sion policies and procedures.

Should you use traditional criteria to ensure your institution's reputation for educational quality? Most don't, according to our national survey of undergraduate adult accelerated programs.

In fact, only seven of 80 programs we surveyed even ask for ACT or SAT test scores, and almost all accept adults with poor prior academic records or who lack basic skills. See inside for more of what we found. ■

#### SPECIAL REPORT: PAGES 8, 9

- RESULTS.
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- WHO USES PLACEMENT TESTS.
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## Illegal immigrants may get tuition break in California

A bill has been introduced in the **California State Assembly** that would allow illegal immigrants living in California to qualify for in-state tuition at the state's public universities. Currently, tuition for out-of-state students averages \$15,000. If the bill is passed, illegal immigrants will pay approximately \$4,300.

The bill prevents foreign students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions from receiving in-state tuition.

To qualify for the tuition break, students must have attended a California high school for at least three years and have graduated from a state high school. ■

## Students in Manhattan now have residence hall

**Marymount Manhattan College** (N.Y.), opened its first residence hall over Labor Day weekend.

The college bought the first 31 floors of a 46-story high-rise on East 55th Street.

It has 114 suites for 493 students.

Housing fees are \$8,500 a year. Private apartments in the building rent for \$3,200 to \$15,000 a month. ■

## Retiring dean triggers scholarship donations

The engineering alumni association at **Purdue University** recently raised \$132,000 to endow a scholarship fund in honor of **Richard J. Schwartz**, the retiring dean of the Schools of Engineering.

The association kept the fundraising efforts a secret from Schwartz until his retirement ceremony at the end of June.

The money raised will be enough to provide four scholarships.

Schwartz, 65, had reached the mandatory retirement age for senior administrators. ■

## College settles grievance with female faculty members

**Vermont Technical College** has agreed to pay \$50,000 to former and current female faculty members, reports **The Associated Press**. Between 1985 and 1999, the women were hired at the instructor rank, whereas their male counterparts were hired as assistant professors.

An ad hoc campus committee found a pattern of women being hired at lower rankings and presented its findings to the president. When he failed to take action, the grievance

chairman of the faculty federation filed a grievance.

The settlement agreement was signed six weeks later. ■

## Act to encourage employer tuition reimbursements

**President Bush** recently signed the **Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001**.

The bill permanently extends the exclusion for employer-provided educational assistance (Section 127 of the **Internal Revenue Service** code).

It allows employers to provide up to \$5,250 per year to each of their employees in tax-free reimbursement.

It can be used for tuition, books and fees for job- or non-job-related education at the undergraduate and graduate level. ■

## UIC professor wins preretirement jackpot

A **University of Illinois at Chicago** professor due to retire in December has won \$1 million in the Illinois lottery.

**Sterling Plumm**, who has taught at UIC for 30 years, plans to use the money to travel and develop his award-winning poetry and other written works. ■

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## Consider using older retail malls as satellite campuses

BOSTON — More institutions are seeking satellite sites to attract working adults who don't live near the central campus. And shopping malls usually end up on their short list of possible locations because they offer inexpensive rent and are accessible from major highways.

But there are good and bad points about using old malls as educational sites, according to **Aaron B. Schwarz**, principal of **Perkins Eastman Architects PC** in New York.

Schwarz presented a session entitled "Can Abandoned Retail Malls be Successfully Transformed into College Buildings?" at the recent **Society for College and University Planning's** national conference.

Schwarz recently conducted an e-mail survey asking 150 institutions if they were planning on renovating retail malls for educational use. He got 24 yes responses.

But he says there are advantages to colleges renovating an existing mall, or space within it, including:

- **Physical:** It's quicker and less expensive to renovate an existing structure than building a new one.

The malls usually have ample space for parking, have access to major roadways and good floor to ceiling heights.

- **Political:** Institutions need to reach out to the community to serve those not close to the central campus. Older malls are in suburbs, close to where potential students may live. Some institutions use them for a few classes, then later expand their use to whole programs or departments. Communities sometimes request a univer-

sity to revitalize an eyesore and become a catalyst for private development in the area.

- **New experimental initiatives:** Administrators may like keeping experimental programs at arm's length. Incubator projects usually work well off campus.

- **Programmatic:** "Using a mall has historical advantage," Schwarz says. "Colleges usually are built in one box — where you can see everything that's happening." Malls use the same model.

But there are also disadvantages in trying to convert old malls for educational use (*see middle box*).

So should you consider converting a mall into educational space? "Yes," says Schwarz, "but be sure you are transforming the building to meet your program, and not changing your program to meet the building's constraints." *Contact Aaron Schwarz at AB-Schwarz@peapc.com.* ■

### Mall renovations can be costly

BOSTON — Consider the details of housing a satellite campus in an old mall, says **Aaron Schwarz**, of **Perkins Eastman Architects PC**. He says you should keep these cautions in mind:

- **Some floors may not support heavy loads**, such as needed for libraries.

- **Staircases usually need to be built.** Malls have escalators and elevators to move a lot of people through, but the load is spread out. But students come to and leave class at the same time, so wide, accessible stairs are needed.

- **Malls are built as disposable architecture.** They are expected to last about 18 years, so they usually need extensive renovations.

- **Mall interiors are dark.** "Retailers want people to focus on goods inside, not be looking outside," Schwarz says. But typical classrooms are 70 to 90 feet wide so light can come in from both sides. "Supplying natural light is a major issue in converting retail space for higher education," he says. ■

### Remodeling usually extensive, but location of space favorable

**Aaron Schwarz**, principal of **Perkins Eastman Architects PC** (N.Y.), was recently involved in renovating a **Bloomingtondale's** department store for the **University of Connecticut**.

Major corporations wanted the university to have more of a presence in the downtown area, and city officials wanted to rid themselves of an abandoned eyesore.

The building's location meant the university's executive MBA and other business programs would be convenient for adults working downtown.

The building was stripped down to its structure. Elevators and escalators were torn out and "light spines" were cut into the middle. Two years later, the new campus is in use — much faster and less expensive than if they had built a new structure, Schwarz says.

Here are more examples of recent retail renovations:

- **Housatonic Community-Technical College** in Connecticut. An abandoned mall at the edge of the Bridgeport city limits was transformed into a vibrant community college, Schwarz says. The price of the renovation was \$152 per square foot.

- **Houston Community College.** The interior of a mall was reconstructed for classes and offices. An old movie theater on the grounds became the college's performing arts center. The \$2 million renovation amounted to \$77 per square foot.

- **University Center of Greenville.** Seven institutions formed a consortium located in what used to be a retail mall. The consortium now shares space with a 100,000-square-foot retail area. "The revitalized mall portion is economically vibrant because of the student population," Schwarz says. ■

## Be ready for disaster scenarios with proactive planning

It would be easier for terrorists to get onto college campuses than to get through airport security and hijack planes, says **Lee Clarke**, associate professor of sociology at **Rutgers University**. That's why he thinks chief academic officers need to be proactive regarding possible terrorist attacks.

It's not that Clarke believes you can necessarily anticipate specific types of attacks or stop terrorists, it's just that you can lessen the effects of an attack if there is one.

"The people in the New York emergency center had the most organized, prepared and creative people for disaster preparedness, but they didn't plan for this [the **World Trade Center** attack]," he says.

You can't plan for every contingency, but you need to decide what's most important to your institution and figure out how to get it back up within a week from the time of the emergency, he says.

Before a crisis occurs, Clarke says you should have the following in place:

- **A clear, sophisticated disaster recovery plan.** "What's your backup system for computer records?" Clarke asks. "What would you do if the administration center was suddenly gone?"

- **A proven evacuation plan.** "We're talking about a smart population [on campus]. They will understand the need for evacuation drills," Clarke says.

- **Agreements with law enforcement specialists.** Decide whom you will call and know that they will be prepared to respond. You may need different teams of people for a bomb threat than you would for a mass murder. "Don't try to do it all yourself," he adds. "We are experts at producing and disseminating knowledge, not taking care of the dead and injured."

After a crisis occurs, Clarke recommends you:

- **Send counselors to the residence halls.** Students will need to talk about their emotional trauma.

- **Create support groups led by counselors, faculty members and administrators.** Communities bind together to help each other out in a disaster. People forget their traditional roles and pitch in to do what needs to be done in a disaster. Faculty and administrators can make huge contributions by working as a team with students to help rebuild the campus and students' emotional states.

- **Hold teach-ins led by faculty members trained in disaster counseling.** People need information and will appreciate sessions led by a knowledgeable expert.

- **Host activities to help students cope.** "People feel helpless during disasters," Clarke says. "They need to do something that helps them express their sense of caring and solidarity." Consider holding blood drives, creating chat rooms and listservs on the subject, holding religious services, etc.

- **Be honest. Don't withhold information.** "Some top administrators feel that people can't handle bad news and that they should appear in control," Clarke says. "They may be condescending or act like they know more than they do." This is the time for straightforward honesty, he says. "Students and faculty members will respect you when you say you don't know."

- **Encourage faculty members to stray from their syllabi.** For example, professors may feel discussing the World Trade Center situation is an inappropriate use of class time, "but the resources of the university — whether private or public — should be for the general good of society," Clarke says. "The president, provost and deans need to give the green light. Take the leadership roll and say it's OK. It's one of the most important things that has ever happened in the U.S."

Contact Clarke at [lee@leeclarke.com](mailto:lee@leeclarke.com). ■

### Protecting, duplicating all records should be standard operating procedure

It's important to have redundant pathways when it comes to things critical to your institution, says **Lee Clarke**, associate sociology professor at **Rutgers University**.

"The insurance companies that were housed in the **World Trade Centers** should all still have their files even though the buildings are gone," Clarke says. "There would be no excuse if the records were not stored elsewhere." Those in the business of education need to be like-minded, he says.

The **University of Iowa** stores its records with a registrar at another state university 70 miles away. It swaps all electronic records every semester.

And you need to remember that disasters come in all forms. When **Alice Poehls** was registrar at the **University of North Dakota**, blizzards and floods closed the academic year early and destroyed many records.

You should preserve any hard copies of your records on materials that minimize water damage, she says.

Poehls, now registrar at the **University of Illinois**, recommends that administrators do an annual inventory of everything, including their index and catalog.

"Then you should annually review and update your indices and back up records in multiple ways," she says.

The University of Illinois makes CD-ROMs of its records. Store your records in multiple places on campus and in different cities, Poehls adds.

Create an academic policy detailing what would happen if you had to close the campus prior to the end of a semester, Poehls says.

Contact Alice Poehls at [poehls@uiuc.edu](mailto:poehls@uiuc.edu). ■

## Follow these 8 steps to develop a crisis management plan

Whether it's a terrorist attack, blizzard, hurricane or flood, having a crisis management plan can speed your institution's recovery.

The following is the **University of North Dakota's** crisis response plan that helped it overcome a major flood and blizzard in 1997.

**1. Establish a crisis response team.** UND's team, which meets monthly, includes staff from housing, counseling, health, women's center, student services and the dean of students' office.

Have a list of team members with contact information and who is to be called first. They should be prepared to provide safety information, referrals and help with transportation and lodging and updates to students and personnel in plant services.

**2. Develop an evacuation plan.** Write out the details, including who is responsible for what.

**3. Plan an emergency operations center.** Choose several possible locations, in case one is destroyed. Equip them with backup generators to maintain power and

communications during the crisis. Staff should be on hand with a script to answer students' and parents' questions.

**4. Activate a toll-free number.** Faculty members, staff and students should have a special number to call to let administrators know their status and location.

**5. Involve students.** Prepare student leaders to get vital information out to their peers. Brainstorm with them about activities to start the emotional healing process.

**6. Plan on absence notification.** The dean of students sent notices to let professors know which students were unavailable for classes due to the crisis.

**7. Set up a process for community outreach.** At UND, the student government coordinated students and staff volunteering to fill sandbags in the community.

**8. Announce that you will reopen.** Let all parties know that you will be reopening, even if you can't tell them a specific date. It sets a positive tone and raises morale.

*For more information, contact **Gerald Bulisco**, assistant dean of students and director of the crisis coordination team at UND, at [gerald\\_bulisco@und.nodak.edu](mailto:gerald_bulisco@und.nodak.edu). ■*

## Oswego State activities helped students cope after the disaster

Imagine being in the middle of Violence Prevention Month on campus when the most notorious incident of terrorism in U.S. history takes place just five miles away.

That was the situation at **State University of New York College at Oswego**.

The activities already taking place, plus new ones, took on more meaning after the **World Trade Center** horrors.

"About 20 percent of our students come from the down-state area and have extensive connections to the city," says **Michael P. McNeil**, health promotions coordinator.

There are also students with family members in the military or who work at the **Pentagon**.

And some students who are in the reserves and national guard have been placed on alert, he says.

On Sept. 11, the campus was closed. But unlike other campuses in the state, it did not open the next day.

"We thought it was important to have a day of reflection," McNeil says. The offices were open and all faculty were present, but no classes were held.

Instead, faculty members, administrators and staff went to residence halls and the student union to talk to students about their fears and concerns.

"We wanted to hope, pray and support those that didn't have information yet on their loved ones," McNeil says.

Some of the activities previously planned took on new meaning as the catastrophe unfolded. They gave students a concrete way to express their emotions.

The following are some of the ways Oswego officials helped students cope:

- Peer educators, students trained to educate their fellow students about health-related topics, posted bulletins across campus giving information about the Trade Center catastrophe and announcing activities planned.

They also walked around with boxes of tissue and comforted grief-stricken students and staff.

- A candlelight vigil was held the night of the terrorism. Local stores donated the candles.

- Many students cut and pinned white ribbons for students to wear in expression of their grief and concern. More than 3,600 feet of ribbon was used.

- An "I will not raise my hand in violence" activity took place in the student union on Sept. 12. Students and staff used paint to make hand prints on a large canvas to publicly show that they would not contribute to a culture of violence.

"Providing them an opportunity to be a part of a visual display was important," McNeil says. "The event helped us cope and begin what will be a long healing process."

Volunteer peer educators were instrumental in all the campus activities. "They wanted to help," McNeil says. "To them I say thank you for the strength they have shown in the face of this tragedy."

*Contact **Michael McNeil** at (315) 312-5648. ■*

## Do your homework before starting new programs

Columbia College dean shares lessons learned from rushing a program launch

BOSTON — When it comes to starting new programs, there are two approaches.

You can take it slow and do strategic planning, including research, and then decide what to offer, or you can short-circuit the process and offer something that sounds great — on paper.

Unfortunately, **Columbia College** in South Carolina chose the second alternative, and that made for a lot of problems, according to **Michael C. Broome**, dean of the graduate school.

At the **Society for College and University Planning's** national conference, Broome was willing to share the many lessons learned in the process of designing, delivering and then redesigning Columbia's graduate program in conflict resolution.

### Conflict resolution fit the college's mission

In 1997, Columbia launched the conflict resolution program. It was designed to attract working adults.

"Teacher education and social work are the strengths of our institution, so we felt a degree in conflict resolution would be a good fit," Broome says. Another incentive was that the **University of South Carolina**, a Columbia competitor, did not offer a degree in that area.

The original idea was to start the program on a satellite campus in Florida, where two women with conflict resolution expertise had agreed to head it up.

When both women had to withdraw from the project for personal reasons, the Florida campus was scratched. But Columbia administrators and faculty members wanted to get on with it, so it was launched on the main campus.

"We were already counting on the money it would bring in," Broome says.

Two formats were offered: Students could either join a cohort that met four weekends over each 15-week term or could come to campus with a cohort that would meet for a 13- to 14-day session each semester.

Both formats would be augmented with listserv assignments and Internet research.

### A promising start for the program

There were some early successes. A program director was hired who had a "bend-over-backwards" approach to student services, Broome says.

And there was collective campus excitement over the launching of an innovative program.

Personnel from admissions, the registrar's office and other departments were pulled from their regular duties to give the program a good start. They were willing workers.

Strong advertising and public relations were employed to attract potential students.

Unfortunately, many of those who expressed interest in the program were marginal students for the graduate level.

"Gracious admissions decisions were made" to fill the seats, Broome says. "Many of the students accepted were not prepared for graduate study."

And there were no provisions to provide in-depth academic assistance to the underprepared students.

### Problems began to escalate

As time went by, more problems appeared:

- There was limited personnel to handle duties related to the program's innovative academic calendar.
- There was a lack of systematic preregistration and registration procedures.

- Students began to voice their concerns to faculty members and administrators about whether they could get jobs in the field once they received their degrees. They realized conflict resolution was not a major trend in South Carolina.

- Because of the academic calendar of the two formats, some students weren't finished with classes when grades were due, upsetting the registrar's grading procedures.

- Most of the students in the program needed financial aid, but their academic calendars conflicted with financial aid deadlines. Administrators had not anticipated that so many would have financial support.

- The computer support resources were overtaxed.

More challenges arose with an unclear supervisory chain. No one had clearly defined to whom the program director reported or the roles of the program director, department chair, academic dean and graduate dean in regard to the new program.

### Enrollment numbers lower than expected

With poor word-of-mouth circulating about the lack of student services, confusion over policies and procedures and a general disappointment with the "textbook approach" of the curriculum, the anticipated student numbers never materialized. After the first two years, the program had only 65 students.

And dealing with all the glitches meant administrators couldn't devote the time they needed on developing another promising new master's degree program.

After the college president told Broome to "fix it quick," the repair work began (*see next page*).

Broome conducted a limited market survey and began attending to faculty and student feedback. Then he made a fresh start proposal to his president and provost.

Time will tell if the conflict resolution program will be successful, but one thing's for sure — Broome has his work cut out for him. ■

## Lessons learned the hard way from Columbia's program launch

BOSTON — **Michael Broome**, dean of the graduate school at **Columbia College** (S.C.), learned a lot after his institution launched a nontraditional program without doing its homework.

The graduate program in conflict resolution resulted in little revenue and a lot of unanticipated headaches.

Although the jury is still out as to whether the program will survive, Broome can already reflect on his institution's experiences to help others thinking about starting new programs geared to working adults.

If he had to do it all over again, Broome says he would:

- Do research to discover if the program under consideration had a student market.
  - Establish an advisory board.
  - Listen and react more quickly to students' negative feedback once the program was underway.
  - Establish clear reporting and supervisory channels for those directing the program before the program began.
  - Make an informed decision about the most relevant type of curriculum — textbook or practical. Most of his students expected hands-on practical coursework.
  - Think carefully about whether the program fit the institution's core identity.
  - Offer more flexibility in course choices. A limited curriculum kept some students from enrolling.
  - Offer more program options, such as certificates instead of just a degree.
  - Offer more flexibility in students' capstone options.
- Contact Michael Broome at [mbroome@colacoll.edu](mailto:mbroome@colacoll.edu). ■

### Revisions made to the program

BOSTON — Enrollment was down. Students were complaining. Faculty turnover was high — in fact, every original professor was gone — and staff were stressed.

Something had to be done to salvage the conflict resolution program at South Carolina's **Columbia College**.

The following changes were made by **Michael Broome**, dean of the graduate school:

1. The 13-14 days per semester format was eliminated.
2. Admissions standards were raised.
3. The academic calendar was fixed to coincide with the program's terms.
4. Students were allowed to enroll part-time, without being part of a cohort.
5. Managers met on a regular basis to problem-solve.
6. The curriculum was revamped to adopt a practitioner model after taking into account student, alumni, faculty and staff feedback. ■

### Names in the News

#### Sexton becomes president of NYU

**John Edward Sexton** has been named the next president of **New York University**. He was previously dean of the NYU School of Law. Sexton replaces **L. Lay Oliva**, who will step down as president after the spring 2002 semester.

In other personnel matters ...

- **W. Bruce Shepard** has been chosen as the next chancellor of the **University of Wisconsin System**. He is presently provost at **Eastern Oregon University** but will begin his new post in November.
- **Laura d'Andrea Tyson** will become dean of the **London Business School** in January 2002. Tyson is currently dean of the Haas School of Business at the **University of California at Berkeley**.
- **E. Thomas Sullivan**, dean of the **University of Minnesota Law School**, will resign at the end of June 2002. He plans to take a sabbatical and then return to his faculty post in the Law School.
- **Roberta S. Matthews** has become provost and vice president of academic affairs at **Brooklyn College**. She was previously interim president of **La Guardia Community College**.
- **Kathy Quirk** has been appointed associate dean for instructional support services and retention at **Hudson Valley Community College**.
- **Robert Miller** has been named vice chancellor for research at the **University of California-Santa Cruz**. He was formerly vice provost for intellectual property and technology at the **University of Wisconsin**.
- **Thomas Sneider** will become interim dean of the College of Natural Sciences at **Colorado State University**. He replaces **John Raich**, who is retiring.
- **Stephen Seidman** has been named dean of the College of Computing Sciences at **Colorado State University**. He has been chairman of the department of computer science.
- **Gene Miller Jonakait** is now dean of the College of Science and Liberal Arts of the **New Jersey Institute of Technology**. She was previously associate dean of arts and sciences and dean of instruction at **Rutgers University**.
- **Charles Self** has become the first dean of the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the **University of Oklahoma**. He was formerly head of the journalism department at **Texas A&M University**.
- **Victoria A. Montavon** has been appointed dean and university librarian at the **University of Cincinnati**. She was previously university librarian at **Wright State University**. ■

*Let your colleagues know if you, or other deans and provosts, are changing positions.*

Contact Paula Willits, editor, at  
[pwillits@lrp.com](mailto:pwillits@lrp.com).

## Survey results reveal liberal admissions policies for adults

*Dean and Provost* surveyed 80 institutions with undergraduate accelerated adult degree programs. Here is what we discovered about their admission criteria:

- Only seven ask for SAT or ACT scores.
- Only nine require candidates to take some sort of placement tests.
- 38 require application essays.
- 33 require one-on-one interviews.
- 53 accept 92 to 100 percent of all applicants.
- The most common application fee is \$25.
- Only 15 require letters of recommendation.
- Almost all allow provisional acceptance for applicants with low grade point averages or demonstrated problems in writing or other basic skills. ■

## Institutions use a variety of tools to judge applicants' readiness

Our adult admissions survey revealed three main tools respondents use to judge whether applicants are capable of college-level work. These include:

- **Application essays.** Those requiring applicant essays say that writing skills are crucial to success in adult programs. Some institutions have essay evaluators who grade the essays or indicate grammar and organization problems.

Most of the essay evaluation systems are highly subjective, but some institutions, such as **The Master's College** (Calif.) and **Spring Arbor University** (Mich.), have created evaluation sheets in an attempt to objectify the process.

A few institutions deny admission to those with marginal writing skills, but most admit them if they take a fundamental writing course or get on-campus writing help.

### Looking for more on adults?

The complete special report on adult program admissions appeared in *Nontraditional Students Report*. Subscribe to this LRP Publication for the latest information about nontraditional students. Call customer service at (800) 341-7874, Ext. 347. ■

- **Tests.** Only 11 respondents required adults to take standardized placement tests. National tests used included ACCUPLACER, ASSET and COMPASS.

A number of institutions use instruments created by their own math and English departments.

**Placement** tests are used to enroll adults in the appropriate levels of courses, rather than mixing them immediately with those who have college-level skills.

Only 10 percent of the programs ask applicants to submit ACT or SAT scores, and most do not require applicants without the scores to retake the tests. Many respondents were adamant that the scores were not predictive of adult program success.

- **Personal interviews.** Not all programs require one-on-one interviews with candidates, but many feel they are key to the admissions decision. Interviewers, often called recruiters, explain the details of their programs, while listening for signs that applicants may not understand program demands.

Respondents stress the importance of being honest about how school work impacts work and family life.

Although applicants with marginal academic records are usually accepted, interviewers want to make sure they understand any provisions to their acceptance. ■

## Who uses placement tests

Respondents who require standardized placement tests when admitting adult learners were:

- **Belmont University** (Tenn.).
- **Bethel College** (Ind.).
- **Brenau University** (Ga.).
- **Goshen College** (Ind.).
- **Harcum College** (Pa.).
- **Piedmont College** (Ga.).
- **The Master's College** (Calif.).
- **University of Indianapolis** (Ind.).
- **University of New Haven** (Conn.).
- **Villa Maria College** (N.Y.).
- **Xavier University** (Ohio). ■

## How the admissions survey was accomplished

Before *Dean and Provost* could discover the admission practices and procedures for adult undergraduate degree programs, we had to find the programs — and that wasn't easy. Until now, there has been no national list of adult accelerated programs.

We defined "accelerated" as any program where courses lasted less than the traditional 15-16 weeks.

To find as many of the programs as possible, we started with institutions that offered portfolio assessment for adult learners. That's when students are allowed to earn college credits for learning experiences outside the classroom.

Then we added subscribers we knew had the accelerated adult programs.

Finally, we added names of institutions known to us to offer the adult programs we were seeking.

From 700 e-mail inquiries, 80 programs fit our criteria and responded to the survey.

Most offered courses that lasted between five and 10 weeks each. Many were degree completion programs.

We do not claim to have found all the adult accelerated undergraduate programs, but this survey is the first to document the admissions practices of many of them. ■

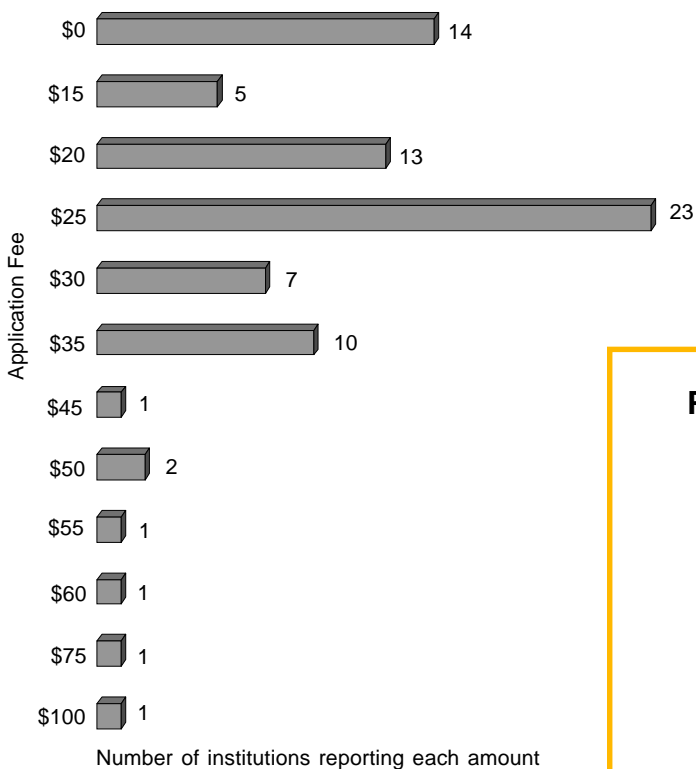


## Study tracks trends in adult admissions policies, practices

Our e-mail survey of 80 institutions with adult undergraduate accelerated programs touched on a wide range of issues and policies dealing with admissions. The following illustrate the main findings. ■

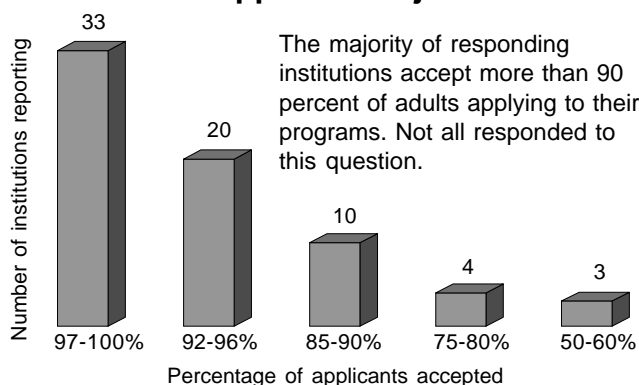
### Application fees minimal for adult programs

The following range of application fees was charged by respondents. Not all responded to this question.

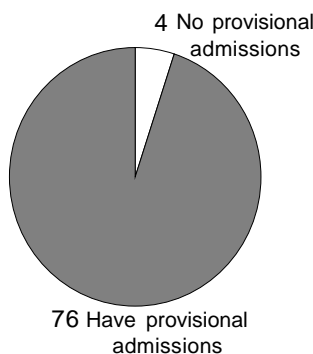


### Few applicants rejected

The majority of responding institutions accept more than 90 percent of adults applying to their programs. Not all responded to this question.



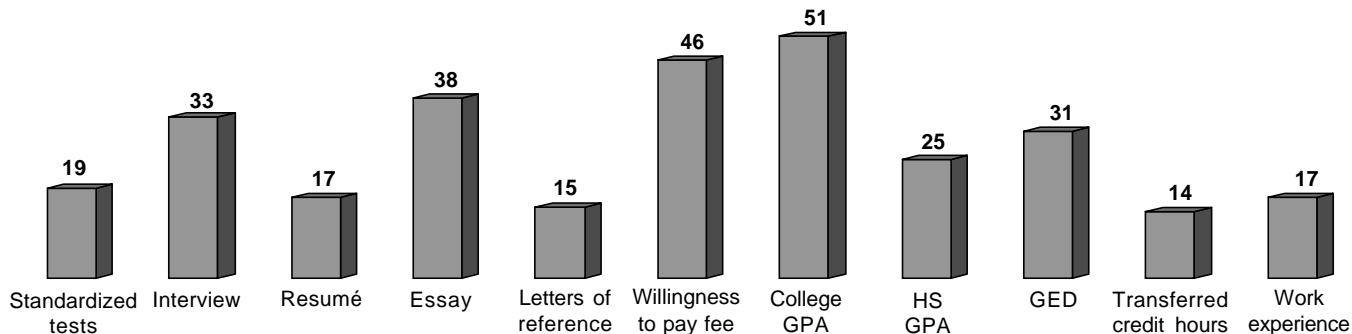
### Provisional admissions are routine



Seventy-six of the 80 respondents will admit marginal adult students to give them a chance to prove themselves capable of college-level work.

### Institutions use multiple criteria for admission decisions for nontraditional students

Below are the number of institutions reporting each criterion. When asked to rank the top three factors, 24 respondents said grade point average was the most prominent consideration. Sixteen rated all the factors as equally important. A distant third was the formal interview followed closely by the essay.



## Tight focus leads to successful redesign of freshmen campus introduction

Incoming freshmen and their parents find no lines, easy check-in and tech help

BOSTON — **Marist College** (N.Y.) was in the middle of a \$250 million construction/renovation project. There was no way campus leaders could justify allocating resources for a complete redesign of their student services, even if they did acknowledge the process was broken.

But it didn't have to be all or nothing — and that's the lesson more institutions can learn from the choices made by Marist administrators.

They focused on redesigning student services for entering freshmen. The new, efficient system is winning rave reviews from students, parents, faculty and staff.

Three Marist officials explained how the college revised freshmen's first days on campus at the recent **Society for College and University Planning's** national conference.

First, a general meeting was held for anyone involved in opening day services — from phone installers to financial aid officers. From this group, a team of 14 was assembled to come up with the most efficient way of introducing freshmen to the college. It included people from the technology department, the registrar's office, student affairs (including housing), admissions, continuing ed and the business office.

A "neutral facilitator," **Karen Hinton**, director of institutional research and planning, headed up the group.

"We couldn't have a leader directly involved with any one of the offices that needed to be improved," says **Sean Kaylor**, vice president for admissions and enrollment planning.

The team was given only one semester to come up with a plan. It met every two weeks for one-and-a-half-hour sessions. "In between, two- to three-member taskforce teams did homework and then reported their recommendations at the group meetings," Hinton says.

The group gathered all informational materials sent to freshmen and assembled them into a binder. "We wanted to see what could be combined and what was confusing," Hinton says. "Just cataloging everything was amazing."

It was a fact-finding process that led to discussions regarding how to streamline all processes.

The team then created and reviewed process diagrams of what students went through from the time of accep-

tance all the way up to the day they checked in. "The diagrams helped prevent turf battles," Hinton says.

"We saw that new students were bounced to one place after another when they arrived," she says.

"We realized if we could get them financial clearance before they arrived, we could compact much of what they needed to do and save them running around."

The group created and enforced a \$500 late fee for financial clearance. There had been a late fee previously, but it was much less and many times it was not enforced. The new fee was substantial enough to cause a change in students' and parents' behavior.

Almost all freshmen were cleared by the business office before they arrived.

The late fees were applied to returning students, too, so they would not cause long lines. Only 60 out of the total 4,000 students had to

meet with financial officers when they arrived.

The group also scrutinized minor processes to see if they made sense. For example, when students left their residence hall rooms for the summer, they were told to disconnect their phones and turn them in.

But that meant newcomers had to go to a central office and check out phones when they arrived in the fall.

"There was a fear that phones left in the room would be stolen, but the rooms are locked when they are not occupied, so that didn't seem reasonable," Hinton says.

The process was changed to allow students to simply leave the phones in their rooms when they left, so they would be there when freshmen arrived.

Parents were very impressed with how smoothly the new check-in process went, says **Roy Morolli**, executive vice president. "Although some were sad that they had to say good-bye earlier than they thought they would."

All new students were checked in by 1:30 p.m.

"Before this, people on campus thought quality improvements encompassed so much that it would just lead to more problems. But now people are interested in addressing problems," Morolli says.

They're calling it "focused reengineering."

"We will be using it to improve services throughout the campus," Hinton says. ■

### How the threat of a big fee paid off

A number of changes in standard operating procedures regarding the freshmen move-in were implemented this fall at **Marist College**. But the most dramatic change — the one that eliminated almost all standing in line — was instituting a \$500 late fee for financial clearance.

"We made the late fee substantial enough that it would matter to parents," says **Sean Kaylor**, vice president for admissions and enrollment planning.

Incoming freshmen were notified that they had to have financial clearance before arriving on campus. Then staff members called any students whose financial clearance was pending over the summer to remind them of the late fee and urge them to complete the process.

The result? Instead of newcomers stuck in line for hours trying to get their financial records straight, only 14 students out of 1,000 had to visit the financial office. ■

## Changes result in a good first impression

BOSTON — A planning team at **Marist College** (N.Y.) was charged with revamping the opening-day experience for freshmen. After meeting for one semester, they suggested and implemented the following changes:

- Entering freshmen received one packet of materials when they arrived at their residence halls instead of having to collect information throughout the campus.
- Phones were already installed in residence hall rooms. Before, students had to check them out from an office on campus.
- Technology specialists were available in residence halls to help students connect their personal computers. In years past, they were left to fend for themselves.
- Students ordered their textbooks ahead of time. They found them prepackaged in the bookstore for express check out.
- All opening day services were focused on the freshmen move-in. No services were available to upperclassmen.
- Many returning students purchased parking permits by mail, cutting lines at the campus police department. The earliest applications were assigned parking places closest to residence halls — a great incentive. ■

## Conference inspired Marist officials to revamp student services

The genesis of the renovated opening day experience for freshmen at **Marist College** was an **IBM Best Practices** conference in August 1999.

A number of Marist directors attended.

“We learned what others were doing to improve student services, and how technology was being used for that,” says **Sean Kaylor**, vice president for admissions and enrollment planning.

When the attendees returned from the conference, they submitted a proposal to campus leaders for a complete revamping of the college’s student services.

It was rejected.

But everyone acknowledged changes were needed, especially in light of the growth Marist had experienced in the last 10 years — from 2,800 students to 4,000.

A new proposal was submitted. It focused only on incoming freshmen and the two weeks before and after the opening of the academic year.

This time, it was accepted.

“We were told to begin identifying the resources we needed for a redesign,” Kaylor says.

For more information, you may contact Sean Kaylor at sean.kaylor@marist.edu. ■

## Larger effects are expected from changes made in freshmen services

BOSTON — An empowered committee at New York’s **Marist College** managed to quickly and efficiently pull off a complete redesign of incoming first-year students’ first few days on campus.

As a result, the whole attitude toward change on campus was altered, says **Karen Hinton**, director of institutional research and planning.

The following are some benefits that came out of the experience noted by the Marist presenters at the recent **Society for College and University Planning’s** conference:

- There’s a new respect for collaborative work.
- There’s keen interest in “focused reengineering.”
- Two new areas will be reviewed for revisions soon:
  - ✓ Graduate and continuing education.
  - ✓ Service to part-time faculty members. ■

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Lawsuits & Rulings

AT A GLANCE

A Review of This Month's Lawsuits and Rulings

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■ Termination

■ Decision:

A program director's suit for wrongful termination alleging anti-white bias was disallowed.

■ What it means:

**Discriminatory comments alone do not mean terminated employees will win in court.**

**John Maurey** was terminated from his position as director of the EDA University Center, a federally funded program aimed at community and economic development at the **University of Southern California**.

He filed suit, alleging anti-white discrimination and breach of his employment contract.

Maurey claimed his superior said he had "two strikes against him" because he wasn't black or Hispanic and he lacked demonstrated credentials.

When the trial judge ruled in favor of the university, Maurey appealed. *Maurey v. University of Southern California*, No. 99-56381 (9th Cir. 6/21/01).

In an unpublished opinion, the appellate court stated that anti-white comments by Maurey's employer were not significant because Maurey had presented no evidence to attack an independent university peer review report.

The peer report was highly critical of his performance.

The court ruled that since the employment contract signed by Maurey clearly stated that he could be terminated without cause, evidence of oral statements to the contrary was irrelevant.

It affirmed the decision of the trial court. ■

■ Termination

■ Decision:

**A former University of Southern Mississippi employee lost his job for wrongful termination lawsuit.**

■ What it means:

**Policies/procedures in employee manuals don't apply when there is misuse of funds.**

**Dan Morrison** sued the **University of Southern Mississippi**, alleging that it failed to follow its policies and procedures when it terminated him. *Morrison v. Mississippi Enterprise for Technology, Inc.*, No. 2000-CA-00522-COA (Miss. Ct. App. 5/8/01).

Morrison was hired on July 1, 1994, as an employee of **Mississippi Enterprise for Technology**, a nonprofit corporation organized under state law.

MsET employees are provided to the university pursuant to a personnel agreement between USM and MsET.

All personnel remain employees of USM, according to the agreement.

The only documentation of hiring was the letter offering him the job.

On Sept. 16, 1997, following an independent financial audit, the directors of the nonprofit terminated Morrison because of alleged misuse of funds.

He sued, contending he was denied due process because the university failed to follow its procedures as delineated in the employee handbook and in the published ethics of the university.

Morrison also alleged that his former chairman maliciously interfered with his employment contract.

When the trial court granted a summary judgment against him on all of his claims, he appealed.

The appellate court agreed with the trial court, ruling that neither the employee manual nor the university's published ethics clearly applied to termination for misuse of funds.

Therefore, the procedures contained in those publications did not apply.

The court also found the published ethics to be inapplicable because the separate nonprofit corporation was responsible for the termination, not the university. ■

### ■ **Tenure**

#### ■ Decision:

An appeals court overturned a lower court's ruling that a university retaliated against a professor.

#### ■ What it means:

**Don't fear a retaliation claim when denying tenure if you follow procedures.**

**Marie Aquilino** was hired in 1991 as an assistant professor in the art history department at the **University of Kansas**. During her seven years at KU, Aquilino was described as being abrasive to her students, not achieving routinely high reviews and publishing only one 12-page article.

In December 1997, the faculty of the art history department voted unanimously to deny her tenure. The KU chancellor formally denied her tenure in March 1998.

Aquilino filed a charge with the **Kansas Human Rights Commission**, alleging sex discrimination under **Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act** and retaliation by the university for her filing of the discrimination charge. She later filed suit against the university. *Aquilino v. University of Kansas*, No. 00-3150 (10th Cir. (Kan.) 07/23/01).

### ■ **Tenure**

#### ■ Decision:

An appeals court upheld a lower court's ruling that promotion and tenure standards are different.

#### ■ What it means:

**You can require different standards for promotions and tenure for professors.**

**Benedict O. Atakpu**, dissatisfied that he was denied tenure even though he was promoted to professor, took his case to an Ohio appeals court.

But he did not receive the answer he wanted from the court. *Atakpu v. Central State University*, No. 00AP-1113. (Ohio Ct. App. 10 Dist. 8/2/01).

Because Atakpu was a tenured professor at **Mississippi Valley State University** prior to coming to **Central State University** in 1993, CSU granted him two years of credit toward tenure.

His employment was subject to a collective bargaining agreement between him and the **American Association of University Professors**, the **Central State University Chapter**.

Atakpu applied for promotion and tenure in 1995-96, receiving his department's recommendation for both. But all pending promotion and tenure requests were denied due to CSU's financial problems,

In 1997, all faculty who previously applied for promotion were allowed to reapply.

The District Court denied Aquilino's discrimination claim, but allowed her retaliation claim to be heard by a jury, which awarded her \$35,000.

It found that KU retaliated against her for filing the sex discrimination claim.

Title VII's anti-retaliation provision "prohibits an employer from 'discriminat[ing]' against an employee because that employee ... participated ... in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing... ."

Aquilino claimed retaliation because the university denied her request to become an adjunct research associate with a university foundation, removed her from a student's dissertation committee and denied her request for an ad hoc appointment to the graduate faculty.

These decisions by the university were made after Aquilino received her customary one-year terminal contract.

KU appealed, objecting that Aquilino did not present a prima facie case of retaliation.

The **10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals** agreed.

It ruled that the steps the university took did not harm Aquilino's future employment prospects and were a normal course of action to take when denying tenure. ■

Atakpu was promoted to full professor in November 1997 and was named acting chair of the department of health, physical education and recreation.

While at HPER, he voiced his concerns about financial and faculty conditions and lodged numerous complaints. In 1998, Atakpu reapplied for tenure with the same dossier he submitted for his promotion and was denied. He was advised he was lacking in certain areas, including university service, research and publications. Atakpu's appeal was denied on May 1, 1998. He was replaced as acting chair of HPER.

Atakpu said the trial court should have determined his denial of tenure was arbitrary, capricious and an abuse of discretion.

He claims that there is no real difference between the standards for promotion and tenure as explained in the collective bargaining agreement and maintains this decision was a result of his complaints about the problems in the HPER department.

The appeals court did not agree. ■

***If you have information about lawsuits and rulings affecting faculty, administrators or students, contact:***

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### ■ **Retirement**

#### ■ Decision:

**A court allowed a college to regulate the amount of unused sick leave credited toward retirement.**

#### ■ What it means:

### **Institutions can determine the amount of unused sick leave credited for retirement.**

A class action brought by members of **Missouri Western State College** in the **Circuit Court of Cole County** was deemed meritless by the **Court of Appeals of the State of Missouri Western District**. *Andresen v. Board of Regents of Missouri Western State College*, No. WD59415 (Mo. Ct. App. W.D. 08/07/01).

MWSC employees who were also members of **Missouri State Employee's Retirement System** during 1992-93 facing retirement wanted their unused sick leave credited toward their retirement.

MOSERS is the provider of retirement income and other benefits for state employees.

Chapter 36 of the state personnel law allows a greater portion of MWSC employees' unused sick leave to be credited toward their retirement.

MWSC capped the amount of sick leave employees could earn prior to July 1, 1992. MWSC employees asked the lower court to remove the cap imposed by MWSC, allowing credit for the additional sick leave earned before the 1992-93 academic year.

In 1982, it took 84 days of unused accumulated sick leave to earn employees one-twelfth of a year of creditable service. The policy was later amended to 42 days, and later to 21 days, of unused sick leave to earn one-twelfth of a year of creditable service.

MWSC employees wanted Chapter 36 of the state personnel law to be the deciding factor in their retirement allowances. However, the appellate court gave universities the power to fix compensation, thereby taking precedence over Chapter 36. ■

### ■ **Racial discrimination**

#### ■ Decision:

**An Ohio appeals court sent a case back to a lower court to look at a racial discrimination issue.**

#### ■ What it means:

### **Race, religion, age and country of origin can't be considerations for tenure.**

When **Saeid Amini** was denied tenure, he brought a number of claims against **Oberlin College**, including Title VII, **Age Discrimination in Employment Act** and a 42 USC § 1981 claim of race discrimination. *Amini v. Oberlin College*, No. 00-3550 (6th Cir. (Ohio) 6/8/01).

The District Court dismissed his Title VII and ADEA claims as they exceeded the 300-day limitations period.

It also dismissed his race discrimination claim, stating there were insufficient facts showing that Oberlin took his race into account when making its employment decision.

Amini came to Oberlin with considerable experience. He had worked at the **National Institute of Environmental Health**, the **Deborah Heart and Lung Center**, the **Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine** and the **National Center for Toxicological Research**.

He also worked for 10 years at CWRU School of Medicine and taught there for five years.

Amini had earned a law degree at CWRU's School of Law and was in private practice.

In early October 1998, he applied for tenure with Oberlin's department of mathematics. On Oct. 14, he received a confirmation letter acknowledging receipt of his application.

The next correspondence Amini received was in January, informing him that OC had filled its mathematics faculty position. The letter did not name who had been hired.

Amini attempted to discover whom Oberlin had chosen by checking its Web site. He also visited the mathematics department in March 1999.

Amini discovered on Sept. 16, 1999, that **Chris Andrews**, a white male under age 45 and an Oberlin graduate, had been hired.

Amini complained to the court that Andrews' credentials didn't compare to his. Andrews had only published two professional articles and had one year of teaching experience, whereas Amini published more than 70 articles and had 15 years' experience.

Amini felt Oberlin's decision not to hire him amounted to discrimination on the basis of race, religion, age and country of origin.

The **6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals** upheld all the lower court's rulings except the 42 USC § 1981 claim of race discrimination.

The District Court stated Amini's complaint did not mention his race, ancestry, or ethnic background.

In fact, the only thing Amini had stated regarding his race and national origin was that he was "a 45-year-old Iranian-born Muslim male living in the United States lawfully since August 28, 1977."

Therefore, the lower court found that Amini had not adequately alleged a claim of racial discrimination.

Since the missing information was in his EEOC filing and he made reference to it in his complaint, the appeals court reversed the lower court's decision on that issue.

The appeals court didn't claim that Amini was discriminated against, just that the issue had enough facts to warrant a trial.

The case was sent to the lower court for the trial. ■

### ■ **Collective bargaining**

#### ■ Decision:

The New Jersey Supreme Court upheld calendar year appointees' right to sue.

#### ■ What it means:

### Professors can sue for breach of individual appointment agreements.

Seven tenured professors at **Rutgers University** held calendar year appointments for at least 20 years. Under a calendar year appointment, a professor is expected to devote the entire year to university duties, except during a one-month vacation.

Under an academic year appointment, however, a professor has to perform university duties only from Sept. 1 to the date of commencement ceremonies.

The salary schedules in the professors' collective bargaining agreement provided higher salaries for calendar year appointees.

A dean, unhappy with the time several professors were devoting to university duties, told them that unless they performed sufficient work to satisfy the 11-month calendar year criteria, their appointments would be changed to academic year. Their salaries would be reduced accordingly.

The professors objected, claiming that at the time their appointments were made, no conditions were attached.

They asserted that their appointments were "grandfathered" into the collective bargaining agreement, so they were not subject to the subsequently negotiated calendar year work-time requirements.

The professors refused the university's ultimatum that they abide by the calendar year work-time mandate.

After they were placed on academic year appointments, they filed suit against the university for breach of contract.

Rejecting the university's motion to dismiss the suit, the **New Jersey Supreme Court** held that the professors could sue for breach of their individual appointment agreements, even though there was a collective bargaining agreement provision dealing with appointments. *Troy v. Rutgers*, 2001 WL 686999 (N.J. 6/20/01).

The Supreme Court noted that it should be left to a jury to decide whether the appointment status was an enforceable contractual obligation.

The court also ruled that the collective bargaining agreement did not supersede the professors' individual agreements with the university because the individual agreements did not diminish any rights granted by the collective bargaining agreement.

In addition, the **American Association of University Professors**, the professors' union, specifically agreed to permit them to pursue their individual claims.

The case was sent back to the lower court for trial. ■

### ■ **Patents**

#### ■ Decision:

The court awarded profits to a university and its doctors because a pharmaceutical company fraudulently received a patent.

#### ■ What it means:

### Closely scrutinize contracts with for-profit companies, especially ones involving patents.

**Robert H. Allen** and **Paul A. Seligman**, doctors at **The University of Colorado Foundation Inc.**, discovered a way to reformulate a prenatal vitamin for women.

The doctors wanted to publish their findings and contribute them to the marketplace.

**American Cyanamid Company** had a different plan.

The doctors intended for Cyanamid to use their work, to profit and produce an improved version of their product, Materna.

Materna was not new. In fact, it had been on the market since the early '80s.

The doctors also hoped other manufacturers of prenatal multivitamin products would share in the discovery. But Cyanamid didn't want others to benefit from the doctors' discovery, also known as 634 Patent technology.

Realizing that 634 was a "money-maker," Cyanamid quickly applied for a patent. Because Cyanamid falsely claimed its own doctor was the true inventor, it obtained exclusive rather than general rights to the discovery.

The discovery was, in the eyes of Cyanamid, its own. It didn't need to share the technology and, most importantly, the profits, with anyone. *The University of Colorado Foundation Inc., et al. v. American Cyanamid Company*, No. Civ. A. 93-K-1657 ((D.Colo.) 7/26/01).

The court observed that Cyanamid "thwarted what the doctors intended 'freely' to convey." Cyanamid was not designed to be the only beneficiary of the doctors' research.

The judge awarded punitive damages of \$500,000 each to Allen and Seligman as they were harmed professionally and personally.

Cyanamid should have purchased an exclusive license from the university, thereby securing the doctors' cooperation in applying for a patent. Because of Cyanamid's deception, the university was deprived of its deserved prestige and financial opportunities associated with having its doctors credited with the invention.

An up-front payment of \$100,000 and a 6 percent royalty from the profits Cyanamid received from 1981 through 1991, totaling more than \$23 million, were also assessed against Cyanamid. ■

## Information center turns frustrated callers into happy students

When potential students have a question about admissions, they expect an answer — and quickly. **Columbus State Community College** in Ohio created the Telephone Information Center to eliminate the institutional roadblocks most applicants encounter when they are applying for admission or any time after they enroll.

### Center at a glance

- **Staff:** 30, many students, cross-trained to know all aspects of the college and understand excellent service. Pay starts at \$8.50 an hour.
- **Average call:** 2 ½ minutes.
- **Average calls per day:** 1,500.
- **Most calls in one day:** 4,200.
- **Philosophy:** Treat the callers the way you'd like to be treated.
- **How people find the number:** Advertising on TV, radio, print media and in telephone book. The number, 287-5353, was chosen because it was easy to remember. ■

The TIC is open 24 hours a day. Its 30 staff members, mostly students, are determined to solve whatever problems are thrown their way.

"Anybody who has been to college knows what a bureaucratic nightmare it can be," says **Pieter Wykoff**, vice president of institutional advancement.

"The object behind the phone center is to eliminate the roadblocks and make the [enrollment] process as easy as possible," he says.

With enrollment up 20 percent over last year, the concept appears to be working.

"Its staff and leadership provide some of the very best customer service found at any institution in the country," says **Neal Raisman**, the principal of **AcademicMaps** and a higher education consultant. He visited the call center to see how the staff works with thousands of calls each day.

"When students call with a need, or complaint, they speak with someone who personalizes the college and creates a quiet telephone community within a few seconds," Raisman says.

The TIC staff's cross-training lasts 10-14 days. After that, they are able to provide accurate, detailed information to spare other offices the phone-answering burden.

And the TIC has such a wealth of information about the entire college that faculty and administrators often use it as a resource center.

With the average student 27 years old, the staff handle many calls from nontraditional students and distance learners as well as traditional college students.

**Nina Reese**, director of the Telephone Information Center, developed the concept after observing office directors to get an overview of their operations — processing

applications, documenting attendance, dealing with international student issues, etc.

Call center staff are chosen for their people skills and sense of humor. They are trained to pay close attention to callers' needs. "Some callers have never been to college and are starting over after a lifestyle change, while others know what they want and are very assertive," Reese says.

"We have to be assertive, too," Reese adds. "They may think they know what they need, but we need to make sure they're doing it right."

Flexibility and patience are also needed with the first-generation student callers, Reese says. "We have to guide them through the steps they need to take for admissions, including financial aid processes." And it's very important that the staff keep up with financial aid deadlines.

"We don't want to get a potential student's hopes up, and then have them discover that they have missed a deadline and can't attend classes for another semester," Reese says. "They easily lose their momentum."

When distance education was first offered, most of the questions fielded by call center staff were about technical issues. Now there's a help desk and a Web site to refer distance learners to for those problems, Reese says.

Distance learners also call to find out about their course syllabi and reading materials. They are politely told that the materials are being mailed to them and how to access them on the Web.

Although seasoned distance learners understand the demands of online learning, new students may not, Reese says. If students sound like they think distance learning will be easier (than on-campus courses), they are cautioned about the

need for self-discipline.

Another common concern for distance learners is finding classes to fit their busy schedules. "It's a challenge to work in traditional, Web- and video-based classes,"

Reese says. "Technically, we are not to become academic advisors, but we can read the college catalog and tell them what their advisor would. Of course, we end those calls by telling them their advisors' names and phone numbers and urging that they call them."

"We are the front line," Reese says. "We can make or break it. If we have to say no, we offer alternatives."

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### Staff finds ways to please anxious callers

Going above and beyond callers' original requests is typical behavior for the Telephone Information Center staff at **Columbus State Community College**.

A distraught student called in recently when a class she needed for graduation was canceled.

Before the call ended, the happy student was registered in another section of the course and had paid by charge card for her textbooks to be delivered to her door. She had never known she could order her books by phone. ■