



Tuesday, November 27, 2007

Legislative Developments

A number of bills of interest to the student loan community have been introduced since our October 10th report on proposed legislation in the 110th Congress. A summary of these and other bills is included in the expanded version of today's Daily Briefing. House bills are listed first and Senate bills thereafter. Descriptions of the bills are taken from summaries prepared by the Congressional Research Service, where available. Both are accessible on the government's Thomas web site, <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

Challenges for Increasing College Access and Success

Thanks to Karen Lanning for the following:

A new report finds that most American states are falling behind other industrialized nations with respect to the proportion of their adults who hold a college degree, and the gaps are expected to widen. The report, "Adding It Up: State Challenges for Increasing College Access and Success," provides data on all 50 states, including projections of demographic changes from 2005 to 2025, information about educational attainment by race and ethnicity, and data about students' progress to and through college. The report is available at: www.makingopportunityaffordable.org/wp-content/adding_it_up/Adding_It_Up.pdf.

The report was prepared by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and was supported by the Lumina Foundation for Education and Jobs for the Future.

The report concludes that due to current educational attainment figures and demographic projections, the nation's competitive advantage, which is already slipping, could slip even further. Below are some of the key indicators of this trend:

- According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United States now ranks 10th among industrialized nations in the percentage of 25-34 year olds with an Associate's degree or higher and stands as one of the only nations where older adults are more educated than younger adults.
- OECD data also show that US ranks near the bottom of industrialized nations in the percentage of entering students that complete a degree program.
- Today 42 percent of whites age 25-64 have an Associate's degree or higher, compared with 26 percent of African Americans and 18 percent of Hispanics.
- Currently, only 8 states are on track to reach the level of educational attainment needed by 2025 to compete with best-performing nations and meet workforce demands.
- All states are projected to experience growth in their non-white populations, particularly among groups that have been historically underserved in higher education (African Americans, Hispanics, and Native

Americans).

- In more than half the states (29), the four-year graduation rate for public high schools is below 75 percent

Looking ahead, the report concludes that the United States will have to increase efforts just to keep up when it comes to degree production. It states that because demographic trends point toward substantial growth in populations historically underserved in higher education—African Americans and Hispanics in particular—this looming degree gap cannot be filled without a strong commitment to erasing racial and ethnic disparities in educational attainment.

Education Department Update

The following announcements have been posted to the IFAP website:

- Electronic Announcements: [2008-2009 Final FAFSA](#);
- 2008-2009 [FAFSA on the Web Worksheets](#);
- 2008-2009 [EFC Formula Worksheets and Tables](#); and
- [Change](#) to Loan Data Submittal.

General News

- The Education Department will air a show tonight on college participation that will include tips for parents on how to help their children prepare for college. The segment, entitled, "Higher Education: Ensuring America's Competitive Edge" is part of a monthly TV show, Education News Parents Can Use, produced by the agency.
- *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports, "U.S. Review of Accreditors May Produce a Showdown."
- *Inside Higher Ed* reports on the trend of outsourcing college and university campus email.
- *USA Today* provides insight on what some higher education institutions are doing to engage students and improve matriculation.
- An article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Political Campaigns Get Personal With Students."
- *Inside Higher Ed* reports, "Giving New Meaning to 'Program for Parents.'"

News From Our Members & Colleagues:

- USA Funds awards \$400,000 to national scholarship groups

These complete stories can be found on the NCHELP Web site in the Daily Briefing section of the NCHELP e-Library at: [db1127.pdf](#).

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Legislative Developments

A number of bills on a variety of topics of interest to the student loan community have been introduced since our last report on proposed legislation in the 110th Congress. A summary of these and other bills follows. House bills are listed first and Senate bills thereafter. The descriptions of the bills are taken from summaries prepared by the Congressional Research Service, where available. Both are accessible on the government's Thomas web site, <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

H.R. 4247

Title: STRONGR Act. To improve certain compensation, health care, and education benefits for individuals who serve in a reserve component of the uniformed services, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Rep Smith, Adam [WA-9] (introduced 11/15/2007) Cosponsors (9)

Latest Major Action: 11/15/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, and Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

H.R. 4217

Title: Minority Male Academic Achievement Study. To study the access to and success in education of minority males, including high school graduation and college participation.

Sponsor: Rep Davis, Danny K. [IL-7] (introduced 11/15/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Latest Major Action: 11/15/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4216

Title: Predominantly Black Institution Act of 2007. To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to authorize grant programs to enhance the access of low-income Black students to higher education.

Sponsor: Rep Davis, Danny K. [IL-7] (introduced 11/15/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Latest Major Action: 11/15/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4152

Title: Fire Fighter Higher Education Incentive Act of 2007. To provide loan forgiveness under the Federal Perkins Loan program for Federal, State, and local firefighters.

Sponsor: Rep Sarbanes, John P. [MD-3] (introduced 11/9/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Latest Major Action: 11/9/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4151

Title: STEM Promotion Act of 2007. To expand the public awareness of science, technology, engineering, and math and encourage Americans to study and enter those fields as a matter of strategic importance for the United States.

Sponsor: Rep Reyes, Silvestre [TX-16] (introduced 11/9/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Latest Major Action: 11/9/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4149

Title: Truth-in-Tuition Act of 2007. To limit excessive fluctuations in tuition to help students and families plan for college costs.

Sponsor: Rep Murphy, Patrick J. [PA-8] (introduced 11/9/2007) Cosponsors (2)

Latest Major Action: 11/9/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4139

Title: College and University Rural Education (CURE) Act of 2007. To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve participation in higher education of, and increase opportunities in employment for, residents of rural areas.

Sponsor: Rep Space, Zachary T. [OH-18] (introduced 11/9/2007) Cosponsors (3)

Latest Major Action: 11/9/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4137

Title: College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007. To amend and extend the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Rep Miller, George [CA-7] (introduced 11/9/2007) Cosponsors (1)

Latest Major Action: 11/15/2007 House committee/subcommittee actions. Status: Ordered to be Reported (Amended) by the Yeas and Nays: 45 - 0.

H.R. 4130

Title: Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act of 2007. To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for certain servicemembers to become eligible for educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill.

Sponsor: Rep Walberg, Timothy [MI-7] (introduced 11/9/2007) Cosponsors (20)

Latest Major Action: 11/9/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 4067

Title: Bridges from Jobs to Careers Act. To provide grants to colleges to improve remedial education (including English language instruction), to customize remediation to student career goals, and to help students move rapidly from remediation into for-credit occupation program courses and through program completion.

Sponsor: Rep Woolsey, Lynn C. [CA-6] (introduced 11/1/2007) Cosponsors (5)

Latest Major Action: 11/1/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4046

Title: Student Disability Fairness Act. To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require the Department of Education to accept certifications of permanent and total disability by the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of student loan discharge.

Sponsor: Rep Altmire, Jason [PA-4] (introduced 11/1/2007) Cosponsors (1)

Latest Major Action: 11/1/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 4045

Title: Improving Teacher Diversity Act. To award competitive grants to minority serving institutions to establish centers of excellence for teacher education.

Sponsor: Rep Altmire, Jason [PA-4] (introduced 11/1/2007) Cosponsors (1)

Latest Major Action: 11/1/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 3996

Title: To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend certain expiring provisions, and for other purposes. This includes the tax deduction for college tuition and related expenses.

Sponsor: Rep Rangel, Charles B. [NY-15] (introduced 10/30/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Related Bills: H.RES.809, H.R.2782, H.R.3630, H.R.3879, H.R.3970, H.R.4086, S.2234

Latest Major Action: 11/14/2007 Read the second time. Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 487.

H.R. 3222

Title: Making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes. Includes continuing resolution language to extend current year government agency funding until December 14, 2007.

Sponsor: Rep Murtha, John P. [PA-12] (introduced 7/30/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Related Bills: H.RES.596, H.RES.806

Latest Major Action: Became Public Law No: 110-116 [GPO: Text, PDF]

House Reports: 110-279; Senate Reports: 110-155; Latest Conference Report: 110-434 (in Congressional Record H12814-13183)

H.R. 3043

Title: Making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Rep Obey, David R. [WI-7] (introduced 7/13/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Related Bills: H.RES.547, H.RES.794, S.1710

Latest Major Action: 11/15/2007 Failed of passage in House over veto. Status: On passage, the objections of the President to the contrary notwithstanding Failed by the Yeas and Nays: (2/3 required): 277 - 141 (Roll no. 1122).

House Reports: 110-231; Latest Conference Report: 110-424 (in Congressional Record H12486-12711)

Note: The conference report Division A covered FY2008 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations and Division B covered FY2008 Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations (previously H.R. 2642). As sent to the President, the bill contains only FY2008 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations. Programs currently under a continuing resolution (HR 3222) that is set to expire on December 14, 2007. (See above)

S. 2392

Title: National STEM Scholarship Database Act. A bill to direct the Secretary of Education to establish and maintain a public website through which individuals may find a complete database of available scholarships, fellowships, and other programs of financial assistance in the study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Sponsor: Sen Obama, Barack [IL] (introduced 11/16/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Latest Major Action: 11/16/2007 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

S. 2385

Title: To provide Federal Perkins Loan cancellation to fire fighters. A bill to provide Federal Perkins Loan cancellation to fire fighters.

Sponsor: Sen Brown, Sherrod [OH] (introduced 11/16/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Latest Major Action: 11/16/2007 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

S. 2258

Title: Third Higher Education Extension Act of 2007. A bill to temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965, to amend the definition of an eligible not-for-profit holder, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Sen Kennedy, Edward M. [MA] (introduced 10/30/2007) Cosponsors (None)

Related Bills: H.R.3927

Latest Major Action: Signed into law by the President.

Department of Education Press Release

College Preparation Advice For Parents Tonight On TV

How to Pay, Why College is Important, What's Being Done to Improve Higher Education

Tips for parents on how to help their children prepare for college will be among the topics explored tonight in the U.S. Department of Education's monthly TV show, Education News Parents Can Use, in a program entitled, "Higher Education: Ensuring America's Competitive Edge."

The program will be carried from 8 to 9 p.m. ET Tuesday on the Dish Network, dozens of PBS stations and numerous cable outlets. Others, including The Learning Channel, will broadcast the show on a tape-delayed basis. A complete listing of viewing options is available at www.ed.gov/edtv. In addition, the program will be available as an archived webcast at www.connectlive.com/events/ednews/.

This program will examine:

- Why is a college education more important than ever before? What federal, state and local strategies are helping us to meet this demand?
- When should parents and students start thinking about saving for college, and what programs and resources are available to help?
- How can we help students, especially minority youth, prepare for and succeed in college?
- How accessible is higher education? And how can we make it more affordable?
- How are the Commission on the Future of Higher Education's final report and the Secretary's Action Plan improving the accessibility, affordability and accountability of U.S. colleges and universities?

Guests include Sara Martinez Tucker, under secretary of education and the U.S. Department of Education's top higher education official. As under secretary, she oversees all activities related to postsecondary education, vocational and adult education and federal student aid.

Also appearing will be Michele Brown with the Education Department's Federal Student Aid office; Odette Duggan with the College Board in New York; Frank Alvarez, president of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund; Maria Torres-Flores, principal at Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School in Los Angeles; and Barbara Smith with Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a fourth- through twelfth-grade system to prepare students in the academic middle for four-year college eligibility.

The Education News Parents Can Use TV series airs monthly during the school year.

Government & Politics

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i14/14a00102.htm>

From the issue dated November 30, 2007

U.S. Review of Accreditors May Produce a Showdown

Bush administration is expected to push colleges for more accountability

By PAUL BASKEN

Washington

A dispute over the federal agency charged with reviewing college accreditors may come to a boil at a key review session next month, when the waning Bush administration will have one of its highest-profile chances to try to force colleges to do more to demonstrate how well they help students learn.

The federal agency is scheduled to assess five of the six main regional accreditation bodies and decide if they deserve renewed recognition.

Some of the accreditors say the session has the potential to play out as a politically explosive showdown between the Education Department and the accreditors and colleges that have been seeking to take control of decisions about how institutions' performances are measured.

Earlier this year, the review agency, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, or Naciqi, penalized some smaller accreditors, like the Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools, for failing to require their institutions to improve how they demonstrate their students' performances. Naciqi board members criticized the association for having insufficient data, like test scores, to measure student achievement at the colleges it accredits.

And now leading accreditors are worried that they may have to face the same sanctions.

"They're apprehensive, given the past several meetings," says Judith S. Eaton, president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, an umbrella group of accreditors.

Since Margaret Spellings became education secretary almost three years ago, Naciqi has been stocked with administration appointees who have demanded that colleges use more measurements based on outcomes, such as graduation and job-placement rates, as opposed to using "inputs," such as the test scores of new freshmen. And now Congress, concerned by Naciqi's behavior, is considering whether to curtail the Education Department's authority to appoint all the members of the panel and will debate that as part of proposed legislation to renew the Higher Education Act.

At the crux of the dispute are questions of what the government should be forcing colleges to measure,

who should get to define those metrics, and what accreditors should be doing to monitor institutions' quality effectively.

Throughout her tenure, Ms. Spellings has pushed for an emphasis on student outcomes. The Commission on the Future of Higher Education, which she appointed, questioned whether accreditors do enough to hold colleges accountable for their performances and suggested greater use of tests like the Collegiate Learning Assessment, which measures student achievement in reading, writing, and comprehension.

"Accreditation agencies should make performance outcomes, including completion rates and student learning, the core of their assessment as a priority over inputs or processes," said the commission's final report, issued in September 2006.

But some accreditors and college officials believe that Naciqi, in trying to carry out goals of the Bush administration, has been making demands on accreditors to overhaul their methods without the clear authority under federal law and without giving accreditors sufficient notice to prepare for the new standards.

Even though Congress has repeatedly moved to rein in Naciqi — and leading college associations themselves have agreed to provide more data on student achievement — that might not spare the nation's most-influential accreditors from one more battle, during next month's review session, over the degree to which U.S. colleges must prove the value they provide.

"I'm not sure they care what Congress is saying," Steven D. Crow, executive director of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools' Higher Learning Commission, says of members of the federal review panel. His group is one of the accrediting bodies due for renewal next month by Naciqi.

Naciqi members who were contacted by *The Chronicle* declined to comment on the record, citing the need to maintain impartiality in the midst of the debate over the agency.

"Since, as a Naciqi member, I am sitting in the middle of all that, I think I will have to take a pass," said Anne D. Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, an outspoken critic of accreditors who was appointed to Naciqi this year.

Tough Reviews of Accreditors

Colleges need the endorsement of a federally approved accreditor for their students to remain eligible for government-subsidized financial aid. So Naciqi's push to have accreditors take a more critical look at how well colleges are serving students is crucial for the institutions.

So far the agency has taken that stance mostly with smaller accreditors like the American Academy for Liberal Education and the rabbinical and talmudic schools' group. Both groups failed to win Naciqi's endorsement for full, unconditional renewals of their accrediting authority in the past year, with Naciqi demanding more evidence of student-performance assessment.

But at the federal agency's most recent review session, in May, the panel indicated that, at least in some cases, it is also willing to take a tougher position with more-prominent accreditors. It voted against extending the accrediting authority of a division of one of the nation's six main regional accreditation bodies, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. Naciqi's complaints included the group's poor record of measuring student learning.

The five top accreditors up for review in December are North Central's Higher Learning Commission, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges. The last group is due for a follow-up review at the session, after it was criticized in June 2006 by Naciqi on a series of matters, including the need "to more clearly define what SACS itself considers acceptable levels of institutional success with respect to student achievement."

The sixth major group, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Higher Education, won Naciqi's endorsement for a five-year renewal this year.

Accreditors Plot Strategy

The six major associations, through their Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, have been debating how they should respond to what may come their way at the December review, said the council's chairwoman, Barbara A. Beno. Ms. Beno is also executive director of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

The associations scheduled for review in December have received initial written reports from Naciqi setting out the expected areas of discussion, and none appear to seek broad changes in how much the accreditors focus on student assessments, Ms. Beno said.

But that is not necessarily reassuring, accreditors say, since Naciqi members often introduce such issues during the actual review sessions, or in final reports issued just days beforehand.

The division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges that accredits four-year colleges, for instance, received its final status report only about three days ahead of its Naciqi review in December 2006, Ms. Beno said. That report set out a series of new questions on its policies for monitoring student achievement. The representatives of the accreditor nevertheless managed to win the agency's approval.

"They sort of took a due-process line of argument, and they were successful in showing the department both that they do a lot of monitoring and that the feedback that they got was inappropriately late," Ms. Beno said.

The Education Department has promised to deliver Naciqi's final reports earlier than it has in the past for the December meeting, at least a week before, Ms. Beno said.

Mr. Crow remains skeptical that Naciqi has changed its recent approach. Several panel members have shown themselves to be determined to fault accreditors for not doing enough to measure outcomes, such as student scores on standardized tests, he said.

"Naciqi has become a spectator sport," Mr. Crow said, "because you never know what may happen at any given Naciqi meeting, and you never know what may be the new agenda of the day."

Congress Weighs In

Colleges and their accreditors have been helped by Congress. Ms. Spellings abandoned an effort to rewrite rules governing accreditation this year after lawmakers from both houses and both parties, led by Sen. Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee, protested on behalf of the colleges. The lawmakers

argued that Congress, rather than Naciqi or others in the Education Department, should take the lead role in defining how colleges should measure student achievement.

Lawmakers are also debating a proposal in the legislation to extend the Higher Education Act that would give colleges primary responsibility to develop the measures of learning that their accreditors would use to judge them. That provision is included in the Senate version of the bill but was struck from the House legislation in committee this month.

Congress also appears intent on limiting in other ways the department's ability to dictate how colleges' performances are assessed. The House bill includes language that says measures of student achievement should be considered "in relation to the institution's mission, which may include different standards for different institutions or programs, as established by the institution." The version of the bill approved by the Senate contains similar language.

Both the House and Senate versions would also revamp Naciqi by giving Congress the right to select the majority of the review panel's members in order to limit the ability of the president to push his agenda on accreditation. The administration now names all 15 members.

The House version of the bill would also give colleges and accreditors an extra layer of protection against demands from Naciqi by creating a federal "accreditation ombudsman" who would try to resolve any complaints involving accreditation. The ombudsman, according to the House bill, would also collect data on such complaints and issue an annual report containing recommendations for corrective actions.

One Last Chance

Naciqi, however, still gets at least one last chance at its meeting next month to make its mark on accreditation before any reforms could take effect, which leaves accreditors worried.

Part of the reason they are worried, Mr. Crow says, is that the federal agency's zeal for change appears to come from Secretary Spellings herself.

At the public event last year at which she received the final report from her Commission on the Future of Higher Education, Mr. Crow said, the secretary looked straight at some of her Naciqi appointees and said she expected them to help her carry out the commission's recommendations.

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Advertisement



Nov. 27

When E-Mail Is Outsourced

In 1998, Dartmouth College was at the forefront of campus e-mail. Its homegrown system, [BlitzMail](#), reflected the college's reputation for being ahead of the curve on technology.

Dartmouth students still rely on BlitzMail today, downloading their messages with a traditional Windows- or Mac-based client. But nearly 10 years later, even David L. Bucciero, the director of technical services, calls the service "archaic." It lacks some of the "bells and whistles," he said, that most students take for granted with the personal Web-based e-mail accounts they take with them to college. Such features might include the ability to view and compose messages in HTML, which allows the customization of fonts and colors, or virtually unlimited storage space.

Those inadequacies — combined with occasional downtime — explain why Dartmouth might go back to the drawing board. And in rethinking its e-mail strategy, officials there will confront similar issues as many other colleges and universities in a time of rapid shifts in messaging habits and in the economics of Internet applications. Bucciero and a planned study group will soon consider whether it's worthwhile to continue maintaining BlitzMail, or whether Dartmouth should consider for e-mail what colleges routinely do for many other basic operational functions: outsource it.

In the world of e-mail, outsourcing means two things: Google or Microsoft. Both have been marketing Web-based messaging services to small businesses, nonprofits and other groups, and they've focused more intensely on the higher education market over the past year. Besides services that are completely free and interfaces that are familiar to students, they offer a wide array of features, tools that let people collaborate in real time — and of course, the cool factor.

The availability of viable options outside of the university IT department has forced administrators to consider the consequences of abandoning their in-house e-mail systems. Does it make financial sense to keep spending resources on aging proprietary software when it's available on the Web? Do colleges' services still offer advantages over those reflexively preferred by students? And in offloading a primary function of the campus information technology infrastructure, what role would remain for administrators who previously oversaw e-mail services?

These are some of the fundamental questions that will be raised as Dartmouth and other institutions evaluate their technological offerings at a time when Web applications are becoming increasingly popular, with not only e-mail but word processing, spreadsheets, calendars and other basic tasks

available online — no downloads or upgrade patches necessary. [And with outsourcing e-mail an increasingly popular option](#), colleges are considering some of the other benefits of making the switch, such as integrated collaborative tools that could also change the way students learn in the classroom.

At Dartmouth, Bucciero and his colleagues will weigh the possibility of taking “BlitzMail to the next level,” switching to another system entirely or enlisting a third party. It’s the last option that would raise the most concerns — about security and privacy, if data were migrated offsite; about accessing messages through clients offline, if they’re readable primarily through the Web; about support services, if the current IT help desk can no longer administer the system; and about the ability to send mass e-mail blasts.

Despite those concerns, there is plenty of reason to believe that over the next few years, third-party Web services will become the standard at most colleges and universities. Already, [Google Apps Education Edition](#) has been launched at [individual campuses of large public systems](#) (such as the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the University of Texas at San Antonio) as well as some private institutions such as Hofstra University and Abilene Christian University. It recently formed a [customer advisory board for the service](#) comprised of several early adopters, including Arizona State University, the University of Southern California and Northwestern University.

Jeff Keltner, Google’s enterprise specialist for collaboration products, said institutions at six of the seven continents use its education services, with several hundred thousand active users logging in at a regular basis from several thousand campuses around the world. The senior product manager for Microsoft’s [Live @ edu](#) program, Bruce Gabrielle, said the company has some 450 higher education clients, which ballooned from 300 since the end of June. “A lot of awareness is spreading virally,” he said.

The services are expanding to include community colleges as well. Among others, Butler County Community College has adopted Live @ edu, while Central Piedmont Community College has gone with Google.

While many colleges universities have yet to make the switch to Google or Microsoft, several (like Dartmouth, Cornell University, the University of Connecticut and Ohio State University) are in the process of exploring their options or issuing requests for proposals. Both companies offer integrated e-mail, chat, calendar and publishing tools without advertisements and without any cost to colleges or universities — no exclusivity required. The standard Google contract is one year, with three one-year auto-renewals; for Microsoft, the typical length is two years. Both preserve universities’ “.edu” e-mail domains while offering the functionality of a typical Gmail or Live address.

If that doesn’t sound like a winning business model, that’s because the companies have future customers in mind. When students graduate, the advertisements kick back in (although for faculty members’ accounts, Google recently announced that participating colleges can opt out of ads completely), and both Google and Microsoft hope that they’ll have won users for life. “We think students are going to take these tools out to their personal lives, their professional lives,” Keltner said. For Microsoft, especially, whose search engine lags behind Google’s in popularity, the service represents an opportunity to get its search bar in front of ever more eyeballs.

Once colleges get used to the idea of allowing an outside technology firm to handle their e-mail services, there’s no telling what else they’ll be receptive to. Already, “software as a service” has been catching on in the business world and in higher education, as institutions realize that they can more easily (and more cheaply) manage basic functions by using Web-based software that’s hosted externally. An increasingly

popular example is “customer relationship management” software, which colleges use to handle vast contact lists and create profiles of alumni, prospective students and potential donors. The latest versions of the major packages available in the higher education realm are [entirely Web-based](#).

“I believe that this move by universities toward outsourcing, if you will, their e-mail, that represents the beginning of a sea change, a change in university information technology from ... direct provision of services to becoming agents of value-added applications, emerging technologies to the core business of the universities, which they haven’t really been in for a long time,” said Adrian Sannier, the [university technology officer](#) at Arizona State University.

The Evolution of University IT

Through the 1980s, students in college who were affluent enough to come from households with a personal computer routinely experienced technology that was more advanced than what they were used to at home. “Over the course of the ’90s and into the decade that we’re almost finished with, universities have slipped considerably from that position and have gone sort of into the position of near-follower, and maybe ‘near’ is being charitable,” Sannier said.

Of course, it was universities that developed, refined and incubated the predecessor of the Internet, and they were some of the first institutions to adopt e-mail capability. But when it came time to offer the services to all students, rather than just faculty and researchers, many colleges created their own homegrown solutions. Now, some of them are suffering “from the innovators’ dilemma,” as Sannier put it, as software infrastructure intended for a smaller scale is increasingly strained to match growing numbers of students and their widening expectations.

Many students have come to demand e-mail access at close to real time, integrated chat and several gigabytes of space because that’s what’s freely available from such competing services as Windows Live Hotmail, Yahoo and Gmail. The ad-supported offerings have taken advantage of massive economies of scale to effectively make storage limits and e-mail clients a thing of the past. At the University of Pennsylvania, where 2 of the 12 schools are phasing in Microsoft’s Live @ edu, there was no comparison between the old 75-megabyte limit and the five gigabytes now available, said Ira Winston, the executive director of computing and educational technology services for three of the schools.

“We just can’t keep up with the likes of Google, Microsoft and Yahoo,” he said. Since students are already coming in with their own accounts, and with 30 percent of them forwarding their college mail to personal inboxes, the debate wasn’t whether to partner with one of the Web services — it was “*who* to outsource to.”

The outcome of that decision didn’t necessarily weigh heavily on Winston. Since Google and Microsoft’s contracts are relatively short-term and non-exclusive, choosing a provider won’t lock in a college indefinitely, and different units within an institution can potentially use separate e-mail systems. Students can still always forward their e-mail. For Winston, the most important element was “providing the best services to our students and not constraining them to any one provider,” he said. “It almost doesn’t matter who you pick.”

So, facing fierce external competition and an exponential growth curve, Winston and others have concluded that it’s time to get out of the e-mail business. “It’s very clear that that game is over,” Sannier said. “Not only are we not keeping up now ... we weren’t ever going to be able to keep up.”

That begs the question: If most students come in with their own addresses, why offer e-mail service at all? The simple answer ends in “.edu.” Students and faculty tend to value their domain names, Sannier suggested, but only as long as the technology is “sort of close to the state of the art.” Google and Microsoft’s solutions provide both: the ability for colleges to retain their e-mail identities as well as the latest messaging technology already used by millions.

The Path to Google

Arizona State University, at the heart of suburban Phoenix’s population explosion, is taking its president’s concept of the “New American University” seriously.

The rapidly expanding institution is on a mission to boost both its quality and its size, and an important part of that goal is innovation. With less institutional baggage than many other large research universities, Arizona State adopted Google Apps Education Edition early on. In retrospect, the partnership seems almost destined: Google opened an office on the university’s Tempe, Ariz., campus last year, resulting in expanded internship opportunities for students and a collaboration between professors and Google engineers. (Some even joined ASU’s faculty.)

Working closely with Google’s engineers over a year ago — before the higher education program was even announced — ASU forged a solution within two weeks. With the push of a button, students could convert their existing e-mail accounts, saved messages and all, to Gmail — maintaining their addresses, usernames and passwords. The initial voluntary rollout saw 300 students sign up every hour; within a month, 27,000 (out of some 63,000) had made the switch, Sannier said.

As a part of the package, students also gained access to in-browser chat functionality and a Web-based calendar, all deployed on the same day. A month later, the university was able to replace its uPortal page with Google’s customizable start page — the same as the iGoogle service available to any user. As the company released more and more features — Google Docs & Spreadsheets came a month later, integrated into the e-mail solution — they were automatically added to the university’s offerings.

Now the university is “on the Google development curve,” Sannier said, and that can have both benefits and drawbacks. The university’s IT department no longer has to worry about backing up data, purchasing additional hard drive space or deploying Outlook or other software upgrades. But as the Web-based service evolves, it does so reflecting Google’s priorities and those of its many customers — not just the needs of ASU, even though it’s represented on the advisory board.

One of the most noticeable immediate effects of the switch, Sannier noted, was the number of calls about e-mail problems. Once the most common issue addressed by the help desk, those requests have since “dropped off the map.” As it turns out, not only are there fewer technological glitches and server crashes in the multiple-redundancy world of Web e-mail; the learning curve, for services students are already familiar with, is essentially zero.

But the most significant obstacle for IT administrators considering the future of their e-mail systems remains the issue of privacy. As they weigh the benefits of third-party e-mail services, they must also consider the consequences of moving students’ and faculty members’ personal data to off-campus servers over which they have no control. Often, these concerns are accompanied by institutional opposition by employees who have long been invested in the existing messaging framework.

Sannier’s team had the same concerns, but he eventually overcame them: “I look at my army — I certainly have a formidable force, they’re sharp characters, but ... compared to Google’s army? I have a

police force, and they have the United States Marines.”

Keltner, of Google, preferring an aviation analogy, suggested that the primary issue is that of control. “A lot of people are afraid to fly, but they’re perfectly happy driving even though statistics tell you you’re much safer” in an airplane, he said. But even car accidents can be unavoidable; [some colleges still find themselves vulnerable to hackers and security breaches](#).

New Ways to Collaborate

If (or when) a university adopts the new e-mail paradigm, the thinking goes, it’s only a matter of time before it’s applied elsewhere. And that signals an evolution in the role of IT in higher education: from playing catch-up and offering the basic technological backbone to integrating externally managed services and marshaling newly available resources for the main functions of academia and research.

“What we really want to do is help them to focus on the core educational mission of the institution,” Keltner said.

Instead of asking how to implement e-mail or manage large internal database systems, the questions become: How does the university develop its academic enterprise? How can it use technology to advance research?

One example Sannier cites as a possible future capability is the application of Amazon.com-like profiles to university Web sites. Using students’ stored preferences and previous coursework, for example, a custom-made engine might suggest classes to take and allow users to share their recommendations with others. That idea represents a way to potentially streamline the hassles of the course registration ritual, he suggested.

And now that both Microsoft and Google offer tools that allow students to publish their work — and edit it, in real time, with others — the adoption of these Web services presents an opportunity for universities to evolve their approaches in the classroom as well. For many institutions, they come almost as an afterthought to the e-mail services they initially sought to replace. But they could lead to something as radical as [posting term papers on Wikipedia to be peer-edited by classmates](#), or a more gradual method that emphasizes the sharing of drafts between peers before turning in an assignment.

Either way, the availability of new collaborative technologies could pave the way for more experimentation in classrooms — although it’s already underway at some institutions — and new pedagogical approaches that emphasize the “guide on the side” rather than the “sage on the stage.” Even further, the idea of turning in a single product, rather than a series of incremental components that can be refined and combined with the work of others, remains a central part of the modern method of teaching.

“I think in terms of in-class and out of class, to be able to have common classroom collaboration is a good thing,” said Deirdre Woods, the associate dean and chief information officer at the Wharton School, one of the units at the University of Pennsylvania that’s adopted Live @ edu. Her team is experimenting with some of the package’s features, such as “clouds” that allow students to post and share links, blog entries and other content with friends and classmates.

“What is the 21st-century version of a computer lab? ... I don’t think it’s a physical computer lab,” she said.

Looking Toward the Future

If Google can boast its popularity among tech-savvy students and its commitment to open standards while Microsoft emphasizes variable levels of control for different types of users and compatibility with its heavily used e-mail clients, what are the alternatives?

As is usually the case with a field dominated by the big players, there's an open-source alternative. [The Horde Project's Internet Messaging Program](#) is a Webmail client that's been adopted by the University of Michigan, where it's been [considered successful enough](#) to dispel any possibility, so far, of switching to Google or Microsoft.

And while the outsourcing model implies a top-down approach to implementing various Web-based services, there are also tools available that rely on a more viral, bottom-up method of adoption. [Buzzword](#), a Flash-based online word processor still in the beta phase, is a startup in the process of being acquired by Adobe. Aiming at the same students who might find Google Docs useful, it initially offered features that Rick Treitman, the CEO of Virtual Ubiquity, called "term paper-ready": endnotes, spell check and word count, to name a few, as opposed to more office-centric functionality such as mail merge.

"The generation is highly collaborative and mobile, and so having a virtual word processor that you can get to anyplace and make it really easy to share documents, we thought, [was] key," Treitman said.

Meanwhile, at Arizona State, Sannier sees future potential for Gmail to be available to students when they're not online, using Google's open-source [Gears](#) technology that allows Web applications to store data for offline use (and that already works with the Google Reader). That functionality would theoretically eliminate the need for Windows- or Mac-based e-mail clients entirely. Similarly, Buzzword will eventually adopt Adobe's Air technology to let students work on documents without an Internet connection, much like users of Microsoft Word.

Sannier also suggested that some of the questions about outsourcing may soon shift to Facebook, already ubiquitous among college students and with features that many universities have tried to offer in the past. The question won't be how to replicate it, he said, but how to harness it and "try to see how does that move from a tool that exists outside the university community to one that's sort of knit into the fabric of the university itself."

— [Andy Guess](#)

*The original story and user comments can be viewed online at
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What schools across the USA are doing to engage students

Advertisement

Student engagement doesn't just happen. In most cases, colleges must take steps to ensure all students get the most from their college time. USA TODAY's Tracey Wong Briggs and G. Jeffrey MacDonald look at some approaches used by colleges that report higher-than-average levels of engagement for their institutional type in selected categories.

Creating learning communities

More than 13,000 undergraduates attend **Appalachian State University** in Boone, N.C., yet few first-year students get lost in the shuffle. That's because in most cases, lots of people are looking for them in class — and wondering what's wrong if they're not there to contribute.

What makes this dynamic possible, educators say, are "learning communities." Students gain a stake in one another's well-being and success by studying multiple subjects together and participating in small, discussion-based seminars.

"It's a set of accountability measures," says Dan Friedman, director of Appalachian State's Freshman Seminar, an orientation course. "If every student in the class knows each other, they're less likely skip. ... They're more likely to be engaged in their coursework."

Appalachian State students enrolled in learning communities earn significantly higher grades than those taking the same courses without the benefit of that support structure, according to a study Friedman published this year in the *Journal of the First Year Experience*.

Other schools have found similar benefits. Since **Wagner College** in New York City adopted learning communities on a broad scale a decade ago, the ratio of students leaving before graduation has dropped from one in four to one in 10. The **Evergreen State College** in Olympia, Wash., where every course functions as a learning community by combining multiple disciplines and encouraging group projects, consistently sends graduates to environmentally focused graduate programs and jobs in state government.

Among other schools where NSSE data suggest students benefit from learning communities: **Michigan Technological University** in Houghton, **Westminster College** in Salt Lake City and **Elon (N.C.) University**.



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— *G.J.M.*

High levels of writing, feedback

Elon University in Elon, N.C., and the **University of Dayton** in Ohio both put a premium on writing, and see the results. Students who write more use more deep-level processing in their learning, NSSE says.

At these schools, writing isn't a skill learned solely in English composition classes. The University of Dayton offers a 16-week seminar for faculty in every discipline to learn how writing exercises can help students claim high-level understanding in a range of subject areas.

"If students are struggling for precise language, then they're really struggling for precise thought," says Stephen Wilhoit, writing fellow at the teaching center. "Rewriting is rethinking, so they have to think again about, 'What is it that I mean? What is it that I've learned? What is the significance of this?'"

Feedback is important, too. Students in Janna Anderson's media writing course at Elon University always get her written comments within two days. Students crank out between 14 and 16 news reports, often based on same-day events, and those who miss the 2 a.m. deadline to file by e-mail receive the same grade as those who spell a speaker's name wrong: a zero.

"Sometimes we have tears in the classroom, but usually in the class evaluations, everybody appreciates the honesty," Anderson says. "I celebrate mistakes. ... I say, 'This mistake will make you a better person if you take it and do something with it and don't just ignore it.'"

There are silver linings. Anderson's students always get a chance to revise their work with prior input in mind.

Among other schools where students report high levels of writing and feedback: **Miami University** in Oxford, Ohio, **Middlebury College** in Vermont, **Maryville College** in Tennessee and **Alverno College** in Milwaukee.

— *G.J.M.*

Getting seniors to put it all together

When undergraduates near the end of their college years, NSSE data show, they benefit from opportunities to integrate, synthesize and apply knowledge. In this regard, **Miami University** in Oxford, Ohio, stands out, particularly as a large public university, in NSSE's survey. It offers 140 senior capstone courses; most have fewer than 25 students and involve group projects. "Students are in the lab working on real problems," says Jerry Stonewater, director of liberal education and assessment.

At **Wabash College**, a men's college in Crawfordsville, Ind., every senior takes an oral and written comprehensive exam in order to show how he has synthesized all he has learned over four years. For the oral component, they don suits and face a "jury" of three faculty members.

"If they do not persuade, they do not walk" at graduation, says Gary Phillips, Dean of the College. "And so the pressure rises for them to step forward, take responsibility, prepare for it carefully and work with other students in that preparation. ... High stakes, isn't it?"

Among other schools where senior capstones have made a difference: **Pepperdine University** in Malibu, Calif.; **California Lutheran University** in Thousand Oaks.

— *G.J.M.*

Offering cultural and co-curricular activities

A substantial percentage of students at the **University of Virginia**, a public flagship that accepted only 34% of its

applicants last year, report in NSSE's survey that they spend six or more hours a week on co-curricular activities. The school's culture of self-governance, along with the current emphasis on leadership among top students in college admissions, contribute heavily to the school's record, says Christina Morell, assistant vice president for student affairs.

Some aspects of U.Va.'s self-governance go back to founder Thomas Jefferson and how he designed the campus with a library at the center, says interim dean of students Allen Groves. The school's student-managed honor system and judiciary committee, and its tradition of Contracted Independent Organizations (CIOs), go back decades, he says.

With 13,600 undergraduates, U.Va. has more than 500 CIOs, in which students organize, present constitution and bylaws, get student council approval, and manage the organizations themselves, he says. The student judiciary committee has students investigate, defend and resolve complaints, "even if brought by my office," Groves says.

Winthrop University and **Berea College**, which have notable percentages of students participating in culturally enriching activities, both make it a requirement.

Winthrop, a medium-sized public university in Rock Hill, S.C., requires undergraduates to attend three cultural activities for every 20 hours of completed coursework. The requirement was adopted in 1984 in the belief that being exposed to culture is a part of being a well-rounded, educated person, says Judy Longshaw, news services coordinator.

Berea, a private college in Kentucky for low-income students, offers a formal Convocation Program, a series of lectures, symposia, concerts and other arts performances, which have ranged from student performers to the Dalai Lama. Students are required to attend at least seven of about 20 free events each semester.

The college charges no tuition but requires students to work at least 10 hours a week. Convocation events are held in Berea's auditorium, which was built by students.

Most of Berea's students, while high-achieving, are not from backgrounds where they have seen such programs in paid venues, says Tim Jordan, director of public relations.

When John Fenn, a Nobel laureate in chemistry and 1937 Berea graduate, gave a Convocation lecture several years ago, he spoke of the impact of the program on his own education, Jordan adds. "He said Berea literally brought the world to him."

Other schools where students report high levels of extracurricular or cultural activities for its type include **Pepperdine**, **Oklahoma City University** and **Centre College** in Danville, Ky.

— **T.W.B.**

Working with older students

•With a long-standing mission of serving the entire state, **Northern Arizona University** has added more than 120 career-oriented distance-learning programs to its 37 campuses, nearly half of them available totally online. That offers lots of flexibility for adults, who represent about 39% of all undergraduates today, according to the American Council on Education. About a third of NAU's students enrolled off the main Flagstaff campus are adults, and their average age is the early 30s. Because they typically live off campus, attend part time and often juggle other obligations, adult students generally are less engaged than traditional-age students. But NSSE data suggest more engagement among NAU seniors 28 or older compared with other large research universities. And internal NAU surveys show that seniors in distance-learning classes report higher satisfaction with college overall than on-campus students.

Adults have different needs, says Fred Hurst, vice president for extended programs and dean of distance learning. "The adults already have a social life," he says. "They're looking specifically for credentials."

Other noteworthy schools have similarly created programs aimed at serving adults. **Gwynedd-Mercy College**, a Catholic college outside Philadelphia, offers five business and health career degree programs in its Center for Lifelong Learning.

Gwynedd-Mercy launches a cohort, or class, when it has a group of 14 students; they stay together for the entire program, typically meeting one night a week for four hours. Center director Joe Coleman credits its high retention rates to its learning teams — groups of three to five students who are required to meet for four more hours a week to work on projects and tasks. "You don't always get along, but you work your way through it. They get the professional expertise of their peers, and they're able to come up with ways to solve problems," he says.

Also notable for their success with adult students: **Drury University**, a liberal arts university in Springfield, Mo., with eight other branch campuses in southern and southwest Missouri; **Nebraska Methodist College**, a private health professions college, and **College of St. Mary**, a Catholic women's college, both in Omaha; and the **College of Notre Dame of Maryland**, a liberal arts college in Baltimore.

—*T.W.B.*

Putting diversity into practice

The **University of Michigan**, which scores above average for large research universities on almost all its NSSE benchmarks, has a particularly high proportion of students reporting that they have had serious conversations with students of different economic, social or ethnic backgrounds.

Michigan, whose affirmative action policies were challenged at the Supreme Court in 2003, has long promoted diversity on its Ann Arbor campus, which has 26,000 undergraduates. Although its undergraduate admissions point system was struck down, and state voters approved an affirmative action ban last year, the university remains committed to a campus culture where students learn to work with people from different backgrounds.

Michigan offers an integrated array of academic courses, programs, speakers and student leadership training that encourages dialogue across differences. Its 20-year-old Program on Intergroup Relations has around 280 students each year in its academic IGR Dialogues course, as well as 150 students in its training course for resident hall advisers.

A host of efforts goes into setting an inclusive tone at residence halls, and a hotline system helps the school provide interventions around issues of potential bias, says associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students Susan Ekland. A new student group sporting "Expect Respect" T-shirts uses dialogue tools modeled on the IGR program to defuse controversies, she adds. "We actually talk very directly and with transparency with our students about the eventual goal of being good world citizens."

Jesuit schools **Seattle University** and the **University of San Francisco**, as well as Chicago's **DePaul**, a Catholic university that derives its title and mission of access from 17th-century priest St. Vincent de Paul, also have large proportions of students reporting to NSSE that they have serious conversations with students who are different.

"I think that there is something to a Jesuit education that sets the stage of student exploration of difference. One thing integral to a Jesuit education is a reflection of self, and the woundedness of self," says Monica Nixon, who directs Seattle University's office of multicultural affairs. "There's something in that spirit that opens students up to engagement to others."

Seattle University makes its focus on social justice and diversity known from its initial contacts with potential students, and programs to foster interactions are spread across the school, she says. Commuter student services even offer a collegia program, in which commuters can affiliate with one of five campus spaces to study or talk, and where dialogue programs are offered. "Seattle University has a pretty diverse population, so people have the opportunity to interact, but we want those interactions to also be intentional."

—*T.W.B.*

Supporting first-generation students

Students whose parents didn't graduate from college, which NSSE defines as "first-generation," often can't rely on family to help them navigate campus life. That puts them at a disadvantage: NSSE data show they are much less likely to participate in educationally enriching activities such as learning communities, research with a faculty member or a senior culminating project.

California State University-Dominguez Hills, a large public university near downtown Los Angeles with a majority minority enrollment, has had such success with its Toro First Year program that it will be required starting fall 2009, says Andrew Long, director of the program. Of those who completed the recommended program in 2005, 77.8% came back in 2006, compared with 52.8% of non-participants, he says.

The program includes a general education course that covers academic skills such as note-taking, as well as emphasizing campus involvement, introducing students to campus resources and encouraging them to foster peer support networks, something first-generation students often don't have, says Long, who also teaches in the program.

"We see students coming in with that deer-in-the-headlights look that first week," he says, but students develop confidence that they are going to be successful in college. "There's a realization that when they finish their first semester in the Toro First Year, they are not the best student they're going to be, but they know what it takes to get there: 'Yes, I have what it takes to do this, and I'm in the right place.' "

Other notable schools include **Our Lady of the Lake University**, a small, private Catholic university in largely Hispanic San Antonio. Almost all of its students are first-generation college-goers, and the average family income is \$30,000 a year.

The school got a grant from AT&T that enables the college to provide personal success coaches for each first-year student last year. OLLU offers support programs, such as tutoring and mentoring. But the new program goes further, providing regular, one-to-one interaction to every one of the more than 300 first-year students, plus transfer students, says president Tessa Martinez Pollack.

With another grant, from PepsiCo., OLLU is studying practices to raise graduation rates. "Basically what it does is reaffirm the connection, the one-on-one interaction between faculty and students," Pollack says.

Also notable for the engagement level of adults: **Indiana University East**; **Peace College**, a private baccalaureate college in Raleigh, N.C.; **Alverno College**, a Catholic liberal arts college in Milwaukee; **Texas Women's University**, a university primarily for women in Denton, Texas.

— *T.W.B.*

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Students

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From the issue dated November 30, 2007

Political Campaigns Get Personal With Students

By JJ HERMES

Credit-card companies, apartment complexes, you name it. College students are constantly barraged with unsolicited advertisements.

But on Election Day in 2006, some students at the University of Texas at Austin were prodded by startlingly personal calls: "Today someone our age is going to die in Iraq. Today you will also walk or drive by your precinct polling location at least twice on the way to and from class. If you choose not to vote, their blood may as well be on your hands."

The recorded calls, placed by Democratic Party supporters, were able to be so focused in part because the politicians knew whom they were calling. The University of Texas had made available a list of some student telephone numbers in response to a request under the state's open-records law.

As political campaigns look to corral young voters, those calls could be a harbinger of things to come in 2008: campaigns going after students through contact information that public colleges are required to release.

"This is not a business we want to be in, but we've been advised that it's something that we are supposed to do," says Linda A. Kizer-Paquette, an assistant registrar at the University of Oregon. The university has received several requests for students' phone numbers in the past few years, mostly from local political campaigns.

"Oregon being a public-records-law state, we have to make this information available to third parties," she says.

Cheap Data Sets

Military recruiters have long used public-information laws to generate student-contact lists, as have savvy advertisers at graduation-announcement companies and apartment complexes. Just last month the student-loan company Sallie Mae announced that it would back off several Freedom of Information Act requests it had made for information about students at community colleges in New York.

Such third-party requests for students' contact information are in line with most state open-records laws. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the federal law that governs student records, college officials do not need a student's consent to release directory information. Most administrators interpret phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and home addresses as directory information.

Students can opt out by telling the registrar in writing that they do not want their contact information released. But without such a request, colleges are obligated to release directory information, even without informing their students.

Most institutions charge an hourly rate to third parties, including student groups, to recoup the costs of providing databases of directory information. Colleges typically set a minimum charge of one hour's worth of work, and many campus officials say the work usually does not exceed that.

As a result, at institutions like Oregon, the University of Iowa, and Ohio State University, lists of tens of thousands of students and their phone numbers or e-mail addresses would probably cost less than \$100 per request.

Ohio State and Iowa, like Oregon, have received a handful of requests from political campaigns for student-contact information. At Ohio State, Linda Katunich, an associate registrar, says a presidential campaign requested student data in 2004, although she could not find a record of which campaign made the request.

Outside Requests

To curb the growth in third-party requests, many colleges charge higher rates for commercial entities. Arizona State University charges \$165 per 1,000 student names for most requests, but it tacks on an additional \$4,000 if the request comes from a commercial entity.

At the University of Wisconsin at Madison, registered student organizations can request the information at a rate of \$35 per hour, while third parties must pay \$90 per hour. The effect: Student organizations are formed on the campus to support a candidate, and those groups request the information.

"Every election year we get some requests," says Marilyn N. McIntyre, manager of information services in the registrar's office at Madison. Most political campaigns request students' e-mail addresses, she notes, since that is a cheap way to reach them.

Some colleges have explicitly prohibited student organizations from sharing requested data with third parties. Auburn University has a written policy that bars student groups from sharing directory information with outsiders. It also expressly forbids students from requesting directory information for a political campaign.

Sam Lowther, a senior institutional research analyst at Auburn, said the policy was issued not in response to a particular incident, but to make sure that student groups were not misusing the data.

Nomadic Voters

So far, it seems, political campaigns have yet to blanket universities with requests, but get-out-the-vote efforts are almost a year away.

"There's no shortage of ways that we're trying to reach out to people," says Matt B. Hamlin, Internet-communications coordinator for the campaign of Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, a Connecticut Democrat. The Dodd campaign has not made any student-directory requests, Mr. Hamlin says.

He expresses skepticism about plastering students with what amounts to campaign spam. "Generally speaking," he says, "the most effective people to be in contact with are the ones who actually express

interest in contacting you. Any large net isn't necessarily going to yield the return you're looking for."

And students may not appreciate the attention.

"I could see students thinking it's annoying if they are getting e-mail bombed," says Peter Koltak, a sophomore journalism major and vice president of the College Democrats at Ohio State. "But it would not feel invasive to me."

For now, political organizers are turning to social-networking sites like Facebook — where some users identify their political preferences — to build networks for communications and voter-registration drives.

Contact information from student directories would most likely be used for get-out-the-vote efforts on Election Day, such as at Austin in 2006.

A recent study found a 3- to 5-percent increase in turnout among young people when they were sent text messages that day reminding them to vote.

Aaron B. Strauss, a graduate student in the politics department at Princeton University and an author of the study, says student-directory requests could help campaigns connect with a nomadic demographic.

"One of the challenges for student mobilization is actually finding the students," he says, "because they change phone numbers and addresses so often."

And colleges, willing or not, could become an increasingly useful tool for finding those voters.

<http://chronicle.com>

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Nov. 27

Giving New Meaning to ‘Program for Parents’

Many community colleges have programs for parents — policies and tools for helping adult students balance child care and other demands of being a parent with the expectations of being a college student.

But as two-year institutions have increasingly become a destination of choice for traditional age students, a small but growing number of the colleges have begun developing “parent” programs of a different sort: initiatives (of the type much more common at four-year colleges) to help the families of students both understand how to support their children, and draw boundaries so that students can make their way on their own. The community colleges are adding orientation sessions, informational Web sites, and other resources for parents — part of larger efforts to alter and expand student service operations to respond to the needs and demands of 18- to 24-year-olds.

“We’re being faced with the challenge of adapting a lot of our college policies to younger students — how that student thinks and operates, and understanding their culture,” says Beverly Walker, director of retention services at North Central State College, a two-year technical college in Mansfield, Ohio, that has added services for parents as the average age of its students has dropped precipitously from the late 20s to the early 20s in recent years. “In addition to worrying about our students’ children, now we’re having to deal with their parents.”

And sometimes they can be a handful to “deal with.” The already clichéd “helicopter parents” pops up in many a conversation about the parent programs that community colleges are developing, just as it does at four-year institutions. But while some two-year-college officials acknowledge that the programs for parents are designed in part to help professors and staff members play defense against intruding parents, preparing them to loosen the reins, most say the programs’ primary aim is giving well-intentioned fathers and mothers better information and tools to gently guide their children through the sometimes tough transition from high school to college.

Out of High School, Into Community Colleges

Enrollments of traditional age students are growing at two-year institutions, driven by the colleges’ lower tuitions and the comfort that many first-generation college students feel in staying close to home. That trend is just beginning to be evident in national data, as statistics prepared by the American Association of Community Colleges from information collected by the National Center for Education Statistics shows two-year-college enrollment increases in all age categories under 30 and decreases or no

growth in all age categories 30 and over between 2003 and 2005 (the latest available year).

If the trend is just emerging nationally, it is unmistakable at some individual colleges. Colorado's Front Range Community College, which is getting a new program for parents off the ground, has seen the proportion of area high school graduates who enroll at the two-year institution climb by 1-2 percentage points a year in the last few years, to about 20 percent now. With that increase, says Kris Binard, dean of student services at Front Range, faculty and staff members at the college began reporting more and more inquiries from students' family members. "We were hearing from a lot more parents who are a lot more demanding, wanting to know every moment, 'How is my kid doing?'" Binard says.

In the initial stage of its new initiative for parents of students, the college added a parent component to its orientation program for new students. Students and their families meet together for the first segment, and then the students go out and "do their thing" with their peers. Meanwhile, college officials take a tour with parents, filling them in along the way on the information that federal privacy law allows the college to share (and not to share), what the academic cycle looks like, and campus offices to which parents might point their children when they run into different sorts of roadblocks.

Skagit Valley College, in northwest Washington, has had a program for parents for several years that Binard and other officials say they plan to imitate. (Others have had them even longer: California's Palomar College, for instance, began its program about a decade ago, and now has hundreds of parents each year who attend its six parent orientations — five in English, and one in Spanish, says Diane McAllister, supervisor of the two-year college's Access and Assessment Center.) The college began with a Web site, [No Parent Left Behind](#), that contains [a list](#) of "10 things that every parent should know" and [a guide](#) to what student records a parent does and does not have access to (which contains the question: "Since I'm paying for my child's education, why can't I get a copy of his/her records?") under the federal [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#), among other things.

Last spring, the community college worked with the local public schools and nearby universities to set up a parent information night for the families of prospective students, and this fall invited parents for the first time to new student orientation. About a third of participating students brought parents with them — "proof that we need to be responding in a more systematic way" to the needs and demands of parents, says Linda P. Woiwod, dean of students at Skagit Valley. "Parent academies," designed to provide more in-depth information about the inner workings of key campus offices and processes, are next, Woiwod says.

Mixed Feelings

As is true of all college officials who deal with students' parents — other institutions that have gone this route includes [Metropolitan Community College](#) in Missouri and Maryland's [Harford Community College](#) — two-year-college administrators are of two minds about their newest "clients." Walker, of North Central State, counts herself among the guilty as part of a generation of parents who are arguably overinvolved in their children's lives, including their educations.

"I have students come in for registration with their parents, and I start asking the student questions, and the parent answers," says Walker. "I almost have to say to the parent, 'I'm going to ask your son or daughter some questions now.' We get used to doing that [when the kids are in elementary and secondary school], and we almost have to unlearn that and let our students go to college and learn the same things themselves. Our goal is to teach them how to be supportive without being overbearing."

Binard, of Front Range Community College, agrees that "you are always going to have parents who are

helicopters, or even bulldozers.” But over all, she says, “parents mean well — they want to know, ‘How can I help my child?’ ”

More typical than the parent who intrudes by answering questions meant for his or her child, Binard says, is the father she met with recently who wanted to know, ” ‘What can I do to help my student in this situation be more successful?’ He didn’t want me to do anything for the student, but wanted to know what the resources were that the student might need,” she says. “So we try to answer their questions in that way: ‘If your stud is getting a D in this class and is worried about not being able to do better, the withdrawal date is such and such.’ ‘Have them go to the advising office. Here’s the phone number.’

“Everything you read about retention says that the No. 1 person that many students go to for help is a parent,” Binard adds. “If we can make sure parents know what they need to know to help students, retention is going to be better. That’s what we all want.”

Given the large proportion of first-generation college students at many community colleges, some of the two-year institutions that have begun programs for parents are seeing an interesting side benefit. As Ohio’s Owens Community College transformed its original registration-based program for parents into [Parent College 101](#), which travels to middle and high schools to help parents begin planning for their children’s college possibilities, the college has motivated the older generation, too, says Bill Ivoska, vice president of student services at Owens.

“It’s been so successful,” he says, “that the parents want to go to college, too.”

— [Doug Lederman](#)

*The original story and user comments can be viewed online at
<http://insidehighered.com/news/2007/11/27/ccparents>.*

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Contributions will enhance access to education for minority students

USA Funds awards \$400,000 to national scholarship groups

INDIANAPOLIS — USA Funds[®], the nation's leading education-loan guarantor, has announced the award of \$400,000 in contributions to five national scholarship organizations that promote access to higher education for minority students. For the sixth consecutive year, USA Funds has awarded funds to the American Indian College Fund, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund and the United Negro College Fund. USA Funds also announced awards to the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund.

The contributions address the findings of a federal advisory committee, which reported that members of ethnic-minority groups will account for a large part of the future growth in the college-going population and that these students will have significant financial need.

“Through the support of organizations like USA Funds, the United Negro College Fund is able to provide scholarships for African-American students,” said Andrea Neely, UNCF area development director. “We are extremely grateful for USA Funds’ continued generosity in making sure that more African-American students will realize the dream of a college education.”

During the past six years, USA Funds has awarded more than \$1.9 million to national scholarship organizations that promote higher-education access for minority students. The

-more-

National Scholarship Organizations -2-

contributions complement USA Funds' own national scholarship program, which this year provided more than \$8.3 million in aid to assist students in financial need. Up to half of USA Funds' scholarship awards go to students who are members of ethnic-minority groups or are physically disabled.

In announcing the awards, Henry L. Fernandez, USA Funds executive director, access and outreach, said, "In keeping with our mission to promote access to higher education, we are pleased to support the scholarship programs of these outstanding organizations. These organizations are working to ensure that ethnic-minority students have the chance to realize their dreams of postsecondary education and the opportunity for greater success following graduation."

Headquartered in Indianapolis, USA Funds is a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services. During the year ending Sept. 30, 2007, USA Funds guaranteed education loans totaling \$25.8 billion for students and parents throughout the nation. USA Funds serves as the designated guarantor of federal education loans in eight states: Arizona, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada and Wyoming. USA Funds also invests more than \$16 million annually in scholarships and outreach programs that advance its mission of support to higher education. For more information about USA Funds, visit www.usafunds.org.

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