FOR THE WEEKS OF JULY 25 — AUGUST 7, 2007

Coverage


The Press (Los Angeles)—July 19, 2007—Article on an international student who recently completed his auto technology certification at Cerritos College (from press release).

Los Angeles Times—July 26, 2007—Article on the winners of a national woodworking competition, one of which is a Cerritos College student.


Norwalk Community News—July 27, 2007—Article about former ASCC president Joe Cobarrubio receiving an award from the ABC School Foundation.

Related News
Long Beach Press-Telegram—July 15, 2007—Article regarding the low graduation rates of students attending community colleges.

Los Angeles Times—July 18, 2007—Article regarding a Republican plan to cut funding for California schools as a way to balance the state budget.

L.A. Daily News—July 30, 2007—Article about the impact that the state’s lack of a budget will have on community colleges.

Los Angeles Times—July 31, 2007—Article about a statewide tour of college campuses in Northern California taken by a group of disadvantaged students.

Los Angeles Times—August 1, 2007—Article about a settlement reached in a lawsuit against Corinthian Colleges, which plaintiffs claimed provided inflated figures of graduates’ job placement rates.

Los Angeles Times—August 6, 2007—Article about an increasing number of females enrolling at Caltech, a school traditionally dominated by males.
NORWALK, CA - July 26, 2007 - The Cerritos College Foundation will host its 22nd Annual Golf Classic on Monday, August 6 at Friendly Hills Country Club in Whittier. The day will begin with registration at 9 a.m. followed by a shotgun start at 11 a.m., a social hour at 5 p.m. and an awards dinner at 6 p.m. The tournament is hosted each year to help raise funds to support student scholarships and programs.

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Cerritos College Fall Semester Begins August 13

Online Registration Makes Enrollment Process Easier

For Immediate Release: July 26, 2007

Registration Contact: Rose Alegre, Admissions and Records; (562) 860-2451, ext. 2211

NORWALK, CA - July 26, 2007 - Registration is underway for Cerritos College's fall semester, which begins Monday, August 13, 2007. Students may access a schedule of classes, complete an application and register online for a variety of classes by visiting www.cerritos.edu/admissions.

All eligible returning students have an option to either register online through MyCerritos or by using the automated Falcon Phone registration system at (562) 865-3276.

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Cerritos College Court Reporting Program Offers Online Training

Classes Offer Overview of Stenotype Machine for Very Little Cost

For Immediate Release: August 1, 2007

Contact: Micki England, Cerritos College Court Reporting Program; (562) 860-2451, ext. 2746

WHAT: Cerritos College's Court Reporting Program will offer online theory classes for the first time with the start of the fall 2007 semester on August 13, 2007. This entry-level set of classes provide an overview of the court reporting stenotype machine and are open to anyone wishing to pursue a career in court reporting or captioning. Per-unit fees at Cerritos College are only $20. (Out of state non-resident tuition fees are $160 per unit and international student fees are $186 per unit. Refer to Cerritos College's Schedule of Classes for complete fee information.) Students will also need to provide their own steno machine (purchased or rented) and purchase books to accompany the course.

For more information about the new online theory course offered by Cerritos College's Court Reporting Program, please visit www.cerritos.edu/courtreporting and click on "online classes," call (562) 860-2451 ext. 2746 or e-mail mengland@cerritos.edu.

WHEN: Cerritos College's fall 2007 semester begins Monday, August 13 and runs through Friday, December 14.

WHERE: Cerritos College
11110 Alondra Blvd
Norwalk, CA 90650
A map of the campus is available at www.cerritos.edu/guide

COST: Classes are $20 per unit for state residents.

CONTACT: For more information, contact the Court Reporting Program at (562) 860-2451 ext. 2746 or mengland@cerritos.edu.

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Cerritos College Offers Online Employee Training

6-Week Courses Forming Soon

For Immediate Release: August 6, 2007

WHAT: Cerritos College Economic Development (CCED) has partnered with ed2go to create a new program that makes it easy for businesses to provide high-quality training for their employees. These courses take place exclusively online, and are available for individual employees or as a group training program for businesses. The courses are thoroughly market tested; more than a million learners have benefited from ed2go’s online instruction.

Through well-crafted lessons, expert online instruction and interaction with fellow students, employees gain valuable knowledge they can immediately apply on the job. The courses give employees enough flexibility to study at their own pace, but retain enough structure and support to guide them through completion of the course. The classroom is accessible 24 hours a day via an Internet connection.

Topics covered include supervision and management, customer service, accounting, sales and marketing, human resources, project management, business writing, computer applications and database management. Courses are also offered for teaching professionals.

WHEN: New sessions of each course run every month, lasting for six weeks.

COST: Prices of most courses range from $87 - $159.

CONTACT: To learn more, contact Cindy Lo at Cerritos College Economic Development at clo@cerritos.edu or 562-860-2451 ext. 2511, or visit http://www.cerritosetrainsu.com/ed2go-pro.

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Project HOPE students finish Cerritos classes

NORWALK — Cerritos College’s Project HOPE (Health Opportunities and Pipeline to Education) graduated 22 health profession students at a recent banquet.

Major sponsors were Health Net of California, Orange County’s Credit Union and Verizon, said Kristen Habbestad, the college’s public information officer.

The ceremony celebrated the transition of the students to four-year universities.

The Project HOPE Class of 2007 included Angelica Barrera, Mario Carrasco, Cynthia Ceretti, Sonia Diaz, Margot Cisneros, Janei Dominguez, Alvaro Espinoza, Gabriel Gomez, Robert Inunza, Charlene Lobardio, Amalia Moreno, John Reinier Narvaez, Mayanin Natividad, Maria Ramirez, Reyna Raya, Rosario Rivas, Rosalie Reynoso, Mariacelis Robles, Viviana Ruiz, Karina Vega, Melissa Vega and Brenda Velis.

Project HOPE was established at Cerritos College five years ago and is designed to increase the number of Latinos and other minority students entering the health professions, Habbestad said.

College plans free summer concert event

NORWALK — The Cerritos College Community Band and Orchestra will present “Concert On the Grass,” a free program by the Cerritos College Music Department at 6:30 p.m. next Wednesday at the college, 11110 Alondra Blvd. Parking is $1.

Director David Betancourt and Cerritos College musicians will share a selection of music in the amphitheater in Falcon Square, said Kristen Habbestad, the college’s public information officer.

Snacks, hot dogs and drinks will be sold, with proceeds supporting the Cerritos College Music Club, Habbestad said.

Information: (562) 860-2451, ext. 2629.
College program honors Jackson

WAVE STAFF REPORT

NORWALK — Cerritos College’s Adult Education and Diversity Programs honored Cerritos College Board President Tom Jackson recently during its annual awards ceremony, according to Kristen Habbestad, the college’s public information officer.

Maggie Cordero, director of adult education and diversity programs, presented Jackson with an award for his involvement and leadership at Cerritos College and for his championship of the adult education programs that include English as a second language, citizenship, vocational education and Plaza Comunitaria.

Jackson, a resident of Norwalk, was elected to the Cerritos College Board of Trustees in 2003 and currently serves as the board’s president.

He is a retired Cerritos College faculty member and first joined the college as a part-time accounting and finance instructor in 1976. He then served as a full-time faculty member in the college’s Business Education Division beginning in 1980 until his retirement in 2002.

Jackson earned an associate’s degree in business and engineering from Long Beach City College before earning a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Cal State Long Beach.

He went on to earn a second bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in business administration from the USC. In April, Jackson completed a master’s degree in governance, a two-year program offered by the California School Board Association for board members and education superintendents.

Cerritos College’s Adult Education and Diversity Programs Department offers educational courses that impart knowledge, develop skills and clarify values to students.

It provides students with learning opportunities that blend education with workplace skills. The programs assist adults in gaining the necessary basic skills and English language acquisition to move into mainstream college programs and/or advance in the workforce, Habbestad said.
Peruvian student completes auto technology certification

NORWALK — Ever since he can remember, Gerardo Oka has spent most of his time immersed in Jeep bodies and transmissions.

Oka grew up observing and helping his father, who owns a repair shop in Oka’s native Lima, Peru. In fact, before coming to California, Oka spent 10 years working as a mechanic alongside his father.

Seeking certification in his automotive specialty, Oka two years ago enrolled in Chrysler’s College Automotive Program at Cerritos College, which provides technicians with specific corporate training on Chrysler and Jeep vehicles, said Kristen Habbestad, the college’s public information officer.

He graduated this summer with certification in servicing Dodge, Chrysler and Jeep vehicles and plans to become a full-time technician at Long Beach Chrysler Jeep.

Senior automotive technicians can eventually earn more than $100,000 a year, Habbestad said.

Oka, 29, came to the U.S. on a student visa and began working part time at Long Beach Chrysler Jeep with Tom Bonnstetter, who urged him to pursue a certification program at Cerritos College.

He enrolled at Cerritos as an international student to take advantage of a work-study program.

Cerritos College has offered an automotive training technology program since the college began in 1955, Habbestad said.
Handcrafted by students

WINNERS of the 2007 Fresh Wood national student woodworking competition were announced last week in Las Vegas, where 210 handcrafted entries ranged from period reproductions to wholeheartedly futuristic visions.

The competition, open to high school and college students, awarded its best in show award to Chris Hedges, 31, of the University of Rio Grande/Rio Grande Community College in Ohio. His entry was a Penn secretary reproduction crafted of curly cherry wood. Hedges spent two months on research and design for the project and seven months on construction. Fine finials, intricate rosettes and other detailing helped his entry to stand out, he said.

In the case-goods category, first place went to Christian Lazcano, 21, a woodworking manufacturing technology major at Cerritos College in Norwalk. Lazcano crafted his elegant storage system in wenge, zebra and alder woods.

First place in the tables category went to Cortney Schiappa, 21, an interior design major at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Her angular, low-slung design called for planes of African mahogany to wrap around glass.

Winners were announced at the biennial convention of the Assn. of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers, which started the competition in 1999 to encourage careers in the furniture industry. The association awarded prizes ranging from $1,000 to $2,500, but the biggest payoff may be to come. Hedges is selling his secretary. Asking price: $33,000.

— BETTIJANE LEVINE
Cerritos College Foundation’s 22nd Annual Golf Tournament

Scholarship fundraiser to be held August 6 at Friendly Hills in Whittier

The Cerritos College Foundation will host its 22nd Annual Golf Classic on Monday, August 6 at Friendly Hills Country Club in Whittier. The day will begin with registration at 9 a.m. followed by a shotgun start at 11 a.m., a social hour at 5 p.m. and an awards dinner at 6 p.m. The tournament is hosted each year to help raise funds to support student scholarships and programs.

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Former Cerritos College ASCC President Honored by ABC School Foundation

The ABC School Foundation (ABCSF) presented former Associated Students of Cerritos College (ASCC) President Joe Cobarrubio with a $500 scholarship during a dinner ceremony on Saturday, July 7. Each year, the ABCSF Scholarship Award is presented to several students from the community and from ABC Unified School District who have excelled in academics, service and leadership.

“This scholarship is presented to you, Joe, especially in recognition of your service to Cerritos College students and the local community,” said ABCSF President/CEO Dr. Paul Kahng as he presented the scholarship.

Cobarrubio, of Santa Fe Springs, served as Cerritos College’s ASCC president during the 2006-07 school year and will be attending the University of California at Irvine in the fall. During his presidency, Cobarrubio helped to spearhead the successful “Show Pride in Our Campus” campaign to encourage campus pride among Cerritos College students.

In addition to the presentation to Cobarrubio, ABCSF also honored a student from Corvallis Middle School, along with students from Artesia, Cerritos, Southeast Academy and Whitney high schools. Since its establishment in 2003, ABCSF has awarded more than 47 scholarships. ABCSF is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization comprised of concerned parents, community members and business leaders who are invested in helping the development of schools in the area and are committed to enhancing the benefits in educational program. The mission of ABCSF is centered on serving the community, providing needed services and funding to develop schools in the region, and is especially focused upon raising the national school rankings to assure the best education for children.
Higher education's hidden cost

Community schools have high enrollment, but low grad rates

By Justin Pope, AP Education Writer
Article Launched: 07/15/2007 09:11:19 PM PDT

SAN DIEGO - For most of history, higher education has been reserved for a tiny elite.

For a glimpse of a future where college is open to all, look at California - the place that now comes closest to that ideal.

California's community college system is the country's largest, with 109 campuses, 4,600 buildings and a staggering 2.5 million students. It's also cheap. While it's no longer free, anyone can take a class, and at about $500 per term full-time, the price is a fraction of any other state's.

There is no such thing as a typical student. There are high achievers and low ones, taking courses from accounting to welding. There are young and old, degree-seekers and hobbyists - all commingled on some of the most diverse campuses in the country, if not the world.

Many students, for one reason or another, simply missed the onramp to college the first time around - people like 31-year-old Bobbie Burns, juggling work and childcare and gradually collecting credits at San Diego City College in hopes of transferring to a media program at a nearby university.

"I love City," Burns said, noting that once she transfers she'll face a less-flexible schedule and higher fees. "I wish I could keep going here."

These days, states around the country are wrestling with how to provide mass scale higher education - a challenge California anticipated decades ago.

But if California is a model in one way, it's struggling in another.

The state ranks near the top in terms of getting students in the door of higher education. But its batting average moving them out - either with a degree or by transferring to a four-year school - ranks near the bottom.

"In 1960 or 1970 or 1980, access was enough," said Nancy Shulock, of the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy at Cal State Sacramento. "But it's not enough now."

Of course, not everyone at community college is looking for a degree, so measuring success is tough. But several recent studies, including one by Shulock, have tried to identify students who are seeking such benchmarks as a certificate, associate's degree, or a transfer to a four-year school. Those studies have found that only about a quarter of such students in California succeed within six years. For blacks and Hispanics, the rates are even lower.

Boosting completion and transfer rates is high on the agenda of California policymakers. But opinions vary considerably on why they're so low to begin with - and what lessons others might draw from the state's experience.

Some believe the system's basic financial model of charging students as little as possible is actually part of the problem, and needs reform. The debate comes down to this: Do you help students more by charging them less, or by raising fees and using the money to give students more support, helping them move quickly and successfully through the system?
California has always been at the forefront of making college affordable.

In the 1920s, when it ranked 11th among the states in population, it had the most students in college, according to "The California Idea and American Higher Education," a history of higher education in the state by John Aubrey Douglass, a senior research fellow at UC Berkeley.

In 1907, California authorized the country's first state-sponsored junior college system as a network of feeders for the state's public universities.

Today, the state has three tiers of higher education: the University of California for the top students; the Cal State universities for the next level; and the open-access third tier that came to be called community colleges.

Community colleges students can work their way into the four-year schools, and it's a cheaper path to a bachelor's degree. Last year, more than half of CSU graduates - and nearly one-third of UC grads - started at a community college.

But community colleges now are asked to do much more than broaden the path to a bachelor's degree, from job retraining to remedial high school work. Systemwide, as many as 80 percent of incoming students aren't prepared for college-level courses.

"If we could control the input, the students who are coming to us, we could control their preparedness level and ability to succeed, we could easily increase our success rate," said Eloy Oakley, president of Long Beach City College. "We could do what universities do, which is cherry-pick the best students."

But Oakley - whose student body is one-third Hispanic, one-quarter white, and about 12 percent each black and Asian - says that would defeat the purpose of community colleges.

Lack of preparation isn't the only reason students come up short. They also have to work - a lot - outside of class.

"One semester, my mom helped me out and I took 23 units and got a 3.8," said Monica Robertson, speaking after a Spanish class one recent morning on San Diego City College's campus, a collection of buildings on the edge of downtown that resembles a 1960s-era high school. But every other term she has been working 40 hours a week at a car wash.

Attending full-time one semester "just teased me," she said. "I thought, 'If you didn't have to work, Monica, you could do so much so quickly.'"

If students can attend full-time, they are four times as likely to complete as part-timers. But only 29 percent of California students can attend full-time. That's 12 percentage points below the national community college figure.

California's struggle

Unprepared students

Low fees, low revenue

To many, student work demands are an obvious argument for keeping fees low. Enrollment rose when the state cut fees from $15 per credit to $11 during the 1990s. And enrollment fell during the most recent budget crunch when prices rose from $11 to $18. Prices eventually hit $26 before falling back this spring to $20.

And Zumeta and Shulock argue California's fees are, in fact, too low. Low prices let people in, but give them little incentive to push hard, and deprive the system of revenue to support a new generation of students with intense edu-
Low revenue creates a constant money crunch for counselors, small classes, tutors, child care - all the things that student fees support, and which help students finish their degree.

While Zumeta and others support continuing and expanding waivers for the poorest students, they note that nearly 200,000 other students have incomes of $100,000 or more, or come from families who do.

"There are an awful lot of students in the California community college system who frankly could afford to pay more," Zumeta said.

But many who work closely with students say that argument cuts against the founding philosophy of California's unique system - and fails to recognize that, in the end, raising the price makes attending school harder for low-income students.
GOP plan: slash aid to schools?

Educators say they are shocked as Democrats reveal a Republican plan to cut $400 million to balance state's budget.

By Evan Halper
Times Staff Writer

July 18, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Republican legislative leaders, vowing to block passage of a state budget until Democrats agree to more spending cuts, have proposed in secret talks to slash $400 million from schools, according to education groups that were briefed on the negotiations Tuesday.

School officials say they were shocked to learn of the proposal at a briefing on the state budget impasse — now in its third week — by Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez (D-Los Angeles) and Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata (D-Oakland).

The officials said they were told that, under the GOP plan, the money would be cut out of cost-of-living adjustments for salaries and other expenses and funding for the growth of student populations. The cuts would apply to schools with kindergarten through high school classes and to community colleges.

"We are very concerned," said Scott Plotkin, executive director of the California School Boards Assn. "We had received public assurances that education would not be cut. A lot of districts have already adopted their budget for the coming school year based on those assurances."

Republican leaders refused to comment on the proposal. They have repeatedly said they will not vote for a budget until Democrats, who dominate the Legislature, agree to at least $2 billion more in spending reductions. But Republicans have declined to reveal publicly what programs they want to cut to reach that goal.

Although the overall reduction the Republicans are seeking accounts for a relatively small amount of the state's $103.7-billion general fund, half of that general fund money goes to schools. Budget analysts say making a multi-billion-dollar cut at this point without eating into school spending would be extremely difficult.

Assembly Republican leader Michael Villines of Clovis and Senate Republican leader Dick Ackerman of Irvine left through a back door after two hours of budget negotiations with Democrats Tuesday evening, avoiding half a dozen reporters waiting in the hallway to question them about the status of the talks.

Villines and Ackerman have repeatedly said that they would not support even the spending plan drafted by the governor, criticizing it for not going far enough to wipe out the state's chronic multibillion-dollar deficit.

But the Democrats' spending plan closely resembles the spending plan drafted by the Schwarzenegger administration, and Nuñez criticized members of the governor's own party.

"The Republicans are asking for cuts that are way too deep," Nuñez said. "They would eviscerate public education and public safety. We're not going to go there."

Perata (D-Oakland) said he and Nuñez had called education officials to the meeting Tuesday afternoon to "give them a status report."

"They told us they would view any additional cuts to education as a hostile action," Perata said. "We told them that
Los Angeles Times, con’t
July 18, 2007

we will stand firm and they should let their members know that."

Both he and Nuñez declined answer questions about what specifically the Republicans were proposing, saying that as a condition of the budget talks, they had assured Republicans they would not publicly disclose such details.

But education leaders who attended the private briefing said the cut being proposed would wipe out a good chunk of school districts’ discretionary spending.

"I cannot tell you how extremely disappointed our members will be to hear this news," said David Sanchez, the incoming president of the California Teachers Assn. Sanchez, who spoke by phone from an annual association conference of 600 teachers in Monterey, said he expects the teachers at the event to immediately begin working to resist any education cuts.

"We are going to mobilize," he said.

Aaron McClear, a spokesman for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, declined to comment on the GOP proposal. "We have not been commenting on private budget negations," he said.

The state has been operating without a budget since the July 1 start of the fiscal year, with legislative leaders unable to reach a compromise. Democrats had initially planned to bring their spending proposal to a vote before the full Senate and Assembly today.

Although the plan does not have the GOP support needed for approval, Democratic leaders say a floor vote would put pressure on Republicans to share with the public what specific cuts they are seeking.

But Perata said Tuesday night, after the negotiations with Republican leaders, that the floor vote may be put on hold. This actually could mean progress, because it would leave room for further negotiations.

"Our position has always been that as long as we continue to make progress, we are not going to go to the floor for some sort of a pyrrhic victory," he said. "It’s looking like [the Republicans] are now interested in making progress."

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evan.halper@latimes.com
No cash left for colleges

$2.2 billion bond gone; biggest projects remain

BY SUSAN ABRAM, Staff Writer
LA Daily News

Article Last Updated:07/30/2007 11:08:17 PM PDT

Having used up the entire $2.2 billion taxpayers gave them to modernize nine campuses, Los Angeles Community College District officials failed to deliver many of the big projects and admit they spent a lot of money on little jobs.

While completing 70 percent of the 658 projects they promised, the nearly 200 projects that remain will cost an additional $2 billion or more - highlighting a focus up to now on design planning, project reviews and smaller efforts such as marquees, landscaping, tree trimming and exterior waterproofing.

"There's no doubt in my mind that they've mismanaged the money," said former board of trustees member Patrick Owen, who served on the board from 1989 to 1993 and organized a slate of candidates that failed to unseat incumbent board members this year.

Big projects that never were built included a $45 million media arts building at Los Angeles Valley College, a $56 million consumer science building at Mission College and $37 million for a new technology center at Pierce College.

As district officials prepare for another school year, they're examining these latest figures to determine whether they should go to voters for an additional $2 billion or cut projects from the list.

The district has long been criticized for mismanaging the massive construction project that began when voters approved the Proposition A/AA bond money in 2001 and 2003.

A 2005 report by an independent auditor criticized officials for allowing endless reviews of design plans for project delays that might have wasted millions in taxpayer money.

Acknowledging that they underestimated rising construction costs and could have done more to streamline the design and approval phase, district officials said they'll have to ask voters again for the extra $2 billion - possibly as early as November 2008.

"I don't think people expected a tsunami of construction to happen," said Sylvia Scott-Hayes, president of the board of trustees. "I personally didn't think we would quite reach 100 percent, but I didn't think we would have had such a large gap."

The $34 million health education and fitness center at Mission College is an example of costs rising as a result of land purchases, and an appeal from Sylmar neighbors on an earlier design and environmental impact report for the 90,000-square-foot, two-story building on Harding Street, officials said.

College officials broke ground on the project Monday, but a land swap is still pending.

High construction costs have plagued large-scale projects throughout Los Angeles County, such as the Los Angeles Unified School District's even larger program.
About 200 projects will be left undone throughout the college district, including library renovations and physical-education fields.

College officials do not expect those estimates to change as they continue to analyze which projects will fall off the list and which should remain.

Critics say one big problem is that the trustees dragged their feet on projects that were proposed after the first bond measure passed in 2001.

"The fact of the matter is, they let time lapse, and the cost of all the materials have escalated up," Owen said. "The only reason there is a parking structure being built at Trade Tech is because me and my dedicated friends protested at the district headquarters."

College officials point to major projects completed, such as the $4 million Monarch Stadium at Valley College, and emphasize that other projects demanded more funding for designs, environmental impact reports and land purchases.

"My impression is in many cases they underestimated what the costs were going to be and oversold it to voters," said Bob Stern of the Center for Governmental Studies. "What did they promise, and what did they deliver? If they don't come through, people get disillusioned."

Larry Eisenberg, the college district's executive director for facilities planning and management, said the district has so far focused on smaller projects because of the rising construction costs, partly from China's huge demand for concrete, steel and lumber.

"I think people had assumptions that weren't realized," Eisenberg said.

When the projects were proposed in 2001-02, land cost was $250 per square foot. Now, it is $450 to $500 per square foot, he said.

"It's not that anyone had negative intentions when they asked for bond money," Eisenberg said. "Our costs doubled. Projects need to be designed before they are built. And the laws and the rules for some districts to build are complex."

An updated report on the status of various projects, and a list of projects that could be cut, will be presented to the board in the fall. The board will then decide whether to scrap plans or ask voters for a third bond measure.

Scott-Hayes said the board has not held formal discussions about a third bond, but that based on a survey of 1,000 voters that cost $42,750 to complete, residents seemed willing to approve a measure.

"They want to see projects completed," Scott-Hayes said.
College tour gives Latino students a wider world view

'This tour is the type of opportunity we came to this country for,' says the mother of one teen taking the seven-college trip.

By Jennifer Delson
Times Staff Writer
July 31, 2007

From subsidized apartments in gritty Orange County neighborhoods, 40 high school students began preparations to board a charter bus before dawn Monday, packing with them dreams of a college education.

By 7 a.m. the Latino students had hopped on what organizers called the "Barrio to Boardroom Bus" in Santa Ana for a week-long tour of college campuses in Northern California.

Many of the teens had never stayed in a hotel or traveled outside Southern California. Thirty-five of the teenagers hoped to be the first in their families to graduate college.

Although pleased that their children had the opportunity to travel and scout colleges, the Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant parents from Buena Park, Garden Grove and Huntington Beach were anxious about having their families separated. Many showed up two hours before the bus was scheduled to leave and began saying goodbyes, most through tears.

"This is huge for these families," said Yesenia Velez, board chairwoman of Orange County Community Housing Corp. Owner of 225 subsidized apartments, the nonprofit offers teen residents college counseling and, for the first time, an out-of-town campus tour. "Getting away from their neighborhoods is a big deal. For many of these students, this is the biggest trip they have ever taken. Even Disneyland would be big."

Mariel Pantoja, 16, a Buena Park student who hopes to be a police detective, woke at 4:30 a.m. so she would have time to go to her uncle's house to say goodbye, pack glue that will keep hair extensions in place, and to wipe her mother's tears.

"This is an opportunity we can't provide her," said her mother, Noelia Pantoja, 35, who came to the United States 17 years ago. "She really wants to go to college, and this program makes it seem possible."

Monica Cardenas, who heads the corporation's counseling program, conceived the bus tour with the hope of showing the teens "that there is a whole world out there."

Throughout the year, Cardenas and others have provided the students with information about colleges and taken them to local campuses. Cardenas, 24, knows firsthand about the barriers they face. Her father completed second grade; she graduated from Cal State Fullerton.

"There's no doubt that without this program, many of them would stray," she said.

Statistics show the odds are often stacked against the children of Latino immigrants. Nationally, one in five won't graduate from high school, said Richard Fry, a researcher with the Pew Hispanic Center.

Among Latinos nationwide, 47% do not attend college, 23% go to a four-year school, 25% go to community college and 5% get some form of postsecondary education, he said.
Students on the bus tour said their parents — who speak little English and haven't attended college — aren't the best career guides.

"That doesn't mean you don't want to go. I do," said Buena Park High School student Arturo Monje, 16, who hopes to be an engineer. "I want a better future for me and for my children."

Monje and other students will visit seven colleges in Northern California, in addition to seeing Hearst Castle and Monterey Bay.

Accompanied by 10 counselors who work for the corporation, the students will visit Cal State Monterey Bay, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, San Francisco State, San Jose State, UC Davis and Stanford. They will stay in college dorms and hotel rooms, a first for most in the group. The tour is sponsored by numerous private foundations.

Buena Park High School student Christian Velador, 13, is looking forward to the free buffets at each campus, while his neighbor Michael Penaloza, 17, is worried he will miss his mother's mole and menudo.

After loading their luggage, 20 cases of water, 15 cases of Gatorade, 50 bags of Cheetos and several dozen doughnuts, the students filed onto the bus, waving to red-eyed parents.

"It is wonderful that they have this chance to see and learn," said Evangelina Flores, whose 17-year-old son Pablo Palominos is on the tour.

"I've only gotten my kids as far as the zoo, the science center and the Natural History Museum. This tour is the type of opportunity we came to this country for."

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Vocational school chain settles suit

Corinthian Colleges plans to pay $6.5 million over claims it inflated its job-placement record.

By Henry Weinstein
Times Staff Writer

August 1, 2007

Corinthian Colleges, one of the nation's largest vocational school chains, has agreed to pay $6.5 million to settle a lawsuit alleging that the chain engaged in unlawful business practices by exaggerating its record of placing students in well-paying jobs.

The company, based in Santa Ana and operating under the names Bryman College, Everest Colleges, Titan Schools Inc. and National Institute of Technology, had been under investigation by the California attorney general's office for at least 18 months.

In a filing with the federal Securities and Exchange Commission last year, the school acknowledged that some of its campuses might have to be shut down as a result of the probe, though none of its 18 California schools will be shuttered. Some of the California programs will be placed under significant restrictions, however.

The settlement was approved Tuesday by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Kenneth Freeman.

The company, which has 94 campuses nationwide, agreed to pay $5.8 million in restitution to students. Thousands of students are expected to benefit, though exact figures were not yet available, said Albert N. Shelden, senior assistant attorney general, who heads the office's consumer unit.

Corinthian also agreed to pay $500,000 in civil damages and $200,000 in costs.

According to a lawsuit filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court, Corinthian campuses "engaged in a persistent pattern of unlawful conduct." School representatives persuaded people to enroll in classes at a cost between $7,000 and $27,000 by overstating the percentage of those who obtained employment from the courses, the suit said.

Corinthian also inflated information on starting salaries and made misleading or false statements about which programs it was authorized to offer and which were approved by the California Department of Education, the lawsuit added.

"In addition, the percentages of former students whom Corinthian's documents claim successfully obtain employment are inflated," the suit said. In some instances, Corinthian's records listed nonexistent businesses as students' places of employment, authorities alleged.

Corinthian officials "have placed intense pressure on their schools, particularly the recruitment employees and those who supervise them to meet a pre-set quota" of new enrollments, according to the suit.
"That means the employees are to enroll at least a certain number of students who stay in school beyond the five-day period during which students may withdraw from school and obtain a full refund under the California Education Code," the suit added.

Many people wound up paying their tuition through a combination of government grants, taxpayer-subsidized loans and private loans arranged by Corinthian.

As part of the court-approved settlement, Corinthian is barred for the next 18 months from offering specific courses at nine of its California campuses.

For example, it cannot offer the pharmacy technician program at its Anaheim, San Jose or Wilshire Boulevard campuses; the medical lab assistant program in City of Industry or San Bernardino; the homeland security program in San Bernardino; the business management program in Ontario or at the West Los Angeles campus; or the medical administrative assistant and medical insurance billing and coding programs in San Francisco.

From now on, Corinthian is also barred from compelling any student, as a condition of settlement with the company, to sign an agreement promising not to disclose that pact to a government agency. Shelden said the company had compelled such agreements in the past.

In addition, for the next four years, Corinthian has to provide data promptly so the attorney general's office can determine whether the company is complying with the judgment.

"This groundbreaking settlement provides a measure of justice and fair restitution to these students," state Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown said in a statement released with the settlement. "Corinthian students fully expected that their tuition payments would result in the glowing job opportunities the company promised.

"Unfortunately, their hopes were dashed as many of the students ended up unemployed and in deep debt," Brown said.

"We disagree with the attorney general's conclusions but we are pleased to have this matter behind us," said Anna Marie Dunlap, senior vice president for investor relations and corporate communications at Corinthian.

"The agreement is not evidence of wrongdoing, and the company specifically denied any wrongdoing as part of the settlement. We are fully committed to providing quality education and job placement services for students and to being in compliance with state law and regulations," Dunlap said.

Brown countered, "They certainly saw the force of our case and of the factual and legal basis on which we proceeded." He was referring to the lengthy state investigation followed by extensive negotiations conducted between his office and company officials, represented by two law firms: Manatt, Phelps & Phillips and O'Melveny & Myers.

"It certainly is our hope that other vocational schools will look at this judgment, take it seriously and make sure that their practices conform to what Corinthian is now going to have to do, and that they are treating their students fairly, legally and above board," Shelden said.

He said the attorney general's office was investigating other vocational school chains but declined to offer details.

Shelden also said his office was "providing technical assistance" to several organizations that engaged in negotiations in Sacramento over proposed legislation to reauthorize consumer protections governing trade schools that expired on June 30.
Caltech chemistry improves

The Pasadena school sets a record for female enrollment in its freshman classes in the traditionally male-dominated fields of science, technology.

By Larry Gordon
Times Staff Writer

The relatively modest — but growing — number of women at Caltech did not figure much in Hillary Walker's mind when she decided to enroll this fall as a freshman at the prestigious science and engineering campus in Pasadena.

But the 18-year-old physics student from Alaska was delighted to learn that she is part of a record-breaking uptick in the number of females at a school lampooned in the past as a place where extremely bright male scholars bonded more with microscopes than with members of the opposite sex.

"I think it's wonderful. I'm always happy to see more women in science," said Walker, who chose Caltech over Princeton University and MIT because of what she described as the school's intimate size, research opportunities and friendly environment. Besides, she said, having more women on campus "might liven up the social atmosphere. The men will certainly welcome it."

According to preliminary figures, 87 women are entering a freshman class of 206 students in September. That 37% share is Caltech's highest since it began admitting undergraduate women in 1970, when pioneering females comprised 14% of the entering class. (Female doctoral candidates first arrived in the 1950s.)

Six years ago, women made up about 36% of freshmen, but that dropped to as low as 28.5% last year.

The new rise may not seem very dramatic to the outside world. Caltech still lags the 46.1% female enrollment expected in this fall's freshman class at its East Coast rival, MIT, which offers a broader range of majors, and the 42.6% expected at Harvey Mudd College, the science-and-math-focused school in Claremont.

And all those schools still lag the current 57% female enrollment total at colleges nationwide.

Still, the increase at Caltech — a small and intellectually elite campus where the middle range of SAT scores is in the top 1% or 2% nationally — is significant. It represents progress in getting more women into the highest levels of technology and science training, officials said.

"The more women we have on this campus, the better it is for everybody," said Erica O'Neal, Caltech's assistant vice president for student affairs. "It is better for women to not feel so isolated. And it is better for the guys to learn how not to be awkward with the opposite sex."

Caltech students said they are not expecting a revolution in social life or an end to the much-discussed practice of "glomming," in which a posse of young men annoyingly seek the attention of one woman. But, they add, it doesn't require an 800 on your math SAT to realize that the improved ratio will boost men's chances for an on-campus girlfriend.

Michael Woods, a senior and chairman of the council that governs campus residence halls, said he welcomes anything that makes "the social environment at Caltech a little bit more like the rest of the world."
The old stereotype of Caltech students as romantically clueless holds some truth, although that is changing, said Woods, 20, a physics major from Torrance.

"Most of the students who come to Caltech spent most of their high school careers being nerds, and I myself am no exception," he said. "But I hope that does not make us totally socially inept."

The "emotional learning" in dorms and clubs, Woods said, "is a vital aspect of college that isn't represented in tuition and lecture halls."

Incoming freshman Elizabeth Mak, a Pasadena resident who plans to major in biology, said it is important to encourage more women to enter the traditionally male-dominated fields of science and technology.

Mak, 18, noted that she followed the controversy that arose two years ago when Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University, said that innate differences between men and women might be a reason why there was a dearth of female professors in the sciences.

Summers' comments sparked an immediate uproar and played a role in his departure from Harvard last year. He was replaced by a woman.

But whatever the biological differences are between males and females, "opportunity and success should be equal for both sexes," Mak said.

Although Caltech insists that it did not lower its notoriously tough admission standards or practice affirmative action for women, the school said it more actively and shrewdly recruited women this year.

Among other things, Caltech made its female applicants more aware that, for example, they could be physics majors but also study music and literature, said Rick Bischoff, director of undergraduate admissions.

"That's not to say men are not interested in those issues," but those seem to resonate more with women, Bischoff said.

According to the National Science Foundation, women outnumber men in the full-time graduate-level study of many biological sciences, but are woefully underrepresented by a 2-1 ratio in physical science fields, such as chemistry and physics, and by a 3-1 ratio in computer science.

Caltech is not alone among science and engineering campuses in grappling with gender imbalances. Harvey Mudd College, which also attracts top-flight students, saw its percentage of freshman women drop to about 25% last year from a recent average of about 33%. But this year, the campus is proud of a rise to a record 42.6% of an expected 197 freshmen.

That increase was attributed in part to the actions of Harvey Mudd's new president, Maria Klawe, the first woman in that post. Among other steps, she sent handwritten letters to every woman who had been accepted at Harvey Mudd, urging them to enroll there.

"It didn't hurt at all that we have a woman president who cares deeply about these issues," said Peter Osgood, Harvey Mudd's admissions director.

The anticipated female presence among MIT's 1,070 freshmen — 46% — is close to what it has been for the last four years or so. MIT does not have "quotas of any kind or policies that would mirror such quotas, but we do try our best to enroll as diverse a class as possible across the board," said Ben Jones, associate director of admissions.
At Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's engineering college, the percentage of female freshmen is up slightly from 13.1% to 15.4%. The percentage of female freshmen enrolled in its college of science and mathematics is expected to remain at about 56% this fall, the same as last year, said James Maraviglia, assistant vice president for admissions and financial aid issues.

Phoebe Leboy, president-elect of the Assn. for Women in Science, said the presence of women in many science fields is rising. She attributed the increase to improved K-12 education and to young men being lured to more lucrative careers, such as Wall Street.

Leboy has a mixed view of Caltech's recruitment of women.

"I think they can do better," she said, "but one has to give them a pat on the back for improving things."

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