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Amendment draws voters to polls
By Ginger Livingston
Monday, May 7, 2012

The arguments have been laid out over the airwaves, from pulpits, at coffee houses and city council meetings. Now North Carolina voters will enter the polling booth and decide how they view and define marriage.

Amendment One, which seeks to add a definition of marriage to the state’s Constitution, has prompted hours of debate over how it could affect the lives of North Carolinians.

The ballot language states people should vote either for or against a “Constitutional amendment to provide that marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State.”

The language that would be added to the Constitution if the amendment passes is:

“Marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State. This section does not prohibit a private party from entering into contracts with another private party; nor does this section prohibit courts from adjudicating the rights of private parties pursuant to such contracts.”

The amendment is being pursued by individuals who believe same-sex marriage should not be allowed in North Carolina.
A North Carolina statute has prohibited same-sex marriage since the mid-1990s, but advocates said stronger protections are needed.

“I would like to see Amendment One to be passed so marriage, as defined between one man and one woman, would not be subjected to any activist judge or judiciary changing it against the will of the people,” said Pastor Jeff Manning, who leads Unity Free Will Baptist Church on East 14th Street in Greenville.

If the amendment is passed, only another vote of the people or a federal court challenge, could overturn the amendment.

Opponents to the amendment said the protection is unnecessary.

“It would be highly unlikely that our legislature is going to allow same-sex couples to have access to marriage,” said Melinda Kane, an assistant professor of sociology at East Carolina University whose studies focus on lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender politics and legal change.

North Carolina’s legislature was conservative even before Republicans took over following the 2010 elections, and there was no movement in that body or even among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists to override the state’s current law, she said.

“That doesn’t mean we who believe what we believe shouldn’t be pro-active,” Manning said. Amendment supporters view marriage as precious, he said, and they don’t want a vocal minority to alter marriage.

Six states and the District of Columbia currently issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples as of March, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Another five states provide spousal-level rights, also called civil unions, to same-sex couples and four grant most spousal-level rights, also called domestic partnerships to same-sex couples.

Thirty states have amendments banning same-sex marriages. Other states either have statutory limits on marriage or no laws or other provisions on same-sex marriage.

Amendment proponents have focused on the arguments that heterosexual marriage is ordained by God and creates the best environment for raising children while opponents say the amendment has the potential to harm unconventional families.

The greatest worry of opponents is that the amendment could prevent domestic violence laws from being applied for the protection of unmarried victims of abuse.
Such a situation happened in Ohio after it passed a marriage protection amendment with language similar to North Carolina’s proposal. The Ohio Supreme Court eventually ruled unmarried couples had the same protections as married couples, but that ruling came after several years of turmoil in the court system.

University of North Carolina law professor Maxine Eichner wrote a paper in February that argued the state’s courts could interpret the amendment as barring the state from giving any rights to unmarried couples.

Manning said amendment opponents are creating unnecessary worry. A group of district attorneys, including Locke Bell of Gaston County, Wallace Bradsher of Caswell and Person counties, have produced a statement that the protection of the state’s domestic violence laws do not depend on the marital status of the victim or the individual’s relationship to the supposed abuser.

Since legal experts disagree on the amendment’s effect on domestic violence laws, it is unclear how the situation will play out in the state’s courts, Kane said.

“This could be solved by having language that specifies that the only marriage in North Carolina is a marriage between one man and one woman but (the ballot) doesn’t say that,” Kane said.

While the amendment’s language about private parties won’t prevent businesses from offering benefits to partners and individuals from entering legal contracts, it would prevent the state from approving future legislation that would create a civil union or domestic partnership, Kane said.

Eichner said the amendment could prohibit local governments from offering benefits to same-sex couples.

Manning said Amendment One changes no state laws, and benefits and services will remain unchanged.

Current and past elected leaders such as Charlotte mayors Richard Vinroot, a Republican, and Harvey Gantt, a Democrat, have urged voters to reject the amendment.

Duke Energy CEO Jim Rogers last month argued against the amendment.

Renowned evangelist Rev. Billy Graham this past week voiced his support for the amendment.

In the days leading up to Tuesday’s vote, discussion about Amendment One will intensify.
Manning’s sermon today will be on how marriage should be treasured and practiced.

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship at St. Paul’s Church is planning an interfaith prayer service from 7-8 p.m. Monday at the chapel, 401 E. Fourth St.

The Rev. Bob Hudak, St. Paul’s rector, said the event isn’t meant to be a “partisan gathering for those who are against Amendment One.”

“However, it has inspired me to organize this service as a fundamental call to love, praying for liberty and justice for all,” he said.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or 252-329-9570.
Most courses not compromised

The recently issued Review of Courses in the Department of African and Afro-American Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill is sobering and disappointing for all of us who believe deeply in African and Afro-American studies and are committed to upholding the ideals and the integrity of the University of North Carolina. The findings of the report have been a heavy blow to us. We are particularly mindful of our majors who have worked hard, with integrity, and are in no way implicated in this report that deals primarily with a subset of summer school courses taken mostly by non-majors.

There are two findings of the report that merit greater attention. Finding 7: “No evidence emerged during the review that directly implicates any faculty or staff other than potentially Professor (Julius) Nyang’oro or Ms. (Deborah) Crowder in the creation of aberrant or irregularly taught courses, or in the recording or changing of student grades in these courses.”

And from the conclusion: “The evidence we reviewed indicated that between 2007 and 2011 the vast majority of courses offered in the Department of African and Afro-American Studies were not compromised in the ways outlined in this report.”

The vast majority of all students taking our courses were not impacted. The report also made clear that the determined and visionary new department chair and the faculty have put in long hours establishing policies and procedures that will ensure that nothing remotely like this situation will ever happen again. Most importantly, we want to ensure that our graduating majors will be able to enjoy the day of pride and celebration that they have earned.

Reginald F. Hildebrand
Associate Professor of African and Afro-American Studies
UNC-Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill
The length limit was waived to permit a fuller response.
Firing offenses

Regarding the May 5 front-page article “UNC report finds academic fraud,” so a professor who took money under false pretenses committed no crime? What should it be called when he is paid $159,000 a year to pretend he taught all of his classes? And the administration at UNC-Chapel Hill lets him resign? He should have been fired and law enforcement should have pursued legal charges. And by the way, where were the academic deans in this mess? Maybe they should retire too. This is an incredible embarrassment to the state and a supposedly venerable institution.

Bill Zieger

Cary
Roy Williams defends players who enrolled in dubious classes at UNC

By Andrew Carter

CHAPEL HILL - North Carolina basketball coach Roy Williams on Tuesday defended his players who were enrolled in classes at the center of an internal university investigation of academic fraud and improprieties.

“The players were eligible to be enrolled in those classes, as were non-student-athletes, and they did the work that was assigned to them,” Williams said through an athletic department spokesman.

UNC on Friday released the results of an investigation that found widespread academic fraud in 54 classes offered by UNC’s Department of African and Afro-American Studies. The investigation found evidence of unauthorized grade changes, no-show professors and an absence of instruction in dozens of classes.

According to figures the university released on Monday, football and men’s basketball players accounted for nearly 40 percent of students enrolled in the scrutinized courses. There were 686 enrollments in those 54 classes and, of those, football players accounted for 246 enrollments while basketball players accounted for 23 enrollments.

UNC’s investigation found no evidence that the problem courses were part of a scheme to keep athletes eligible. The investigation also concluded that athletes did not receive preferential treatment.

UNC shared its report with the NCAA, but it was unclear on Tuesday whether the NCAA’s enforcement staff would investigate further. Steve Kirschner, a UNC athletic department spokesman, said Tuesday that the university had received no communication from the NCAA about the university’s report.

In March, the NCAA Committee on Infractions gave its final ruling on a scandal that tarnished the UNC football program, led to the firing of former coach Butch Davis and the early retirement of former athletic director Dick Baddour. For violations that included impermissible benefits and academic fraud, the UNC football team received a one-year postseason ban, among other sanctions.
Several calls and emails to members of the NCAA infractions committee went unreturned Tuesday. NCAA spokesperson Stacey Osburn said the organization would not comment on the findings of UNC’s internal investigation or on the possibility that the NCAA’s enforcement staff would examine the university’s findings.
Local Chef Kirsten Mitchell of Cameo 1900 prepares a Lobster and Asparagus Salad with a lump crab devil egg as her first meal during the Fire on the Dock competition.

Chefs on ‘Fire' - Local chefs use N.C. products

By Allison Ballard

For the past few weeks on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, local chefs and their biggest fans have gathered at the Shell Island Resort in Wrightsville Beach for Fire on the Dock. The coastal leg of this statewide cooking competition is one example of the explosion of foodie culture, especially the celebrity chef phenomenon and the interest in local eating.

And it's one we can call our own.

These are 16 of our local chefs, from Wilmington and coastal cities such as Morehead City, New Bern and Atlantic Beach, battling it out with ingredients and products grown and produced in North Carolina.

It's a winning recipe.

Jimmy Crippen has been hosting and tweaking the "Fire on the Rock" segment of the competition, held in Blowing Rock, for seven years and he knew he had
something that could be big. He soon partnered with N.C. Department of Agriculture to bring his brand of dining-room theater to the rest of the state.

Fire on the Rock took place in January and February. After the final rounds of Fire on the Dock on May 15-16 and 22, the production will move on to Raleigh for Fire in the Triangle in June and July and then on Greensboro for Fire in the Triad in August and September.

First, though, local diners can have a front-plate seat to see the results of what have been happening here in recent weeks.

**Catching Fire**

For Fire on the Dock, 16 regional chefs competed against each other in eight preliminary rounds. For each session, a chef and two assistants/team members arrive at Shell Island at noon. They learn the secret ingredient and work to prepare three dishes that will be evaluated by the 100 or so people in the dining room next door.

They jot down ideas, scribble plating suggestions on paper and then get to work. They "shop" in a mobile food truck filled with ingredients from North Carolina farms – like heritage pork, country ham, strawberries and asparagus – or made by regional companies such as a curry from Pittsboro or the N.C.-based chocolate from Mona Lisa Food Products.

The chefs then work in the hotel kitchen or a mobile kitchen set up outside. There are only a few hours to get everything right, to re-chop burned onions or re-think a dessert that didn't quite work.

**Serving up the ‘final 4’**

The competition's style of cooking is one that Andy Hopper of Chefs 105 in Morehead City said suits him. While working in a restaurant in Greenville, the menu changed nightly. For each shift, there were four or five new dishes to devise and create.

"That sort of stuck with me," Hopper said.

He gained much of his culinary experience while traveling and working at the James-Beard-award-winning Chicago restaurant Spiaggia and for the Four Season hotel company. Hopper went on to earn a hospitality degree from East Carolina University.

During the competition he's had close matchups with two Wilmington chefs but has bested both Jacob Hilbert of Manna (on April 17) and Antoine Murray of Cape Fear Country Club (on May 1). Those wins made him the first of the "final four" chefs.
On May 2, Hopper was joined by Gerry Fong of Persimmons in New Bern, who defeated Josh Woo of Wilmington's YoSake.

Fong was raised in a small North Carolina town and his parents had a Chinese restaurant. At the time he thought he hated the business and he said he preferred to eat Southern soul food at his friends' houses. Eventually, his parents encouraged him to attend the Culinary Institute of America.

"That's really when what I was doing made sense to me," Fong said. "It all fit together."

At Persimmons, which is situated over the Neuse River, Fong and his team offer what they call Carolina-fusion cuisine, with seasonal menus that change every two weeks to a month based on the availability of local ingredients. Working with these ingredients is one thing that he believes has helped him prepare for Fire on the Dock.

"A lot of our stuff is local," he said. "We work with 17 different farmers."

This week, two more chefs will proceed to the semifinal round. Last night after press time, Marc Copenhaver of Wilmington's Marc's on Market, a two-time winner of Wilmington's Top Chef competition, battled Anthony Garnett of the Coral Bay Club in Atlantic Beach. The winner of that contest goes against Hopper on May 15.

Tonight, Kirsten Mitchell of Wilmington's Cameo 1900 goes up again Kyle Lee McKnight, former chef at downtown Wilmington's Circa 1922 and of the upcoming Swim with the Fish restaurant. The victor competes against Fong on May 16.

The final round of Fire on the Dock is May 22.

The home stretch

Both Hopper and Fong said that the competition isn't getting any easier.

"A lot hinges on the ingredient," Hopper said. "It's stressful."

Cooking with strawberries and asparagus as the featured ingredient was a lot different than cooking with bacon and country ham for the second round.

"It's always a challenge," Fong said. "But the experience is pretty awesome and a little unreal."

The winner of Fire on the Dock will ultimately compete against the other regional winners later this year, likely in October or November. After that, Crippen said, he's already thinking about doing it all again next year and the year after. "It's like NASCAR," Crippen said. "Take a couple months off and go at it again."
Students learn what they should wear to win jobs

By Micaela Fouhy
Class of 2012

In the business world, first impressions mean everything. From the resumé to your interview attire, you are creating an image and you may never get a second chance. With today's tight competition for jobs, it is important to know what makes you stand out.

On March 30, UNCW's Communication Studies Society hosted its 10th annual Dress for Success fashion show. Student models showcased professional and business casual attire provided by Men's Wearhouse, White House | Black Market and Belk at Independence Mall.

As one of three student co-coordinators, I was glad to help show students the importance of creating a lasting impression through fashion. As a senior, I have learned that it is critical to market yourself confidently and positively.

Our goal for the fashion show was to change the opinions of people who think a professional suit has to mean no personality. As our faculty adviser, Jennifer Chin, explained, “Too often people think ‘dressing up' means boring, but our fashion
show is an informative and creative way to display stylish and professional outfits for an interview or the workplace.”

Dress for Success illustrated subtle ways that a suit can fit with individual style and remain professional. Some overall guidelines we provided during the show included:

Add style and personality to a professional suit by wearing a colorful blouse or tie.

Wear a two-piece suit with matched pieces of the same material and color such as black, brown, navy or grey.

Always wear a suit for an interview, even if the daily work environment is casual.

When wearing a skirt, keep the length conservative, at or just above the knee.

Mike Phillips, UNCW Career Center counselor, said, “I encourage everyone to have at least one suit. They can be expensive, but it is an investment in your future.”

Whether you know it or not, you are your own personal brand. People will judge you the instant they meet you. With the unemployment rate at more than 8 percent nationwide, many people are competing for the same opportunities. It is your job to communicate why a specific company should hire you.

Your outfit choice shows that you see yourself as a professional, and that you take pride in your appearance.

Dress for Success also reinforced the value of a succinct, relevant resumé and a portfolio that provides evidence for an applicant's experience. Although fashion is a great way to show personality, the best way to represent yourself in an interview is through your presence, conversation and relevant experience.

How you dress should positively represent who you are.

This is one in an ongoing series of articles highlighting the activities and accomplishments of UNCW students.
Conference USA adds 5 new members to offset losses coming in 2013

By Associated Press, Published: May 3 | Updated: Friday, May 4, 3:26 PM

Conference USA announced Friday that it is adding five new schools in 2013.

Commissioner Britton Banowsky said Charlotte, Florida International, Louisiana Tech, North Texas and UT-San Antonio will join the league in all sports, with Charlotte joining in football in 2015.

Charlotte is rejoining Conference USA after several years in the Atlantic 10. Louisiana Tech has been in the WAC since 2001, and UTSA will play in the WAC next year before joining CUSA. FIU and North Texas will be leaving the Sun Belt Conference.

Current CUSA members include East Carolina, Marshall, Rice, Southern Mississippi, Tulane, Tulsa, Alabama-Birmingham and UTEP. Conference USA will lose Houston, SMU, Memphis and Central Florida to the Big East in 2013.

Banowsky says Conference USA and the Mountain West continue to discuss a merger and expansion remains a possibility.

“The discussions with the Mountain West are ongoing,” Banowsky added. “What form the relationship will take is still to be determined, but both remain committed to working together.”

For now, the conference is happy to be at 13 teams.

“We are excited about adding these new members as part of our bold strategy that focuses on growing institutions in large media markets,” Banowsky said. “There is a tremendous upside here. This is an opportunity for us to add a mixture of established and emerging programs. We also remain committed to divisional scheduling models that are student-athlete and fan-friendly. The more we analyzed it, the more it made sense.”

Conference USA noted that the metro area population of the new additions is nearly 18 million. Divisions will be announced later.

The move puts Charlotte on the fast track to go from a school without a football team to one that will play in the Championship Subdivision and then
the Bowl Subdivision after just two seasons, the shortest time allowed by the NCAA. The 49ers will be bowl eligible in 2016.

The other school to do that was UTSA, a program the 49ers have tried to emulate. UTSA went 4-6 in its inaugural football season under Larry Coker as an independent in FCS last year, but the program has sought to accelerate its national profile.

Charlotte Chancellor Dr. Philip Dubois said that while nobody expected things to move along this quickly it was an opportunity the university simply couldn’t pass up.

“To be sure, it is an upgrade to what some of us envisioned,” Dubois said. “I certainly have been ahead of the pack in urging us to crawl first, then walk and then run. But when opportunity knocks in Division I athletics, it is most certainly not the Avon lady.”

Dubois said the move was “momentous” for the university’s football program.

“We have yet to take a snap on McColl-Richardson Field, yet to play our first game, yet to have even our first practice — but because of who we are, because of what we’ve done, and because of the great community we live in — we have the unique opportunity to become one of the first programs in history to go from no football to FBS football in the minimum time allowed by NCAA regulations,” Dubois said.

Charlotte is planning on meeting with its architects to add 2,500 to 5,000 temporary seats, as well as adding lighting — the wiring was already in place — to allow night games, which would potentially draw additional television revenue.

“In adding football, it was imperative that we find a conference to compete in — and today we struck gold,” athletic director Judy Rose said. “We not only found a conference to play in — but we found an FBS conference. A top 10 basketball conference. A conference that includes regional rivals, and holds national attention and it’s a conference that has an in-state opponent to fight for bragging rights. It’s a strong conference across the board.”

The Mountain West on Friday said San Jose State and Utah State will join the league in July 2013, which will give it 10 football-playing members. Currently, the league consists of Air Force, Colorado State, New Mexico, UNLV and Wyoming, with the Fresno State and Nevada coming aboard in July, and Hawaii becoming a football-only member on the same date.
Mountain West schools San Diego State and Boise State are joining the Big East for football next year.

The WAC, which once had 16 football teams, could be left with only New Mexico State and Idaho after next season. As for the Sun Belt, the league recently added Texas State and Georgia State as football members starting in 2013 in anticipation of losing two schools.

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Football players made up 36 percent of enrollments for suspect classes in UNC department

By Associated Press, Published: May 8

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Football players at North Carolina made up more than a third of enrollments in suspect classes within a department the school investigated for academic fraud.

The school said Tuesday football players represented 246 of 686 enrollments (36 percent) in the 54 courses within the Department of African and Afro-American Studies between summer 2007 and summer 2011. Those classes lacked appropriate supervision and were called “aberrant” or were “taught irregularly” with limited contact between instructors and students, according to a university report released Friday.

Men’s basketball players represented 23 enrollments, roughly 3 percent, during that span.

The school’s investigation found fraud and poor oversight, including unauthorized grade changes and reports of grade rolls with what appear to be forged faculty signatures. The report found no evidence of favorable treatment for student-athletes or grades awarded without written work.

The News and Observer of Raleigh first reported the athlete enrollment figures Monday.

The probe was a result of an NCAA investigation into the football program. In one of the suspect classes, a former football player wrote a research paper that later led to accusations of plagiarism.

The report directed blame toward the former department chairman and a now-retired administrator.

Julius Nyang’oro resigned as chairman last year and will retire in July. His name on the grade rolls or he was listed as instructor for 43 courses considered aberrant or taught irregularly from 2007-09. He was also the instructor for the only two classes that qualify as taught irregularly after 2009, according to the report.

The administrator, Deborah Crowder, worked under Nyang’oro and wouldn’t talk with school investigators. UNC found no aberrant courses or unauthorized grade changes after her September 2009 retirement, according to the report.
(Patrick Semansky/ Associated Press ) - In this May 1, 2012 photo, teacher Kayla Morrow writes on a board as she leads an Advanced Placement government class at the Academy for College and Career Exploration in Baltimore. In May 2012, 2 million students will take 3.7 million end-of-year AP exams - figures well over double those from a decade ago. “What AP is really trying to teach you is for a lot of things, there’s really not a right and wrong answer. It’s, ‘how do you get to that?’” Morrow said, adding the AP training improved her teaching in regular classes, too.

**Once for the elite, AP surges in popularity as broad range of schools looks to raise standards**

By Associated Press, Published: May 5 | Updated: Sunday, May 6, 1:35 AM

Not long ago, Advanced Placement exams were mostly for top students looking to challenge themselves and get a head start on college credit. Not anymore.

In the next two weeks, 2 million students will take 3.7 million end-of-year AP exams — figures well over double those from a decade ago. With no national curriculum, AP has become the de facto gold standard for high school rigor. States and high schools are pushing AP classes and exams as a
way to raise standards across the board, in some cases tying AP to bonuses. And the federal government is helping cover the exam fees.

Now, AP’s rapid growth is reaching even schools serving some of the most disadvantaged students. These schools are embracing AP as a comprehensive toolkit for toughening coursework, emphasizing college preparation and instilling a “culture of excellence.”

If math teacher Jaime Escalante could lead low-income Los Angeles students to AP calculus glory in the story that became the 1988 film “Stand and Deliver,” why not others?

The problem is, there usually isn’t a Hollywood ending.

Last year, 18 percent of U.S. high school graduates passed at least one AP exam (by scoring 3 or higher on a scale of 1 to 5), up from 11 percent a decade ago.

But there also many more students falling short — way short — on the exams.

The proportion of all tests taken last year earning the minimal score of 1 increased over that time, from 13 percent to 21 percent. At many schools, virtually no students pass.

For instance, in Indiana — among the states pushing AP most aggressively, and with results close to the national average — there were still 21 school districts last year where graduates took AP exams but none passed.

Baltimore’s Academy for College & Career Exploration, where 81 percent of students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch programs in 2010, added three AP classes in recent years. Over the past two years, just two of 62 exams taken by its students earned a 3.

Passing an AP exam means demonstrating college-level skill, so a high failure rate isn’t necessarily surprising or alarming. Many educators insist the AP coursework preceding those exams is valuable regardless.

Still, they acknowledge the trend raises tough questions: Is pushing poorly prepared students to take college-level classes effective? Or does it just demoralize them and divert time and money better spent elsewhere?

“It’s kind of an easy reform — plunk in an AP course,” said University of Northern Colorado scholar Kristin Klopfenstein, who edited a recent collection of studies on the AP program. But without accompanying steps, it’s not clear AP does much good, especially for students scoring 1s and 2s.

“What I’ve observed in a lot of cases is AP programs being helicopter-
dropped in with the hope that the high standards themselves would generate results.”

Perhaps surprisingly, those concerns are shared by the not-for-profit College Board, which runs the AP program and has benefited from its growth (collecting $353 million in revenue from its college readiness programs, including AP exam fees, in 2009).

“Schools that are using AP in a very deliberate way to change the culture, there’s something very powerful there,” said Senior Vice President Trevor Packer. But as a shortcut to avoid the hard foundational work students need, AP may be a waste — or worse, a diversion (The test fee is $87, though the College Board discounts that to $53 for low-income students, who with government grants often have no cost at all.).

“The last thing we want is (schools) spending money on test fees if that’s all they’re spending money on,” Packer said.

The AP program dates to the 1950s, but has grown rapidly in recent years to 34 subjects, from art history to Japanese. High-achieving students and parents have driven some of the growth, but mostly it’s educators and policymakers. The six states now requiring high schools to offer AP include several that have struggled the most with educational achievement — Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina. (The others are Indiana and Connecticut. A half-dozen additional states require schools to offer either AP or other rigorous classes such as dual-enrollment or International Baccalaureate).

States also encourage AP in other ways. Indiana, for instance, gives schools bonuses for AP performance, and factors AP into the state’s accountability formula and performance goals. Florida pays bonuses to teachers for each student earning a qualifying score. Seven states require public colleges to award credit or placement based on AP exam scores. Students, meanwhile, usually get extra weighting on their GPAs and improved chances for admission to selective colleges.

Increasingly common are school districts like East Noble in Kendallville, Ind., where the high school now offers 11 AP classes, up from three a few years ago. The district’s pass rate on statewide tests ranks just above the bottom quarter in Indiana, state figures show. Superintendent Ann Linson started pushing AP when she was the high school principal, dropping a requirement that AP enrollees come from the top 25 percent of students.
“I was really put out by that,” she said. “I believe every student should have the ability to be part of a more challenging course.” Last year, about 42 percent of East Noble graduates took an AP exam, roughly double the percentage three years before. But the 14 percent of graduates who earned a passing score (close to the state average) was about the same as before. Indiana’s statewide goal is 25 percent of graduates earning AP credit.

“If a student pushes themselves at a higher level, even if they receive a C or D, it’s going to better prepare them for life after school,” Linson said.

Why has AP become a gold standard? One reason is schools can slap the label “honors” on any class, but AP requires outside validation, said David Conley, a University of Oregon professor and CEO of the Educational Policy Improvement Center. To offer official AP courses, teachers and principals must develop a curriculum that the College Board attests meets standards set by college faculty (Conley’s group does that validation work for the College Board). Many AP teachers also undergo special training.

Also, Conley says, the seemingly endless battery of state-level tests that have emerged over the last two decades focus on setting a “floor” — minimum skills for all students. AP lets schools and policymakers talk about raising the “ceiling,” elevating students beyond the bare minimum and pushing them toward college.

One other possible factor: For years, Newsweek magazine used a school’s number of AP tests per graduate as the sole factor for inclusion on its annual list of “Best American High Schools”. (That list’s inventor, Jay Mathews, moved it to the Washington Post in 2011. Newsweek developed a new list with a formula where AP factors into three categories totaling 40 percent).

Nationally, 56 percent of AP exams taken by the high school class of 2011 earned a 3 or higher, but there are wide disparities. The mean score is 3.01 for white students and 1.94 for blacks. In New Hampshire, almost three-quarters of exams earn a 3 or higher; in Mississippi, it’s under a third. In the District of Columbia, more than half of exams score a 1.

At Detroit’s Mumford High School last year, none of 62 AP exams earned higher than a 1. But at the nearby Renaissance magnet high school, a quarter of the 113 AP exams earned a 3 or higher, and the school had the second most black students scoring 3 or higher in literature in the country.

When Kayla Morrow began teaching social studies at Baltimore’s Academy for College & Career Exploration five years ago, the school offered no AP courses and barely any honors.
“We were just kind of graduating kids from high school and just pushing them out the door and just hoping something positive would happen,” Morrow said. When a grant arrived for Morrow and others to get training and develop AP courses, “pretty much all the teachers were like, ‘yes, we really need this, we all did this when we were in high school, it’s a crime that we don’t have this.’”

Last year 36 students took AP exams in three subjects, scoring on average 1.4.

The AP government class Morrow teaches, she says, isn’t just harder than regular classes. It’s fundamentally different, and — surprisingly — less test-driven.

“What AP is really trying to teach you is for a lot of things, there’s really not a right and wrong answer. It’s, ‘how do you get to that?’” she said, adding the AP training improved her teaching in regular classes, too.

As for not passing the exams, “students take ownership of that,” she said. “They’ll work harder for you. In fact, they’ll be more appreciative for knowing where they stand.”

Sean Martin, who helped start an AP literature program at Heritage High School in Baltimore before moving this year to another school, said some of his AP students read at a seventh-grade level.

“I knew for a lot of them ... it was going to be very difficult to get them even to the level of a 2,” he said. Still, he said, simply putting students who want to push themselves together in a class with a goal is valuable.

“We set a higher bar and we could do things a little differently, and really have meaningful class discussions,” he said. Classes “take on a different feel when every student in the room is success-oriented.”

The two teachers note advanced college credit isn’t the only worthy goal: Both have heard former students report their AP preparation helped them place out of remedial college classes, which also saves time and tuition.

Klopfenstein, however, is skeptical. While data show students who do well in AP courses do better in college, it’s not clear whether that’s because they took AP. And the evidence is weak for any college benefit for students who take AP courses but do poorly on the exams. Schools with many students struggling in AP may need more focus on skill-building.

“If you have kids that are not necessarily being successful in high-school level courses, it seems like a logical fallacy to think what they need is
college-level courses,” she said. “AP without sufficient supports is worse than no AP at all.”

She notes AP carries a cost — to students, in time they could spend on other things, and to schools, in assigning the strongest teachers to an often small group. In an era of tight budgets, more schools may conclude AP is a luxury they can’t afford. Martin says Baltimore’s Heritage, where he previously taught, has cut back on AP (Heritage’s principal didn’t return phone messages seeking comment).

But there’s also a cost of not offering AP: students who might benefit but never get the shot. That’s why the College Board believes there’s still room for AP to grow.

One figure stands out. Of last year’s roughly 3 million high school graduates, the College Board believes that based on prior academic performance, 770,000 had a strong chance of passing an AP exam.

But of those students, nearly two in three didn’t have access to an AP course. Among black students, nearly 80 percent who might have passed never took an exam. That adds up to countless missed opportunities for rigorous coursework, and countless potentially saved tuition dollars left on the table.

Packer cites the Baltimore academy as an example of places building up an AP program the right way, using it to inject a culture of high expectations and college focus where it might not otherwise exist.

“In those cases, who am I to say from the College Board ‘you should not offer AP courses because your kids are getting 1s and 2s’?” he said.

Still, “it all depends on what educators do with the program,” he said. “No program is a silver bullet.”

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Teacher evaluation: What it should look like

By Valerie Strauss

A new report from Stanford University researcher Linda Darling-Hammond details what the components of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system should look like at a time when such assessments have become one of the most contentious debates in education today.

Much of the controversy swirls around the growing trend of using students’ standardized test scores over time to help assess teacher effectiveness. This “value-added” method of assessment — which involves the use of complicated formulas that supposedly evaluate how much “value” a teacher adds to a student’s achievement — is considered unreliable and not valid by many experts, though school reformers have glommed onto it with great zeal.

Any reader of this blog will have seen numerous pieces from educators, mathematicians and others explaining why this method is unfair, as well as pieces on what does work in teacher evaluation.

Darling-Hammond’s report, entitled “Creating a Comprehensive System for Evaluating and Supporting Effective Teaching,” explains the essential components of any fair teacher evaluation system — and provides examples of where it is working.

Here are the necessary criteria she says should be part of an effective teacher-evaluation system:

1. Teacher evaluation should be based on professional teaching standards and should be sophisticated enough to assess teaching quality across the continuum of development from novice to expert teacher.

2. Evaluations should include multi-faceted evidence of teacher practice, student learning, and professional contributions that are considered in an integrated fashion, in relation to one another and to the teaching context. Any assessments used to make judgments about students’ progress should be appropriate for the specific curriculum and students the teacher teaches.

3. Evaluators should be knowledgeable about instruction and well trained in the evaluation system, including the process of how to give productive feedback and how to support ongoing learning for teachers. As often as possible, and always at critical decision-making junctures (e.g., tenure or
renewal), the evaluation team should include experts in the specific teaching field.

4. Evaluation should be accompanied by useful feedback, and connected to professional development opportunities that are relevant to teachers’ goals and needs, including both formal learning opportunities and peer collaboration, observation, and coaching.

5. The evaluation system should value and encourage teacher collaboration, both in the standards and criteria that are used to assess teachers’ work, and in the way results are used to shape professional learning opportunities.

6. Expert teachers should be part of the assistance and review process for new teachers and for teachers needing extra assistance. They can provide the additional subject-specific expertise and person-power needed to ensure that intensive and effective assistance is offered and that decisions about tenure and continuation are well grounded.

7. Panels of teachers and administrators should oversee the evaluation process to ensure that it is thorough and of high quality, as well as fair and reliable. Such panels have been shown to facilitate more timely and well-grounded personnel decisions that avoid grievances and litigation. Teachers and school leaders should be involved in developing, implementing, and monitoring the system to ensure that it reflects good teaching well, that it operates effectively, that it is tied to useful learning opportunities for teachers, and that it produces valid results.

Darling-Hammond explains why using value-added models are a bad idea. She notes that they:

* are “highly unstable,” as teachers’ ratings “differ substantially from class to class and from year to year;”

* are significantly affected by differences in students — even when value-added formulas attempt to control for various factors such as prior achievement and student demographic variables.

* cannot adequately deal with the various influences on a student that could affect performance on a test, both in school and out of school — and “these matter more than the individual teacher in explaining changes in scores.”

This does not mean, however, that student achievement should not be included in a teacher evaluation system. A variety of other measures of student learning are useful in teacher evaluation, including evidence taken
from classroom assessments and student science investigations, research papers or art projects.

The highly regarded Darling-Hammond directs the Stanford University Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and was the founding director of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. A former president of the American Educational Research Association, Darling-Hammond focuses her research, teaching, and policy work on issues of school restructuring, teacher quality and educational equity.
No College Left Behind: A guest post

By Daniel de Vise

In a recent article, I discussed the arrival of new standardized tests that measure student learning in college — and the prospect for an accountability system in higher education akin to the No Child Left Behind law in K-12.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan at an Indianapolis school. Some states have defied the Obama administration in following the No Child Left Behind law. (Michael Conroy — Associated Press) Here, on that point, is a guest post from Robert J. Sternberg, provost and Regents Professor of Psychology and Education at Oklahoma State University.

Everyone wants accountability in higher education: You do; I do; so does the guy next door. After all, students, parents, and taxpayers are investing lots of money in higher education and they want a return. We all agree on that. But please: Let’s get it right this time!

The last time there was a big push for accountability, it brought us a nightmare—one that has persisted through Republican and Democratic administrations alike. “No Child Left Behind” has been an abysmal failure, and only a blind person could fail to see that it is the Act and those enforcing it, not the schools and kids, who deserves a big F.

The Department of Education has been granting waivers left and right because — even with more than sporadic dumbing-down of the tests and faking of the data — states can’t meet the NCLB goals. The law has led to thousands of schools investing untold hours in test-preparation exercises. Instead of educating children, many public schools are preparing students for tests that, at best, yield weak measures of narrowly conceived achievements. In the meantime, schools have abandoned music, art, physical education, and even cut back on science and social studies when those subjects are not on their state’s tests. And teaching kids to think creatively, wisely, or ethically has become a big no-no because — you guessed it — they’re not on the tests.

One student survivor of this system put his finger on the problem when he saw how unprepared he was for university-level inquiry and analysis at Georgetown. As he reported in a recent article in this newspaper, he had learned how to “memorize and regurgitate information” for the tests he was given in school. But he had never learned how to “form original, concise
thoughts…[and] to focus less on remembering every piece of information, word for word, and more on forming independent ideas.”

NCLB certainly did focus attention on serious underachievement, especially for students in schools with the fewest resources. Its overemphasis on narrow standardized tests, however, has proved a disaster for K-12 education. We must not make the same mistake in higher education. Imagine how much worse these kinds of tests would be in measuring the achievement of college students who major in many different fields, set diverse career goals and need a broad array of adaptive skill sets. My own research on “successful intelligence” and others’ research on “emotional intelligence” show clearly that post-college success depends on much more than the general knowledge and narrow analytical thinking currently measured by standardized tests.

Yet the drumbeat is on to make the same blunder in higher education that we have made in K-12 public education. Testing enthusiasts want wider use of available standardized tests like those featured in the recent book, Academically Adrift, or closely related standardized tests produced by ETS and ACT. That would be a mistake. All these kinds of tests measure general knowledge and analytical thinking — necessary but far from sufficient for students’ long-term success. These measures do not address what students can do with their majors. They do not assess creative, practical, wise, or ethical thinking; nor do they measure emotional or social intelligence, self-regulation, perseverance, responsibility, resilience in the face of obstacles, or overall intellectual maturity. They tell us little, in short, about students’ real preparation for success.

The truth is that there will never be one perfect test that represents the Holy Grail for assessment. Treating any one higher education measure in the way some colleges mistakenly treat the ACT or SAT — as an all-encompassing measure of students’ educational or cognitive skills — would be a disastrous mistake. It would narrow college learning just when global challenges require a broader portfolio of learning than ever before.

If we want accountability, we can achieve it without resorting to fantasies of a single Holy-Grail assessment. First, we can make sure our students go to accredited institutions. Second, we can ensure that the accreditation process is serious, rigorous, attentive to broad learning outcomes, and free of political influence. Third, we can have students complete capstone courses requiring them to integrate and apply their learning. Fourth, we can ask students to engage independent research projects that delve deeply into a topic of the student’s interest. Finally we can ask students to compile
expansive, integrative, and reflective portfolios of their best work, both within the classroom and outside it. Tools now exist for scoring such portfolios in meaningful ways that address broad and cross-disciplinary rather than narrow learning. Indeed, some colleges are combining such portfolios with standardized tests, recognizing that no one assessment can tell us all we want to know.

If you want to search for a Holy Grail, see a Monty Python movie. Don’t look for it in standardized tests. Let’s seek accountability, but this time, let’s do it right. Our last attempt at the Holy Grail, “No Child Left Behind,” may get an A for effort, but it gets an F for its outcomes.

By Daniel de Vise  |  01:14 PM ET, 05/08/2012
Emanuel 'E' Davis goes big time
BY SENTINEL STAFF

Emanuel Davis has dreamed of playing football in the NFL all of his life. Starting today, he'll get that chance.

The former Maneo High School Redskins star quarterback and East Carolina University all-America cornerback (2008) will try out for the Cleveland Browns starting Thursday, May 10. Chances are they'll move him to safety.

As a free agent, it's up to his performance to secure a position on the 53-man National Football League team.

But Davis, 22, has already overcome a number of challenges in his young life. The hard-hitting, left-handed defense back with an electric smile said his mind is set on making the team.

Although his career as a Pirate had its ups and downs, he leaves Greenville with a college degree in communications and bucket full of life experiences.

"[Graduation] was my biggest life accomplishment thus far," Davis said.

It will take a solid work ethic to earn a spot with the Browns and Davis claims he has it. Cleveland is a working man's town and Davis said his "hard hat and lunch pail" are ready.
Over the years, he's learned that a low profile is better than a flashy one. He just got a haircut and shaved most of his facial hair. He now drives a 2004 Chevy Tahoe that blends in.

He's also good about answering questions directly and always remembers his "yes sirs" and "no sirs." Before lunch Friday with his former coach, R.V. Owens, the pair said a prayer before eating.

"[I want] the dinner, I'm hungry," Davis said.

While they waited, Davis explained how he felt the day the draft ended on April 28 when at first things didn't go his way - he wasn't drafted.

He and four friends, who also are former Redskins, first hung their heads. But only 20 minutes or so later, Davis said the phone started ringing; first his agent, then the general manager of the Browns called.

Next thing he knew, he was under contract and headed to Cleveland. There were grins and high fives all around.

"It feels good, it's something I've been waiting for for a long while," he said. "Ever since I could remember - all of my baby pictures had footballs in them.

"I was just so happy, so many emotions were going through my head," Davis said. "I've been waiting so long -- it was just a blessing."

And then he flashed that big smile.

Owens, who has been a father figure for Davis since high school, agreed it was an exciting day and he believes Cleveland is the perfect place for "E" as he's known from Manteo to Greenville and beyond.

"I think this is the perfect place to go - it's about us -- the journey of life," Owens said. "It's who we are."

And what a journey it's been.

The Owens family took in Davis during high school when his guardian died and he had nowhere else to go. They've supported him ever since.
Davis earned a full athletic scholarship to East Carolina, and the Owens family has always been there to help him with everything else. R.V.'s wife Julie helped Davis move all his belongings back from Greenville last week.

R.V. jokes that Julie, who is Carolina blue through and through, will now have to trade in her Pirate's purple and gold gear for Cleveland's brown and orange team colors. They plan on catching a jet from Raleigh to Cleveland for the games if all goes well.

When Davis arrived in Greenville in 2007, he quickly made a name for himself. In his redshirt freshman year, he was rotating in and out of the University of Central Florida game at cornerback when he intercepted the ball in overtime, and the Pirates won the away match up.

Next, at home against Marshall on their first passing play, Davis intercepted the ball. In the Pirates second defense stand, he picked off another.

"They stopped throwing to our side," Owens said. He was in the stands watching the action with his dad Bobby Owens.

Davis went on to have awesome season that resulted in him being named a Freshman All America. This was followed up by conference championships for ECU in 2009 and 2010.

He was all-conference his sophomore, junior and senior years in Conference USA, Owens noted. His teammates voted him team captain his junior year after the season because every time Davis was named team captain of the week, he always let a team member who didn't normally play in the games go to mid-field for the coin toss, Owens said.

An important figure in his football life as a Pirate early on was defensive backs coach Rick Smith who later followed head coach Skip Holtz to University of South Florida and works as the assistant head coach there now.

Although Smith, who has coached for 41 years, was traveling on a recruiting trip Friday night, he took time to discuss this latest accomplishment by Davis.

"I think he's a got a chance," the coach said. "So much has to do with what they need."
"He's got athletic ability, exceptional strength and loves to play the game," smith said. "He's coachable and respectful."

Smith said he was proud Davis earned his degree and overcame obstacles to do it.

"I hope they need corners," Smith said. "Emanuel has the love of the game and enough speed to be a corner."

Smith bonded with Davis just as others have in the past.

"I love the kid like he was my son," the veteran coach said.

Smith thinks the journey has been amazing for Davis. People like former Manteo football coach Walt Davis and Owens have made things happen for him.

"What people have done for that kid ... part of the reason is that smile," Smith said.

Smith can remember when coach Davis and the Manteo Redskins led by "E" Davis at quarterback were playing for the state championship back in 2007 in Chapel Hill. Although they have the same last name, they are not related.

Smith said he was sitting in the stands surrounded by another team that also was competing in the state championships when coach Davis put "E" Davis in at safety in the second half.

"Emanuel had three licks and was knocking the dog stuff out of those kids," he said. "Those kids in the stands were lovin' it."

And so were the Manteo players.

The Redskins ended up losing that championship but coach Davis worked hard to help "E" Davis get to the next level. Eventually, "E" went to ECU, and coach Davis changed jobs and was coaching nearby at South Central High School.

Coach Davis watched plenty of games and supported "E" during good times and bad. The coach called "E" as soon as he learned about the Brown's try-outs.

Coach Davis couldn't be contacted by press time but what he did for "E" early on
may have made this young stars' career.

Manteo ran a triple option, wing T offense. As a lefty, "E" loved to go left where he had options. And one of his favorites was to dart between the linemen where he could jet to the end zone for six.

He doesn't remember how many touchdowns he had his senior season; he's not really into all of that.

"I just play football," he said.
Republicans in Senate Block Bill on Student Loan Rates

By JONATHAN WEISMAN

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans on Tuesday blocked consideration of a Democratic bill to prevent the doubling of some student loan interest rates, leaving the legislation in limbo less than two months before rates on subsidized federal loans are set to shoot upward.

Along party lines, the Senate voted 52 to 45 on a key procedural motion, failing to reach the 60 votes needed to begin debating the measure. Senator Olympia J. Snowe, the moderate Republican from Maine who is retiring, voted present.

Senators said quiet negotiations had begun to resolve the impasse, but Democrats sought to raise the political pressure, vowing to take to the Senate floor to show the cost of inaction for students in their states.

“Mitt Romney says he supports what we’re trying to do. I’d suggest he pick up the phone and call Senator McConnell,” said Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the Senate majority leader, referring to the Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.
Republicans blamed Democrats for the impasse and suggested that they were manufacturing a political controversy instead of working out differences in private.

“We all agree we’re not going to let the rate go up,” Mr. McConnell said.

The vote was the Senate Republicans’ 21st successful filibuster of a Democratic bill this Congress, which started in January 2011. Republicans have blocked consideration of President Obama’s full jobs proposal, as well as legislation repealing tax breaks for oil companies, helping local governments pay teachers and first responders, and setting a minimum tax rate for households earning more than $1 million a year. Republicans say the measures were flawed and potentially harmful to the economic recovery.

But the student loan filibuster may be the highest-profile stalemate yet, because unlike those earlier bills, this one is not likely to be abandoned. Mr. Obama has elevated the issue by hammering Republicans on it for weeks. American students took out twice the value of student loans in 2011, about $112 billion, as they did a decade before, after adjusting for inflation. Overall, Americans now owe about $1 trillion in student loans. In 2010, such debt surpassed credit card debt for the first time.

The bill in limbo addresses only part of that burden. Graduate students with Stafford loans pay a higher rate, as do students with unsubsidized Stafford loans. Most undergraduates take out both unsubsidized and subsidized loans.

Republicans say they want to extend Democratic legislation passed in 2007 that temporarily reduced interest rates for low- and middle-income undergraduates who receive subsidized Stafford loans to 3.4 percent from 6.8 percent. But the Republicans would not accept the Senate Democrats’ proposal to pay for a one-year extension by changing a law that allows some wealthy taxpayers to avoid paying Social Security and Medicare taxes by classifying their pay as dividends, not cash income.

“They want to raise taxes on people who are creating jobs when we are still recovering from the greatest recession since the Great Depression,” said Senator Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee, who instead wanted to pay for the rate decrease by eliminating a fund for preventive health care in Mr. Obama’s health care law.

Before the vote, Senate Democrats arrayed college students to plead for a yes vote, including Clarise McCants, 21, a junior at Howard University in Washington who said she pulled herself out of a troubled neighborhood in North Philadelphia and relies on $13,500 in Stafford loans for her tuition.
“I know I’m not the only one with dreams,” she said. “I’m here to ask Congress, ‘Don’t double my rate.’”

Republicans have not always been so averse to closing the loophole that the Senate bill addresses. In 2004, when it emerged that John Edwards, then a vice-presidential hopeful, had classified himself as a “subchapter S corporation” to pay himself dividends rather than income, conservatives criticized him for avoiding payroll taxes.

But the Democratic line of attack has been complicated by the House’s actions. Shrugging off a veto threat, the House passed an extension of the subsidized rate last month, paid for with the preventive health care fund. Thirteen Democrats voted for the bill, making up for the 30 Republicans who voted no because they opposed federal subsidies for an interest rate that they believed should be set by market forces. Those Democratic defections put the House bill over the top and fortified Republican arguments that the Senate Democrats were now to blame for the stalemate.

Representative Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the House minority whip, said Tuesday that those Democratic votes were driven by politics, not substance. “They didn’t want that 30-second ad” attacking them for opposing a rate-subsidy extension, he said. “That was not a demonstration at all for the funding source.”

Republicans made clear they would go on offense, blaming Democrats if interest rates doubled July 1.

“Instead of compounding the problem with more bad policies that raise taxes on small businesses and raid Social Security and Medicare, we must work together to prevent a rate increase on students and make it easier for job creators to hire them when they graduate,” Senator Roy Blunt, Republican of Missouri, said after the vote.
Law School Plans to Offer Web Courses for Master’s

By TAMAR LEWIN

The law school of Washington University announced Tuesday that it would offer, entirely online, a master’s degree in United States law intended for lawyers practicing overseas, in partnership with 2tor, an education technology company.

Legal education has been slow to move to online classes, and the new master’s program is perhaps the earliest partnership between a top-tier law school and a commercial enterprise.

“We don’t know where the students are going to come from exactly, but we believe there is demand abroad for an online program with the same quality that we deliver in St. Louis, accessible to people who can’t uproot their lives to come to the United States,” said Kent D. Syverud, the dean of the law school, which currently offers students on campus a Master of Law degree, or LL.M., in United States law for foreign lawyers. “It’s not designed to prepare students for the bar exam.”

Nonetheless, graduates of the new program, which will include live discussions via webcam and self-paced online materials, would probably be eligible to take the California bar exam.

Washington University will share the revenues from the $48,000 program — the same tuition paid by students at the St. Louis campus — with 2tor, which will provide marketing, the Web platform and technical support, including a staff member to monitor each live class and deal with any technical problems that arise.

2tor, a four-year-old company based in Maryland, has partnerships in place with the University of Southern California, Georgetown and the University of North Carolina for online graduate degree programs in education, business, public administration and nursing.

Largely because of American Bar Association rules, however — under which approved law schools may not count more than 12 credits of distance education toward a Juris Doctor degree — legal education has been slow to shift to online classes. Students who earn a J.D. from a bar association-approved law school are automatically eligible to take the bar exam nationwide.
But beyond that, each state sets its rules on who can take the bar exam. California, for example, is the only state that allows graduates of Concord Law School — which is not approved by the bar association, but offers a fully online Juris Doctor — to take its bar exam.

The bar association does not approve master’s programs, beyond certifying that a new one at an approved law school will not detract from the J.D. program.

About a dozen states allow some Master of Law holders to qualify for the bar exam, but in New York, those with master’s degrees are not eligible if they earned the degree online.

“It’s hard to make a definitive statement before a candidate applies, but California allows LL.M. students and online students to take the exam, and our program will meet their course requirements, so it should be a possibility,” said Tomea Mersmann, the associate dean for strategic initiatives at Washington University School of Law.

Gayle Murphy, senior executive of the California committee of bar examiners, confirmed that under the current guidelines, those with an online master’s from a bar association-approved law school could be eligible. But with the advent of online degrees, she said, those guidelines might be revisited.

A growing number of law schools offer online master’s degrees in specialized areas of law, like taxation, health care, estate planning, the environment or business transactions. Florida Coastal School of Law, a commercial school, offers a master’s in United States law, created, like the Washington University program, for international lawyers.

New York University Law School’s online Executive LL.M in Tax program enrolls more than 100 students, mostly from the United States, with a smattering from other countries.

“Online students can see videos of all the brick-and-mortar classes,” said Joshua D. Blank, faculty director of the graduate tax program, which has been available online since 2008. “We use the same technology Netflix uses to watch movies online. Now that there’s the technology to do this, I think there’s a lot of room for these programs to grow.”

But so far, law schools offer nothing like the online computer-engineering classes at Stanford or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that draw thousands of students.
Washington University is not aspiring to that scale. Classes will be kept small and, Mr. Syverud said, will re-create the discussion between students and professors that characterizes most in-person legal education. Mr. Syverud said he hoped to enroll 20 students in the first group, starting in January, and have four groups a year, totaling more than 100 students.
Michigan needs to invest more in higher education to better compete with states like North Carolina, where a four-year education costs $20,000 less, the head of Domino's Pizza said Monday.

"In Michigan this fiscal year, we will dedicate 76 percent more general fund dollars to our prisons than we will to our public universities," Domino's President and CEO J. Patrick Doyle told a Business Leaders for Michigan summit on higher education at the Lansing Center. "In North Carolina, they will spend almost twice as much on universities as they will on prisons."

Doyle said the two states are similar in population, personal income, joblessness, the size of their state budgets and the number of people they have in prison or college. But while Michigan spends $1.1 billion annually on higher education, North Carolina spends $2.5 billion.

According to the State Higher Education Executive Officers, Michigan had the third-highest decline in state support for higher education between 2005 and 2010. In the current budget year, university funding was slashed by 15 percent. That pushed up Michigan colleges' tuition and fees, resulting in an average cost of $38,215 for a four-year degree versus $18,877 in North Carolina, Doyle said. As a result, fewer Michigan residents get degrees.

"Our state cannot afford to continue to continue its recent trend of declining investment in the talent pool of tomorrow," Doyle said. "Michigan faces a very real shortage (by 2025) of nearly 1 million workers with a two-year degree or better, so we need to think about educating and developing our workforce."

Grand Valley State University President Thomas Haas said his university is getting $2,365 per student in state funding this year, while the University of North Carolina system gets $11,000 per student. He supports asking universities to be accountable for making sure students are getting a good value, and said his Allendale-based university has cut the cost for obtaining a degree by 14 percent.

But declining state funds also have forced Grand Valley State to raise tuition.
"I have enough money from state appropriations to take care of debt retirement and financial aid. Everything else is on tuition dollars," Haas said. 

Asked if the tuition increase has left some students unable to afford college, he replied: "Absolutely."

Haas said he'd reduce tuition at his school if the state increased its support and he could count on the funding remaining stable.

Most of Michigan's 15 public universities expect to see an increase in state funding of around 1.5 percent to 3 percent in the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1, but still will be able to count on state payments for only about a third of their operating budgets, compared to close to 80 percent in the 1960s.

Doyle said he'd like to see universities increase research and development efforts and partner with businesses more often. He'd also like to see Michigan follow North Dakota's example. It increased revenue by attracting more out-of-state students who pay higher tuition without decreasing access for in-state students.

But, he said, the main goal must be to better support universities with state dollars.

"The decline in state support for our public universities over the last decade has shifted the cost of earning a college degree from the state to students and their families," he said. "To help make college more affordable for hundreds of thousands of Michigan young people, we need a long-term commitment from the state to make higher education a ... priority."

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The Chronicle of Higher Education Fires Blogger Over Black Studies Post

By JENNIFER SCHUESSLER

The Chronicle of Higher Education has severed ties with a blogger after her post dismissing black studies as “left-wing victimization clap-trap” provoked a torrent of criticism, including a petition signed by more than 6,000 people calling for her dismissal.

The blogger, Naomi Schaefer Riley, posted her commentary, called “The Most Persuasive Case for Eliminating Black Studies? Just Read the Dissertations,” on The Chronicle’s Brainstorm blog on April 30. It was a response to a long article in The Chronicle two weeks before, reporting on what it described as a discipline “swaggering into the future” and highlighting several dissertations, none of which Ms. Riley found at all impressive.

“There is nothing here of which one should be proud,” she wrote in the post, adding, “If these young scholars are the future of the discipline, I think they can just as well leave their calendars at 1963 and let some legitimate scholars find solutions to the problems of blacks in America. Solutions that don’t begin and end with blame the white man.”

As criticism mounted, The Chronicle initially suggested that readers debate the post, and posted a response by three of the graduate students whose work Ms. Riley had singled out for criticism. But on Monday night, Liz McMillen, The Chronicle’s editor, posted a note to readers saying that Ms. Riley’s commentary, which was not reviewed before it went up online, “did not meet The Chronicle’s basic editorial standards for reporting and fairness in opinion articles” and that she had been asked to leave the blog.

In an interview with Poynter published on Tuesday, Ms. Riley, the author of “The Faculty Lounges, and Other Reasons Why You Won’t Get the College Education You Paid For,” expressed surprise at the uproar and repeated her earlier insistence that reading the dissertations she had criticized was unnecessary.
“I read some academic publications (as they relate to other research I do), but there are not enough hours in the day or money in the world to get me to read a dissertation on historical black midwifery,” Ms. Riley wrote in a blog post on Thursday. “In fact, I’d venture to say that fewer than 20 people in the whole world will read it. And the same holds true for the others that are mentioned in the piece.”
Social justice is central to the mission of Dominican University, a small private Catholic college in suburban Chicago. Serving poor immigrants is part of its history.

So as the school began to get more applications where Social Security numbers weren't provided, there was never a question of turning qualified undocumented students away, President Donna Carroll says. This year, the school pulled together $274,000 in financial aid for 17 undocumented students. Despite pushback from some donors and alumni, Carroll says her only regret is that she can't help more students.

"Is it controversial? Yes," she says. But "it's against the law to discriminate against any student group. You need to start from that premise."

Each year, about 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools, says a report by the College Board. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities estimates that between 5% and 10% go on to college.

Most of the debate about illegal immigration and higher education has centered on whether undocumented students should be allowed to pay lower in-state tuition rates at public schools, but as undocumented students become more visible and vocal about their status, some higher-priced private colleges are being pressed to consider policies to make tuition more affordable for them.
The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, of which Dominican is a member, is urging its schools to enroll and assist undocumented students. On many campuses, though, students are leading the charge.

At Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where tuition alone will run about $43,000 next year, a student group this spring raised $10,000 to help an undocumented classmate pay tuition. It's also calling on its administration to offer scholarships, work-study options and advising for undocumented students.

At Haverford College, just outside Philadelphia, students recently passed a resolution asking the school to give undocumented students "fair, need-blind admissions consideration." Similar campaigns were launched at nearby Swarthmore and Bryn Mawr.

'Encourages illegal aliens to remain'

Organizers say such policies would encourage more undocumented students to go to college.

"Our most important goal is to empower and liberate undocumented students, so we can come out of the shadows," says Jessica Hyejin Lee, 20, an undocumented Bryn Mawr student from South Korea and co-founder of Students for Undocumented Dreams & Decision Equity Now.

The non-profit Federation for American Immigration Reform, an advocacy group that opposes tuition breaks for undocumented students. "Just because there's an absence of a legal prohibition does not mean it is ethical," says spokeswoman Kristen Williamson. "It still encourages illegal aliens to remain in the country."

Raj Kannappan, 21, president of Cornell's College Republicans, says that if Cornell offers financial aid for undocumented students, "there's going to have to be a justification for why that aid can't go to students who are enrolled legally." But he doesn't expect much to happen in favor of undocumented students. "There's a lot of talk about it, but no one's really doing anything about it because a lot of people would not be in favor," he says.

Many college officials aren't resisting student demands, but they're not exactly embracing them either.

"We don't have any philosophical objection to what the students are proposing and in fact agree with them," says Jess Lord, Haverford's dean of admissions and financial aid. But "we have limited funds available to
provide financial aid, which dictates how many students with need we can take." To Lord's knowledge, Haverford doesn't enroll undocumented students.

**Illinois takes welcoming approach**

A study last year involving 447 colleges found that 57% of private and 29% of public schools provide undocumented students with aid. That suggests some schools "are trying to work with students to resolve this problem," says John Burkhardt, director of the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, based at the University of Michigan.

Even so, of 2,650 institutions surveyed for the study, just 17% responded, suggesting to Burkhardt that "institutions feel they can serve more students and take care of more cases by staying under the radar."

In Illinois, lawmakers and activists have approached the issue from another angle. A law passed last year allows immigrant families to contribute to the state's two college savings programs, authorizes private donors to create a government-backed scholarship for undocumented students and requires that high school counselors be trained on college options for undocumented students.

For students at Dominican, the word is out. "When undocumented students apply to a school it's because they've already heard that it's welcoming," says freshman Arianna Salgado, 19, an undocumented student who was born in Mexico and has lived in the USA since age 6. "It makes you really comfortable with the whole application process."

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