RELATED NEWS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER
Part 2

Los Angeles Times—October 19, 2008—Article on Measure J for Los Angeles Community College.

Los Angeles Times—October 19, 2008—Article on college’s financial aide shrinking.

Long Beach Press Telegram—October 20, 2008—Article about CSULB’s remote controlled library.

Los Angeles Times—October 20, 2008—Article on college’s offering video game majors.

Long Beach Press Telegram—October 27, 2008—Informational brief on beer & politics with CSULB president

Los Angeles Times—October 20, 2008—Article on vocational training program offered at Center for Education in TV and Radio (Centro).

Los Angeles Times—October 21, 2008—Article on UC labor pact with minimum wage workers.

Long Beach Press Telegram—October 22, 2008—Article on Cal States deal with Sun Edison for solar.

Los Angeles Times—October 24, 2008—Article on UCLA chancellor’s return.

Long Beach Press Telegram—October 27, 2008—Informational brief on beer & politics with CSULB president

Long Beach Press Telegram—October 29, 2008—Article on federal funds for CSULB.

Los Angeles Times—October 30, 2008—Article on opponent of Measure J.

Los Angeles Times—October 30, 2008—Article on college tuition rise.
23 bond issues seek new funding for schools

L.A. Unified's $7.1 billion plan is the largest ever for a California school district.

The community college district seeks $3.5 billion.

A state-mandated 23-school bond ballot measure passed in November, but voters rejected two other bond measures in recent years. The district is now seeking $3.5 billion for new construction and repairs.

By Howard Blume

L.A. Unified's $7.1 billion plan is the largest ever for a California school district.

The district has a long history of bond issues, going back to the 1970s. The most recent bond issue, approved in 2006, raised $2.8 billion. The new bond issue would bring the total to $9.9 billion.

The bond issue would cover a wide range of projects, including new schools, repairs to existing schools, and upgrades to technology and facilities.

L.A. Unified is one of the largest school districts in the country, serving more than 625,000 students. The district has faced challenges in recent years, including a budget crisis and a lawsuit over the district's special education program.
Tough times put the squeeze on colleges

As more students must apply for financial aid, many universities see the value of their endowments shrink.

By Larry Gordon
Times Staff Writer

With family investments and house values battered by the financial crisis, colleges and universities in California and around the nation are seeing an increase in students seeking financial aid and are bracing for even more.

At the same time, higher education's ability to meet that extra need is in question because the value of many college endowments has dropped as well, experts say.

"It's putting more demands on the system when the system can least afford the new demands economically," said Phil Day, president of the National Assn. of Student Financial Aid Administrators. "It's going to be tight."

Nationally, applications for financial aid jumped 16% this fall compared to last year, said Day, a former chancellor of the City College of San Francisco. And that figure probably will rise again in the spring and next fall if Wall Street does not bounce back from its recent losses, he said.

Some schools may need to cut back on other spending to fund extra scholarships, Day predicted. "What's more important than making sure the students have access?" he asked.

Whittier College, Stanford University, Santa Clara University and many University of California campuses are among schools that have recently seen additional students asking for extra aid, officials said. They and others are expecting even more if the economy remains slow.

"Like every individual American and every corporation, colleges are concerned about what is happening in the economy. We are well aware it might affect our enrollments," said Lisa Meyer, Whittier's vice president for enrollment.

Meyer said her office is increasing grants and boosting staffing to help students find loans if their families' college savings accounts have been hit by Wall Street losses or if they can no longer borrow against their homes.

But she said that Whittier, which enrolls about 1,300 students, cannot afford to meet all of the new need with grants. "There are fiscal realities we have to live within," she said. Whittier's relatively modest endowment was about $80 million on June 30, and officials there and at many other schools are awaiting figures on their portfolios' current, presumably lower, values.

Stanford University, which enrolls about 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students, had a $17-billion endowment on June 30. That allowed Stanford this year to expand its undergraduate financial aid to offer free tuition to most students from families earning less than $100,000 a year. It joined a small number of affluent schools giving such breaks.

[See Aid, Page B11]
Colleges feel the fiscal pinch of the tough economic times

‘Colleges are concerned about what is happening in the economy.’

— Lisa Meyer, Whittier College vice president

Santa Clara, which had a $897-million endowment in June, is among many schools using formulas that average their endowment returns over three years.

That “even out the hits and misses,” Toomey said, and allows schools to maintain financial aid and other programs in bad years.

In Claremont, Pomona College had, as of June 30, $1.78 billion in its endowment, a very large amount for a school that enrolls 1,520 students.

Karen Sisson, Pomona’s vice president and treasurer, said that a dip in the endowment’s value would not lead the college to reduce aid. Pomona this year replaced student loans with grants.

“One of the blessings we have with our endowment is we do have the capacity to weather the storm,” she said.

At Northeastern University in Boston, about 10% more students than last year have asked for additional midyear aid, according to Anthony Ervins, financial aid director.

His office also is fielding calls from parents asking “what if” questions about whether reduced investment values could make them eligible for more aid. So far, the university has been able to meet all legitimate needs.

“I think all of us in higher education are watching the financial markets and how families are going to react,” said Ronne Turner, Northeastern’s dean of admission.

If the crisis had begun two months earlier, some colleges might have lost freshman enrollment, said Sarah Shanahan, vice president for policy development at the National Assn. of Independent Colleges and Universities.

For now, she has not heard such stories, but “there is a lot of nervousness out there,” she said.

larry.gordon@latimes.com
REMOTE CONTROL
Cal State Long Beach's library system fetches books automatically and saves space

LONG BEACH — How can you fit more than 100,000 books into a room that's only about 3,000 square feet?

The Cal State Long Beach Library recently achieved that very engineering capability using technology employed mainly in the automobile and aerospace industries.

Chances are, if a student wants to see a copy of a bound academic journal, the volume will arrive by way of the new mechanized book storage and retrieval system that the University Library began using in May, called Online Remote Collection Access, or ORCA.

Housed in a newly built structure connected to the library, the robotic book retrieval system consists of about 5,000 metal bins stacked in six floors — four stories high.
After the library's computer system locates the desired volume, one of three cranes shoots up to meet the ceiling, retrieves the metal bin, then lowers and approaches several computer terminals at the front of the room.

Once it reaches the terminals, the crane then automatically unloads the metal bin. A library staff member retrieves the book and sends the crane back up to replace the metal bin in the climate-controlled facility.

The use of the $2.3 million automated library storage system, manufactured by Salt Lake City-based IJK Systems, has made library operations more efficient, said Ronan Kochan, CSLUB dean of library services.

The ORCA project required building a $2.3 million addition to the library just to house the metal bins, each separated by just 3/4 inch.

The project was part of an overall modernization effort at the library, Kochan said, which included new computers.

ORCA is connected to the library's computer system, meaning that library patrons can reserve the copies online.

The compact storage also had another benefit. It allowed the library to reclaim 38,000 square feet of space on its fifth floor, formerly used for book shelves.

"There was very little growth space left for the library before the automated system was installed," Kochan said.

Now that most of the shelves have been cleared out, staff members on the fifth floor can be found sitting at tables to study or to work on group projects, which have become more prevalent in college courses in recent years, he said.

The university's new library is the result of a 1989 $36 million bond issue, and it is the first building to be completed on the campus since 1975. The university had been facing a $1.2 million deficit in its library budget, leading to cuts in library programs, Kochan said.

The new automated retrieval system wasn't initially developed for libraries, he said. It was originally intended for manufacturers in such industries as automotive and aerospace, and then adapted for library use, he says.

"It's been around a long time," he said.

Kochan got the idea when he saw a similar system in use at a Ford auto parts facility.

"It made sense," he said. "I bought into it." Kochan hopes students and staff do, as well.

Just to clue them in on the project, Kochan installed a live camera in the ORCA room that feeds into a video screen mounted on the wall of another library feature that Kochan says is currently the wave of the future: The library's new Starbucks.

kochan@pacificwest.com, 925-499-1328
Mom, I want to major in video games

By ALEX PHAM
Times Staff Writer

Parents may think it's a joke, but schools are serious — and the field is seriously lucrative.

Second of three parts

THE THIUKRALS wanted their son, Dhruv, to go into nanotechnology. So when he told them he'd rather be a video game developer than have fun as well, they had to join the circus.

"Are you serious?" they asked.

He was. The 21-year-old USC graduate student proved it by switching the focus of his computer science doctorate from a field known as distributed systems to video game programming.

He then launched a campaign to convince his parents back home in New Delhi that helping people have fun was not only a legitimate career but also lucrative. He peppered them with articles about the growth of the video game industry, which is expected to generate global revenue of nearly $50 billion this year. He also sent them stock charts and annual reports of some of the industry's top companies.

They relented.

"Awareness is growing, and more students are interested," said Thukral, who in 2004 became one of the inaugural students in USC's graduate program for video game development. "Computer science can be fun.

Game design has helped rekindle interest in computer science

[Games From Page 11]

PUSHING PLAY: USC students gather in May to show their video game projects to professors and recruiters in the industry.

The skills they teach here perfectly fit with what we are trying to do," said Redmond.

Students come from USC's other departments, such as the School of Cinematic Arts, which created its own game program for graduate students in 2003.

The surge in interest has led schools to add games to their curricula but not to the benefit of its students. Recruiters say they often see "nits" that run around the clock seeking to quickly churn out as many students as possible. Other programs teach specific skills but not how games are pulled together.

"It's a very hot academic growth area," said Colleen McKeymey, who runs LA's university relations program. "They're very worried about the number of community colleges and for-profit institutions, as well as four-year programs, that are using game design as a lure for students who are not going to be prepared for the real entry-level positions that the game industry wants." Among established programs, success in placing students in jobs is high.

About one-third of Carnegie Mellon's graduates go directly to work at EA, said Cindy Nicoll, the company's vice president of talent acquisition. The Redwood City, Calif., company looks up to 800 new graduates each year from various universities.

"You've got kids in school who wake up saying, I want to be a game developer when I grow up," Nicoll said. "That's pretty exciting.

One of them is Paul Bellizzi, 39, who says he thinks of games as "the new dominant form of entertainment." He was so desperate to enroll in the USC School of Cinema and Television Film that he showed up uninvited to many of its events. After months of schmoozing, he got in.

There, Bellizzi teamed with another student, Matt Kozy, to produce a little called "The Misadventures of P.B. 7
Winterbottom," a metaphysical puzzle game that combines the creepy but cute aesthetics of illustrator Edward Gorey with the look of silent film.

Bellezza and Korea graduated from the master's program at USC in May and formed their own game company, Odd Gentlemen Co., in Los Angeles.

"This is my dream job," Bellezza said.

Working in the business isn't always a bed of roses, particularly for the entry-level game testers. Bellezza did that for a year before enrolling at USC.

"Imagine having to play a video game that's not as good as the ones you get to play at home," said David S.J. Hodgson, co-author of the book "Video Game Careers." "None of the textures are in, so everything looks blurry and your characters are doing weird things. Each time they do that, you have to write it down so the developers can fix it."

"Now imagine having to play that same level again and again for nine months," he added.

"You have to do things like pound on every inch of the walls on that level to make sure there are no bugs. It's mind-numbing."

Then there are the deadline pressure and the long hours.

"The stress is absolutely phenomenal," Hodgson said. People sleep on couches and floors. Their desks are littered with snacks, old games and the detritus of half-eaten meals. There's a reason why big game studios have showers, laundromats, beverage cars and gyms on site. It's so you will never leave."

Rewards await those who stick it out.

The average annual salary last year for game developers — which includes all workers in the industry — was $73,600, not including bonuses and stock options that can add several thousand more, according to a 2017 survey by Game Developer magazine.

Gordon, the former chief creative officer of EA, had this message for other students: "We're starved for talent. So hurry up and graduate."

Some don't even have to graduate. After the USC event, where Thakral presented a cellphone game designed to get kids to exercise, he got a job offer at EA's mobile games division. He took it and is now working on his doctorate at night.

His parents, he said, were very pleased.

Source: Times research

Los Angeles Times

On latimes.com

To watch a video on how a group of students at USC created the game "The Misadventures of P.B. Winterbottom," as well as to view photos documenting a brief history of video games, go to latimes.com/workofplay.

About this series

Sunday

Despite the slow economy, the video game business is booming, especially in California.

Today

Video game design has become a hot major at hundreds of schools across the country.

Tuesday

The boom in video game jobs has largely bypassed women, which could stunt the industry's growth.

The Work of Play will continue as a series of occasional articles exploring some of the jobs created by the game industry.

www.latimes.com/fulltime.php?id=14
University of Central Florida
Orlando, Fla.
www.fem.scied.stu/higher/ShowPage.php?page_id=1
Cornell University
Ithaca, N.Y.
gdi.ac.cornell.edu
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia
cp.sas.upenn.edu/ogpp契/index.php
Other resources:
The International Game Developers Association website has a framework for a proposed curriculum in game development: igda.org/wiki/index.php?Game_Education_SIG/Curriculum
United Business Media, publisher of Game Developer magazine, lists more than 300 schools offering game courses or programs: www.gamescareerguide.com/schools

Source: Times research

8
Students focus on broadcasting

Program trains people for behind-the-scenes jobs in TV and radio

By Richard Verrier
Times Staff Writer

In a small classroom inside an industrial park in Torrance, veteran TV engineer Jaime Hernandez is dispensing some practical advice to his eager students.

Look at the subject. Frame the shot. Check the focus. Above all, be consistent.

"I had a student who was always going after the spectacular shot," Hernandez said. "I told him, just give me something I can use. Just give me a base hit, not a home run every time."

With that in mind, a dozen students fanned out to film segments on topics such as high gas prices and fishing at the Redondo Beach Pier before returning to the classroom two hours later, when their work would be dissected.

The learning-by-doing approach is core to the mission of the Center for Education in TV and Radio, nicknamed Centro, which is Spanish for "center" and a rough acronym of the business' name. This minority-owned business offers a seven-month vocational training program to students pursuing careers in television and radio broadcasting.

The students don't fit the profile of those at established college programs. Many come from inner-city neighborhoods in Los Angeles and couldn't afford to attend a four-year college.

"We need to diversify our industry at all levels, and that's what we're helping to do," said Rolando Nichols, the school's co-founder and morning news anchor at Univision Communications Inc.'s K MiaX-TV Channel 34. "We're giving opportunities to kids who otherwise might have done menial work for the rest of their lives."

Launched this year by Nichols and other Latino journalists, the center is a small player in the field. Centro has just 26 students and six instructors. And the center is not yet accredited, a process that takes two years.

[See Broadcasting, Page C4]
Program aims to diversify broadcasting

Already, however, the program has garnered a strong reputation among major networks such as Fox Sports and ESPN, by tapping into a growing demand for technicians, especially those who are bilingual. ESPN International, which owns in full or in part 45 international TV networks, recently hired one of the graduates to work as an assistant producer.

"They have state-of-the-art equipment in their facility, and they're teaching students how to operate it in a very practical way," said Charla Johnson, vice president of production and development for ESPN.

"We're very impressed," said Jennifer Johnson, spokesperson for Fox Sports West and Fox Sports Prime Time. Fox Sports has hired three of the graduates.

"Their graduates have fit well into our production crew," she said.

That's what Nichols had in mind when he hatched the business concept two years ago while teaching a journalism class at UCLA. He realized that many of the students lacked something he couldn't teach in a classroom: a production experience in the field and familiarity with the latest digital equipment.

"You can have a four-year college degree but if you don't know how to use the digital cameras or editing stations, you're not going to get a job," Nichols said, adding that he keeps his anchor duties "completely separate" from the school, which is managed by former KNX-TV Channel 2 anchor Odita De La Torre.

Education runs deep for Nichols, 23, whose relatives own several schools and a university in the northern Mexican state of Baja California, where he grew up before moving to Arizona to attend high school.

He drew up a business plan for a training program run by experienced professionals that would simulate the conditions of an actual TV studio. He recruited a team of bilingual investors, including De La Torre.

"I immediately saw the potential, that we could make the students marketable and ready to work as soon as they leave here," De La Torre said.

The curriculum would stress learning all facets of the business, including operating cameras and lighting equipment, directing shoots and using editing stations.

"We wanted to train them for a life in media, so if they can't find a job in one area, they can find it in another," De La Torre said.

The biggest hurdle was obtaining financing. "I went to most every major bank," Nichols said. "They all thought it was crazy."

After months of trying, Nichols secured an $80,000 loan backed by the Small Business Administration through Promerica Bank, which came to Lettco-owned businesses.

"They knew what they were doing for and had the experience in the field," said Joe Joseph, the bank's senior vice president. But topping his contacts in the industry, Nichols asked Fox Sports for other networks what equipment they needed them to approach Panavision, Arri and other manufacturers to negotiate discounts on cameras, editing stations and other tools of the trade.

Otero also partnered with National Mobile Television, a branch-based firm that sells rentable TV trucks that serve as studio trucks. Throwing the school as a potential training ground for new recruits, National Mobile Television agreed to house the school in its facility and make its equipment available for training.

"Our industry has had a shortage of qualified people," said Frank Coll, National's senior vice president of operations. National Mobile Television customers, in turn, helped fund the school to industry heavyweights such as ESPN, which allowed some of the students to work as production trainees during ESPN's X Games in Los Angeles this summer.

The company generates about $460,000 in annual revenue and expects to break even this year despite falling short of its original target of 60 students. The shortfall is mainly because many students don't qualify for federal loans to cover the $25,000 tuition. That situation should ease once the school gets accredited next year, making students eligible for federal grants, Nichols said.

Students make extra income for themselves and the school by producing commercials, including a recent television ad for Downey Regional Medical Center.

Among those who worked on the project was Juan Martinez, who recently graduated at the top of his class and landed a job at ESPN.

"Where I come from, people are expected to go to jail and become a gangster," said Martinez, 22, who grew up in South Central Los Angeles. "This is my opportunity to prove everyone they're wrong."
CALIFORNIA

UC labor pact talks progress

After a yearlong impasse, the University of California has reached a tentative labor contract with 11,000 patient care workers.

The pact calls for the minimum wage for workers at the system’s five medical centers to be raised to $14.50 an hour over five years. It also provides salary parity for existing employees and new hires, sets up a step system to reward workers for years of service and guarantees extra pay for overtime work. Officials with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees will recommend that its members ratify the contract when they meet early next month.

Still without a contract are 8,000 custodians, groundskeepers and other service workers also represented by the federation. UC spokesman Paul Schwartz said the state budget crisis is “a major factor” in limiting what the university can offer.

“All employees deserve to be compensated fairly, not just those in the union,” Schwartz said. “But raising salaries that lag behind market rates systemwide would require mas-

sive resources, hundreds of millions of dollars.”

But the president of Local 3299, Lakesha Harrison, pointed to UC’s recent spending on executive salaries and construction and said the university could well afford to use the patient care agreement as a standard for the service workers.

“The university has proven time and time again they are only prudent with their lowest-paid workers,” Harrison said.

— GALE HOLLAND
Governor to let sun shine on campuses

ENERGY: Deal with SunEdison to use solar power at 15 Cal State sites will lower rates.

By Nguyen Huy Vu

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger took time from dealing with California’s growing money crunch on Tuesday to announce a plan that provides state university campuses with more affordable power.

But the governor was later questioned at a press conference at Cal State Dominguez Hills about his call for lawmakers to work out the growing fiscal crisis in a special session.

The state recently agreed to let solar power company SunEdison build, maintain and pay for solar panels at 15 California State University campuses, including Cal State Long Beach. In return, the company will charge the schools cheaper rates.

SunEdison officials said construction on the solar panels will likely be completed by early 2009 and will generate more than 12 million hours of energy within a year.

"California has more sun than anywhere in the world," Schwarzenegger said. "Why not utilize that energy?"

The governor made the announcement behind a solar panel canopy at CSUDH, one of the first schools in the state to use the solar energy it collects.

More than 3,000 panels generate about 900,000 kilowatts a year, producing nearly a fourth of campus power needs, according to university officials.

"California’s continued economic, environmental and social prosperity depends on sustainable energy and technology," said CSU Chancellor Charles B. Reed. "As the nation’s largest university system, the CSU welcomes this opportunity to lead the way."

Schwarzenegger said he dreams of a day when he can fly over the state by helicopter and see every rooftop with solar power panels.

“In this political season, everyone talks about red states and blue states,” he said. “I’m doing everything in my power to make California a green state.”

As Schwarzenegger fielded questions from the crowd, the focus turned to state finances. California is facing a $3 billion deficit less than a month after approving a budget because of lower than anticipated revenues and a slumping economy.

As foreclosure rates soar and a funding source for the state’s basic needs remains unclear, the governor believes lawmakers need to return to Sacramento in a special session.
At UCLA, he’s forever Young

The former longtime chancellor comes out of retirement (again) to teach a course on the American presidency.

LARRY GORDON

To many students at UCLA, Charles E. Young is a building or a street, not a breathing, teaching human being.

After all, two prominent features of the Westwood campus are the Charles E. Young Research Library and Charles E. Young Drive, both named for the charismatic chancellor who led UCLA for nearly 30 years until he retired in 1997.

But to the surprise of some young people, the real-life Young is back at UCLA these days, teaching an undergradu- ate class on the American presidency and the current election.

The first full course that Young has taught in more than 40 years, it marks a complete circle from the time he left UCLA and later became president of the University of Florida and then of a higher education foundation in the Persian Gulf state of Qatar.

Now, the man who helped transform UCLA into a world-class research university spends a dozen hours each week preparing for his three-hour course, which carries students from George Washington to George W. Bush and on into next month’s presidential contest.

To the 54 students who landed much-coveted seats in his weekly class, Young lectures on such topics as Theodore Roosevelt’s reforms and why John McCain admires them, and on Franklin Roosevelt’s actions during the Great Depression and the lessons they hold for the current financial mess.

Young, 76, said he sometimes has to remind himself of his students’ youth and that

[See Young, Page B6]

Former chancellor is back at UCLA

[Young, from Page B1]

They may not follow his shorthand references to historical figures. So he tries to blend history and today’s headlines in a way “that is going to make sense to the kids.”

“I thought to do just the current election would have insufficient substance and get to be just a bull session,” Young said during an interview in his modest office at the UCLA School of Public Affairs. “I thought it would be more instructive for people to understand how we got where we are today in terms of presidential elections.”

For its first sessions, his course sweeps from the nation's founding to contemporary politics, leaving time for frequent discussions of the presidential race between McCain and Barack Obama. Next month, it will focus fully on the election and policy challenges for the winner.

Young disclosed his support for Obama to students early on but said he tries to keep lectures neutral.

“ar course like this, you are better off if you spell out who you are, what you are and what your biases are, so the students don’t have to, to guess,” said Young, who earned a political science doctorate from UCLA in 1960 and then, at 36, became the youngest chancellor in UC history.

Some students did not know who Young was when they signed up for the political science class. Seeing the library and street name, others assumed he was dead and that their professor might be a younger Young, possibly his son. Now, they seem delighted to have as their teacher the man credited with hugely increasing UCLA’s fundraising and academic prestige.

Matt Murphy, a sophomore majoring in political science and economics, said he enrolled because of the topic’s timeliness and to fulfill a requirement, not because of Young, whom he was vaguely aware. It has become his favorite class. “I pretty much stuck with a class about this presidential election and getting to be taught by someone who I now know has had such an amazing impact on this university,” Murphy said.

Young told his students about himself, noting that he was born during Herbert Hoover’s presidency and the Depression. “You know what’s happening now and know the consequences are very great,” he said of the financial crisis.

“But that isn’t nothing compared to then.”

In response to a student's
question about socialism, he briefly touched on his support in the 1960s for the right of the radical Angela Davis to teach philosophy at UCLA when UC regents and then-Gov. Ronald Reagan tried to fire her.

UCLA nowadays, he said, is more placid and conventional than it was in the era of protests against the Vietnam War. Yet he also stressed that many UCLA students are keenly interested in the election and do more community service and volunteer work than earlier generations.

Young has come out of retirement three times. After four years at the University of Florida and two helping to create a new college system in Qatar, he took on consulting work, including advising UC Merced about establishing a medical school. He and his wife, Judy, now live in Thousand Oaks and have a vacation house on an island in British Columbia.

During earlier visits to UCLA, Young said, he had to fend off requests from acquaintances to go to bat for them on campus issues. He reminded them that he no longer controls things at UCLA and cannot interfere with current administrators. “I couldn’t if I wanted to, and I don’t want to,” he said. More recently, he is treated more like a warmly welcomed colleague, he said, which “feels great.”

But Young, who receives a stipend for his class on top of his UCLA pension, said he is not sure whether he’ll teach again in a nonelection year. “Standing up and teaching,” he said, “is grueling, but grueling fun.”

Gordon is a Times staff writer. larry.gordon@latimes.com
LONG BEACH
CSULB chief at Beer & Politics

This month’s Beer & Politics meeting features CSULB President F. King Alexander discussing the university’s impact on Long Beach.

The meeting is Tuesday at 7 p.m. at Gallagher’s Pub & Grill, 2751 E. Broadway, Long Beach. Alexander will also take questions.

It’s free of charge, and the Webcast is online at www.beerandpolitics.org.

CSULB program gets federal funds

By Kevin Butler
Staff Writer

LONG BEACH — The California State University system — including its Long Beach campus — has received $1.6 million in federal money to continue a program that trains students in foreign languages deemed critical to national security.

President Bush late last month signed into law a bill that includes the money for the Strategic Language Initiative.

The multi-campus program focuses on training more students for defense, intelligence, diplomatic and business employment utilizing strategically important foreign languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Russian and Korean.

Cal State Long Beach provides intensive instruction in Mandarin Chinese as one of several CSU campuses involved in the Strategic Language Initiative.

This is the third fiscal year that the program has received federal funding.

The initiative aims to provide students with intensive foreign language instruction and opportunities to study abroad.

Rep. Laura Richardson, D-Long Beach, who co-sponsored the program during the Congressional appropriations process, said she hoped that the program would provide opportunities for Southern Californians to get jobs in the U.S. Foreign Service.

“At a time when the cost of college is rising, these funds will stabilize a vital program that might otherwise be reduced,” she said in a statement.
Complaint targets bond campaign

An opponent of Measure J filed a complaint Wednesday with Dist. Atty. Steve Cooley accusing community college officials of improperly using taxpayer resources to promote the $3.5-billion bond measure before the Nov. 4 election.

Attorney Dan Wright filed a seven-page complaint saying Cooley should determine whether the Los Angeles Community College District broke the law by assigning its development team to spend office hours talking up the school construction bond, the district’s third in seven years.

Wright said the college’s efforts, including appearances on television and at civic events, conflict with laws barring government officials from using public resources to “expressly advocate” for ballot measures.

Representatives of the Measure J campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Still, the complaint is only the latest in the county to focus on taxpayer money and local tax hikes.

Last week, City Controller Laura Chick said the Los Angeles Unified School District should not be spending $1 million in taxpayer funds on an outreach campaign for Measure Q, the $7-billion bond measure. That effort has included $500,000 worth of Measure Q mailers and $21,000 worth of Measure Q hats and T-shirts for parents and teachers.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority spent $1.1 million promoting Measure R, the half-cent sales tax hike for transportation, but canceled an additional $3 million in outreach efforts after receiving complaints from county supervisors.

— David Zahniser
Tuition may rise sharply, experts warn

The cost of attending college rises nearly 6% this school year. The economic crisis might push tuition bills sharply higher next year.

A report released Wednesday by the College Board showed that the average price of attending college rose 6.6% this fall, but education officials warned that the widening economic crisis might push tuition bills sharply higher next year.

Annual tuition, fees, and room and board for in-state students at four-year public colleges and universities nationwide grew 5.7% for the current academic year to $24,332, according to the College Board’s annual college pricing survey. For four-year private schools, the price of attending rose 6.8% to $34,132.

A financial aid reduced schooling expenses for eligible students.

The increases closely matched the 5.7% overall inflation rate for the fiscal year ending July 2008 and were relatively moderate compared with a run-up of college costs a decade ago.

"This is certainly not quite the norm by historical standards," said Sandy Baum, a College Board policy analyst and economics professor for Biddlemore College in New York.

But tuition might be looming. State budget cuts, college expenditures hit hard by the tumbling stock market, and an expected slide in donations could lead to higher charges for students and parents next year, some officials warn. However, some experts speculate that schools may be loath to raise prices at a time when many American families face layoffs, home foreclosures and shrinking investments.

Molly Corbett Broad, president of the American Council on Education, said she was worried about the possibility of steep tuition hikes at both public and private institutions.

“I am afraid this year’s College Board report may prove only to be a snapshot of a time in history that we might soon be referring to as the good old days,” she said in a prepared statement. Given the economic strains and endowment losses, college administrators "will be reluctant to increase tuition, but they will likely have little choice.”

Ball said the College Board said she could not make predictions but conceded that campuses were feeling financial strains. “Obviously, the pressure is going to be very strong on colleges and universities, as it is going to be on the rest of the economy,” she told reporters Wednesday during a telephone news conference.

At the National Assn. of Independent Colleges and Universities, spokesman Tony Plais pointed out that one school, Benedictine University in Illinois, recently froze tuition fees through spring 2010 and guaranteed that next year’s freshman classes would see no increases through 2011 because of the financial problems many families are facing. Some other private schools may follow that example. Plais said, and others will work to limit hikes.

Still, average tuition increases probably will be larger next year, Plais said. But whether they will be significant is too early to predict," he added.

According to the College Board report, students at California’s community colleges and Cal State campuses are getting a good deal compared with students in other states.

This year, annual tuition and fees at public two-year colleges nationwide averaged $2,462, compared with $3,934 at California community colleges.

Excluding room and board, tuition and fees at four-year public schools averaged $18,555, compared with $32,500 at Cal State campuses. Annual UC fees are more than $36,000 not including living costs, but UC officials are similar to those of other highly ranked, research-oriented public universities.

However, with the state budget billions of dollars in the red, officials of California’s public universities are guarding themselves for possible fee hikes next year, although they say it is too soon to speak of specifics before next month’s meetings of Cal State trustees and UC regents.

Many other state campuses face similar situations, according to the National Assn. of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. Since state budgets and tax revenues are down, “universities will be forced to increase tuition,” said Peter McNerney, the association’s president.

Full-time students at public four-year institutions received grants and tax benefits averaging $3,700, and full-timers at private four-year schools received grants and rebates averaging $10,000, the College Board report said.

American undergraduates received an average of $3,800 in financial aid this year, including $4,958 in grants and $3,650 in federal loans.

The debt level worries educators and families. About 60% of all students who graduated in 2007 had some school loans to pay off, and the average total debt was $18,800 at public colleges and $23,500 at private schools. That average debt was 18% higher than it was six years ago, the study found.

Tumult in the banking industry and the increased amounts of money that students can now borrow in federally guaranteed loans are discouraging students from taking out private loans, College Board officials said. Private-loan volume fell slightly between the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years, while federal-loan volume rose about 6% after inflation, the officials said.

The study did not include the most cautious. "Our research shows experts and they expected to see that trend grow stronger.

Gordon is a Times staff writer.

larry.gordon@latimes.com