



WEST VIRGINIA
HIGHER EDUCATION
POLICY COMMISSION

Higher Education News Clippings

Week of April 22, 2007

4/27/06

Approved

Students at the state's colleges and universities will shoulder most of a faculty and staff pay raise.

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission gave final approval Thursday to tuition and fee increases at 13 colleges and universities. The increases range from 4.72 percent at WVU Parkersburg to 9.8 percent at West Virginia State University.

Higher Education Chancellor Brian Noland says a three to five percent faculty and staff pay raise approved by state lawmakers will cost \$18 million, but the state is providing just below \$7 million. He says the rest will be made up through the tuition and fee increases.

Noland says the increases will also help fund the schools' operating budgets. "While we are careful to ensure that we remain affordable we also have to ensure we take measures to protect institutional quality and it's our goal to provide the highest quality education possible to students across the state."

With the new tuition and fee increases the state ranks 10th in cost of college in the 16 states in the southern region.

Chancellor Noland says the cost-of-living raises will faculty and staff will take effect October 1st. He calls the pay hikes, "The first in a small step to bring up salaries across-the-board."

West Virginia faculty salaries are dead last in the 16 state southern region. Noland says, "We have much ground to cover if we're going to not only retain our current faculty, but be able to attract the best and brightest faculty."

The tuition and fee increases approved by the HEPC Thursday include Bluefield State 9.2 percent, Concord University 5 percent, Fairmont State University 6.51 percent, Glenville State College 7.52 percent, Marshall University 5.06 percent, Shepherd University 4.97 percent, West Liberty State College 5.78 percent, West Virginia State University 9.48 percent, West Virginia University 5.50 percent, West Virginia University Institute of Technology 5.51 percent, WVU-Parkersburg 4.72 percent, WVU Potomac State College 4.93 percent, WVUPSC (Bachelor's Degree) 3.96 percent.

4/27/06

Tyson to head education commission

By Bryan Chambers

Huntington attorney David Tyson was elected Thursday as chairman of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

Tyson had served as interim chairman since last month. Tyson's appointment became permanent Thursday with a unanimous vote of the commission during its meeting at Institute.

"I've had a chance to work with David for more than a year, and he has a detailed knowledge of the issues faced by our colleges and universities. Plus, he's right on the ground and close to Marshall University," Chancellor Brian Noland said. "I couldn't think of a better person to be in the position of chair."

Tyson, 53, was appointed to the commission in October 2005 by Gov. Joe Manchin and became vice chairman about six months later. He was the first Huntingtonian on the commission since J. Thomas Jones moved to Morgantown in 2002 to become CEO of West Virginia United Health System.

Tyson was named interim chairman after former chairman Mike Garrison resigned from the position because he was a finalist for the presidency at West Virginia University. Garrison was named as president of WVU earlier this month.

The 10-member commission develops and oversees a public policy agenda for the state's four-year colleges and universities.

It works to make sure they accomplish their missions and implement the provisions set by state statute.

As chairman, Tyson said his focus will be on increasing the student retention rate, making a college education more accessible and affordable for West Virginia residents and finding new ways to finance capital improvement projects.

"We're financing the construction of new campus facilities by raising various student fees," he said. "At the rate we are proceeding, there soon won't be much of a difference between the cost of a public education and private schools."

Tyson earned a bachelor of arts degree in political science at WVU in 1975 and took graduate courses in international relations for a year. He earned his juris doctorate in 1980 at the California Western School of Law in San Diego.

He also has taught criminal justice and political science classes at Marshall and worked in the legal assistance program at Marshall Community and Technical College.

Charleston
Daily Mail

April 27, 2007

Federal official visits W.Va. to discuss safety in wake of massacre

by The Associated Press

WHEELING -- Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt paid a visit to West Virginia to discuss public safety issues raised by the massacre at Virginia Tech. Leavitt met privately Thursday in Wheeling with Gov. Joe Manchin, retiring West Virginia University President David Hardesty and incoming WVU President Michael Garrison, Marshall University President Stephen J. Kopp, mental health experts, law enforcement and local leaders, The Intelligencer reported.

"President Bush is deeply troubled by what happened at Virginia Tech," Leavitt told the newspaper. "What is more is that government leaders sense a pattern to such tragedies."

Leavitt, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings will hold similar meetings across the country to discuss issues raised by the April 16 shootings at Virginia Tech in which 33 people, including the gunman, died.

"What have we decided? Nothing yet," Leavitt said. "But we will be making our recommendations to the president in 30 days. We have come here not seeking answers, but to seek information that will help us to frame the questions. We are all feeling the pain from this tragedy, but now we are charged with finding the balance between maintaining privacy and security."

Manchin said West Virginia has addressed other safety issues, such as mine safety, but not mental illness.

"I don't know why we haven't stepped up to the plate before and asked what is causing this? As human beings, we know how to care, share and reach out. But it seems that it is always after the fact that we do this," Manchin told the newspaper.



4/27/06

Gayle Manchin launches teaching Web site

First lady Gayle C. Manchin has launched the WVPASS (Partnerships to Assure Student Success) Web site, wvpass.org.

“As a former educator and lifelong community volunteer in West Virginia, I believe in creating the opportunity to bring a variety of people together to share ideas, communicate and network,” she said, “which in turn allows programs at all levels to develop, grow and become self-sustaining — that is WVPASS.”

WVPASS is a state initiative that provides training, technical support, and resources for youth and community development. It also connects partners to serve youth with far greater resources than they would otherwise receive.

“This is a single site that connects people to many locations,” said Jack Wiseman, WVPASS director.

The Web site will provide West Virginia communities, nonprofits, civic organizations, state agencies and individuals the ability to gain access to state and national grants, training opportunities, and events that assist in community and youth development.



April 27, 2007

Addition planned for engineering building at WVU

In a major project scheduled to break ground next month, a four-story addition to the Engineering Sciences Building will be built for WVU's College of Engineering and Mineral Resources.

The WVU Board of Governors has budgeted \$11 million for the project, and WVU Facilities Management is reviewing bids. Money for the project will come from university, and College of Engineering and Mineral Resources, funds.

The 28,000-square-foot addition will be located on the southeast corner of the building, adjacent to Parking Lot 40 and Evansdale Drive.

A two-story atrium will provide a new entryway to the building, a gathering place for students and faculty and additional space for special events, such as the college's annual career fair.

The addition will have a hightech theater-style lecture hall that will seat 150, a student learning center, state-of-the-art teaching and research laboratories, and office space for professors and graduate assistants.

Alpha Associates of Morgantown is doing the architectural design for the project. Construction is scheduled to be completed by summer 2008.

April 26, 2007

Evolving Education: Community and Technical Colleges Find Their Place in Teaching West Virginians

Community and technical schools are hitting their strides.

Story by Ann Ali

West Virginia is realizing the value of a community and technical college education.

The state's community and technical colleges have been a loosely connected mix of educational opportunities that historically have not had a higher governing board or statewide reach.

"Local community colleges date back to the mid-1970s," said Jim Skidmore, chancellor of the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia, the recently legislated body created to bring accountability and organization to the schools.

Skidmore breezed through descriptions of each school and its creation, as if it was his A-B-Cs, explaining simply, "I lived through it."

But to the average West Virginian, community and technical colleges and their organizations remain a mystery.

The schools offer much more than they used to, from career-technical education, work force training, retraining and continuing education to dual credit arrangements with public high schools for a seamless progression through higher education.

The state's 10 community and technical colleges have 22 branch locations and include as many associate degree and certificate programs as four-year schools.

"There are different degrees of awareness about CTCs," Skidmore said. "The areas of the state know their own, and there are still some visibility problems with the schools that were part of the four-year institutions."

Community College Chronology

The state began studying technical colleges in 1971, and it recommended the state "develop community colleges as 'discreet elements' of baccalaureate institutions," according to a timeline from the CTCS.

A 1989 Carnegie study concluded the state's community college structure needed overhauled, and it recommended all community colleges become freestanding institutions.

The next recommendations came in 1999 from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. They called for a shift over a six-year period to a statewide network of independently accredited community and technical colleges to serve every region of the state. The 1999 study seemed the most dire, pointing out the state's poor educational numbers -- 50th in the preparation of the work force for the new economy, last among competitor states in high school graduates attending community and technical colleges, 47th in the proportion of adults at the lowest level of literacy and last in education attainment rate.

"A lot of this started back ... when we started looking at where we are as a higher education system," said Sen. Robert Plymale, D-Wayne, chairman of the Senate Education Committee. "What resulted was the eventual creation of the community and technical college system that we have now. ...

"Let's be very honest here: We haven't built accountability into this system, and since 2000, with Senate Bill 653, we started doing some accountability."

Senate Bill Milestone

The West Virginia Legislature passed Senate Bill 653 in 2000, shaking up the state's CTC scene.

"We had three freestanding schools not attached to a four-year institution," Skidmore said. "Those were (West Virginia) Northern (Community and Technical College), Southern (West Virginia Community and Technical College) and, at the time, Parkersburg.

"Northern had come from West Liberty (State College), Southern from Marshall (University), and there were community college components as part of baccalaureate-level institutions -- those were Shepherd, Fairmont, Marshall, (West Virginia) State, Tech and Bluefield (State College).

"We continued under that structure until Senate Bill 653 in 2000, when things changed. The actual legislation said those institutions that were part of a four-year (institution) would become independently accredited."

Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College was created in 1999, and Parkersburg became a regional campus of West Virginia University. Fairmont's community college began seeking independent accreditation, but after experiencing the high costs of accreditation, the school re-merged with Fairmont State College but created its own identity as Pierpont Community and Technical College.

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College was the offspring of Bluefield State College's community college, and New River Community and Technical College was created from Bluefield State College and the Glenville State College community and technical college campus in the Summersville area.

Making the school histories even fuzzier are the name changes state colleges took when they became universities a few years ago.

Plymale said he didn't think the state should be rewarding any institution that isn't making progress or moving toward graduation rate goals.

"The community and technical college council has done a good job ... and the policy commission has done a relatively good job as well," Plymale said. "We've had some very good discussions, and I think they're ready."

Defining the CTCs

The overriding concern when the Legislature brought CTCs into the spotlight was that the schools would overshadow the work at four-year institutions and take their students.

Brian Noland, chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, said more than 173,000 adults in West Virginia have some college credits but no degrees and 127,000 adults have some high school credits but no diplomas. He said he sees plenty of room for education.

"We struggle with the participation rates of adult students in secondary education; there's an untapped market of adults 25 and older," Noland said. "At my core, I want people to go to college, and that doesn't matter if it's a two-year or a four-year institution.

"When you look at the mission of the community and technical college system, it's different from the mission of the four-year system. It's more focused on immediate needs and more focused on adults."

Skidmore said CTCs don't exclusively deal with adults, and baccalaureate institutions also recruit adults. The only overlap of the two schools, he said, comes with the opportunity to go on to baccalaureate program.

"CTCs have two major focuses," he said, "to provide access to higher education and deliver work force development."

Community and technical colleges have the flexibility to establish a program of study in response to new business needs.

"If we are going to have an immediate impact on work force needs in our state, that impact will most likely be best achieved through the community colleges," Noland said.

"I think if you look at emerging business training and infrastructure needs, if we spent the next five years positioning our institutions to work more closely with business and industry to provide training and certification, there will be more than enough challenges to keep all of our institutions occupied."

Plymale said the studies showed the Legislature a multitude of issues that needed addressed, especially a lack of focus on work force training.

"Our community and technical colleges were underneath the four-year institutions, where they got limited direction in where they were going to be moving with regards to those types of things," Plymale said. "We're doing a study that will be out in June. I think ... once the study's out, you'll see what Gov. (Joe) Manchin is doing on the jobs council. He's certainly saying we have areas that are not working, but not necessarily because of the structure; it's because of a long-term issue."

The state's CTCs already have done work force development with mining industries, allied health and nursing needs and the chemical and polymers industries.

Noland said he thought there always would be room for all forms of education because a different experience is gained through attending a four-year institution. He said within a limited amount of time, some of the CTCs have "made mountains," and the key for all higher education to remain in harmony is for each school to define its niche.

"I think we still have a ways to go even just to let people know that college is possible," Noland said. "I commend the two-year system and Chancellor Skidmore for accomplishing what they have, but I can't hit hard enough on the need to focus on adults. ..."

"If we all remain focused on our missions, it's going to be a very different West Virginia in about 10 years."

Lagging Behind?

Kathy D'Antoni, vice chancellor of the CTCS, said West Virginia is the only state in which more residents attend four-year institutions than community and technical colleges.

"We've got to change a whole culture, and the sad thing is West Virginia is the reverse of the entire nation as far as folks attending CTCs versus the percentage who attend a four-year," D'Antoni said. "We did not have an independent system up until three or four years ago."

Noland said the schools have a lot of work to do, and the state has gotten a late start to the game.

"We have just recently, in the past seven years, established a pronounced community college presence," Noland said. "States like North Carolina did that in the 1960s, and, in many ways, we're playing catch up."

Unskilled workers made up 60 percent of the 1950 work force nationally, with professional and skilled workers at 20 percent each, according to information from the CTCS. Unskilled workers made up 15 percent of 2000's work force, with professional workers still at 20 percent but skilled workers at 65 percent. Skidmore said that shift shows how badly community and technical college educations are needed.

D'Antoni said community colleges traditionally have been thought of in West Virginia as a stepping-stone or a second-tier school.

"All the colleges are doing a great job with the tools they have to work with," she said. "It's a culture change, and it's directly related to work force."

"States with very strong CTCs have very vibrant economies. Word of mouth takes a while, but we're getting there."

D'Antoni said the public in general still doesn't realize the quality and value of a CTC education, but she said high school students are beginning to understand.

Most CTCs offer degree or certification packages that high school students can use to gain dual credit or even an early associate degree if they know which classes they need.

"We're trying to encourage high school students to map out career paths," D'Antoni said. "You can only make decisions based on the information you have, and a lot of students are making major education decisions based on very little information."

D'Antoni said she thought the state had finally gotten on the right path for community and technical college education.

Skidmore said the CTCS is working in the right direction, and the CTCs have the structure they needed for so long.

"We have goals and a vision," he said. "We know which direction we need to go. We just need to put together the pieces to get there."

April 25, 2007

Hoppy's Commentary
Talkline Host Hoppy Kercheval

When it comes to high-tech jobs, West Virginia is on the low end.

A new report by the trade group AeA (formerly the American Electronics Association) says West Virginia had 14,343 people working in high-tech jobs in 2006. Nationwide, the survey found, 5.8 million people work in the technical industry.

That means just two-tenths of one percent of all the tech jobs in the country are in West Virginia.

True, West Virginia is a small state (1.8-million people), but even when you factor in population the state ranks near the bottom in high-tech jobs.

The six states that have fewer high tech jobs than West Virginia are Alaska (9,298), Hawaii(14,024), Montana (10,542), North Dakota (10,187), South Dakota (8,629) and Wyoming (4,596). But each of those states has a smaller population than West Virginia.

And there are more high-tech lowlights.

The 2007 State New Economy Index study ranked West Virginia 50th. The study found West Virginia was near or at the bottom in categories such as knowledge jobs, economic dynamism, digital economy and innovative capacity.

So, why are we so low on the high-tech scale?

I talked with several West Virginia economists who all start their explanations with something called "educational attainment." West Virginians, they say, don't get enough education.

Consider this: In 2000, 15 percent of West Virginia residents 25 and older had a BA or better level of education. The national average that year was 25 percent. Only Monongalia County, where WVU is located, had a share of residents with a BA or higher greater than the national average (32 percent).

West Virginia also has a "chicken or the egg" problem.

Dr. George Hammond at WVU's Bureau of Business and Economic Research says tech firms like to locate where there are skilled workers and skilled workers prefer to locate where there are high tech firms.

Tech firms and tech employees tend to cluster, meaning it's more likely for a location with existing technology parks and trained workers to expand and grow than it is for a new tech location to start up.

Can West Virginia move from the tech "have nots" to the "haves?"

Director Dr. Tom Witt of the WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research tells me that begins with attracting nationally and/or internationally recognized engineering and science faculty "whose research can lead to commercialized products and spin off firms."

Witt says some states have accomplished this by setting up matching grant funds that can be mixed with private dollars to pay for endowed chairs at the state's leading research institutions.

In the industrial economy, you have to be where the coal is to mine it.

In the new economy, location matters less. West Virginia has many assets: beautiful scenery, little crime, rock-bottom housing prices, abundant recreational opportunities.

But without the technically skilled workforce, West Virginia will continue to lag behind the rest of the nation.



April 24, 2007

Schools weigh text alerts for crises

ALERTS' MERITS UP FOR DEBATE

By Thomas Frank, USA TODAY

After last week's Virginia Tech massacre, hundreds of colleges are considering a text-message emergency-alert system, and thousands of students have signed up for the cellphone service on campuses where it's already in use.

"The standard changes after Virginia Tech," said Mark Rosenberg, chancellor of Florida's state university system. He is asking the state Legislature for \$1.5 million for new emergency-alert systems that include text-message notices for the 11 state-run campuses.

Virginia Tech school officials did not alert students until more than two hours after the first 911 call reported a shooting at West Ambler Johnston Hall. Most schools including Virginia Tech warn students with e-mail, but that may not be read for hours.

"Parents expect us to be far more responsive to the safety of their sons and daughters," Rosenberg said.

At Penn State, which in August became one of the first universities to send text-message alerts, more than 6,200 people signed up in the last week, said Annemarie Mountz, who administers the system. That's one new enrollee every 97 seconds.

Since the shootings, more than 500 colleges have contacted Omnilert to ask about setting up text-message alerts, said Nick Gustavsson, company chief technology officer. At the 34 campuses where Omnilert already operates, tens of thousands of students have signed up in recent days, he said.

Douglas Tuttle, former president of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, praised cellphone alerts because students often ignore e-mails or dorm-phone messages. "Cellphones are how they communicate," Tuttle said.

Roughly 16.6 million college students have cellphones, according to M:Metrics researchers. That's 95% of the 17.5 million full- and part-time college students counted by the Census.

The text-messaging system does have critics. Cellphone alerts that tell students where to hide "might direct a killer to the facility where everybody is a sitting duck," said Brett

Sokolow, a lawyer who advises colleges on reducing risk. "We really have to be measured in the rush to adopt these things."

At Syracuse University, which may start text-message alerts, spokesman Kevin Morrow acknowledged the potential to tip off a killer but said in emergencies "you have to communicate swiftly about what has happened and the potential risks."

When Douglas Pennington went to Shepherd University in West Virginia last September and murdered his two sons before killing himself, university officials alerted other students the old-fashioned way: They sent e-mails.

Last week, Shepherd officials saw the potential flaw of their alert system when it was reported that officials at Virginia Tech took two hours to send e-mail alerts after the first of two shooting incidents.

"They had some problems with communication to students," Shepherd spokeswoman Valerie Owens said. "So we're looking for something a little more instantaneous."

Hundreds of universities such as Shepherd are moving to speed up emergency alerts by adding text messages that go to student and staff cellphones for emergencies ranging from storms and road closures to crimes on campus.

The systems are cheap and fast. Omnilert, which provides emergency text messaging at 34 campuses, says it charges colleges about \$1 per student per year. Students also would have to pay for the alerts if their cellphone plan excludes text messaging.

University officials warn that brief text-message alerts are imperfect. They are debating whether to require students to sign up and whether alerts should be reserved for emergencies only.

"It's not a panacea," said Annemarie Mountz, who administers an alert system at Penn State. With the growing use of personal digital assistants that include phones, "students are going to have e-mail capability on their hip instead of a cellphone, and text-messaging is going to be obsolete," Mountz said.

Syracuse University may require its 24,000 students and staff to give the university cellphone numbers so it can send text-message alerts, spokesman Kevin Morrow said.

Some students could thwart the system by giving wrong numbers, intentionally or not, said Brett Sokolow, a lawyer who advises colleges on risk reduction. "A lot of students don't want to share that information," he said.

Wheeling Jesuit University runs its own system, which gets text messages to students in 62 seconds. As Wheeling tries to expand its system to other colleges, university Vice President Davitt McAteer warns about commercial text-message vendors that send

students ads in addition to warnings. "Commercialization takes away from the emergency nature," he said.

Mobile Campus, which provides text messages at 11 campuses, adopted a new policy last week that enables students to get only emergency alerts without ads. If students want to get other university text messages, such as sports scores, they receive two ads a day.

Mobile CEO George Tingo expects students who sign up only for emergency alerts eventually will convert to getting all text messages as well as ads. "They'll want to sign up," Tingo said.

Upgrades wanted

Universities across the USA are working to improve their emergency-alert system by using cellphone text messaging:

- Penn State University expanded its text-message alert system to 21 satellite campuses.
- Florida is considering text alerts at its 11 state-run campuses.
- Texas Lutheran University's text-alert system is likely to be operational by June 1.
- Syracuse, Shepherd and Fairmont State universities all are considering using campuswide text alerts.

April 24, 2007

Marshall approves tuition increases

By Davin White

Marshall University students will pay an additional \$105 per semester for tuition this fall, while students living in on-campus dorms must shell out an extra \$163.

The university's Board of Governors approved the increases at its meeting in Huntington Monday.

Resident undergraduate students living on campus would pay \$5,589 per semester for tuition, room and board, up from \$5,321 per semester this year, according to Marshall spokesman Dave Wellman.

The increases affect all full-time undergraduates, both in- and out-of-state. Tuition increases for part-time undergraduates will be prorated. The governing board did not address Marshall's graduate students Monday, Wellman said.

Still, undergraduates with the Unlimited Meal Plan (a food plan required for freshmen) will see their overall semester bill decrease by \$95 if they also live in campus residence halls, Wellman said. The cost of the Unlimited Meal Plan drops by \$363 per semester this fall.

When asked, Wellman was not immediately sure why the university was able to decrease the meal plan costs from \$1,800 to \$1,437 while increasing tuition, room and board.

Students in the School of Medicine also face a "resident, metro and non-resident" fee increase of \$268 per semester.

Marshall will submit the plan to the state Higher Education Policy Commission, but does not need its approval to finalize the changes, Wellman said.

The board of governors also approved a fee of \$75 for Marshall's new fitness center, expected to open in the spring of 2009. The fee will not be assessed until the center opens, according to Wellman.

Earlier this month, West Virginia University's Board of Governors approved similar increases.

In-state undergraduates on the main campus in Morgantown are expected to pay an additional \$123 per semester this fall, while students at WVU Tech in Montgomery face a \$120 tuition increase.

Meanwhile, students living in the residence halls in Morgantown will pay an average of 6.5 percent more. A student now paying \$1,750 for an average double room will pay \$1,864 next fall.

Charleston Daily Mail

April 23, 2007

Officials debate coming teacher shortage

by Jessica M. Karmasek

Teachers' unions in West Virginia contend there is a shortage of teachers on the horizon, citing the upcoming retirement of a bunch of baby boomers and low pay dissuading young people from joining the profession. Some higher education officials remain skeptical of any impending shortage, despite a decreasing number of education graduates at some colleges around the state.

Rosalyn Templeton, executive dean of Marshall University's College of Education and Human Services, said she was given the same speech as a college student in the 1980s.

"Talk of all these teachers leaving has been hanging around for a decade," she said. "I haven't seen it. I keep hearing about it.

"I remember when I went into education in the 80s, they were saying the same thing. I was being told there was going to be a large number of retirements, a lot of positions."

Teachers' unions say the impending exodus of educators will leave a severe void in the state's public schools.

West Virginia Education Association President Charles Delauder said he predicts 10,500 teachers will retire in the next five years.

He echoes fears expressed by other union officials that there will not be enough future teachers or in-state college graduates to fill those open spots. Recruiting from surrounding states will prove even more difficult, he said.

"It becomes the position of the higher education institutions to come up with a plan to get folks to go into education," Delauder said. "But it really falls on the people in state government to be the ones to deal with the problem."

Delauder and other lobbyists argue that if lawmakers would increase teacher salaries the profession would be more attractive.

"As we've been saying all along, the beginning salary is not enough to attract people into education," Delauder said. "If the state could increase teachers' salaries, make it

more attractive, then we might have a better chance of recruiting and attracting teachers in our state."

The state is now paying beginning teachers about \$30,000 a year.

At Marshall, there has been a significant drop in the number of teacher candidates graduating from the university, Templeton said.

She said the education school is producing far fewer teachers than it was five years ago.

For example, in 2005, 203 teacher candidates graduated from the university. Last year, the number of education graduates dropped to 161.

Templeton cites a lack of marketing about education programs and low salaries in the field as reasons for the decrease.

"The main reason is salary," she said. "Educators are just not making the level of salary desired. Some say they're not attracted to the profession because of social challenges in classrooms today. I hear a lot of people say that. A lot of it is that we haven't really gotten out there to show and market education."

Marshall administrators say they don't have any projections for how many education graduates the school might produce in any year in the future.

Templeton said it might help to gather the data and try to forecast, given the growing talk of more teachers retiring from the profession, she said.

"We do have a lot of baby boomers getting older," Templeton said. "And a lot of people are talking about what we're going to do."

Still, she said she remains somewhat skeptical of so many teachers departing the profession.

She believes many more teachers are working more years for financial purposes, or out of boredom.

"Now individuals are saying, well, I'm supposed to retire, but I think I'm going to keep working," Templeton said. "Look at my faculty. The oldest faculty member I have is 76. Another faculty member is 74 or 75. Another just turned 70, and I have several in their 60s."

At West Virginia University, the number of education graduates has remained fairly steady in recent years, ranging from 300 to 350.

University officials said they expect the number graduating this year to reach 352. That includes students in the five-year teacher education program, and those who are graduating from the music education, special education, physical education, art education and agriculture science education programs.

Anne Nardi, dean and professor at WVU's College of Human Resources and Education, expects the number to remain steady in the next few years.

Unlike Marshall, WVU is able to forecast the number of graduates based on the number of students in current programs. They say they can project three to four years into the future.

Nardi said the salary scale and the state's current teacher seniority system, which often results in graduates having to wait for certain job openings, can make it difficult for in-state graduates to find a job in West Virginia.

"For a graduate who may have student loan obligations, it is imperative to locate a position as soon as possible," she said. "That, coupled with better salaries offered in most other states, often results in individuals leaving the state.

"Unless the salary situation is changed, in all probability graduates from West Virginia colleges and universities will continue to leave the state even if the number of teachers graduating were to increase exponentially."

Templeton said if teachers' unions are correct and 10,500 teaching jobs open up in the next five years, it will be hard to staff schools, especially given her university's present graduation figures.

A survey released last month by temporary staffing agency Manpower Inc. says nationwide, employers counted teaching as one of the three hardest jobs to fill in 2007.

According to the survey, experts are forecasting a need for hundreds of thousands more teachers over the next decade. That, combined with the prospect of current teachers retiring or leaving the profession, could create big problems in education.

George Jackson, a national spokesman for the American Federation of Teachers, said in an article published by MSNBC.com last month he thinks it has long been difficult to recruit and keep teachers in districts where poverty, crime and behavior problems are rampant. That's partly because of wages, he said.

But teachers in those areas also complain they don't receive enough support and professional development.

He noted that at least 40 percent of all teachers leave the profession within their first five years.

Carol Hamric, human resources director for Kanawha County schools, said recruiting teachers is hard work these days.

"I've been doing recruiting for about 15 years now, and it's the toughest recruiting I've ever done," she said. "I try to sell the area, the cost of living, the benefits, but it's hard -- and I used to do recruiting in the corporate world before this."

Hamric said a fourth of the county's workforce could retire right now. That includes teachers and other school employees such as cooks and custodians. They have the years of service and the age, she said.

Some have decided to continue working because Social Security benefits have changed, raising the age at which a person is eligible to receive full benefits, she said.

But she said it's only a matter of time before those employees leave the workforce.

"It's going to happen," Hamric said. "It's going to happen all over the country. And there's no way the in-state colleges are going to meet our demand."

Still, applications from aspiring teachers flow steadily into the Kanawha school board offices.

Hamric said earlier that for the past two years, the board has received about 190 applications each month.

The problem, she noted, is finding applicants qualified for specific positions.

New federal No Child Left Behind standards have made it difficult to find highly qualified secondary teachers in critical areas such as math, English and special education, Hamric said.

"It's getting really hard in some states, and it'll probably only get harder here," Hamric said.

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Campus alert systems a hot topic in state

By Davin White

Wheeling Jesuit University has developed a communication system on campus that other schools could use to instantly alert faculty, staff and students to an emergency.

Emergency communications became a hot topic following the Virginia Tech shootings Monday, where students in Blacksburg were notified of the first shootings by e-mail more than two hours after the fact.

Using the Community Alert Online system, Davitt McAteer, vice president for sponsored programs at Wheeling Jesuit, expects to discuss the system with colleges such as Shepherd, West Liberty, Concord, Fairmont State and Bethany.

The alert system can notify students, and those using multiple cell phone services or other communication devices, by text message or e-mail alert within 90 seconds.

The program is up and running and ready for colleges' use.

"The idea is they don't have to reinvent the wheel," said McAteer, who also served as special adviser to Gov. Joe Manchin following the Sago Mine explosion in January 2006. "We've got a product that is up there and ready and they can use it now."

He says the logistics (cost, who will serve as system administrator, etc.) are still being worked out. The cost to lease the software may range between about \$15,000 and \$25,000, but there is no \$1 charge per student per day or daily advertisements associated with the system, as other emergency alert systems feature.

Wheeling Jesuit also might add the same capabilities for emergency services in Monongalia, Marshall and Ohio counties, McAteer said.

In Charleston, Butch Evans of the Software Computer Group said a product known as Wide Area Rapid Notification, or WARN, can send thousands of emergency alerts through a Web-hosted rapid text, e-mail, home or office phone, cell phone, pager, BlackBerry, fax and more.

The system can deliver thousands of messages per minute to students, faculty, school board or university personnel, alumni, volunteers, emergency personnel and parents, Evans said.

The WARN system boasts the ability to reach any electronic communication device within a matter of minutes, he said.

The higher education-based system costs 99 cents per student each year, Evans said. A more advanced version, WARN NetFlash, serves the U.S. Army and Navy. Adding its features costs an extra \$2 per student, he said.

Subscribers, however, will not be annoyed with advertisements, he said.

Evans doesn't want to be considered an "ambulance chaser," but to make those interested aware of the software. West Virginia University officials have already contacted him, he said.

"We don't want to be an opportunist; it was terrible what happened [at Virginia Tech]," he said. "But somebody messed up."