INTRODUCING

STEVE GUNDERSON

IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH CAREER COLLEGE CENTRAL, APSCU'S FIFTH PRESIDENT SHARES HIS MOTIVATIONS, GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE SECTOR.
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Introducing Steve Gunderson
by: Jenni Valentino

After almost a year of searching for the perfect sector figurehead, APSCU has found their fifth President in moderate Wisconsin politician Steve Gunderson. His excitement and enthusiasm thus far have been contagious, and his presence in the sector has been nothing short of refreshing. In an open, friendly interview, APSCU’s newest president shares his thoughts on the sector, its struggles, his aspirations for the Association and its member schools, and his advice for the upcoming years.

Your Admissions Department
by: Dr. Jean Norris

Throughout the years of scrutiny on the career college sector, admissions departments have borne the brunt of the accusations. As the gatekeepers to potential students – and those pretending to be – your admissions department has the opportunity to change the perceptions and operations of your school. Here are five tips on how to make them shine.

Nimble Critters or Agile Predators: A Critique
by: Daniel L. Bennett

A few months after Harvard scholars released a paper analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the for-profit school sector, Daniel Bennett took them to task by analyzing their own strengths and weaknesses. His conclusions shed light on the report’s weight.

The Marketability Correlation
by: Dr. Pete Savo

As dollars for higher education get tighter, students must make their choices more wisely. By choosing a career education, students are essentially choosing to market themselves specifically to their field and are more primed for success than ever before.

POSTed
by: Kelly Duffy

Senators Harkin and Durbin are at it again. Their newest pet project, Senate bill 3032 (also dubbed the POST Act), seeks to replace the 90/10 rule with 85/15 and ultimately works to limit access to education for our country’s veterans and service members.
News

10 Something Like Gainful Employment
by: Kevin Kuzma
Recent comments from President Obama and his camp hint at applying a gainful employment-like measurement to traditional colleges, leaving sector proponents hopeful but skeptical. Stephen Friedheim weighs in on how the administration’s lack of specifics points toward the likelihood of actually putting a focus on outcome in place.

32 Getting to Know U
by: Melissa Cowan
Harrison College’s new online learning platform, KnowU, provides students with an interactive, virtual way to connect with their classes, their instructors and each other.

40 140 Characters or Fewer
by: Kris Saim
It’s quick and concise. It’s where some of the most publicized debates of the past few years have been held. It’s where a company can make or break their customer service reputation. Are you savvy enough to keep up with Twitter?

42 Able to Benefit, Unable to Qualify
by: Jenni Valentino
Beginning in July 2012, eligibility for Pell Grants gets a whole lot tighter. While Washington pats themselves on the back for upholding the maximum grant amount, who is thinking about the students who need this financial help most? For those who struggled through high school and didn’t earn a diploma, there are now even more hoops to jump through on the path to a college education.

In Every Issue

52 BOOK REVIEW
60 IMAGINE AMERICA FOUNDATION
68 TWEET BEATS
70 LINK UP ON LINKEDIN
72 MAKING HEADLINES
76 WHY I CHOSE
AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION
SUPERIOR FUNCTIONALITY
TARGETED DEMOS
COMPLIANCE QUALITY
ADVANCED ANALYTICS
SOCIAL ENROLLMENT
QUALITY ENROLLMENT
CAMPAIGN OPTIMIZATION
CUSTOM DESIGN
LEADS
FACEBOOK VERTICALLY FOCUSED
SOCIAL MEDIA UNIQUE
RETENTION CREATIVE

SOCIAL LEADS
Midway through my second grade year, a new student joined our classroom. She arrived without fanfare or the excited announcement that her family had just moved to town due to her father’s job.

Betsy was the only child of a single mother. She was overweight, had scraggly hair down past her waist, and wore the same sweatsuit multiple times a week. She spoke nervously when the teacher called on her and rarely anytime else. She hummed to herself on the way to the water fountain and often cried quietly at her desk. None of us were outwardly cruel to her, but instead, we acted like she didn’t even exist … a fate which I realized later may have been worse.

The gravel beneath the playground equipment was still dark and damp with leftover rain on the last day I saw her. I was doing “cherry drops” off the uneven bars when I noticed Betsy sitting on a wooden playground platform. She was crying, and I ignored her. Only a few of the other girls laughed, but none of us bothered to ask what was wrong or call for help. The risk of associating with her was too great, her track record of tears too long. By the time a teacher crouched down to talk to her, she had been crying alone for more than 15 minutes.

We were back in the classroom reading quietly when we heard the sirens. We found out later that Betsy had fallen from the monkey bars and broken her leg in two places. Just like that, as quickly and quietly as she had appeared in our classroom, she was gone.

Was she pulled from our school because we saw her sitting there, hurt and alone, and did nothing? Probably not. In a way, tying a specific incident like that to her sadness would feel easier. In reality, the way she was treated in that second grade classroom probably paled in comparison to the struggles that followed her and her mother over the years.

I’m sure Betsy doesn’t even remember me. But I am still haunted by the idea that I could have made her feel less alone, even for a little while, and I did nothing. I am proud to be part of the career college sector for this very reason – because we are all doing something for the people who need it most.

When the media berates the entire sector for only being in the education game to make a profit, I just pause and shake my head. The reality is, yes, there are people in this sector – hard-working, entrepreneurial people – who have propelled themselves into the next tax bracket. Just like in any other industry. Also similar to any other industry, the vast majority of us make comfortable livings, but no more than we would if working in another sector of education or in another industry altogether. In fact, many of us are still paying off our own student loans, which means that we’re in this for other, more important, reasons.

For many of us, we are in this sector to encourage, support and stand up for those students who don’t have anyone else standing up for them. Time after time, the government and the media indirectly try to make these students feel ashamed of their choice in school – a choice that should instead make them feel extremely proud.
At a recent conference, a popular New York Times op-ed columnist named Joe Nocera commented on the career college sector. He admitted to not being a fan of it, but he conceded that there is definitely a place for the type of education and training provided by these schools. Nocera went on to offer advice on how to move past the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigations and bad press. Basically, he said it was time to stop whining about everyone else and fix what was broken in one’s own organization. Specifically, he mentioned that the admissions office was the “weak link” that the government entered through. It’s time to change practices and the people involved in recruitment, because public opinion drives political action – and you’ve seen how that’s played out.

As the career college sector continues to have every facet of its operations taken apart in the courts of law and public opinion, it may be comforting to know that the sector has been here before – and survived. The government intervened in the early ’90s when unscrupulous admissions recruiters were enrolling students in their school simply to be paid commissions. Many of these students weren’t even qualified. So, the Department of Education jumped in to put an end to commission-based sales. When the commissions went away, so did the admissions reps who were solely motivated by money. A new kind of rep emerged, bringing a softer side to the sales process with relationship-based or consultative selling techniques.
The sector went along to experience two decades of success and unprecedented growth. Savvy admissions managers continued to measure every aspect of the process to tweak, perfect and increase predictability. All was well until reports and numbers started to overtake the original intent of the sales methodology. Consultative selling, needs-based counseling and relationship selling were bastardized into shadows of their original intent to serve the interests of the organization over the needs of the student. Student fit became secondary to profit.

As people spent time analyzing data and reports, they missed the signs that their sales process had declining returns for other reasons. They focused on lead type and how to get their reps to convert better instead of understanding that the student buying behaviors had changed right before their eyes. They didn’t know what to do, so they pressed admission reps to push harder – and we all know where that path leads.

We’ve been studying the trends on student preferences and best practices in sales methodologies for years. Moving forward, those working in college admissions will be best served by adhering to a strict compliance environment, meeting the needs of today’s student and increasing recruitment effectiveness. We believe that five key things need to happen in admissions to move this sector forward.

1 **Be Open to Change.** Although it is never easy to change, hopefully there’s enough motivation to try something new. My guess is that admissions teams are ready and simply waiting on management to catch on. In fact, I’ve been told by some seasoned reps that management is the one that needs convincing – not them. Their bosses happen to come from the admissions world of old and are the ones standing in the way of progress.

2 **Increase Requisite Variety.** The new admissions methodology we’re suggesting isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach as previous approaches were. Today’s students want variety and flexibility. It will take a smart and skilled admissions professional to know how to best serve the needs of each individual within the “guardrails”.

3 **Develop New Knowledge and Skills.** Outdated techniques need to go away, including withholding information, making the student “earn the right to enroll” or using high pressure. The good news is that we don’t have to throw away everything from past sales processes. We do, however, have to add new skills and knowledge to help admissions professionals meet the needs of today’s student and their organization at the same time. This will take a degreed professional with advanced skills and experience in communication, psychology, customer service, sales and counseling.

4 **Rethink Performance Metrics.** As the admissions approach changes, so do the metrics. Perhaps we need to look beyond conversions to qualitative metrics, including student success and retention.

5 **Hire for the New Paradigm.** Given the skill set necessary for success is different, so will be the person doing the job. Reexamine job descriptions and selection criteria to fit the new methodology.
In 2012, there is an amazing opportunity to reinvent the admissions experience by making the necessary changes to stay compliant, meet the needs of today’s student and increase effectiveness. No longer do admissions departments have to be a “weak link.” This sector can set the standard on how admissions should be conducted for all segments of higher education. All that’s left is to make the choice. So, what do you say?

Sources


Dr. Jean Norris is a Managing Partner with Norton | Norris Inc., a firm that specializes in Tactical Enrollment Management™. Norris has worked in admissions and marketing for more than 20 years in both career colleges and traditional colleges and universities, including Robert Morris College, Argosy Education Group, University of St. Francis and Deltak. She can be contacted at jean@nortonnorris.com.
Obama’s higher education plan would tie traditional colleges to outcomes

By Kevin Kuzma, Online Editor

When President Barack Obama delivered his State of the Union address on Jan. 24, he put colleges “on notice” without clarifying what he meant by the vague phrasing or how exactly he was going to do so. Then, in the days following those initial words, he offered an explanation that was slightly more specific – and somewhat surprising.

At another address, this one given at the University of Michigan, Obama explained the intentions behind his new approach to higher education. His plan, which involves using campus-based financial aid programs, would offer rewards to colleges that keep costs down while penalizing the ones who miss the mark.
His sentiments seemed to reflect the administration’s all-too-well-known gainful employment rule that draws a correlation between what a graduate earns in a position that he or she trained for and what they paid for their college education. Obama’s description was indistinct at best, but the new plan would link federal aid to net price, as well as offer a determination about whether or not a college has prepared graduates to obtain employment and repay their loans.

In the span of two speaking engagements, the President had seemingly shifted gears on the administration’s higher education policy. The administration’s previous approach was to heap regulations on for-profit colleges, in effect directing more students to the nation’s community college system.

The reaction to online news articles about the administration’s change in approach generated the same reaction that came from the career education sector upon the announcement of the gainful employment rules: calls that the change in policy would limit access to education, that the notion was unfair because students should have the choice to follow whichever degree path they choose that an institution cannot control what jobs pay or what salaries job candidates are willing to accept.

Without a focus on outcomes or accountability – at least as far as placement is concerned – traditional colleges and universities would likely face a significant challenge if programs were tied to outcomes. The connection between federal aid and net price increases – and whether or not the institutions provide a “good value” to students – is a 180-degree turn from what has been the norm on the traditional side.

The notion to link graduate salaries to education cost was blasted by career college leaders. The sector that has essentially arranged itself on the principle of providing career-specific training and connections to employers objected to the Department of Education’s plans. Naturally, the reaction from the sector of higher education – a sector that isn’t organized by the same principles – was negative. But what about the future?

The vagueness so far on the administration’s part keeps much about the plan in the dark. Obama’s intent, though, is to finally place an emphasis on outcomes on the traditional side. The new focus could have implications on colleges and universities, which, for the most part, would be learning to play by completely different rules. Many career educators might be wondering: Can traditional colleges and universities, which aren’t exactly known for having good bedside manner with students, handle restrictions similar to those imposed by gainful employment?
“Unlike the for-profit sector, traditional higher education has never seen itself as a stepping-stone to employment, and I seriously doubt that actions by the federal government will change that,” said Stephen Friedheim, a long-time career education supporter who is now Strategic Coach at Education Systems & Solutions in Dallas, Texas. “This is true for most colleges within a university. Achievements such as passing the bar or gaining licensure, which are graded by agencies other than the feds, do act to place emphasis on the necessary outcomes of schools, particularly in the healthcare arena.

“On the other hand, despite the negative image of our sector espoused by some of our critics, we have seen more and more discussions on innovation and creativity in higher education advocating the mirroring of our success formulas, like scheduling classes that are convenient to the adult learner or ensuring sufficient classes are offered to achieve graduation. In other words, making education decisions with students in mind, something that has been the cornerstone of our sector from the beginning.”
There are some career college leaders who would say any step to place accountability on traditional universities is a step in the right direction. Since new guidelines have been focused on for-profit schools, additional measures similar to those that for-profit schools are facing could be a positive course of action.

“I would agree that asking traditional higher education to become more outcome oriented is a good thing, particularly for students,” Friedheim said. “Measuring universities by the number who enroll and the number who graduate is a valuable step in the right direction. However, we must guard against establishing a goal of everyone graduating with a four-year degree when current and projected jobs will not require such a credential. We must bring dignity back to those who work. The assumption that a four-year degree somehow is the holy grail in education is totally misleading.”

As many career educators stated during the initial move against the gainful employment rule, Friedheim said that society must fill all of the occupational categories for a lively, productive community. Somehow, the nation must get back to honoring all those who fix our cars, build our homes, drill for our oil, pave our roads, fix our planes and so on.

But fair treatment might need to come first, giving career colleges and traditional colleges an equal chance to succeed. The Obama administration’s plan would need to address this inequality, an action career educators have called for all along.

“What ‘plan’?” Friedheim asked. “We’ve only seen some platitudes and predictions so far. No meat on the bones; no appreciation regarding the concepts’ consequences. I’d like to see a lot more of a description. Career colleges will continue to face stricter, unfair, rules as long as Obama/Biden hold sway. They are not friendly toward the private sector, thinking that the government way is the better way.”

Obama’s new direction could grant retribution to those career education professionals who objected to the Department of Education’s gainful employment rule after all. The outcome, though, is uncertain.
A dissection of the for-profit sector’s strengths and weaknesses through the lens of econometric analyses

Harvard scholars David Deming, Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz (DGK) recently released a working version of their paper, “The For-Profit Postsecondary School Sector: Nimble Critters or Agile Predators?” The paper presents a relatively neutral view of the private for-profit sector, describing both strengths and weaknesses in addition to providing econometric analyses of student loan cohort default rates and student outcomes. Their default rate analysis makes use of institutionally provided data from the Department of Education, while the outcome analysis uses individual data obtained from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), a survey of 16,680 students who enrolled in college for the first time during the 2003-04 academic year.

The authors examine institutional cohort default rates after controlling for student population characteristics, including demographics and financial aid received; institutional characteristics such as degree offerings, selectivity and ownership; and geographic and time effects. The results corroborate previous findings, including my own, that even when controlling for factors believed to influence non-repayment, cohort default rates remain higher among the for-profit industry than other sectors. Relative to community colleges, controlling for the above factors modestly expands the default rate gap, but it tends to contract relative to public four-year schools, especially when restricting the analysis to open admission schools.

The innovative contribution of the DGK default rate analysis is differentiating between for-profit schools that are independent, regional, national and predominantly online. These four school classifications are mutually exclusive, meaning that no school is assigned to more than one category. They find that independently owned schools have lower default rates than regional chain schools, which have lower default rates than national chains. Perhaps surprisingly, online schools had the lowest cohort default rate when no controls were employed, an advantage that disappeared once other variables were included in the analysis. Controlling for demographics, financial aid, time and geographic factors, the default rate gap between for-profits and community colleges rose for all but national chain schools, a result which may reflect a broader diversification of students among schools with a national presence than schools with only a local or regional presence.

The BPS sample provides detailed student background characteristics and individual level outcome data that are not available in other aggregate education data sets. This allows them to analyze student outcomes such as completion and retention, post-schooling employment and earnings, satisfaction with coursework, and student loan burden by school type. As the authors indicate, the BPS data has several shortcomings. First, it is a nonrandom sample of students. Next, it over samples students from for-profit institutions. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it excludes a large segment of the for-profit student population: nontraditional students returning to higher education after spending substantial
The authors indicate the lower propensity of remedial education among students at for-profit institutions as one potential reason for the higher retention and short-term completion rates in the sector, implying that the practical approach of career college education is more appealing to its target student population than is an academic approach taken by many traditional providers.
time in the workforce or in other endeavors. Thus, the BPS provides somewhat of a nonrepresentative sample of students enrolled in the for-profit sector. Nonetheless, the study is to be commended for taking a step in the right direction toward providing a comparable analysis of student outcomes across school sectors and types.

The results reaffirm earlier work suggesting that for-profit schools are more successful than their counterparts in the not-for-profit sectors at retaining students beyond the first year and at graduating students who are pursuing short-term education programs (i.e. certificates and Associate degrees), but less successful in Bachelor’s degree completions. The authors indicate the lower propensity of remedial education among students at for-profit institutions as one potential reason for the higher retention and short-term completion rates in the sector, implying that the practical approach of career college education is more appealing to its target student population than is an academic approach taken by many traditional providers, an argument with which I tend to agree and might add is a positive characteristic of career education.

DGK's analysis of the BPS data also provides some negative results for the for-profit relative to the other sectors. Even after controlling for student demographics, academic preparation, familial resources, school type and debt burden, students beginning their postsecondary education at a for-profit school have higher loan default rates than similar students who began in other sectors, a finding that is more revealing than the cohort default rate analysis due to the use of micro-level data. The authors also found that students who attended for-profit schools, although generally reporting high levels of satisfaction, were less satisfied with the value of their education as an investment than students that attended not-for-profit schools.

But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the study is the use of the BPS data to analyze post-schooling employment outcomes, data that is generally very hard to come by. The data set allowed the authors to examine employment and earnings data among students who attended various types of institutions, and it showed that students who began at a for-profit school in the 2003-04 academic year were less likely to be employed and had lower average earnings in 2009 than students who began at either a two-year or
four-year not-for-profit school, with the earnings gap varying by type of education pursued. The earnings gap tended to decline when earnings were conditioned on being employed, but the results were often statistically insignificant. One result reported in the regression tables but not mentioned in the paper (most likely because it was only marginally significant using one of the two regression techniques) was that, conditional on employment and pursuing a Bachelor’s degree, students who attended a for-profit school had higher earnings in 2009 than students attending either not-for-profit two- or four-year schools.

The authors use two regression techniques – Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Nearest Neighbor Propensity Score Matching (NNPS). When the entire sample was pooled, having attended a
for-profit school was associated with between a 2.8 percent and 3.1 percent greater chance of being unemployed in 2009 and $1,771-$1,936 lower earnings on average than the baseline. When only nonselective schools were included, unemployment rates were between 2 percent and 9.3 percent higher, while earnings $1,237-$4,168 lower, on average, for students who began at a for-profit. When the sample was restricted to only students participating in a certificate program, unemployment was between 6.5 percent and 10 percent higher, and earnings were $3,041-$3,584 lower for students from for-profits. When only Associate degree seekers were included, unemployment was between 0.2 percent higher and 4.3 percent lower, although the former was not statistically significant, and earnings were $552-$1,880 lower, with only the latter marginally significant. When the sample was restricted to Bachelor’s degree seekers, the unemployment rate was between 6.9 percent and 7.8 percent lower and earnings between $1,065 lower and $500 higher, although neither of the earnings figures were statistically significant. For employed Bachelor’s degree seekers, earnings are $1,014-$3,471 higher, with only the latter being marginally significant.

DGK’s statistical analysis is relatively well done with the exception of their selection of several control variables in the cohort default rate analysis that provide absolute, rather than relative, measures of the financial aid characteristics of an institution’s student population, a potential model misspecification that likely does not affect the results significantly. The control variables used by the authors are the “number of recipients of Pell grants and subsidized and unsubsidized federal loans, total yearly disbursement amounts for each, and total loans and Pell grants per enrollee.” In my opinion, these variables do not account properly for the relative measures of the financial aid characteristics of the underlying student body. Better measures would include recipients of Pell grants and federal loans as a share of enrollment and the average disbursement amount for each.

Overall, the paper provides important outcome-oriented results that should motivate additional research and become part of the public discussion over the value of higher education; however, their analysis misses a critical component of the public debate – institutional subsidization. They mention several times that for-profit schools receive a significant portion of their funding from federal aid programs, stating that “federal student aid is the lifeblood of for-profit higher education ... account[ing] for 73.7 percent of the revenues ... in 2008-09.” While this is true, the authors seem to (for the most part) neglect the exorbitant institutional subsidies provided to public and not-for-profit institutions in making comparisons between the sectors.†

For instance, the authors compare the average tuition advertised by for-profit schools ($13,000 to $16,000) to that of public four-year schools ($6,000), without mentioning that, per the National Center for Education Statistics, public four-year schools received nearly $8,400 per student in combined federal, state, and local appropriations and nonoperating grants in 2008-09. Add these subsidies to public school tuition, and the two sectors charge nearly identical tuition. The subsidies accounted for 28.4 percent of public four-year revenues in 2008-09. Throw in government operating grants and contracts, and the share of subsidized revenue jumps to 52.7 percent without accounting for subsidized student loans, not to mention the fact that public universities receive implicit subsidies from untaxed business activities, investment returns and philanthropic gifts. In their 2011 paper, “Cheap for Whom? How Much Higher Education Costs Taxpayers,” Mark Schneider and Jorge Klor de Alva estimate that public and not-for-profit schools cost taxpayers between $8,000 and $108,000 per Bachelor’s degree produced, while for-profit schools net a $6,100 benefit per degree, indicating that the societal cost of education is much higher at not-for-profit and public schools than at for-profit ones.

So, it stands that the public purse is also the lifeblood of the public and not-for-profit college sectors. While all schools must compete to attract students in order to obtain the revenues that follow them via government student aid, the playing field is not level. The public and not-for-profit sectors have a distinct advantage over the for-profit sector in currying political favor and economic rent seeking. To make higher education more affordable, we need to level the playing field, and that involves moving away from competition based on political clout and toward competition based on value. My fear is that we may be moving in the opposite direction and that some in the for-profit community may prefer this approach.="

† The authors do mention once that “public sector institutions receive direct taxpayer support largely from state government appropriations that serve to lower tuition and fees. Taxpayer costs are actually lower to finance education in for-profits to the extent their federal student loans get repaid.” They contest this by making the unfounded argument that the rationale for subsidizing public education is warranted since there are potentially substantial spillovers from research and liberal arts education that may improve society, but ignore any such spillover effects that may accrue from students gaining job skills via career education.

Daniel L. Bennett is a Ph.D. student in economics at Florida State University and a Research Fellow at The Center for College Affordability and Productivity. He may be reached by email at dbennett2@fsu.edu.
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Technological integrity in executive search

By John Assunto, President, The Hudson Group
world of executive search has certainly been evolving. However, one thing has been constant since I took the leap from my position as an academic executive to open a division at the firm of which I am now CEO – integrity in the industry. When I started the work, my integrity was immediately put to the test, so I looked to two people in my life to inspire that integrity: one real and the other fictional. First, my father. He spent his entire career as an executive in the trucking industry and the people that worked for him, as well as his clients, loved him. He was a man that everyone respected, and I know he was challenged almost daily with those that wanted to compromise his integrity. The other is a character from one of my favorite movies, “Wall Street,” in which Martin Sheen played a mechanic/union representative that had unbreakable strength of character. Even when greed was all around him, he preserved his passion and pride – virtues that helped make the film memorable.

I’ve seen integrity falter in clients, candidates, competitors and even some of my own former staff members who let greed get the best of them. Technological integrity – a buzzword these days – is becoming more and more of an issue when seeking top talent. As a search consultant, it is unfortunate that we occasionally see resumes go beyond exaggeration to outright lies. Length of employment, job titles, responsibilities and even companies that do not exist are areas that raise red flags. The virtual profile is often much worse.

With the growth of social networking and the popularity of websites such as LinkedIn, the lack of technological integrity is, unfortunately, starting to become a bit of an epidemic. My staff and I have noticed that the virtual resume often does not match the actual resume. This is not only the case with executives seeking employment, when it is part of our responsibility to bring inconsistencies to the attention of candidates, but also with vendors that serve the industry and plagiarize their profiles to have them appear more experienced in our industry. I found it appalling to come across one vendor who claimed to be the president and CEO of a company four years before it even existed!

The technology that LinkedIn offers should, in theory, display one’s professional integrity in a snapshot, though the end user must still do the legwork to conduct reference checks and obtain clear referrals. In the field of executive search, LinkedIn-related technology has spurred the creation of many home-based search firms. These new firms engage in all manner of shortcuts. For instance, they send mass email messages to user groups and potential contacts
to ask for hard copies of resumes which will be submitted en masse (often without the knowledge of the person that forwards a resume). What I find most appalling is when these firms copy and paste the content of a LinkedIn profile to a Microsoft Word document or PDF file with a heading that reads “Please contact ABC Search Firm for an interview.”

In the executive search industry, this mass data dump approach became common years ago with www.Monster.com, and now it’s taking place again on a different playing field. Unfortunately, some companies would rather try what is known as the “shotgun” process instead of partnering with a firm. In a tight-knit industry, imagine your resume floating over to a competing company and ending up in the hands of a hiring manager – perhaps one that knows your boss!

So, what can be done? We encourage hiring authorities to ask relevant questions about a firm that is going to be representing your company. Ask for a reference from a former employer and not just a former client. Did the LinkedIn profile match what the vendor noted? In other words, make sure that the candidate employed technological integrity.

With the growth of social networking and the popularity of websites such as LinkedIn, the lack of technological integrity is, unfortunately, starting to become a bit of an epidemic. My staff and I have noticed that the virtual resume often does not match the actual resume.
**Question the search firm:**

- Does the firm receive a large number of unqualified applicants and others that are just barely qualified? Do they spend their valuable time reviewing resumes that don’t impress?

- How did the firm get into the search consulting business? More specifically, how did they manage to get into the proprietary education industry?

- Does their LinkedIn profile display a recent move to the search business and talent acquisition consulting after working as a CEO for some other company? Chances are, their start-up process consists of putting up ads on LinkedIn and emailing their network. After those connections are exhausted, the talent pool tends to diminish.

- Who is the team lead? What is his or her expertise in education?

- What exactly is the firm’s process? Are they running user groups and using the shotgun approach to find talent? Be careful, your inbox may be barraged by candidates with no contact information.

- If you are a candidate, what is the privacy policy on your resume? Insist in writing that it is not forwarded to anyone without your permission.

I’ve had some candid conversations about LinkedIn recently and, I admit, I like the potential I see. Subsequently, our firm does use the site. Having worked in the education industry for 24 years, I implore those that work directly in education and those that serve the industry to take the time to get their facts straight – whether online or on paper – as you never know when someone will question what you are advertising.

This article was originally published in part as a blog at www.CareerCollegeCentral.com.

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John Assunto is the President and CEO at The Hudson Group. He created the firm’s education division in 2003 after a distinguished career as an administrator in both proprietary and traditional higher education. He can be reached at johna@hudsongrp.com.
Our exclusive interview with APSCU’s fifth President, Steve Gunderson, explores his motivations and goals for the sector

By Jenni Valentino, Editor
The applicability of Steve Gunderson’s favorite African proverb, quoted in a Feb. 6 audio conference introduction to the Association for Private Sector Colleges and Universities (APSCU) members, says so much about the difficulties and objectives of the sector and Gunderson’s understanding of the task before him: “To go quickly, go alone. To go far, go together.”

At this stage, Gunderson seems to be exactly the bridge builder that APSCU needs. He radiates charisma, trustworthiness and passion, and the decision to have him lead the sector wasn’t taken lightly.

“Access and opportunity! You’ll hear those words from me a thousand times. I hope it becomes the clarion call of this sector – and even this nation. I can assure you that it will define and guide almost everything I do here in service to our members, to the sector and, most importantly, to the students we serve.”

– APSCU President Steve Gunderson

The monumental decision to appoint APSCU’s fifth President came after the back half of 2011 was spent seeking a replacement for former President Harris Miller, who left his position in June of last year. The Association and its members were united on the need to bring unity, transparency and a sense of community to the position, but from which direction? Rumored candidates included former sector executives, military officers and figureheads from all facets of government. Still, the Association kept their search activity close to the chest. The individual chosen to represent APSCU, and by proxy, the sector, had the potential to completely alter the reputation and value of the career college sector for years to come.

APSCU found their leader at last in former Congressman Steve Gunderson, a moderate Republican from Wisconsin whose resume is as perfectly suited for the industry as anyone could hope. Gunderson served in the U.S. Congress from 1981-1997 after serving three terms in the Wisconsin State Legislature, and he was a recognized leader on education and employment policy, as well as agriculture, healthcare and human rights issues. Since leaving his elected office in 1997, Gunderson has worked as a management consultant and, until September 2011, served as President of the Council on Foundations. He is a published author and was appointed to the Commission on White House Fellows by President Obama in 2010.

Gunderson’s past higher education advocacy may seem to slant toward traditional higher education: he was previously a finalist for the presidency of the University of Wisconsin system; a consultant for the American Council on Education; and a speaker for college groups, including the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. However, he is no stranger to the for-profit sector.

“I have experience at one of our career colleges. It was a very good experience for me,” said Gunderson in the Feb. 6 audio conference. “I could spend the next hour just telling you what it’s like to sit in a professional baseball stadium and practice broadcasting a baseball game – or a hockey game – because that was the type of real-life experience that I got at Brown School of Broadcasting. It’s something that I cherish very much.”

Gunderson began his reign at APSCU on Feb. 1, 2012, to the delight of the sector, which looks to APSCU as a whole to be proactive in our efforts to be valued and respected by Congress, the media and the public.

"Under Congressman Gunderson’s leadership, we will continue to highlight to Congress, members of the media and the American people the critical contribution our schools make in higher education and preparing students to succeed in a very competitive 21st-century workforce,” said Arthur Keiser, the Association’s Chairman, in APSCU’s official announcement to its members.

Gunderson’s primary focus for 2012 will be to prepare for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2013, he said in the audio conference. “We very much want to
introduce a comprehensive, positive proposal related to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. We’ll be focused around access issues, opportunity and accountability across the board.”

Q: What initially drew you to the plight of private sector colleges and universities and their students?

A: This was the only association job for which I applied. In so many ways, it reflects a combination of my skills, my passion and my entire career. Representing rural western Wisconsin in the state Legislature and then the U.S. Congress, I confronted the issue of economic job dislocation early and often. Our small family farms were a great way of life, but they were challenged as viable economic units, especially with the unpredicted price of milk. Rural manufacturing was the first to go south – and then east. So, my career in government dealt with the training and retraining of adults throughout my 22 years in elected office. Thus, my passion for postsecondary education and workforce investment has defined all my work.

After leaving the Congress, I was a strategic planning consultant for a Michigan-based firm. During this time, I researched, wrote, spoke and consulted on this issue. I was also the lead author of a book called The Jobs Revolution. In 2005, I was selected to become the President and CEO of the Council on Foundations. In today’s world, with limits – or even reductions – of public resources, I concluded that philanthropy held the opportunity for innovation, creativity and the development of public-private philanthropic partnerships. I still believe we’ll see more and more of these partnerships being developed in future years. There are just not sufficient public dollars to meet the need. And I think everyone, including those in government today, would say that creativity and innovation is not likely to come from government programs and formulas.

Q: In your new role as President, what do you hope to help APSCU accomplish?

A: I’m really passionate about the work of APSCU, especially this sector and our members. Everything we know about our economy and our workforce tells us that the private sector colleges and universities are our best hope to meet the future needs of this nation – dare I say even the global economy.

Every study suggests that we need between 8 and 23 million additional postsecondary-educated workers over the next 15 years. Now, I’ve always been a fan and supporter of the entire higher education system. But the reality is that with state and federal budget cuts, there is simply no chance the public colleges and universities – or even the not-for-profit colleges and universities – can get the resources necessary to expand their delivery systems sufficiently to meet this need. Our only hope is that the private sector colleges and universities can invest the capital to meet this need.
Second, we all recognize that one size of postsecondary education does not fit all. It is becoming more and more clear as time goes on that people need continuing education as adults – often with jobs and families already a part of their existence. The private sector colleges and universities have designed the delivery of their academic programs and the flexibility of their schedules in ways that enable adults to access their programs. Everything we talk about regarding “saving the middle class” and “providing opportunities for upward mobility” rest with the design and delivery of education that we find through this sector.

Access and opportunity! You’ll hear those words from me a thousand times. I hope it becomes the clarion call of this sector – and even this nation. I can assure you that it will define and guide almost everything I do here in service to our members, to the sector and, most importantly, to the students we serve.

“To go quickly, go alone.
To go far, go together.”

– African proverb

Q: What established traditions and efforts do you hope to help the Association continue?

A: For the worst of reasons, this sector has probably come to understand the traditions that must continue. There is no question that some people do not support the concept of the private sector being engaged in the design and delivery of higher education. (Note: We have had that same debate in K-12 education over the past three decades.) Thus, some policy makers literally seek to put this sector out of business. Recognizing this threat, the Association and its members have come to understand the importance of telling our story: to our students, to our communities, and to policy makers at the state and federal levels. We must not only continue this tradition – we must expand it.

I have a sister. (OK, I have lots of brothers and sisters!) She is one year older than I am. She runs a small title company back home in rural Wisconsin. I don’t know of anyone who wanted me to get this job more than she did. She kept saying, “I so hope you get this job, because these are the schools that design programs for people like me.” Well, I’m happy to report she has already applied to one of our schools to take a business management course online. She has an Associate degree, and she wants to complete her studies for a B.A. degree. In this way, she can both improve her skills and send a message to her children that adults must keep learning in today’s world of work.

That’s the good news. My one concern – and I’ve shared it with the board and the search committee during the interview process – is that we must come to speak with one voice. I have said, jokingly, that to understand the Congress, you must understand ADD (attention deficit disorder). Now, I can say that because I served in Congress for 16 years. I loved my time there and I’m one who still reveres our democracy. But, the point of the humor is that members of Congress, and all engaged in policy making at the state and federal levels, are so busy confronting so many different issues and challenges. We must find ways to communicate our message in order to enhance their ability to understand and hear us. One of the first and most important ways to do this is to speak with one voice. Let’s work out the issues and concerns among us, and then let’s speak with a loud, unified and positive voice.

Q: What is your advice for APSCU members and sector supporters during this trying time?

A: That’s actually pretty easy. By now, you know I’m from Wisconsin. You’ll quickly discover that my love for my Wisconsin Badgers and our Green Bay Packers runs very deep. It’s part of who we are. But Vince Lombardi taught me something that is as important in politics and policy as it is in football: The best defense is a good offense. This sector has been on the defense for too long – and simply because we allowed our detractors to set the agenda. We must develop a positive, proactive agenda. We must tell
our story. Others will find the exception and tell the isolated incidents that are problematic. We must be positive. My goal for this sector, led by APSCU, is to develop a comprehensive agenda for the 2013 Higher Education Act Reauthorization. Let’s go to Capitol Hill and to the administration with our agenda. And let’s build it around access and opportunity. How can others argue against that?

**Q: What do you see as the biggest threat against the sector in 2012?**

**A:** The biggest threat to our sector is over regulation. I’m just amazed at how much time, money and effort is being invested to deal with the regulation of our sector at the federal and state levels. We are preparing workers for employment in a global economy. We’re increasingly providing educational opportunities to students across the world. and yet, we’re consumed with all of these regulations and the potential for more regulations – even conflicting regulations among different states and the federal government.

We all need to figure this out. Hopefully, we can do so in a positive way with our policy makers. But, between state licensure, accreditation and eligibility for Title IV, one may ask, “How many more regulations do we need?” And how can we create both the right regulations by the public sector and right standards of principle and practice within our own schools and our own work that enable us to focus on the important work of delivering access to, and the opportunity for, postsecondary education?

Brian Moran, who served as Interim President while APSCU was searching for a new candidate, will remain APSCU’s Executive Vice President of Government Relations and General Counsel and help ease President Gunderson into his new position.

It’s no secret that our industry still faces numerous challenges in political, legal and media scrutiny; slowing enrollments; and allegations about the recruitment and mistreatment of veterans. However, Gunderson seems ready to be called to task. In return, he calls for your “engagement, participation, feedback and counsel.” As he said on Feb. 6, “I need your active partnership with us as we try to move forward together.” 😊

**Jenni Valentino is a 2006 graduate of the University of Kansas. She began her career as a freelance journalist for Career College Central and a copywriter in the career college industry. Her interest and involvement in the sector led to the Editor position at Career College Central. Jenni can be reached at jenniferv@careercollegecentral.com.**
Harrison College supports students through a new online learning platform

By Melissa Cowan, Staff Writer

For the past nine years, the number of students enrolled in online classes has continually increased. In 2010, more than 6 million students took at least one course online – a 10 percent increase from 2009.

But aside from growth in number of students, the way online students have learned and interacted seems to have stayed consistent.

“The popularity of online learning has grown immensely in a relatively short period of time, yet few institutions are doing anything to improve the way online learning is delivered,” said Mark Apple, Director of Public Relations at Harrison College. “The online student has little connection to the college or university, limited interaction with staff and faculty, and even less interaction with fellow students.”

Harrison College, formerly Indiana Business College, is a private institution with roughly 6,000 students enrolled at their 12 campuses across Indiana and Ohio and online. Of those students, approximately 1,800 take all of their classes online, and an additional 2,000 students take at least one course online. But while 87 percent of on-campus students return to Harrison for the next quarter, only 80 percent of online students return.
Because of this, Harrison College is expanding their efforts to support their online students with a new learning platform called KnowU, which Apple says “will improve retention rates for online students. Improved retention rates will lead to improved graduation rates.”

KnowU strives to create an interactive, virtual campus that allows students to connect with one another in a social network-type setting that includes the ability to import their personal Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

“KnowU was developed to give online students a sense of place, a sense of community, unprecedented access to staff and faculty, and resources that will dramatically improve educational outcomes,” said Apple.

According to Apple, Harrison College has spent more than $1.5 million over the past two years developing KnowU. It was launched Jan. 3, 2012, to a pilot group of 164 students.
“The immediate feedback has been outstanding,” said Apple. “The students are especially excited about the opportunity to interact with one another in a Facebook-style setting. They are meeting new people, collaborating and developing relationships in a way that online students have never been able to do previously.”

In addition to the social aspect of KnowU, there are other unique benefits of the new platform. KnowU uses analytical engines to recommend learning resources for students based on their personal preferences. “For example, if a student prefers to receive information from videos or charts and graphs, KnowU recognizes that and recommends resources accordingly,” said Apple. “To my knowledge, no other college or university is doing anything like that. As importantly, our online students have unprecedented access to support from the college. Students can chat live with student affairs specialists, contact them via email or give them a call — all within the KnowU environment. We’ve truly integrated the college campus experience into an online environment.”
Students also have access to information on hot topics such as financial aid, tutoring and future careers, and with KnowU, students can track their academic progress via the Path to Success function to make sure they are on their way to fulfilling their educational goals.

Harrison College understands that non-traditional students have different needs than traditional students when it comes to obtaining their education.

“The traditional residential university oriented toward 18- to 22-year-olds and clocked credit hours often cannot satisfy the needs of, say, a military veteran with a family and day job who wants to beef up his or her technical skill set via online educational courses that can be accessed anywhere, anytime,” stated Apple.

With KnowU, online students can study when and where it’s convenient for them while still feeling a connection to the college. They can visit the quad, the classroom and the library – all simulated on the screen. “They know their fellow online classmates’ names, faces and backgrounds,” said Apple. “Working mothers can connect with other working mothers. Military service members can connect with one another. Indianapolis Colts fans can talk smack with New England Patriots fans. We’ve facilitated community building for online students.”

As a new project, Harrison College will keep monitoring trends, feedback and online student needs, and they will rework and improve KnowU as needed.

“In reality, it will always be a work in progress. We will continually use feedback from students and faculty to improve the KnowU experience.”

Harrison College hopes to keep gradually adding students to the KnowU format, 200 students every week, until all online students have access by this spring.

If you would like more information about Harrison College and KnowU, please visit www.KnowU.Harrison.edu or check out their YouTube channel, www.YouTube.com/HarrisonColl.


Melissa Cowan graduated from the University of Missouri – Kansas City in 2010 with a degree in Journalism and Mass Communications. She is currently a Communications Specialist at PlattForm Advertising. Melissa can be reached at melissa.cowan@plattformad.com.

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How a student’s marketability correlates with career colleges

By Dr. Pete Savo, Vice President of College and University Outreach, Essential Knowledge
Today, higher education choices are numerous. What is important to understand is that education is power, regardless of where you earn it. Some higher education institutions provide greater opportunities to transform an education into jobs that pay well. As a student, it becomes equally important to bridge the gap between education and the job market by making yourself marketable. “Hard Times – College Majors, Unemployment and Earnings: Not All College Degrees are Created Equal,” a 2012 study published at Georgetown University, concluded that unemployment for students with a college or university degree is a tolerable 8.9 percent per today’s standards. It’s a disastrous 22.9 percent for job searchers with only a high school diploma and an inconceivable 31.5 percent for high school dropouts according to the Georgetown study. Marketability correlates to higher education since those with education have significantly greater employment opportunities. Marketability is more than a fancy word; it is a place in time that waits for no one. Marketability is a lifestyle necessity. The simple message is: Plan higher education wisely and become employed!

The economic experts agree that the recessionary dive our economy experienced in 2008, 2009 and 2010 is now proving wearisome. A recovery is not near, nor will the economic downturn be over soon. As George Pyle noted in his 2009 article in The Buffalo News, most people have come to terms with the reality that this economy has directly affected their ability to spend money on higher education. Perhaps this is a blessing in disguise. These economic and social changes are encouraging people to spend their education dollars wisely with a focus on a more strategic higher education commitment resulting in employment. The American people's survival skills began in our colonial days. We are a force to reckon with when it involves our freedom, our families, our religion and our education. Education is a power that affects every aspect of our American heritage.

The career college industry is ready to create jobs in America because career colleges provide educational programs in hundreds of occupational fields. In my opinion, the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities (APSCU) provides the best means for defining career colleges. A career college is simply a postsecondary institution that provides professional and technical career-specific educational programs. These higher education programs range from doctoral, Master’s and Bachelor’s degrees to Associate degrees, certificates and diplomas. A focused education designed to fill a niche in the service and product-delivering domains begins with having no education boundaries at all. Career colleges are businesses that can positively affect the job creation market in two areas: higher education jobs and jobs that are not limited to those with a formal education, but instead require experience.

Erin Snelgrove’s 2010 article published in the Yakima Herald-Republic further emphasized that college and university student career service centers are successful in helping students find jobs by tapping the vital alumni strategic group. This is important because people continually encounter life changes that overlap with their work and social communities. Our society tends to work to live, so having an alumni resource becomes a common sense strategy that career colleges can easily adapt and promote to their students. According to Snelgrove, the fields that have best capitalized on the alumni job strategies are healthcare, computer technology and business.

Investment Weekly News reported in 2011 that career colleges have a proven record of preparing students for careers. Career colleges graduate 58 percent of their students. Career colleges develop programs that prepare and then place students in 17 of the 20 fastest-growing fields in America. Another interesting statistic
from the *Investment Weekly News* article is that career college graduates represent 42 percent of health degrees and certificates conferred at two-year and less-than-two-year institutions. Comparing higher education to employment opportunities, the “Hard Times” report found that unemployment rates for graduates in healthcare and education are 5.4 percent compared to 9.4 percent for students who majored in liberal arts. This is an indicator that career colleges have become a formidable strategy to get a job. Perhaps career college graduates will continue to advance their academic career later in life, but the first focus is getting a job.

Our American society has demonstrated for more than 200 years that adaptable survival skills result in duplicable, successful results. Clearly, our economy is far from recovered; however, *Investment Weekly News* reports that career colleges’ strategic education initiatives will continue to prepare students for the workforce without massing enormous debt. Education should be a lifetime of benefits – not a lifetime of paying for these benefits.

This article is not intended to rule out liberal arts education’s contributions to promoting applied education. William Lucius Storrs, a professor at Yale University in the mid-1800s, was quoted in the 1937 *Journal of Higher Education* on this very topic. He observed many years prior to publication that liberal arts and fundamental career training are not incompatible. The author goes on to examine the correlation of what it takes to adequately prepare a student for graduate work, apprenticeship or entrance into a chosen field of employment. The 1937 journal supports the idea that higher education should result in practical workforce employment, a notion that has not wavered since the early-American education industry acknowledged the importance. Marketability was in play in 1937 – hardly different than it is today. The only difference is that with today’s technology, time and boundary limits no longer exist.

Having an alumni connection is not enough for employment in today’s competitive market as students must understand who they are and how they can contribute to society in order to increase marketability. An important tool widely used in all industries is the art of self-assessment. In her 2006 *Black Collegian* article, “Career Success Starts With Self-Assessment,” Delores Dean reports that a person performs a self-assessment to better understand what is important to them and this helps a person determine how they will respond to work, life and education advancement. Students should understand their strengths and focus on them. They need to know what they want from life and remember the human factor variables – life’s desires are subject to change without notice. Studies like the 2012, “Teaching Students Self-Assessment and Task-Selection Skills with Video-Based Modeling Examples,” published in *Learning and Instruction* suggest that students have a difficult time with accurate self-assessment. The simple solution is to keep an open mind and to self-assess often. Asking a friend or someone who will be honest, perhaps even too honest, is a good place for students to start. Self-assessment is an inexpensive tool for helping students maximize their chances of satisfaction and achievement before they invest in an education or take a job they do not enjoy. After a successful self-assessment, marketability becomes the art of focusing your talents to obtain the necessary education and desired job. Very few people do not have to work for a living. Since people have to go to work, the right education ensures they have a lifetime of workplace enjoyment.

At no time in American history has student education been more primed for employment success then the higher education technology advances of the 21st century. Regardless if a student studies at a career college or a liberal arts institution, the walls and time restrictions are no longer in place. Higher education has embraced online education, and we are all amazed and better off for it. One cannot help but wonder if educators such as William Lucius Storrs could have envisioned the cultural explosion from institutional higher education evolving so spectacularly. The lesson here is to keep our minds open to the next institutional higher education shift that, in my opinion, is occurring today in career colleges – a shift focused on an uninterrupted entrance into a chosen field of work and obtaining a good paying job.

In closing, students today are bridging the gap between education and getting a job. This journey results in marketability. Marketability has become the natural countermeasure against the recessionary dive our economy experienced. This countermeasure delivers endless opportunities to test the true American survival skills in all of us. Economic and social changes are encouraging people to spend their education dollars wisely. Career colleges are developing and delivering education programs that satisfy the need for occupational education. Occupational education’s natural by-product is an education where people can fill immediate workforce needs. Hence, marketability becomes the norm, not the exception.

Career colleges have a direct correlation to preparing a student entrance into a chosen field of work. Both career colleges and liberal arts institutions with their alumni strategic groups are opening doors and establishing their strong presence in the workforce. The final task is for students to self-assess and focus all of their energy on their strengths. Their strengths have the power to take them to exciting arenas of academic success that contribute to enhancing their marketability. Today, technology and the online education communities are speeding up marketability! The question is this: Are your students taking the steps to increase their marketability? 😊

Dr. Pete Savo is the Vice President of College and University Outreach at Essential Knowledge, an education company with more than 30 years of experience serving members of the military community nationwide. Dr. Savo, a respected lecturer and published author, spent 18 years with Sikorsky Aircraft and six years as a direct business operations and lean manufacturing consultant for the U.S. Air Force Small Business Manufacturing Technical Assistance Production Program (MTAPP), Air Force Outreach Program Office and the Department of Defense (DOD) supply chain missions. He can be reached at psavo@essentialknowledge.com.
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Adding Twitter to your social media strategy is no longer an option; it’s a necessary part of a well-rounded social strategy. Working in tandem with Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and your blog, Twitter can drive traffic to any source you wish once you establish a following and consistent interaction. By seeking out your shareholders, competitors, vendors, partners and, most importantly, your students, you can build your school’s presence. This allows you to not only share pertinent information, but also provide fast and effective service while monitoring your brand mentions. Twitter’s fast pace and succinct method of communicating your key message can easily improve your school’s relationship with everyone who is discussing or will discuss your school on Twitter today and in the future.

**People are talking about you**

You know it’s happening. People are saying things about your school. Graduating students are tweeting messages of their success to all of their followers. Your instructors might be subtly motivating potential students to find out more about enrolling for an upcoming start. There might be someone who is considering dropping out and they are sharing their frustration with their followers. Whatever the situation may be, people are likely discussing your brand, and Twitter gives you the opportunity to join in the discussion quickly and efficiently. You can provide great service, save that student from dropping out and address that perception about a local campus – all in 140 characters or fewer. Whether it’s evangelizing or providing solutions, Twitter is an efficient way to make it happen.
Enhance the service you provide to shareholders and students

When you are consistently reading and replying to tweets and sharing great content, your perceived level of service will be overwhelmingly positive. No different from Facebook or your blog, when people send a message to your school’s attention, a prompt reply will go far in the eyes of your followers. Your ability to work within the organization to quickly resolve issues across all departments will also encourage those who follow and engage your school. On the flip side of that coin is the damage which is done when followers are ignored or a cry for help goes unanswered. Negative backlash comes a lot quicker and can destroy months of good work. Everyone has a preferred method of contact, and for some people Twitter will be the way they choose to reach out to your school. Don’t miss out on an opportunity to create a fan or save a student.

Twitter’s fast pace and succinct method of communicating your key message can easily improve your school’s relationship with everyone who is discussing or will discuss your school on Twitter today and in the future.

Develop strong and long-lasting relationships

Never before has it been so easy to build lasting relationships. Social media users are vocal individuals; they will sing your praises or tarnish your image based on how you interact with them. The key to keeping the peace among your followers is to provide them interesting content and to respond to their praises or problems as fast as possible. Keep in mind that social media doesn’t sleep. People are talking about your school at all hours of the day and night. Building strong relationships with fans and followers means being available when they are ready to talk. If you don’t have someone who is consistently monitoring Twitter, be sure they are checking it at regular intervals. This is a key to building a strong following on Twitter.

Build upon your SEO efforts

Similarly to every social medium and online discussion, when you share great content and encourage other people to share it or comment on it, you enhance your search engine optimization (SEO) efforts. This is one SEO solution which does not require an individual with years of search engine knowledge and experience. Getting people to retweet your links, photos, videos or other commentary can help drive traffic to your Facebook page, YouTube page, blog or even your website. Making sure you share news people can use and other content that is thought provoking, funny or beneficial will catapult you to the top of someone’s list. Once you set the expectation that the content you share is valuable, people will not only look forward to your updates, but they will also recommend you to others.

With an effective Twitter strategy that is closely linked to Facebook, your blog, YouTube or LinkedIn, social media success is well within your reach. It’s important to set clear expectations for staff members who are monitoring social media. How they respond, what they share and how they tie it all together will definitely help evaluate performance and measure the key performance indicators. Be sure not to fall into the trap of basing success on the number of followers your school has. A successful Twitter strategy should center on the quality of engagements and the number of clicks your followers apply to your content.

The time for tweeting is now. Everyone else is doing it; why aren’t you? 🐦

Kris Saim has been helping clients create effective social media strategies since the early days of MySpace and Facebook. In addition to his education from the University of Kansas, he has attended multiple social-media-specific continuing education courses and has been certified in social media from WOMMA (Word of Mouth Marketing Association) and Social Media Examiner. As an Account Supervisor in PlattForm’s Client Services department, Kris drives the strategic thinking on his accounts. Connect with him on LinkedIn by searching “Kris Saim” or find him on Twitter: @KSaim.
ABLE TO BENEFIT, UNABLE TO QUALIFY

Denny Rehberg and John Kline weigh in on the changes to Pell Grant eligibility

By Jenni Valentino, Editor

Back in 2009, the most recent wave of scrutiny toward the career college sector was still on the upswing. The current gainful employment regulations were in the negotiated rulemaking stage, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) sent two undercover auditors to pose as potential students at a campus in the Washington, D.C. area. The GAO used the auditors’ findings in a report about the sector, which included the following paragraph regarding the ability to benefit (ATB) exam process:

"Without better oversight of the ATB testing process to ensure more frequent identification of improper testing and stronger processes for handling and reporting improper testing, both the integrity of the testing process and the qualifications of students who receive federal funding cannot be assured. In addition, without stronger controls, such as clear guidance from the Department of Education banning the use of high school diploma mills to obtain federal aid and information on how to identify diploma mills, the government cannot be assured that its student aid funds are only provided to students who have an ability to benefit from higher education."

As the attack on our schools took the form of gainful employment regulations, Senate hearings and media blitzes, the scrutiny of ATB-eligible students took a backseat – until now.

Under a suffering economy and ballooning national debt ceiling, Congress began looking for places to slash budget. One of the places they deemed worthy was within the Department of Education: the
Pell Grant program. As the result of a wide array of factors – increased enrollment, expanded eligibility for recipients and broader availability of grants – Pell Grant costs had tripled. In April 2011, there was an $11 billion funding gap in the Pell Grant program that had to be filled. That gap narrowed to $1 billion after passage of the Budget Control Act, which included additional funds for Pell.

“In recent years, Democrats in Washington expanded the Pell Grant program beyond what taxpayers can afford, putting the program on a path to bankruptcy,” said Congressman John Kline, R-Minn., Chairman of the House of Representatives’ Education and Workforce Committee. “In the last five years alone, Pell Grant program costs have increased from $12.8 billion to an estimated $32 billion in the 2012-2013 school year – an amount almost equal to the entire discretionary budget of all other K-12 and higher education programs run by the Department of Education.”

Originally named the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant, the Pell Grant received its moniker from the late U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., and has helped millions of lower-income students complete their undergraduate degrees. For almost 40 years, Pell Grant eligibility has been determined by annual household income and school cost. The grants usually fluctuate in amount per semester and, though students apply for them through their universities and colleges, the funds are awarded directly to individual students who then decide how the grant money will be spent.
Throughout 2011, the House and the Senate crafted very different proposals for the 2012 funding of the Pell Grant. Senate bill 1599 proposed to appropriate a full $24.3 billion dollars to the program—the amount needed to maintain the maximum grant of $5,550—with no cuts. This proposal would have cost the government $1.3 billion more than in 2011.

The bill released in the House under Representative Denny Rehberg, R-Mont., Majority Leader of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, however, proposed to reduce spending to the program not by reducing the maximum grant but by significantly changing eligibility requirements. This proposal, of course, is much closer to what ended up being made final under the 2012 omnibus.

“By ensuring students are focused on graduating in a timely way, we were able to preserve the maximum grant level at $5,550. That’s very good news for students who rely on Pell. Left unchanged, the Pell Grant program may simply collapse under its own weight. If that happens, everyone loses,” said Representative Rehberg. “I’m certainly sensitive to colleges and universities that permanently built temporary funding increases into their annual budgets, but we simply can’t continue to ask the taxpayer to subsidize tuition at any price, especially when doing so requires us to borrow money that will ultimately have to be paid back by the very students we claim to be helping.”

Students in the lowest income brackets specifically depend on Pell Grants, and while the maintenance of the maximum grant is crucial to their success, the inability to enroll in college without a high school diploma or GED will absolutely affect the most disadvantaged students whose circumstances forced them to leave high school to support themselves or their families.
Rehberg was under close scrutiny regarding the grant program due to comments made in an April 1, 2011, radio interview where he compared Pell Grants to welfare. On record, though, he explained his position more thoroughly.

“It’s precisely because I support Pell Grants that we’ve addressed the real challenge of keeping them around. If we didn’t act, the program was almost certainly going to collapse in the future,” said Rehberg. “In the face of a perfect storm of increasing tuition prices and expanded eligibility, we made common sense changes today to avoid more painful challenges tomorrow.”

Of course, this is not the first time that the program has experienced tweaks. As Pell has in fact been subject to any number of changes each year, but it has always held strong in its mission to provide disadvantaged students with the opportunity of a postsecondary education – provided that the student shows the ability to benefit from the grant. In December, that benefit was taken away from some of the students who need it most.

The final legislation, H.R. 2055, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012, which was voted on in December and passed, is the piece of legislation that includes the final Pell Grant language under Division F, Section 309. Along with other education-related changes, the bill leaves the Department of Education funded at $71.3 billion, which is $153 million below last year’s level and $9.3 billion below the budget request, leading some government officials to refer to the cuts as “common sense reforms.” The changes lower the cost of the Pell Grant program by $3.6 billion in 2012, allowing Congress to fund the program at only $20.7 billion for the fiscal year – down $2.3 billion from 2011.

Under the new legislation, Pell Grants will continue to be awarded at a maximum of $5,550 ($4,860 provided through discretionary appropriations and $690 provided through mandatory funds), which the vast majority of Congress considers a major win. However, the legislative changes affect eligibility by limiting grants per student to a maximum of six years/12 semesters; slightly adjusting the minimum Pell grant; reducing the income level below which a student will automatically receive the maximum Pell grant from $23,000 to $30,000; and requiring a high school diploma, GED or completion of a home-schooling program to receive a Pell Grant. Estimates vary, but about 100,000 to 150,000 of the program’s nearly 10 million recipients are expected to be affected by the new criteria, which go into effect July 1.

Chief among these updates – and certainly most incensing to the mission of the career college section – is the alteration of the eligibility for non-high school graduates.

Students who were not high school graduates, or who had not earned a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, used to be able to establish eligibility to receive Title IV
program assistance through a number of avenues. They could earn approval from their state, complete secondary education in a home school/private school recognized as such by state law, demonstrate six hours of completed coursework toward a higher degree, or demonstrate that they had the ability to benefit from the education or training being offered by passing an approved ability-to-benefit (ATB) test, which measured basic verbal, reading comprehension and math skills.

Under the Fiscal Year 2012 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, however, non-high school graduates can receive Pell Grants only if they have completed secondary education in a home school/private school recognized as such by their state or have passed the GED exam, eliminating the ability-to-benefit test for students with demonstrated capacity to benefit from higher education through testing or coursework.

"It’s precisely because I support Pell Grants that we’ve addressed the real challenge of keeping them around. If we didn’t act, the program was almost certainly going to collapse in the future."


These changes were passed in the House on December 16, 2011, through a 68 percent majority vote of 296-121. Among those who voted to implement the changes was Chairman Kline, who has been a staunch supporter of the career college sector through recent struggles. He was opposed to the gainful employment legislation and sponsored a bill to prohibit funding to implement and enforce the gainful employment rule. So, why did he vote to take away opportunities from ATB students?

First, the scope of H.R. 2055 must be understood. Because the Consolidated Appropriations Act is an omnibus, Pell Grant funding and the Department of Education, in general, are a tiny portion of what the act covers. In a December 23, 2011, statement after signing the bill into law, President Obama said that H.R. 2055 “provides the funding necessary for the smooth operation of our nation’s government.” It does so by appropriating funds for such issues as transferring Guantanamo detainees into the United States, amending the Water Resources Act of 1986, and prohibiting the U.S. Mint from using any federal funds to construct or operate museums without specified Congressional approval. Clearly, the scope of consideration for this funding plan goes well beyond the provisions specified for the Department of Education.

Still Kline stands by the changes made to the Pell program. “In order to keep the Pell Grant program available for low-income students trying to realize the dream of higher education, I supported the meaningful reforms included in the fiscal year 2012 appropriations package,” he said. “By lowering the amount of time a student can use the program from nine years to six years, limiting eligibility to students who have earned a high school diploma or GED, and rolling back some of the more unsustainable program expansions enacted by Congress over the last four years, we are taking steps to strengthen this program for the students who need it most.”

Although the plan will go into effect on July 1, it is retroactive, which has the potential to enormously affect students who have been in school for a while already and will have their funding pulled out from under them. Non-high school graduates who have yet to start school will now need to take the extra step of earning their GED before enrolling in a college or university. Schools that admit students without a high school diploma must make available a GED program in the vicinity of the school and must inform students about the program.
A GED certificate, and thus the eligibility to apply for a Pell Grant, can be earned through a specific, approved high school equivalency test. The GED exam is made up of five tests, each measuring the skills that a high school graduate should have mastered. The tests focus on general academic skills and important concepts, including comprehending reading material and evaluating, analyzing and drawing conclusions, rather than on the ability to recall specific facts in a subject area. The tests range from 25 questions to be answered in 45 minutes to 50 questions in 80 minutes, and they measure writing, social studies, science, reading and math skills.

The cost for GED testing varies by state but averages a $75.00 non refundable fee, which may be a deterrent for some students. Others may be discouraged about having to take additional steps before enrolling in the college of their choice. The GED is available at no cost to military personnel, and a Spanish version of the test is offered at many GED testing centers.

Current high school students have the luxury of awareness and will be able to plan their academic careers around the changes. Students in the lowest income brackets specifically depend on Pell Grants, and while the maintenance of the maximum grant is crucial to their success, the inability to enroll in college without a high school diploma or GED will absolutely affect the most disadvantaged students whose circumstances forced them to leave high school to support themselves or their families.

The real concern is for those who have already left high school without graduating and have yet to enroll, as well as those students who enrolled under the previous, more lenient eligibility guidelines. For them, the retroactive amendments will have a huge impact, as they may have capped out their Pell help already and now have to find other resources to graduate. Because there is no grace period or warning for the retroactive changes, students who already have used close to their six years worth of Pell Grants will be cut off immediately.

“While the impacts for the vast majority of today’s students will be minimal, these changes help ensure that Pell Grants will still be around for their kids in 20 or 30 years,” said Rehberg. “Pell has opened doors for a lot of students, and if we’re smart, keeping them focused on their core purpose, Pell will be around to open doors for decades into the future.”

Jenni Valentino is a 2006 graduate of the University of Kansas. She began her career as a freelance journalist for Career College Central and a copywriter in the career college industry. Her interest and involvement in the sector led to the Editor position at Career College Central. Jenni can be reached at jenniferv@careercollegecentral.com.
Two federal laws protect students with disabilities from discrimination at the postsecondary level.

The first law is found in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (implemented in 1977). As it applies to higher education, the critical portion of Section 504 essentially says that if you are a school that receives any kind of federal funding, you may not discriminate on the basis of disability. If the opportunity is available to one student on your campus, it must be available to all qualified students, regardless of their status as a person with a disability.

The second law is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (amended in 2008). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) expands the protection offered by Section 504 to any entity not already under such obligation. Title II of the ADA says, "If you are funded by a state or local government, you may not discriminate on the basis of disability." Title III of the ADA says, "If you are funded primarily by private sources, you may not discriminate on the basis of disability." Colleges and universities are specifically named as examples of entities covered in both Titles II and III. Public institutions such as community colleges and state universities are covered under Title II. Private institutions, both not-for-profit and proprietary, are covered under Title III of the ADA.

Both Section 504 and the ADA are civil rights statutes. They carry the same wording regarding nondiscrimination as do other federal civil rights laws protecting unique populations (such as those providing protection on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender or age). Neither law requires affirmative action or outreach to students with disabilities, nor do they require the kind of special educational programming mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which assures a free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities in the K-12 system.

Generally, civil rights statutes provide protection from being treated differently. However, for people with disabilities, Section 504 and the ADA actually require different treatment. In higher education, the laws require that students with disabilities receive case-by-case consideration and appropriate accommodations, if necessary, so that they have equal access to the opportunities available to nondisabled students – from admissions to graduation.

Career colleges and universities have always strived to provide equal opportunity to all students. To help us better serve students with disabilities and ensure that we are in compliance with the applicable laws, we must provide adequate training for all of our employees on the legal mandates regarding equal access for students with disabilities.

An online course, Students with Disabilities: Legal Obligations and Opportunities, is now available on all training sites powered by MaxKnowledge. Authored and facilitated by Dr. Jane Jarrow, a recognized authority in disability compliance in higher education, the course provides a practical framework to help institutional personnel know what to say and do in the context of their defined role and interactions with students with disabilities. Topics include the civil rights nature of applicable federal law, definitional issues, the impact of disability on traditional education activities and pursuits, reasonable accommodations, and the unique responsibilities of faculty, staff and administrators as prescribed by their positions.

Dr. Amir Moghadam is Founder and CEO of MaxKnowledge, the leading training company for the career college sector of higher education. Moghadam has 20 years of experience in career education, serving in many capacities including Professor, Director of Education, Academic Dean, Director of Student Affairs, Campus Director, College President/Owner and International Training Consultant. He earned his Ph.D. in Engineering from the University of Cambridge, and his accomplishments have been recognized in Who's Who in American Education and Who's Who in the World. Moghadam can be reached at amirm@maxknowledge.com.
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A bill making its way through Congress right now lowers the limit proprietary schools can receive in federal funding and expands the definition of Title IV funds. It’s no surprise that the bill, dubbed the POST Act (Protecting Our Students and Taxpayers), is cosponsored by Senators Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, and Dick Durbin, D-Ill. The pair have pledged scrutiny and review of the for-profit sector to their constituents, resulting in legislation that many in the industry see as anti-sector.

Senate Bill 3032 replaces the 90/10 rule (which requires for-profit school schools to acquire at least 10 percent of their revenue from sources other than Title IV to remain eligible for Title IV funding) with 85/15, erasing gains made in a 1998 revision of the Higher Education Act.

At the root of the latest move is the pivotal process of reeducating U.S. veterans in a down economy. For-profit schools serve a higher percentage of veterans and active duty military (6.1 percent of undergraduates) than either public colleges (3.9 percent) or private non-profits (4.2 percent). Right now, money from the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Department of Defense tuition assistance programs doesn’t count as federal funding – and that, according to the senators, has made military members recruiting targets for aggressive and unscrupulous schools.

“This is an outrageous loophole that has led to veterans and service members being heavily recruited for the amount of additional federal money they can bring in to the company. It’s time the federal government started to better oversee and regulate these heavily subsidized for-profit schools,” said Durbin.

The POST Act also increases penalties for noncompliance to the proposed 85/15 rule. Eligibility for federal student aid programs is forfeited after just one year of noncompliance instead of two. Durbin announced the legislation during a January round table in Chicago where career college insiders were quick to defend themselves and the veterans who will lose options with the change.

“Career colleges help veterans continue their education and find jobs in growing numbers. Punishing our veterans and prohibiting them from getting the education they need is counterproductive,” said Penny Lee, Managing Director of the Coalition for Educational Success, a member-funded advocacy group for career colleges. “For
schools that do not conform to the highest standards, let us work on ensuring they do rather than taking punitive measures that deny veterans the opportunity to transition into the workforce.”

Durbin made his point with a small parade of veterans who were “done wrong” by the industry. There is little doubt that proprietary schools could put up equal representation of successful veteran stories, but this was Durbin’s show. Once again, “good” for-profit schools find themselves grouped and regulated according to the actions of the “bad” and separated from the public universities.

“When the legislation we are introducing today is one of many important steps we will take in the coming months toward holding for-profit colleges accountable to the taxpayers who invest $30 billion in their institutions annually,” said Harkin. “It will close a loophole that has made veterans and active duty military major targets of deceptive marketing and aggressive recruitment, rather than students treated with the respect their service deserves.”

The bill has been sent to committee. Two other House bills calling for an 85/15 rule are also in committee.

“This rule does not help expand educational opportunities for any student. In fact, it effectively and inexplicably limits access for the poorest students,” said Lee. “We would encourage all policy makers to work together to study the impact of the proposed legislative solutions prior to proceeding with legislation that very well might prevent students from accessing higher education and job training.”

Lee said the coalition will continue to work with Durbin’s office to reach those goals.

“Career colleges help veterans continue their education and find jobs in growing numbers. Punishing our veterans and prohibiting them from getting the education they need is counterproductive.”

— Penny Lee, Managing Director of the Coalition for Educational Success

“As any higher education expert understands, concerns about student outcomes and student loans exist for every student in higher education,” said Lee after the round table. “In fact, today’s round table could be replicated using testimony from students at schools from other sectors of higher education, including state colleges and universities, private non-profit colleges, and community colleges.”

Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Harold Jensen, Manager of Military Operations at Education Corporation of America, added, “Career colleges offer veterans extraordinary flexibility. Given the demographics of this generation of veterans, many of whom have families to support, career colleges offer students flexible course schedules that enable them to work while going to school. Their rolling admissions policies mean that veterans, who are often older than traditional colleges students and eager to move into their careers, can take classes year-round. This means they can complete their degree and quickly start a new career.”

That is not how Durbin and Harkin see it. What will jump out to for-profit educators is Durbin’s adversarial tone and combative word choices. A recent press release out of his office refers to legal accounting methods utilized by for-profit schools as “tricks,” and veteran benefits that pay for tuition are dubbed “taxpayer investments” that he infers may not be protected when they are spent on career colleges. It is not the language one would expect from a lawmaker working with the industry. When he spoke of the bill, Harkin also implied that the industry does not respect veterans and promised more legislation to come.

Kelly Duffy is a seven-time Emmy Award-winning investigative reporter, producer and news manager. Contact Kelly at kellyd@careercollegecentral.com.
no surprise that an executive in the education field would write a book addressing problems that plague the American higher education system. But apart from simply recognizing current issues, Kaplan University’s CEO Andrew Rosen offers readers a fresh perspective in Change.edu: Rebooting for the New Talent Economy on how the goals of higher education institutes should be adjusted in the United States.

His position in this thought-provoking read claims the so-called “arms race” between colleges and universities for higher rankings does not help but instead hinders students’ quests for a quality education. Rather than taking sides in the debate on what constitutes a proper postsecondary education, Rosen addresses arguments from both traditional higher education and for-profit parties in the hopes of starting conversations for change.

Rosen offers a snapshot of the bigger picture concerning how colleges and universities can begin to better allocate resources to benefit students. Rather than falling victim to what he calls “Harvard envy,” decision makers at various higher education institutions should measure a school’s success on student learning outcomes, responsiveness to student needs and the resources provided to students to grant them a valuable education.

As a product of a traditional four-year university himself, Rosen is surprisingly critical of the ways these traditional schools measure their rank against competing universities. Rosen recognizes that all institutions are ultimately judged on their reputations, but he brings up a valid point: First and foremost, college needs to serve students with an education and a path for success postgraduation.
As the CEO of a university in the private sector, Rosen articulates his opinions from a perspective that recognizes people’s skepticism of for-profit schools, yet he combats common misperceptions with facts and examples to support his view that all schools need to have student success as the top priority.

People are apprehensive of education practices that aren’t the same as their own, prompting Rosen to explain to graduates of traditional schools how for-profit institutions aren’t the bad guys in education, but instead are a crucial ally in increasing American graduation rates and helping more students earn a degree.

“Private sector colleges may not have four hundred years of history behind them; they don’t have billions of dollars in endowments; and they don’t sing Latin hymns … but we have one major advantage: We’re not afraid of change,” says Rosen.

This idea of positive change that Rosen addresses is relevant to all postsecondary institutions. He notes that those working in the field of education have the goal of delivering valuable education to students at the core of their mission, and yet, so many colleges and universities fall victim to one-upping each other with bigger football stadiums, larger cafeteria food selections and newer dorms.

The unrealistic promises that are made to students by several traditional education institutes ultimately hurts schools, as students drop out and the schools lose tuition money. Schools are more profitable when student retention is high, and at a time when funding crises are dominating concerns for many institutions, being cost-efficient is a way to avoid squandering resources.

Rosen proposes schools follow the “learning playbook” to avoid unnecessary and extravagant expenses – a system that incentivizes better practices at universities, including putting more emphasis on learning outcomes, lower costs, access and innovative strategies to help students reach greater success.

The pressures for-profit schools face to recruit and retain students without the fancy facade of a campus quad or a high-ranked basketball team motivates these schools to provide students with support and resources to help them graduate.

Instead of funders dropping large sums of cash to make the school more attractive, private sector colleges rely on earning reputations of preparing students for the workforce and prioritizing actual learning over perceived amenities. Frills have little if no weight in a student’s success after graduation, and schools that funnel more funds into education advantages will create the most successful leaders of tomorrow.

“If higher graduation rates for a given student demographic mix led to more funding, how quickly universities would prioritize graduation rates over climbing walls,” says Rosen.

Ultimately, Rosen advocates that the American higher education system is at a crossroads. If positive changes are made and new standards for quality education are set in place, Rosen claims that the next 25 years will be the golden era for American postsecondary education in the United States.

If the benchmarks for what constitutes a valuable education at colleges and universities do not shift to give students more learning resources rather than extravagant amenities, the U.S. risks falling behind other nations in the years to come. Holding schools to a higher level of accountability will help to ensure students have the most valuable learning resources at their fingertips, and it will help American schools be competitive on an international scale.

*Book review by Erin Petry, Staff Writer*
The advisory board is an integral part of the success of our magazine. Each board member provides a unique perspective and valuable insight into the issues impacting our sector. While you likely know their names, we wanted to take this opportunity to introduce our board members’ motivations on a more personal level. Each edition, we will highlight two or three of the important people who make Career College Central what it is today. To our advisory board, we appreciate you.

Tom Ferrara

What is your title/affiliation with the career college sector?

Currently, I am a Founding Partner of FF Ventures, an incubator for education services start-ups. In addition, I often consult with private equity firms, venture capital firms, schools, EDU services companies and investment banks on topics relating to industry outlook, future growth and business/corporate development opportunities. In addition, I manage www.ForProfitEDU.com, an industry networking blog and the For-Profit EDU Industry group on LinkedIn. I was cofounder and CEO of CUnet, and I served as CEO of a public company in the job board/career industry. I also authored Job Seeker Secrets, published by Thomson Learning.

What was your first tie to the education sector?

While writing a book for Thomson Learning on the topic of job searches, I learned about the for-profit education sector. I decided to get involved and landed my first job within the education sector as Vice President of Admissions and Marketing for Career Education Corporation. Eleven months later I left to start CUnet with David Flack.

What industry issues are you most passionate about?

I believe that important industry issues are compliance and transparency in advertising and marketing, assessments for interest and skills alignment, and ultimately, retention and placement outcomes. I learned early on that the best firms in the for-profit education industry have a moral compass and focus on changing people’s lives for the better. Thus, I am a firm believer that quality in (interested, well-informed and accurately positioned students), leads to quality out (employed graduates).
Denny Spisak

What is your affiliation with the career college sector?

I am currently Senior Consultant for Pearson Learning Solutions and Vice-Chairman of the Imagine America Foundation. I have worked with career colleges for 29 of my 31 years in publishing.

What was your first tie to the education sector?

Education was my field of choice as I hold my B.A. and Master’s degrees in business education. I taught school at the secondary and postsecondary levels for 10 years prior to entering the field of publishing. I would not have left teaching for any other profession besides publishing as I saw educational publishing as an extension of my training and background as a teacher. I also had the opportunity to see the impact of career colleges on individuals firsthand as my three sisters graduated from career colleges and it drastically changed their lives in a very positive way.

What industry issues are you most passionate about?

There are several. One that is in the forefront is the transformation taking place in the teaching/learning process due to technology. Students today learn very differently from how I learned, yet many schools have not made the change to teach to the needs of the Net Generation student. Such a change will not only impact retention in a positive manner, but it may also positively differentiate the career college sector from the public sector of postsecondary education. I’m also very passionate about the value of the career college sector to our society. I feel our sector should be recognized and valued as one of three sectors of postsecondary education, be on a level playing field with the two- and four-year public school sectors, and that regulations from the Department of Education should apply to all three sectors. Career colleges, community colleges and four-year institutions all have a purpose, all have value, and all serve a specific group of students.
Sometimes interviewing can seem as difficult as rocket science, but it really doesn’t have to be so hard. All of the books and instructional videos on interviewing in the world can’t make up for good, old-fashioned rapport and chemistry. As a recruiter, one of the things I have learned is that a lack of chemistry is probably the hardest thing to overcome during an interview process.

Recently, while conducting a search for a campus president, I recruited an exceptional candidate. He was from my client's competitor and had everything the organization was looking for – a proven track record of success, a great reputation in the community, squeaky clean compliance records, and great retention and placement rates.

However, after a couple of interviews, my client decided to pass on his candidacy.

When I asked my client what he was lacking, they replied, "Honesty, nothing. He has everything we are looking for, but we just don’t feel this position would challenge him." When I pressed further, they commented that his personality seemed "too cocky and he probably wouldn't fit into our culture."

The person that I ended up placing in the role was slightly less experienced, did not have quite the resume and did not come from a similar school type. But he impressed the top management. He researched the organization thoroughly (even shopping the school as a perspective student to see how they handled an inquiry) and put together a presentation that included a 30-day, 6-month and 3-year plan for the campus.

Here are three things that might help you succeed in your next job interview:

1. People are attracted to others who seem to be attracted to them. Congratulate the company on some of the positive press releases you have read. It shows that you’ve taken time to research the company. Don’t be afraid to let them know you “shopped” their school and were impressed with the results.

2. Be agreeable, but be genuine. If you agree on something, give a reason why instead of nodding your head and smiling. Perhaps reference a situation you handled in a similar fashion to reinforce that you are on the same page.

3. Highlight your successes. Use positive statements to describe yourself, your future plans and past accomplishments. More importantly, provide specific, tangible results that can be measured in metrics that everyone understands.

Remember that when you are interviewing, you’re in fact selling – yourself, your experience and your ability to do the job better than the other candidates who are being considered. Remember, rocket science is not a required course, but chemistry is, and it will be needed to land your next great position.
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Quite literally, there are becoming two schools of thought in our nation when it comes to higher education. There are those who believe in the advantages of a more generalized educational curriculum that is designed to produce a well-rounded individual. This is the philosophy behind the approach taken by a traditional college or university as well as community colleges to a certain extent. And there are those who believe in an education that provides career-specific learning. That is, when you graduate, you are prepared to go to work for an employer in a specific role. You are trained for the job you will carry out throughout an entire career – bearing in mind that there might be some changes in the profession throughout the years that you will pick on the job.

While each camp seemingly serves its own distinct purpose, in recent years it’s become more important to justify the existence of the career-specific education providers. These schools have come under fire in the media and on Capitol Hill for their share of federal financial aid dollars, aggressive recruitment practices and, some would say, for nothing more than the fact that they happen to be affiliated with for-profit motives. But those who’ve attended these schools and work inside of them know a far different, much more positive story – one that we’ve attempted to bolster with facts.

The Imagine America Foundation’s Fact Book is an annual look at the contributions of career colleges and schools, often referred to as for-profit schools. Career colleges provide diverse educational opportunities for students interested in receiving career-specific education and training in art, business, information technology, allied health, culinary arts and more than 200 other fields of study.

Career colleges enroll nearly 3.8 million students in the United States and comprise 45 percent of the institutions participating in federal Title IV student aid programs. They confer a wide range of awards, from short-term certificates to Master’s and doctoral degrees to first professional degrees. Career colleges also provide innovative learning environments, representing 42 percent of the online education market share. The career college sector serves a diverse student body and is more likely than private, not-for-profit or public institutions to serve students who are independent, have incomes in the lowest quartile, have parents with an education below the high school level, and/or are racial or ethnic minorities.

For more information on the Fact Book 2012: A Profile of Career Colleges and Universities, please contact Robert Martin at 202.336.6758 or bobm@imagine-america.org.
Imagine America Foundation Announces 2012 Golf Tournament Sponsor

The Imagine America Foundation is pleased to announce Gragg Advertising and Vector Careers as sponsors of the 2012 IAF Golf Tournament. This important Foundation event will be held on Wednesday, June 20, in conjunction with the APSCU Convention in Las Vegas.

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– Gregory Gragg, President, Gragg Advertising

Imagine America Foundation Announces 2012 Concert Sponsor

The Imagine America Foundation is pleased to announce Underground Elephant as our Rock Star Concert sponsor for the IAF/APSCU Concert. Champion College Services Inc., and Datamark have also come in as Garage Band sponsors. This important Foundation event will be held on Thursday, June 21, in conjunction with the APSCU Convention in Las Vegas.

The Imagine America Foundation is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit foundation dedicated to supporting the career college sector. Proceeds from the 2012 IAF/APSCU Concert will be used to underwrite the IAF scholarship programs and future research. All contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Sponsorship is limited; To access sponsorship packages for the annual convention’s concert, contact Robert L. Martin at 202.336.6758 or bobm@imagine-america.org, or go to www.imagine-america.org/specialevents.

Career Schools and Colleges Renew Participating in Imagine America Scholarship and Award Programs!

The Imagine America Foundation is pleased to announce that the following career schools and college have reenrolled in to the Imagine America Scholarship and Award Programs.

• Corinthian Colleges have reenrolled 97 campuses into the Imagine America High School Scholarship Program
• The Art Institutes has reenrolled 49 campuses into the Imagine America High School Scholarship Program
• Lincoln Educational Services has reenrolled 42 campuses into the Imagine America High School, Military Award Program (MAP), and the Adult Skills Education Program (ASEP)

The Imagine America Scholarship and Award Programs have provided over $50 million in scholarship and award support for graduating high school seniors, adult learners and U.S. military personnel attending career colleges nationwide.

For more information about the Imagine America Scholarship and Award Programs, visit www.imagine-america.org/careercolleges or contact Andrea Spisak at andreas@imagine-america.org or 314.378.2958.
Student Success Zone for Private Sector Students

Developing skills that matter in real life and in the workforce

By Gillian D. Seeley, Marketing Communications Specialist, Pearson Learning Solutions

Gone are the days of the neatly compartmentalized school, work, family and social life. Social media and instantaneous access to information via evolving mobile technologies has significantly blurred the boundaries that once existed between the many areas of a student’s life. Students and new employees may have trouble understanding which situations call for formal, professional etiquette, while struggling to understand which behaviors and habits may be beneficial or damaging to their school or work life. Alarming academic statistics speak to poor college readiness: Only 24 percent of high school seniors who took the ACT test in 2010 met college-ready benchmarks in all four core subject areas. Poor academic performance, combined with lacking study or organizational skills, can spell disaster for many students. The lack of clear direction available—as well as the difficult balancing act—puts students (many of whom are already under tremendous pressure to succeed in school and find employment in a dim economy) in a tough predicament.

Fortunately, there is an increasing understanding among education professionals that students need help preparing for their future—even those who don’t appear to be struggling. How can educators help students stay on track as they navigate their busy and complicated lives? Through the promotion of skills and habits that are crucial for success in their education and in their respective careers.

In light of the realities facing the student in 2012, and given the pressing need for college and workforce readiness, Pearson and the Imagine America Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing scholarships for education, research and training for the career college sector, have launched the Student Success Zone. This innovative website is specifically designed to support career college students’ endeavors in formal education and in the workplace. It also seeks to clarify and improve areas of students’ lives that aren’t necessarily given any formal attention in the K-12 educational experience, such as personal finance and workplace etiquette.

The Student Success Zone website functions as a go-to resource for students, soon-to-be students and returning students who are looking to sharpen their skills in many of the core areas that will help them to be successful in the classroom and beyond. The website offers assistance and information around such subjects as Financial Planning Made Easy, Credit Cards, Time Management and Study Skills. Also covered are the inherently less tangible topics that are just as important to the overall success and well-being of students, including Life Balance, Stress Management, Professionalism, and Setting and Achieving Goals.

Each section of the Student Success Zone site prepares students by providing them with straightforward content that speaks to the topic at hand, while interactively enabling them to test their skills, knowledge and ability in the various areas. For example, the Test Taking section of the site walks students through the fundamentals of test taking, explaining the logic behind questions one might find on a multiple-choice or essay-based test. This back-to-basics approach allows students to revisit concepts that may be only superficially touched upon in formal study environments.
Here is an excerpt from the Essay Questions section of the Test Taking Practice page on the Student Success Zone website:

**Essay Questions**

With subjective test questions, there is no set answer. The correct answer depends on your understanding of the content on which the question is based.

Verbs are the key to subjective test questions. A verb is a word used to show that an action is taking place. For instance, if a question asks you to “compare” two situations, you’ll need to do what the verb asks you to do. Take a look at some of the verbs that are commonly used in subjective test questions.

- Compare
- Contrast
- Define
- Describe
- Discuss
- Evaluate
- Explain
- List
- Outline
- State

Here are some examples of subjective questions and what the verbs are asking you to do:

1. **LIST three battles and their results**
   To LIST is to create a simple series of words or phrases

2. **STATE the signs of addiction**
   To STATE is to explain clearly and simply

3. **DEFINE the term “clinical depression”**
   To DEFINE is to state the basic quality or meaning

This site is not only an incredible and free tool for career college students to use, but it is also indicative of the education world’s shifting perspective on the student. The Student Success Zone speaks to the student’s well-being in its entirety – and not just in relation to academic or career performance. The Pearson/IAF partnership was built around the vision of simplifying as many areas of the student’s life as possible in order to promote success in a healthy and meaningful way. This site will be a valuable asset to many career college students and early career professionals who are ready to get the many areas of their busy lives on track and organized for success.

For more information visit www.pearsoncustom.com/imagineamerica/ or contact Robert L. Martin at 202.336.6758 or bobm@imagine-america.org.

Questions finalized and surveys deployed

The Educational Benchmark Study by the Imagine America Foundation and Wonderlic has been finalized and deployed to nearly 75,000 students and graduates across the nation, and data is beginning to pour in.

While results are very preliminary and data will continue to accumulate in the coming months, we took a quick peek at what the students shared with us about their experiences. One of the questions with measurable feedback asks, “Is the education worth the price?” In this initial query, we find the majority of students (79 percent) had positive or neutral feelings about the return on investment.

---

The Education at this School is Worth the Cost

- **strongly agree**: 23%
- **agree**: 35%
- **neither agree nor disagree**: 21%
- **disagree**: 10%
- **strongly disagree**: 11%
Part of the purpose of this study is to find out what factors contribute to student engagement. One revealing factor we see so far is that when the student feels connected to the teacher (e.g. “My teacher knows my name.”), they are more likely to see value in their education.

If this trend remains steady as additional surveys arrive, it will provide prescriptive information to schools to help students get the maximum benefit from their education. (e.g. encourage teachers to know their students’ names)

For more information on the Educational Benchmark study, please contact Ken Silber at ken.silber@wonderlic.com or 1.800.977.1401.
Dear Keith:

I think it’s time to sell the school. I just don’t know what it’s worth. How do I do this?

Signed,

Ive Haddit

Dear Ive:

The value of schools involves a number of components. The starting point is its regulatory goodwill. Schools that are accredited and Title IV participating are more valuable than those that are not. A school that is accredited, has at least a few students and is Title IV participating has a base value of about $500,000 – assuming that it is in good standing with its state regulator, its accreditor and the U.S. Department of Education.

Beyond those characteristics, it’s the financials that largely determine the value. The metric for schools with gross revenues above about $1.5 million is typically a multiple of EBITDA, which stands for “earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.” It’s essentially a measure of free cash flow (net income) after adding back taxes, depreciation, amortization and one-time unusual expenses (like a lawsuit settlement). You would also add back owner perks and excess salary. Your accountant can help you with that calculation. Clean schools that gross revenues above $1.5 million typically sell for between four to six times EBITDA. Unusually, valuable programs like nursing can bring you to the higher end or above it.

Schools below $1.5 million or so in gross revenue are not usually valued on EBITDA multiples, at least primarily. They don’t throw off enough profit to do this. Ordinarily, their value is somewhere above or below their gross revenue, depending on their characteristics.

A critical action for you once you get serious about a deal is to engage expert counsel – at the minimum for the regulatory part of the transaction. School sales have unique aspects, and not knowing how these work can lead to terrible results. One important part is the working capital adjustment. The buyer will normally insist that the school’s current assets be equal or greater to its current liabilities. Remember that unearned tuition is a liability and varies daily. If you fall below this balance, your purchase price will be reduced accordingly. Also very important are the negotiations over how your buyer will value your accounts receivable. It is not uncommon for schools to carry accounts receivable that are of dubious collectability. The buyer will not treat those accounts at full value on your balance sheet.
Once you have a potential buyer, the next step will be a non-binding letter of intent. That document sets the basic terms of the planned deal, including price, post-closing adjustment, any holdbacks, timing and exclusive dealing during the transaction. As the seller, you will want this document to be as specific as possible because you will be bound not to negotiate with others during the time set in the letter of intent. The buyer typically tries to be as vague as possible, and this should be resisted if you’re the seller. Also, the more specific the letter of intent, the easier will be the discussions over the definitive agreement.

The definitive agreement is the actual contract for sale. It states all the terms in detail. This includes all the regulatory promises (representations and warranties) you’ll be making about your compliance and the consequences if there are problems. You will also be assisted by counsel in the negotiations over the definitive agreement. That agreement will also set the conditions and sequence of the closing of the deal. That timing requires multiple regulatory approvals and must be staged correctly.

During the discussions, you’ll be undergoing a process called “due diligence.” You will be providing a great deal of information about the business to the seller. It’s often very burdensome, but the buyer will justifiably want to know everything they can. Bear in mind that surprises discovered post-closing cause disputes, lawsuits and other bad things. It’s best to be totally candid during this process.

Another thing that will be negotiated is whether or not you will be departing the school after the closing (some folks stay behind as employees of the buyer). It will also need to be determined how much – if any – of the purchase price will be held back as security for claims, and if held, for how long.

Overall, the process from start to finish takes three to six months. Try to talk to others who have been through it if you can. Your accountants and lawyers will also be a source of guidance on this.

Good luck.

Keith
Given the attacks on the for-profit sector of higher ed, I wonder why the President would prefer minorities be reliant, not empowered.

@EDUplatt Great question. Education is power. If you limit access to it, then you're limiting people's ability to empower themselves.

Harkin: I think most students take out loans for their lifestyle (rather than tuition). #collegeaffordability

One of many ignorant statements from a Harkin-led hearing.

Rationing of community college classes? Is that in the students' best interest? #4profit

Hard to say. If the move lowers drop-out rates, which is the hope, it could help them. But you are going to lose others.

It's great to see our different types of schools working together to help students achieve.

Absolutely!

Getting the ol' notebook ready for the town hall meeting with Steve Gunderson, APSCU's new President and Chief Executive Officer.

We celebrated CCC's fifth anniversary with a piñata breaking this morning. See the "5" get destroyed on Facebook: http://t.co/iI91RKfr

$3.9B in federal financing went to 21 companies backed by firms with connections to Obama staffers: wapo.st/yj03IA

A billion here, a billion there. No one notices a few billion anymore.

Two more traditional universities nailed for corrupt behavior. No indictment of all non-profit schools? Where is Arne? Harkin? Durbin?

It's about 12:30 in Washington. My guess is they're at lunch with short-sellers.

New! Do You Write with Your Students? bit.ly/y3ELtB #engchat #nwp #edchat

Absolutely. You have to set an example. Inspire them!

One of many ignorant statements from a Harkin-led hearing.

The search goes on for ways to make college tuition more affordable and less like a luxury: bit.ly/xwNPXU

Hey Carlos... I would disagree on the fact you noted. I believe schools do a great deal to influence outcomes.
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Michael Platt:
What will determine the trajectory of career college growth?

We have heard much regarding the significance of the presidential election/party in charge and job creation ... those are the easy ones. But what are the less obvious factors that would have a significant impact over the next one to two years?

Dr. Pietro (Pete) Savo:
The words from our career politicians are authored to get them re-elected. Regardless, if these words can result in a positive impact in society, the words keep flowing in all directions. My opinion: As education dollars become challenged by politics, the focus on career colleges becoming the shortest distance to employment will pick up urgency. Urgency is a good place to be!

Julio A. Lopez:
I believe that a positive trajectory will be partially independent of government changes. Meaning that institutions will have to be ahead of the innovation curve by hiring and placing institutional leaders that will implement programs and non-traditional learning methodologies that integrate key social media or networks which will also source candidates and enrollments.

Kevin Kuzma:
Maybe this is one of the more obvious factors, but many of us in this group have talked about the need for a full-scale public relations plan that focuses on student successes and the true value of our schools. If we can change the discussion to something more positive, that would change the trajectory.

Dr. Pietro (Pete) Savo:
The private sector must elect for success. The private sector must strategize for change that promotes job creation. The private sector will drive positive trajectory, regardless of what our government does! It is what we do best.

Julio A. Lopez:
I agree the institution will be the catalyst for change and therefore the entity setting the trajectory.

Michael Platt:
I think it is way more complicated. While each school can be creative and improve their results, Washington, D.C., the Department of Education, the media, consumer perception, regulations, etc., have a major impact. I agree that schools need to focus on their circle of influence (what they can do), but I don’t think it is realistic to ignore their circle of concern ... the real circumstances they face.

I’ve been in this business long enough to have seen one change in regulations (max defaults) put nearly a third of the schools in the country out of business, and severe increases in unemployment drive schools to huge growth periods. And, by the way, I am not talking about now. Six percent to 10 percent unemployment is not what I’d call a severe increase ... but 5 percent to 14 percent qualified.

Martin Lind: Do law schools cook their employment numbers?

Michael Platt:
Some do, some do not. There are already lesser schools that have been nailed, and there are currently roughly 20 additional lawsuits filed by grads.

Bill McNabb:
Being in collections, we do not deal with law schools ... BUT ... I can tell you that many schools either (1) report false numbers or (2) don’t care enough to actually keep track. I really wish that schools would step up their graduate follow-up procedures and take the next leap of helping their graduates find work.
Kevin Kuzma:
The popular thing to do now when you can't find a job in a field related to your degree is to start a blog and cry foul – and in some cases, file a lawsuit. Yes, I believe some schools cook the books. But there are many that do not. The article suggests law schools need to be "more upfront about their graduates' job prospects." While I tend to agree with that statement as far as it relates to each particular institution, I would argue that most law students – and college students in general – are fully aware of the challenges that face them in the job market upon graduation.

Katie Martino:
I agree with Kevin. As a college student, I knew going into college which fields were going to have higher job prospects and which were not. However, I feel that it is a common assumption (and misconception, apparently) that the only reason anyone would want to become a lawyer in the first place is to make money.
Obama's gainful plan gives hope to middle-class families

President Obama presented a plan to lower the prices of higher education in a speech at the University of Michigan. His plan, which is a major part of his re-election campaign, is aimed toward middle-class families who find the raised prices of college unaffordable. The White House wrote that the goal of the plan is to give students a “quality education and training that prepares graduates to obtain employment and repay their loans.”

The focus of the plan is to change the Perkins Loan Program, a student lending program, by increasing the funding to $10 billion per year and directing the money to colleges that meet the standards of providing students “good value” and “reasonable tuition,” as well as “graduating and enrolling large numbers of low-income students.” Along with this, he has organized the “Race to the Top” and “First in the World” competitions. Both were created to give money to colleges to help lower tuition. Obama says he wants to make college more affordable, and he’s willing to help make that happen.

Skepticism was a common reaction by many higher education experts. For example, Michael Young, President of the University of Washington, said the plan was “nonsense on stilts.” However, most were in favor of the plan.

Because of the congressional deadlock, the future of the plan going into voting is unknown.

Synopsis of: ‘Gainful’ Comes to the Nonprofits
Source: Inside Higher Ed
Date: January 30, 2012

Law schools lure in potential students with untruthful job prospects

Lawyers are no longer guaranteed a job, and that is forcing the nation’s law schools into pandemonium about being truthful of prospective jobs for students.

One student at New York Law School, Chloe Gilgan, found herself jobless and in debt three years after graduating law school – after being promised that she would find work within nine months of graduation.

“Nobody can guarantee you’ll have a job for sure,” said Gilgan, “but what they can do is give you honest prospects.”

In the past, law schools were able to choose which information they provided prospective students, but the American Bar Association, which accredits law schools, recently changed those rules. Universities will have to report whether the students will be employable lawyers or not. This will go into effect next year.

This is useful for future college applicants, but it does not help the students who are attending law school now.

The U.S. Department of Education made stricter for-profit regulations when attacked on the same premise of deception, but says it has no control over most law programs.

Synopsis of: Do Law Schools Cook Their Employment Numbers?
Source: National Public Radio
Date: January 16, 2012

U.S. News thinks online education programs should be ranked

Online education is popular because of its low prices and availability to busy higher education seekers. The standards online education programs provide should be held just as high as traditional education, which is why U.S. News thinks it is important that the programs be rated.

Because online programs and traditional schooling each have their own unique characteristics, it is not possible to analyze them in the same way. Basic accrediting standards are still available for evaluation, but there are still many programs that can’t be spoken for. Education continues to evolve, but U.S. News is positive that online education is permanent.

Synopsis of: Why U.S. News Ranks Online Education Programs
Source: U.S. News & World Report
Date: January 9, 2012

For-profit colleges encounter scrutiny from jobless, in-debt graduates

According to a paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research, for-profit college students end up with higher debt, fewer employment opportunities and will generally earn less than students from public or private not-for-profit schools.

For-profit colleges, however, do a better job of keeping students through the first year of college than traditional universities. On the other hand, students at traditional universities fare better when it comes to Bachelor’s degree programs.

For-profit student enrollment has skyrocketed from 5 percent to 13 percent in the past eight years. However, for-profit students default on loans at higher rates than students at traditional schools. The for-profit college lobby argues that this is because “for-profit students are low-income, first-generation college students without a track record of academic success.”
To for-profit schools’ credit, they are, according to researchers, “playing a critical role in expanding the supply of skilled workers in an era of tight state budgets and stagnating appropriations to public sector schools.”

Synopsis of: For-Profit College Students Face Higher Debt, More Unemployment, Report Finds
Source: Huffington Post
Date: January 4, 2012

**UC admissions continually increase**

Admission numbers are increasing at the University of California as the college’s tuition for out-of-state students and standardized testing requirements are decreasing. Non-Californian applications at UC have risen 56 percent this past year, and in-state applications are up 9.8 percent, while the amount of students graduating remains the same.

The popularity of the school may decrease when decisions for admission go out in the spring, even though the school plans to enroll more students than average. The current freshmen class upped its enrollment from previous years by 12 percent.

Out-of-state students, who were once paying $23,000 in addition to regular UC tuition and fees, are now only paying $13,200 yearly.

 Jerome A. Lucido, admissions expert and executive director of the USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice, said he was not surprised by the increase, and he went on to note that the university had begun to strongly recruit potential students from out of state.

The most popular UC campus last year was UCLA, with 72,626 freshman applicants. UC Berkeley came in second with 61,661, and lastly, UC San Diego had 60,819. Also, the number of California residents seeking schools outside of UC declined by roughly 6 percent this year.

Synopsis of: More out-of-state, foreign students apply to UC schools
Source: Los Angeles Times
Date: January 13, 2012

**Clock hour is becoming more important that credit hours**

Most degree programs use credit hours, but the U.S. Department of Education is showing signs that it may start using clock hours instead. This is a disappointment to students because they usually qualify for more federal financial aid dollars when being measured by credit hours.

A credit hour is “at least one hour per week in lecture and two hours on work outside class.” The reason for switching to clock-hour measurement is a need to preserve aid dollars and “be more consistent with rules for how colleges measure how much time students spend in class on coursework.”

Another problem, along with students not qualifying for as much financial aid, is that programs lose the ability to use credit hours if they switch to clock hours. Not all of the work by students is done in their seats, which is why there is criticism from many about the transition to clock hours.

Brian Moran, Executive Vice President of Government Relations and General Counsel for the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, is not in favor of the decision to switch to clock hours. He said he and his focus group are still waiting for a concrete answer from the Department of Education.

Synopsis of: Turn Back the Clock
Source: Inside Higher Ed
Date: February 7, 2012

**Obama encourages lowering the price of higher education**

President Obama’s third State of the Union address was focused on middle-class struggles. He commended institutions that have lowered tuition and encouraged others to do so, as well. He advised the nation’s colleges to stop “subsidizing skyrocketing tuition.”

“Higher education can’t be a luxury.” said Obama, “It is an economic imperative that every family should be able to afford.”

Recently, after 10 college presidents met with Obama to speak about strategies to keep college cost down while still providing productivity, many colleges have come up with solutions.

Obama’s policy changes are popular, but expensive. Congress has already cut down student aid benefits to pay for the Pell Grant program and would have to cut even more to allow Work-Study jobs to expand and keep interest rates low. A “blueprint” released in advance of Obama’s speech said that the White House was planned to “shift some federal aid away from colleges that don’t keep net tuition down and provide good value.”

Because of Obama’s proposal, it is probable that he will receive votes from the same youthful voters that he won in the last election.

Synopsis of: Obama Highlights Education’s Role in Reaching National Policy Goals
Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education
Date: January 25, 2012
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It was almost two years ago that I signed up for classes at Anthem College. It literally saved my life and my son’s. I had just lost my job in Oregon; I was two months pregnant; and I was down to my last $10. I had to make a choice to either put my last $10 in the gas tank or purchase food. I remember looking out the car window as I watched my last lifeline being pumped away.

How could I let things get this bad? How was I going to raise a child out of my backseat? I wanted my life to end. I pulled into a parking spot at Wal-Mart – across from Anthem College. I sat and thought about ways that I could end all my troubles. As I watched people coming and going from the college, my reality check hit me. I decided to talk to them about going back to school. I told them that I didn’t have any money, but they were able to approve me for scholarships and grants. The only thing I needed to come up with was $50 for my application fee. I went to a pawn shop down the road and sold everything I had except the clothes on my back.

My school helped me find a part-time job and students that I could carpool with, and I was eventually able to get my life back together. I’m excited and proud to say that I graduated from Anthem College in June 2011 with a Dental Assisting degree. The whole experience was great. My teachers were great, and they even took time to stay after class to help me. If I didn’t understand something, they would go out of their way to break it down for me.

I am now certified by the American Medical Technologists (AMT) and eventually, I want to go back to Anthem to get a business degree.

One day, I’ll be able to tell my son how college saved our lives and how my AMT certification secured our future. 😊

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Steve Gunderson
In this exclusive interview with Career College Central, APscu’s fifth President shares his motivations, goals and aspirations for the sector.

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