AP Photo / In this March 23, 2012 photo, Dr. Francesco Rubino, a surgeon at Weill Cornell Medical Center, joins his patient Tamikka McCray, 39, for an interview in New York. McCray no longer needed to take diabetes medication and insulin after her weight-loss surgery. Research by Dr. Francesco Rubino, McCray's surgeon at Weill Cornell, and other doctors gives clear proof that weight-loss surgery can reverse and possibly cure diabetes.

**Surgery can put Type 2 diabetes into remission**

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE - AP Chief Medical Writer

CHICAGO New research gives clear proof that weight-loss surgery can reverse and possibly cure diabetes, and doctors say the operation should be offered sooner to more people with the disease - not just as a last resort.

The two studies, released on Monday, are the first to compare stomach-reducing operations to medicines alone for "diabesity" - Type 2 diabetes brought on by obesity. Millions of Americans have this and can't make enough insulin or use what they do make to process sugar from food.

Both studies found that surgery helped far more patients achieve normal blood-sugar levels than medicines alone did.

The results were dramatic: Some people were able to stop taking insulin as soon as three days after their operations. Cholesterol and other heart risk factors also greatly improved.
Doctors don't like to say "cure" because they can't promise a disease will never come back. But in one study, most surgery patients were able to stop all diabetes drugs and have their disease stay in remission for at least two years. None of those treated with medicines alone could do that.

"It is a major advance," said Dr. John Buse of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a leading diabetes expert who had no role in the studies. Buse said he often recommends surgery to patients who are obese and can't control their blood-sugar through medications, but many are leery of it. "This evidence will help convince them that this really is an important therapy to at least consider," he said.

There were signs that the surgery itself - not just weight loss - helps reverse diabetes. Food makes the gut produce hormones to spur insulin, so trimming away part of it surgically may affect those hormones, doctors believe.

Weight-loss surgery "has proven to be a very appropriate and excellent treatment for diabetes," said one study co-leader, Dr. Francesco Rubino, chief of diabetes surgery at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. "The most proper name for the surgery would be diabetes surgery."

The studies were published online by the New England Journal of Medicine, and the larger one was presented Monday at an American College of Cardiology conference in Chicago.

**Studies mirror millions**

More than a third of American adults are obese, and more than 8 percent have diabetes, a major cause of heart disease, strokes and kidney failure. Between 5 million and 10 million are like the people in these studies, with both problems.

For a century, doctors have been treating diabetes with pills and insulin, and encouraging weight loss and exercise with limited success. Few very obese people can drop enough pounds without surgery, and many of the medicines used to treat diabetes can cause weight gain, making things worse.

Surgery offers hope for a long-term fix. It costs $15,000 to $25,000, and Medicare covers it for very obese people with diabetes. Gastric bypass is the most common type: Through "keyhole" surgery, doctors reduce the stomach to a small pouch and reconnect it to the small intestine.

One previous study tested stomach banding, a less drastic and reversible procedure for limiting the size of the stomach. This technique lowered blood
sugar, but those patients had mild diabetes. The new studies tested permanent weight-loss surgery in people with longtime, severe diabetes.

**Methodologies**

At the Cleveland Clinic, Dr. Philip Schauer studied 150 people given one of two types of surgery plus standard medicines or a third group given medicines alone. Their A1c levels - the key blood-sugar measure - were over 9 on average at the start. A healthy A1c is 6 or below.

One year after treatment began, only 12 percent of those treated with medicines alone were at that healthy level, versus 42 percent and 37 percent of the two groups given surgery.

Use of medicines for high cholesterol and other heart risks dropped among those in the surgery groups but rose in the group on medicines alone.

"Every single one of the bypass patients who got to 6 or less got there without the need for any diabetes medicines. Almost half of them were on insulin at the start. That's pretty amazing," said a study co-leader, Dr. Steven Nissen, the Cleveland Clinic's cardiovascular chief.

An obesity surgery equipment company sponsored the study, and some of the researchers are paid consultants; the federal government also contributed grant support.

The second study was led by Dr. Geltrude Mingrone at the Catholic University in Rome, with Rubino from New York. It involved 60 patients given one of two types of surgery or medicines alone. The researchers set as their goal an A1c under 6.5 - the level at which someone is considered to have diabetes.

Two years later, 95 percent and 75 percent of the two surgery groups achieved and maintained the target blood-sugar levels without any diabetes drugs. None of those in the medicine-alone group did.

There were no deaths from surgery and only a few complications. Four patients in the Cleveland study needed second surgeries, and two in the Italian study needed hernia operations. Doctors note that uncontrolled diabetes has complications, too - many patients wind up on dialysis when their kidneys fail, and some need transplants.

An adult who has a body mass index (a calculation based on height and weight) of 30 or more is considered obese. That's 203 pounds or more for a 5-foot-9 man, for example.
The government recently lowered the criteria for use of gastric bands from a BMI of 35 down to 30 in diabetics or people with heart disease, opening the way for wider use of this and other procedures for obesity.

Dr. Alvin Powers, director of the Vanderbilt University diabetes center, said the results are very encouraging for people like those in these studies - very obese, with diabetes that can't be controlled through less drastic means.

"We still don't know the long-term outcomes of these surgeries" and whether the benefits will last for more than a few years, he said.

Others were more positive.

The studies "are likely to have a major effect on future diabetes treatment," two diabetes experts from Australia, Dr. Paul Zimmet and George Alberti, wrote in an editorial in the medical journal. Surgery "should not be seen as a last resort" and should be considered earlier in treating obese people with diabetes, they wrote.

Jon Diat is a success story. Diat, 50, who works at Citigroup and lives in New York, had been piling on pounds and pills for cholesterol and high blood pressure. After he needed an artery-opening procedure he was diagnosed with diabetes, but medicines for that failed to keep his disease under control and worsened his obesity.

"I was maxed out on the medications. It was very grim," he said. Two years ago, he had weight-loss surgery from Rubino.

"They told me, 'You're going to see rapid results,' but it was amazing. I literally lost 70 pounds in the first three months," he said. "I was off insulin within less than 72 hours of surgery. I am in complete, total remission of diabetes. My blood sugars are normal."

Now he eats right, plays tennis and hockey, walks the two miles home from work and takes 12 flights of stairs to his apartment.

"I look at this as a second chance at life," he said. "It's been liberating."

Tamikka McCray, 39, who also lives in New York and works for the city's Human Resources Administration, also had success from her surgery a year and a half ago. When she left the hospital, her diabetes had disappeared before any major weight loss had a chance to occur.

"That was the crazy part," she said. "I didn't understand that when they came in and they checked it. My sugars were normal." She added: "I left the hospital with no medication. And I haven't been on anything since."
AP video journalist Ted Shaffrey in New York contributed to this report.

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Online:
Body Mass Index calculator: http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bminojs.htm
Heart meeting: http://www.cardiosource.org
Marilynn Marchione can be followed at http://twitter.com/MMarchioneAP
Opinions
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Do college professors work hard enough?
By David C. Levy

No public expenditure has a more productive impact on a nation’s health than its investment in education. But college costs have risen faster than inflation for three decades and, at roughly 25 percent of the average household’s income, now strain the budgets of most middle-class families. They impose an unprecedented debt burden on graduates and place college out of reach for many. This makes President Obama’s recent statement that college is “an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford” an especially urgent message.

As a career-long academic and former university chancellor, I support this position. But I disagree with the next assumption, that the answer to rising college costs is to throw more public money into the system. In fact, increased public support has probably facilitated rising tuitions. Overlooked in the debate are reforms for outmoded employment policies that overcompensate faculty for inefficient teaching schedules.

Through the first half of the 20th century, faculties in academic institutions were generally underpaid relative to other comparably educated members of the workforce. Teaching was viewed as a “calling” in the tradition of tweed jackets, pipe tobacco and avuncular campus life. Trade-offs for modest salaries were found in the relaxed atmospheres of academic communities, often retreats from the pressures of the real world, and reflected in such benefits as tenure, light teaching loads, long vacations and sabbaticals.

With the 1970s advent of collective bargaining in higher education, this began to change. The result has been more equitable circumstances for college faculty, who deserve salaries comparable to those of other educated professionals. Happily, senior faculty at most state universities and colleges now earn $80,000 to $150,000, roughly in line with the average incomes of others with advanced degrees.

Not changed, however, are the accommodations designed to compensate for low pay in earlier times. Though faculty salaries now mirror those of most upper-middle-class Americans working 40 hours for 50 weeks, they
continue to pay for teaching time of nine to 15 hours per week for 30 weeks, making possible a month-long winter break, a week off in the spring and a summer vacation from mid-May until September.

Such a schedule may be appropriate in research universities where standards for faculty employment are exceptionally high — and are based on the premise that critically important work, along with research-driven teaching, can best be performed outside the classroom. The faculties of research universities are at the center of America’s progress in intellectual, technological and scientific pursuits, and there should be no quarrel with their financial rewards or schedules. In fact, they often work hours well beyond those of average non-academic professionals.

Unfortunately, the salaries and the workloads applied to the highest echelons of faculty have been grafted onto colleges whose primary mission is teaching, not research. These include many state colleges, virtually all community colleges and hundreds of private institutions. For example, Maryland’s Montgomery College (an excellent two-year community college) reports its average full professor’s salary as $88,000, based on a workload of 15 hours of teaching for 30 weeks. Faculty members are also expected to keep office hours for three hours a week. The faculty handbook states: “Teaching and closely related activities are the primary responsibilities of instructional faculty.” While the handbook suggests other responsibilities such as curriculum development, service on committees and community outreach, notably absent from this list are research and scholarship.

I take no issue with faculty at teaching-oriented institutions focusing on instructional skills rather than research and receiving a fair, upper-middle-class wage. Like good teachers everywhere, they are dedicated professionals with high levels of education and deserve salaries commensurate with their hard-earned credentials. But we all should object when they receive these salaries for working less than half the time of their non-academic peers.

The cost for such sinecures is particularly galling when it is passed on to the rest of the middle class and to taxpayers in states that are struggling to support higher education. Since faculty salaries make up the largest single cost in virtually all college and university budgets (39 percent at Montgomery College), think what it would mean if the public got full value for these dollars.

An executive who works a 40-hour week for 50 weeks puts in a minimum of 2,000 hours yearly. But faculty members teaching 12 to 15 hours per week
for 30 weeks spend only 360 to 450 hours per year in the classroom. Even in
the unlikely event that they devote an equal amount of time to grading and
class preparation, their workload is still only 36 to 45 percent of that of non-
academic professionals. Yet they receive the same compensation.

If the higher education community were to adjust its schedules and semester
structure so that teaching faculty clocked a 40-hour week (roughly 20 hours
of class time and equal time spent on grading, preparation and related duties)
for 11 months, the enhanced efficiency could be the equivalent of a dramatic
budget increase. Many colleges would not need tuition raises or adjustments
to public budget priorities in the near future. The vacancies created by
attrition would be filled by the existing faculty’s expanded teaching loads —
from 12 to 15 hours a week to 20, and from 30 weeks to 48; increasing
teachers’ overall classroom impact by 113 percent to 167 percent.

Critics may argue that teaching faculty members require long hours for
preparation, grading and advising. Therefore they would have us believe that
despite teaching only 12 to 15 hours a week, their workloads do approximate
those of other upper-middle-class professionals. While time outside of class
can vary substantially by discipline and by the academic cycle (for instance,
more papers and tests to grade at the end of a semester), the notion that
faculty in teaching institutions work a 40-hour week is a myth. And
whatever the weekly hours may be, there is still the 30-week academic year,
which leaves almost 22 weeks for vacation or additional employment.

Regrettably, proposals for faculty workload reform have generally come
from the political right and have been associated with anti-labor and anti-
intellectual values. This has inhibited mainstream acknowledgment that
while the abuse of low faculty pay has been removed, the accommodations
originally put in place to compensate for it have themselves become an
abuse.

Change in employment terms and conditions is never easy, but further
avoiding this issue can only continue an out-of-scale escalation in the cost of
higher education, with the demand, ad infinitum, for increased public funds
to support it. America’s position in the global economy depends on
widespread access to education across all demographics, and college
enrollments must increase accordingly. In such an expansion, the current
model is unsustainable. Therefore, a realistic and fair-minded revaluation of
faculty employment policies in teaching institutions is imperative.

David C. Levy, president of the education group at Cambridge Information Group, was
the president and director of the Corcoran Gallery and College of Art and Design from
1991 to 2005. He is also a former chancellor of the New School University.
University of Maryland University College President Aldridge resigns

By Daniel de Vise

Susan Aldridge resigned Thursday as president of the University of Maryland University College, a month after taking an unexplained leave from the state-supported global school amid mounting dissent about her management style and academic priorities.

Aldridge, 60, said she was leaving simply because the time had come. State university officials offered no further explanation in an announcement laced with plaudits.

“Given all that we have accomplished over the past six years, I think this is a good time to step down,” Aldridge said in a prepared statement. Her resignation will take effect March 31. Javier Miyares, senior vice president for institutional effectiveness, is acting president.

Aldridge came to UMUC in 2006 and burnished its identity as the nation’s largest public online-focused college, according to state university officials, with 92,000 students in 27 nations. A onetime night school, UMUC has evolved into a vast network of adult and military education. The institution granted more than 35,000 degrees during the Aldridge years, with a growing share of those lessons conducted online.

But several current and former employees described an academic culture under Aldridge that prized enrollment and revenue over learning.

Last year, many undergraduate courses were shortened from 14 weeks to eight, and supervised undergraduate final exams were eliminated. UMUC leaders say those changes reflect sound teaching practices. Faculty pay is the lowest in Maryland’s public university system. Meanwhile, the school requested an extra $30 million last year for print, radio and television advertising.

Employees described a work environment under Aldridge that brooked little dissent. They said many workers were required to sign a confidentiality agreement, unusual for a public college, that forbade them to disclose institutional information to anyone inside or outside.
“It was an atmosphere of fear; that’s what really ran the place,” said Spedden Hause, a former academic director at UMUC, who left in 2009.

‘Hush money’ allegations

Those who raised too many questions were told to resign or face termination, the employees said, and those who left voluntarily were rewarded with generous severance packages if they signed nondisclosure agreements. What critics called “hush money” may have cost the state millions of dollars, according to a regulatory complaint a former employee filed this month with the state Office of Legislative Audits. It names more than 20 university employees who allegedly were fired or compelled to resign.

“It was the UMUC ‘poof,’ ” said Scott Perry, a former administrator in UMUC’s exams and testing department. “Some people would just disappear.”

Aldridge declined to address specific complaints. Miyares, the acting president, said the confidentiality agreements are “fairly standard in higher education.” He said no one was paid for silence.

“I don’t think there was a climate in which dissent was punished,” he said.

William “Brit” Kirwan, chancellor of the University System of Maryland, termed the Aldridge tenure a success and the school a vital resource to Marylanders.

“I think it’s doing very well,” he said in a telephone interview. “I think it has a unique niche, both within the [state university] system and, quite frankly, within public higher education.”

Aldridge came to UMUC from Troy University in Alabama, where she was vice chancellor. Both institutions occupy an unusual place within public higher education, offering global online courses to an audience of mostly working adults.

At Troy, Aldridge paid recruiters to find students overseas, a practice that federal regulations prohibit with domestic students.

Aldridge hired the same headhunter at UMUC. The contract has since ended.

“I’ve never approved of this,” Kirwan said of the overseas recruiting technique, “and I’m pleased UMUC is no longer engaged in this.”

Concerns over recruiting
Aldridge hired an aggressive marketing company, the now-defunct Innovation Ads, to recruit students online.

Inquiries triggered a prompt return call from a telemarketer, whose job was to glean enough information to complete an application, according to a former administrator in the enrollment management office.

The former worker said the student would then be charged an application fee of up to $50; those who refused to pay would be sent to collections.

“We were getting complaints by the hundreds, every single week, people calling up and saying, ‘I just got a bill for $50, and I did not apply,’ ” the former administrator said.

Miyares acknowledged that the school’s past recruiting practices “were very aggressive,” but he said they have since been scaled back: “I can assure you, since 2009, none of that has happened.”

Under Aldridge, enrollment soared from 84,188 in the 2005-06 academic year to 92,211 in 2010-11. Enrollment in low-cost online courses rose by half. Full-time undergraduate tuition is $5,856 a year for Maryland residents and about twice that for non-residents.

In a 2010 memo sent to Aldridge and Kirwan from the Asian division, faculty members complained that the university had canceled math, language and writing labs and had stopped paying faculty for travel expenses, for student tutorial sessions and for the purchase of white-board markers.

“The academics were good, but she was cutting that out. It was, ‘How can we get these students through faster and faster?’ ” said one former Asia instructor, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of a confidentiality agreement.

But Miyares said “the large majority” of those complaints had since been addressed, including a leadership change in the Asia division.

The college’s four-year graduation rate held steady at about 30 percent during the Aldridge era, according to state budget documents, and the volume of degrees awarded has risen. Academic pedigree is harder to measure because UMUC is not ranked by U.S. News & World Report.

University leaders defend the decision to shorten courses and cut final exams, saying they reflect the best practices in higher education.

Instead of finals, UMUC students are encouraged to submit an academic project or portfolio, something “much more representative of what they
would be asked to prepare in the workplace,” said Marie Cini, dean of the UMUC undergraduate school. Traditional finals, by contrast, stressed “memorization and recall of facts,” she said.

Shorter courses, Cini said, reflect a move toward “deeper learning”: lessons that cover material in more depth and in less time, a format preferable to many adult students.
College Math 101: Calculating the Real Cost of Attending

By RACHEL LOUISE ENSIGN
Updated March 25, 2012, 12:47 p.m. ET

The fat envelopes are rolling in for Rhianna Lawson, a high-school senior in Virginia Beach, Va. But her college pick won't come down to which has the greenest quad or best dorm. It'll be about how much her parents have to shell out.

So far, Ms. Lawson has gotten into four of the nine schools she has applied to. But after looking at aid packages and doing the math, the family has realized one of her top picks, the honors college at Clemson University, would be the priciest option. So they're trying their hand at negotiating a better aid package.

"It's a dilemma that a lot of us are in who make a little bit too much to qualify for need-based aid, but are still uncomfortable shelling out $100,000 to $200,000 a kid for college," says Jeff Lawson, her father.

It's college-acceptance season, when many high-school seniors reap the rewards of years pulling good grades and cramming in sports and other activities to appeal to their schools of choice. It's also the time parents start crunching the numbers to figure out if Junior can actually afford to attend—and if not, how they can squeeze more aid from the schools.

This annual dance is made all the more complicated—and essential—these days with college-tuition costs rising, states cutting back funding and endowments still recovering from the financial crisis.
The cost of attending a private college rose 5% for the 2011-12 school year, while the cost of a four-year, in-state public college was up 8%, according to the College Board. And 123 schools now charge more than $50,000 a year for tuition, fees, room and board.

**Do the Math**

The first thing you need to do is compare your aid package from a school with the total cost of attendance. The magic number is the tab you'll be left with after accounting for any scholarships and aid.

There are the obvious expenses—tuition, fees, books, room and board. A word of caution: Colleges may leave one or more of these costs off the aid letter, so make sure you account for them, says Sandy Baum, co-author of the College Board's "Trends in Student Aid" report.

Then there are the less obvious costs. Will your child have to take lab-based courses that come with significant fees? Will he or she need a car, with gas and insurance costs, to get around campus? What about plane or train tickets to come home a few times a year? Will you have to pay for off-campus housing at some point? Is the cost of living in the city where the college is located particularly high?

Next, go through the aid—grants, loans and work-study money—and factor in any money from outside sources. Keep in mind that grants and scholarships are far more valuable than loans that have to be repaid. If you have money in 529 college savings or prepaid tuition plans take that money into account as well.

Some grants are good for four years if your child continues to meet certain requirements, while others are good for only freshman year. If it's the latter, you'll need to factor in additional costs of attendance for those later years, notes Scott Anderson, president of eduLaunchPad.com, a provider of college-planning tools.

Complete this mathematical exercise for each school your child is considering attending. Once you have a realistic tab for each of school, you can start comparing to see which is really giving you the best deal.

In their calculations, Ms. Lawson's parents have to consider that tuition at the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary would be covered by money they set aside in a Virginia prepaid-tuition plan back in 2001. But they also have the option of getting the money they put into that plan back penalty-free and pairing it with the merit aid Ms. Lawson has been offered at the University of Charleston, which would be cheaper overall.
"We're in a dilemma as a family," says Mr. Lawson, "Do we try and negotiate with Clemson? Or, do we try to negotiate with the University of Charleston and try to get a completely full ride?"

**Ask for More**

Of course, the school with the best aid package isn't always the one at the top of a student's list. But one of most important things parents need to know is that financial-aid awards aren't set in stone, says Mr. Anderson. Parents often can convince a college to provide a bigger grant based on need, merit or both.

One potential way is to show a change in your financial situation, such as a job loss, pay cut, big medical bills or high dependent-care costs, says Justin Draeger, president of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. You'll likely need to make an official request in writing and submit documentation to back up your claim.

You can negotiate a better deal even without a financial setback. Schools often will boost a merit award if you send them a competitor's offer with a request to match it, says Jennifer Rucker, the college activities coordinator at Lincoln Park High School in Chicago. You'll typically only be able to do this at schools that offer merit aid, says Mr. Draeger. And make sure you are comparing apples to apples. In other words, a public college likely won't match an offer from a private college.

Also let a school know if your child has had any recent significant achievements. After applying to several schools last fall, Karen Burlage's 17-year-old son, Brian, won four national writing competitions. So Ms. Burlage, who lives in a suburb of Denver, figured she might as well find out if those awards warranted more merit money from two colleges that had given him less than the family had expected.

The in-state private school told her to apply for a $6,000-a-year grant. The out-of-state public school boosted his merit-aid package by $400 a year. Brian is waiting to hear back from other schools before making a decision.

"In a competitive environment where schools are all fighting to get the top students, why not see how bad a school wants him, if it's a school he likes?" says Ms. Burlage. "If you don't ask, you're not going to get anything."

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A Day In the Life at Columbia Business School
By MELISSA KORN
Updated March 23, 2012, 2:43 p.m. ET

Some say business school is all play and no work, little more than a series of happy hours and C.E.O. guest speakers. Others insist it's the opposite, with long hours spent perfecting cash-flow models and creating business plans.

So what's life really like for a business-school student? The answer, of course, is "it depends."

The student experience is inevitably different for full- or part-time programs; undergraduate, graduate or executive degrees; large or small schools, and urban or rural campuses.

For example, 60% of undergraduate students at NYU’s Stern School of Business spend at least one semester abroad; it's about one-third at Boston College's Carroll School of Management. Students in the executive M.B.A. program at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business meet on alternate weekends, while E.M.B.A. students at nearby University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School can take weeknight classes. And while more than 80% of Harvard Business School students live in campus housing, that figure is closer to 25% for M.B.A. students at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

But even within those individual categories, how much time students spend studying or sleeping, who they socialize with and what extracurricular activities they participate in can vary widely.

In a new online feature, The Wall Street Journal offers a glimpse into a day in the life of three business students in a single course of study. The first installment tracks a recent day for three M.B.A. students from Columbia Business School.

Write to Melissa Korn at