

TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In the News



May 16, 2013 - June 14, 2013

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INTERNATIONAL Enrollment

By Marian Kisch

Recruiting International Students— Community College Style

ROY MULEMI HEARD ABOUT COMMUNITY COLLEGE the way the majority of international students do—through word of mouth. His cousins lived in Texas and suggested he attend college there. Mulemi's parents traveled from Kenya to check out area colleges and they decided on Lone Star College System in Houston, Texas.

"I decided on a two-year college so I could better integrate into the U.S.," Mulemi says, who lives with his cousins. After graduating this June he will attend Sam Houston State University and then go on to earn a PhD. He hopes to use his education to "bring up my country through technology." His dream? "To be president of Kenya one day," he says.

Adding Diversity and a Global Perspective

Why recruit international students in the first place? The main reason cited by educators is to increase diversity on the campus and to expose students and faculty to people and ideas from other cultures.

"Even though we are a diverse college, international students add richness to the classroom," Eddie West, dean of counseling and international programs at Ohlone College in Fremont, California, says. "Since most of our students will not be able to study abroad, this is the best proxy for an overseas experience, for both students and faculty.

Ohlone College

Total enrollment: **8,853**
Year the college started recruiting international students: **2006**
Number of international students enrolled first year: **63**
Number of international students enrolled first year: **360**

"The world is more closely interconnected," he says. "It is incumbent upon us as educators to weave global intercultural experiences into students' education."

Vilma Tafawa, executive director at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, Massachusetts, agrees: "It does a lot for our students to meet someone from Kazakhstan or Kuwait. And the international students

are able to gain a perspective on America's role in the world and learn about American culture." Global learning has become one of the college's goals, as evidenced by a new World Studies Certificate program.

Bunker Hill Community College

Total enrollment: **13,600**
Year the college started recruiting international students: **2002**
Number of international students enrolled first year: **484**
Number of international students enrolled now: **830**

Targeting Geographic Areas

Although many community colleges host students from 30 to 100 countries, Asia is overwhelmingly the most popular, with Latin America next in line. According to *Open Doors 2011* report, prepared by the Institute of International Education, 13.4 percent of international community college students in the United States came from South Korea; China and Vietnam were close behind. On average, 1.2 to 1.5 percent of a community college's population includes international students.

At Ohlone, China and Vietnam lead the pack, with Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Myanmar next in line. Coast Community College District (in Costa Mesa, California), China, Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea are well represented; many of its domestic students are Asian American. The same

Glendale Community College

Total enrollment: **16,000**
Year the college started recruiting international students: **mid 1990s**
Number of international students enrolled first year: **fewer than 150**
Number of international students enrolled now: **500 per semester**

goes for Glendale Community College, also in California, with most of its students from South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Sweden also sends many students to GCC through a government funding program. The Lone Star College System in Texas attracts most of its international students from Mexico, Nepal, Venezuela, Columbia, and Vietnam.

Lone Star College System

Total enrollment: **85,000**

Year the college started recruiting international students: **2008**

Number of international students enrolled first year: **2,238**

Number of international students enrolled now: **2,600**

Before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, many international students at BHCC were from the Middle East. But when visas became more difficult from that region, the college switched its recruitment efforts to Asia, Latin America, and Europe. Today 150 students are from South Korea, 107 from China, and 67 from Vietnam, with others from the Congo, Senegal, and Japan.

Recruitment Tactics

How a college recruits international students is based on a number of factors: budget, staff, and policies. Those who can afford it send representatives overseas to attend college educational fairs and speak to high school students and their parents.

Some hire overseas recruitment agencies, which promote the college, as well as helping with visa applications, bank accounts, housing, and transportation.

Many colleges establish relationships with English-language schools, which often are the first stop for international students. They often refer students to community colleges.

Faculty members with ties to other countries may be drafted to help the cause, either directly when they visit or indirectly through phone calls and e-mail messages.

Some more familiar recruitment methods are also employed: Web sites,

advertising in international recruitment guides, social networking, and promotion materials in various languages. Geography is sometimes a factor. A well-known city like Boston or Houston may be attractive to some, while the weather in Florida or California may attract others.

But, overwhelmingly, the most successful recruitment tactic is word of mouth. At Lone Star, 95 percent of its international students come this way. "We tell them to share their journey with their friends and family," Nithyanantha Sevanthinathan, executive director, international programs and services at Lone Star, says.

Sometimes help comes in unexpected ways. When Sevanthinathan visited a high school in Vietnam, he learned the principal's daughter had graduated from Lone Star. The principal quickly arranged for a parent forum so he and Sevanthinathan could speak to them.

Challenges to Overcome

One of the biggest challenges administrators face is explaining the community college model because most foreign countries do not have any. Therefore, there's a lack of information and misinformation about what they really are. West heard from a colleague overseas that some are apt to think it's a place where you do arts and crafts or is a senior citizen center.

"We are misunderstood," he says. "We need to show how a community college intersects with a four-year college."

Recruiters constantly emphasize the advantages of community colleges: lower cost, smaller classes, dedicated teachers, and location.

Cost is a big issue, since international students pay three to four times the in-state tuition. At Hillsborough Community College (HCC) in Tampa, Florida, in-state students pay \$78 per credit, while those out-of state pay \$312. This is a boost for college coffers, but makes it difficult for many students to attend. Still, community colleges are much less expensive than traditional four-year colleges. Some countries

Hillsborough Community College

Total enrollment: **48,016**

Year the college started recruiting international students: **2010**

Number of international students enrolled first year: **134**

Number of international students enrolled first year: **184**

subsidize the cost for their student going abroad, while other students get financial help from their families.

Kenyan student Cephas Kaburu was excited to begin his college career at Tallahassee Community College (TCC) in Tampa, Florida, in 2011. But just two weeks before he was to start, he received news that his financial sponsor had been murdered in his home country. Without funds, Kaburu would have to return home. TCC had already sent home three students when the tuition increased by \$1,000. But the college started a scholarship fund and was able to fund Kaburu for two semesters. He intends to his work this summer to earn enough money to continue his studies.

Tallahassee Community College

Total enrollment: **15,000**

Year the college started recruiting international students: **2008**

Number of international students enrolled first year: **81**

Number of international students enrolled now: **88 in spring 2012**

Housing is another concern since most community colleges serve local students. Most international students live with friends or relatives, 95 percent at Lone Star. Others live with local host families or in apartments. Ohlone College has affiliated with a nearby housing provider where new international students can stay for a few weeks or months until they hook up with others to find affordable housing.

For the past five years, TCC has awarded 10 housing scholarships in a nearby apartment complex. "We try to give the scholarships to students who otherwise would not be able to come to TCC," Betty Jensen, international student services coordinator, says.

HCC built a 420-bed residence for students; 19 international students live there. “It’s part of the ‘wow’ factor when we’re recruiting overseas and they see the modern apartment complex, with its pool and gym,” Michael Brennan, director of international education, says.

Shinta Shintawati, project manager for international student recruitment, agrees: “A student from Indonesia changed his mind about attending another community college and decided to apply to HCC instead because of our on-campus housing.”

English proficiency is a challenge for many international students because they need additional instruction. Usually they go to the community college or to a private English language school, which can take up to a couple of years. According to Andreea Serban, vice chancellor educational services and technology at CCCD, many students from Asia read and write English

Why recruit international students in the first place? The main reason cited by educators is to increase diversity on the campus and to expose students and faculty to people and ideas from other cultures.

well, but speaking is more difficult. Almost 30 percent of the 924 international students came to the school after attending one of these English schools. Serban says a new regulation could have a “massive impact” on international student enrollment in the coming years. By 2013 all English teaching schools in the United States must be accredited by an agency recognized by the Secretary of Education.

Growing Enrollment

Enrollment in community colleges has gone up and down over the past few years. According to *Open Doors*, 89,853 international students attended U.S. community colleges in 2010–11, an increase of approximately 10 percent in the past decade. In 2008–09 it reached a high of 95,785. Last year enrollment decreased by 4.5 percent from the previous year.

Some schools have seen large increases, while others have been able to sustain its numbers. Both TCC and GCC have held steady, the former with 110 international students and GCC with 500 to 550 annually, both out of a total student body of 15,000. Others have shown large increases: CCCD went from 649 in 2007 to 924 in 2012; BHCC from 282 in 2001 to 830; LSCC from 1,200 in 2002 to 2,600 (rated number three in enrollment by *Open Doors*); and Ohlone College from 63 in 2006 to 360.

Retaining and Supporting

Support and guidance programs and activities are part of the recruitment package: international clubs and centers, mentor and buddy systems, counseling, speakers, and orientations. HCC requires international students to enroll in a one-credit orientation course to introduce them to the college’s resources and help them acclimate.

Immigration forms are a hassle, and require specialized staff to guide students through the process. International students have special requirements to obtain and keep their F-1 visas, which permits them to study in the United States. Students have to carry a full load of at least 12 credits and are precluded from working off campus during the school year. TCC has academic, career, and immigration advisers in one office “so mistakes are less likely to occur,” according to Jensen. HCC also has a one-stop approach by combining various offices into one “so we can set them up to be successful from application through graduation,” Brennan says.

International Student Recruitment Strategies for Community Colleges

- Marketing and advertising with multiple publications and agencies with both print and online advertisements
- Place magazine ads in countries where most international students come from and place ads in magazines that focus on advertising in overseas countries
- Provide promotional materials to various partners and agencies abroad
- Improve marketing (Web site and Facebook)
- Ongoing visits and in-person presentations and outreach to local language schools
- Partnership agreements with international recruiters
- Participation in overseas recruitment fairs and expos
- Housing scholarships
- Engage services of StudyUSA, online resource for students, parents and educational advisors around world; engaged services of American Association of Community Colleges' Profiles of U.S. Community Colleges;
- Create intensive English program
- Recruiting video on YouTube and other sources and will be handed out to international students returning to their countries on vacation or for good, to take to their high schools
- Seamless 2+2 transfer program
- Build support infrastructure by opening Center for International Education at largest campus
- Streamline application process, developing technology-based communications management with prospective students and applicants
- Launch multifaceted recruitment effort in Asia and Latin America including college fairs, agents, high school visits, Education USA offices
- Create a "culture of evidence" by measuring what we do for purpose of realizing continuous quality improvement
- Create a special program—Coastline Community College offers a unique program known as Education Bound United States (EBUS) which enables students to take college-level credit courses while in their home country (EBUS is conducted in partnerships with foreign high schools and colleges)

Tips provided by professionals representing institutions mentioned in this article.

Two + Two

Partnerships with four-year colleges and universities are one of the most important selling points for recruiters. Students and their parents want to know that once they've completed the associate's degree, there is a clear path to a four-year college or university.

Lone Star has agreements with approximately 80 universities to smooth the transition from two- to four-year colleges. In addition, five Texas universities have annexes on two of the Lone Star campuses. And two of those have joint admission for international students if they meet the academic requirements.

HCC gives conditional letters of acceptance to The University of South Florida. "This makes the 2+2 concept less abstract for students, their parents (influencing students' decisions), and consular affairs officials (making visa issuance or denial decisions)," Brennan says. "We are committed

to executing agreements that create specific road maps for international students to four-year degrees at multiple institutions."

CCCD has a dual admission program in which students admitted to any of its three colleges are guaranteed admission at the same time to one of nine four-year universities, if they meet the academic requirements. These universities are located throughout the country, including Iowa, New Jersey, Michigan, and Florida. "This eliminates some of the risk," Serban says. "Parents invest a lot to have their children study abroad and want a guarantee of admission to a four-year university."

Advice to Other Recruiters

Patience, appropriate resources, and a dedicated staff are vital to the success of an international student program, according to international advisers. The staff needs to meet regularly with international students

to ward off problems, guide them, and make sure they know about available resources.

"It needs a full commitment and support by the campus at large for any international student office to be successful," David J. Nelson, director of international recruitment and outreach at GCC," says.

"They need to take the long view and make sure they understand they're not going to see results overnight," West says. "You can't just dabble in it."

According to Serban, there are significant up-front costs to establish a robust international student program, but once the program is strong it will be self-sustaining and even add to the college's coffers. "We are not doing this just for the revenue," she says. "We want to make sure we prepare our students for a global society." And she cautioned that as the numbers of students increase, the numbers of staff must also increase.

Others expressed caution in hiring recruitment agencies and strongly suggested carefully checking them out before signing on the dotted line.

Sevanthinathan recommends looking at your own community to assess what's happening globally there. "If a company is working overseas, you might hook up with them to recruit in that country."

Maxim Khristenko came to BHCC from Sakhalin, Russia. "I knew there was more opportunity in America." He graduated with an associate's degree in communications, is now taking the requirements for business school and plans to apply to Boston University and Harvard. "This was more affordable, there are a huge number of international students, and I loved my professors. This is definitely the way to go."

Summing it up, Brennan says: "Growing and diversifying our international student population produces a multiplier effect for domestic students, faculty, and curriculum." **IE**

MARIAN KISCH is a freelance writer in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Her last article for *IE* was "Peer-ing Ahead" in the May/June 2012 issue.

Jim Murdaugh

Tallahassee Community College earns high marks from local employers for its ability to respond to workforce demands. Many credit President Jim Murdaugh, who was hired in 2010 to oversee the more than 12,000-student community college. Murdaugh had worked at the college since 1999 and received his bachelor's and master's degrees from FSU.

Under Murdaugh's tenure, TCC has opened a 85,000-sq.-ft. medical training center between Tallahassee's two major hospitals and has broken ground on an environmental institute in Wakulla County.

"Our mission as a comprehensive college is built on the workforce needs of our region," Murdaugh says. "It's a very fundamental difference in vision from universities, which prepare knowledge workers to basically go anywhere in the world."



Murdaugh is the chair-elect of the Economic Development Council of Tallahassee/Leon County and is on numerous local boards, including the new Big Bend Minority Chamber of Commerce and the Imagine Tallahassee group charged with making the city a better place to live. "My goal is to make sure students have places to go to work," Murdaugh says.

➤ **Karen Moore:**
CEO, Moore Communications Group

➤ **Kim Moore:**
Vice president, Workforce development, Tallahassee Community College

➤ **Jason Naumann:** Owner, Naumann Group Real Estate

➤ **Mark O'Bryant:** President/CEO, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare

➤ **Gary Ostrander:** Vice president for research/president, FSU Research Foundation

➤ **Michael Parker:** Director, economic and community development, city of Tallahassee

➤ **Daryl Parks:** Attorney, Parks & Crump; one of the attorneys who represented the family of Trayvon Martin



Karen Moore

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NSF-funded Technology Grant Helps High School Students Gain Industry Credentials

Manufacturing has always been considered the bedrock of American innovation. The industry may have undergone a metamorphosis, but remains a powerful impetus in driving the economic engine (Source: Washington Post, April 2013). From main street to wall street, media pundits along with industry gurus agree the big comeback kid of late that has played a big role in revitalizing the economy has indeed been the manufacturing sector. Then too, manufacturing industry cannot of itself stand alone. Its success hinges on factors that extend beyond the factory floor. In particular, manufacturing requires expertise and knowledge of skilled technicians who can operate in a high-tech and dynamic environment.

In Florida, as in the rest of the nation, the National Science Foundation (NSF) through the Advanced

Technological Education (ATE) centers of excellence housed at local state and community colleges has taken a leading role in spearheading initiatives to educate and train the next generation of high-tech workers. Most recently NSF awarded the Students in Engineering Technology (SET) grant to **Tallahassee Community College (TCC)**. The SET is a two year, \$199,565 grant that was awarded on June 30, 2012. The goal of the SET project is to address industry's needs by producing highly skilled and educated technicians who are prepared to enter and succeed in the field of engineering technology (ET). Bruce Batton, program manager for engineering technology program at **TCC** says a significant component of the grant also encompasses giving students, at the high school level, additional options to earn an industry credential that they can use to find employment, or pursue a two and/or four degree.

The SET project led by **TCC** represents a cohesive partnership between educational and industry partners. Project partners include Godby and Leon high schools in Leon County, Wakulla High School in Wakulla County, Daytona State College, College of Engineering at Florida State University, GT Technologies, St. Marks Powder/General Dynamics and FLATE—the NSF ATE Center of Excellence in Manufacturing at Hillsborough Community College in Brandon, FL. Bruce Batton, program manager for engineering technology at **TCC** says “the intellectual merit is manifested through the introduction of a career pathway in ET, which stimulates and increases

learning by offering educational opportunities that far exceed current curriculum options.” By providing concentrations in a variety of technical areas, Batton says, students can choose a path that is compatible with their academic interests and career choices. The initiative also encourages the study of engineering technology in manufacturing by providing a career pathway for students to either be a technician, or gives them the needed credentials to enter into a four-year program.

Curriculum was developed working closely with local industry and academic partners and FLATE. The

program was engineered to support implementing FLATE's ET career pathway at **TCC** by adapting exemplary educational materials, courses and curricula developed in conjunction with FLATE. Using a 2+2+2 model, the program articulates into the two year A.S.E.T degree at **Tallahassee Community College (TCC)** from Godby, Leon and Wakulla high schools and from **TCC** to a four-year institution (FSU College of Engineering or Daytona State College). The core courses align with the Manufacturing Skill Standards Certification (MSSC) Certified Production Technician certification, with dual enrollment courses being offered at Wakulla High School in Fall 2013, and at Godby High School in Spring 2014. “We mapped it out so that if a student enters a dual enrollment program, say over summer, they can complete all the courses and assessment for the MSSC and gain 18 credit hours that they can use towards an A.S. degree in engineering technology” Batton said.

Indeed students, educators and industry all stand to benefit from the initiative. Immediate impacts include development of a career pathway in engineering technology with specialization in manufacturing that leads to a diverse population of students entering the program at many different stages. Batton says the initiative has spurred a synergy between educational institutions to brainstorm ideas on developing an impetus to get students engaged and move beyond normal classroom activities by showcasing and experiencing real-world applications of what they're learning in the classroom. High schools, community colleges, four-year institutions and employers will be connected through educational, co-operative education, internship, and job opportunities. Activities will involve workforce development initiatives; maintaining close

NSF-funded Technology Grant Helps High School Students Gain Industry Credentials

continued

interaction with employers; broadening the participation of underrepresented groups; advance efforts to create systemic educational change at the secondary and undergraduate levels, and ensuring sustainability of products and services. In all, the initiative stands to boost confidence of local industries in terms of "providing skilled technicians that they can rely on to design a product and build it, and potentially expand operations."

For more information on the SET grant, dual enrollment classes offered at local high schools contact Bruce

Batton at battonb@tcc.fl.edu, or visit the **Advanced Manufacturing Training Center at Tallahassee Community College**. For information on FLATE's award winning A.S. degree in engineering technology visit <http://madeinflorida.org/engineering-technology-degree/e-t-overview>, or contact Dr. Marilyn Barger at barger@fl-ate.org.

NAM's Manufacturing Institute Recognizes Eleven Florida Colleges Offering ET Degree

The Florida Department of Education (FL DOE) announced in a press release last week that the National

Association of Manufacturers' Manufacturing Institute has included 11 colleges from the Florida State College System as charter members of its "M-List" that recognizes schools for excellence in manufacturing education. The FL DOE also indicated that the Manufacturing Institute acknowledges Florida as the national leader with the most schools on the list. The 11 Florida colleges that made the "M-List" are: Brevard Community College, Broward College, College of Central Florida, Florida Gateway College, Florida State College at Jacksonville, Hillsborough Community College, Pensacola State College, Polk State College, St. Petersburg College, State College of Florida Manatee-Sarasota, and **Tallahassee Community College**.

The list recognizes schools for ensuring students earn credentials endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). The recognition by NAM of the Florida colleges prompted Florida College System Chancellor, Randy Hanna, to issue the following statement;

"I am very proud the Manufacturing Institute recognized 11 Florida colleges for incorporating industry standards into manufacturing education and job training. The Florida College System's strong connection to the manufacturing community ensures our students are receiving the highest quality education that will prepare them for good jobs."

FLATE is particularly pleased with this Manufacturing Institute acknowledgement and Florida College System Chancellor's announcement. Each of the colleges on the list offer the statewide articulated A.S. degree in Engineering Technology (ET) with its accompanying

integration of the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council Certified Production Technician (MSSC CPT) industry recognized certification. Students entering this degree program, at any of the colleges listed above that hold the CPT, automatically receive 15 credit hours in this 60 credit hour ET degree program. Students entering without the CPT are prepared to sit for the exam by the completion of their first year in the ET program.

FLATER's hat is off to Meer Almeer, Michael Ouendeno, Cheryl Fante, Margi Lee, Ernie Friend,

Alessandro Anzalone, Mike Cannon, Eric Roe, Brad Jenkins, Adrienne Gould-Choquette and Bruce Batton from the Florida colleges on the "M-List". Without their efforts, none of the colleges would be on the list. In addition, FLATE anticipates that Florida's impact on the "M-List" will go up because the ET degree has very recently been adopted by Gulf Coast State College and Northwest Florida State College. Finally, a very special "thank you" to Eric Owens, senior director of adult and career education at FL DOE for his ongoing support of our work. Without his help, the ET degree would have never gotten off the FLATE drawing board. Thanks gang!

For more information on the award winning, statewide engineering technology degree and the specializations offered at regional Florida community and state colleges visit www.madeinflorida.org, or contact Executive Director of FLATE, Dr. Marilyn Barger at barger@fl-ate.org.

Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda to speak at Westminster Oaks May 29

Stuart Baker

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda will speak on the recently concluded session of the Florida Legislature on May 29 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. in the Maguire Center at Westminster Oaks.

The Florida Legislature has addressed many issues during the past months that will affect all Floridians. Among the questions that have been addressed are the Florida Retirement System, Internet sales tax, education, health care, the environment, and energy (Advanced Nuclear Cost Recovery). Rep. Rehwinkel Vasilinda will talk about these and other items the legislators have taken up and discuss their possible impact on Florida citizens.

Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda has been the representative to the Florida House for District 9 since 2008 and serves on numerous important committees. She moved to Tallahassee upon receiving her law degree from the University of Florida in 1985 and has been active in local affairs every since. A professor at **Tallahassee Community College** as well as many civic organizations. She has worked with Common Cause, the Florida Law Related Education Association, and the League of Women Voters.

This event, sponsored by the Forum of Westminster Oaks, located off Dempsey Mayo Road, is free and open to the public.

For TCC coach's dad, every hamburger is love

Polk State College News Service

Seated in a hospitality suite at Lakeland's Joker Marchant Stadium, just moments before his beloved **Tallahassee Community College** Eagles would take the field, Les McLeod experienced a bit of a role reversal: Someone served him a plate of food.

Most game days, at Eagle Field hundreds of miles to the north, it's McLeod who does the serving, turning the hot dogs, flipping the burgers and plucking cold sodas from a barrel of ice for hours on end each baseball season.

It's not easy work. Some days, it may not even be all that fun.

But, sitting in the Joker Marchant suite, his plate of sausage and peppers before him, he just shrugs.

"I do it because I love my son," he said.

McLeod's son is **TCC** Baseball Head Coach Mike McLeod, who this season has led the Eagles to a Panhandle Conference Championship, No. 1 national ranking and a spot in the NJCAA Gulf District/FCSAA State Baseball Tournament, which is hosted in Lakeland.

In 1990, however, Mike McLeod had just joined **TCC**, having previously worked for eight years as a pitching coach at Florida State University. A year later, the College fielded a club-level baseball team, resurrecting a program that had been dormant for two decades. By 1991, **TCC** was competing in the NJCAA as a member of the FSCAA's Panhandle Conference.

As the program grew under Coach McLeod's watch — it now has four Panhandle Conference championships and one co-championship to its name — he realized early on that no matter how well the team played, there was something missing for the fans: concessions.

"He was really worrying about having a concession stand, a place where fans could get some peanuts, popcorn, cold drinks and feel like they've been to a real ballpark," said Les McLeod. "After a couple years, I said, 'let me worry about it; I'll be responsible for it.'"

So, in 1993, just after retiring from his 23-year career as a senior attorney for the Florida Department of Agriculture, Les McLeod went, as he puts it "full-time into burger flipping."

When the concession stand began, Les McLeod said, it was in the back of a service building near Eagle Field.

"In the back half was where they kept the fertilizer and sand for the field," he said.

Humble as the surroundings may have been, the concession stand was an instant hit. Les McLeod would find himself shopping ahead of the games, stocking up on patties and buns, candy and Coke — he says he buys all the food at his own expense— and his burgers gained a reputation for being some of the tastiest in town.

Fifteen years ago, Les McLeod said, the College built a new concession stand as part of a new pavilion at the ballpark.

This one, he said, is gorgeous.

"It's really dolled up, with three refrigerators and a chest-high freezer and one of those circular barrel-type coolers for serving cold drinks," he said.

Through the years, even as the concession stand grew and moved into its new location, a few things remained constant.

One is Les McLeod's burgers — if there's a secret, no one's sharing it.

Two is that Les, even though his concession stand duties could keep him busy all game, always finds a way to take in a few innings; he recalls for a time pulling a lawn chair underneath the ballpark bleachers, where he could watch the field but also keep an eye on the stand.

Three is simply Les — and to many that's the most important thing of all.

"Les is very engaging. At this level of play, it's a quickly revolving door of names and faces, but Les adds continuity," said Rob Chaney, **TCC** athletic director. "He's a diehard baseball fan who doesn't miss a game and he enjoys making his contribution to the program."

Chaney added that Les was inducted to the College's Eagle Athletics Hall of Fame in 2008 for his service to the baseball program.

For TCC coach's dad, every hamburger is love...

continued

The final constant — and to the McLeods it is certainly the one that matters most — is that every burger Les flips, every bun he toasts, every box of candy he slides across the counter is done out of love for his son.

Love may not be measured in hamburgers or hotdogs, but if it were, Les's would loop the bases at Eagle Field a million times.

"I love working in the concession stand because I love him. It's a way to support him and it was something he wanted," Les McLeod said.

The concession stand has no doubt helped to keep this father and son close through the years. They talk plays. They celebrate victories. They share the same sting after a loss.

"I get to see him virtually every day and it is my pleasure," Mike McLeod said on Friday afternoon just after his Eagles fell in their first game of the tournament, 3-0 against Hillsborough Community College; the team rallied on Saturday, downing St. Johns River State College 8-4.

"Things get to you as a coach, with all the pressure to win baseball games. My dad is a guiding light and a special person."

Whether he has a spatula in hand or has the best seat in the house, all he wants to do, all he ever wanted to do, was be near his son. To cheer him on, to share in his defeat, to make sure he knows his dad is there for him.

"I'm 88 years old and I've been watching him play and coach since Little League," he said. "Being close to him through the concession stand all these years, it's meant a lot to him and it means a lot to me."

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"I get to see him virtually every day and it is my pleasure," Mike McLeod said on Friday afternoon just after his Eagles fell in their first game of the tournament, 3-0 against Hillsborough Community College; the team rallied on Saturday, downing St. Johns River State College 8-4.

"Things get to you as a coach, with all the pressure to win baseball games. My dad is a guiding light and a special person."

Whether he has a spatula in hand or has the best seat in the house, all he wants to do, all he ever wanted to do, was be near his son. To cheer him on, to share in his defeat, to make sure he knows his dad is there for him.

"I'm 88 years old and I've been watching him play and coach since Little League," he said. "Being close to him through the concession stand all these years, it's meant a lot to him and it means a lot to me."

TCC set for 'very tight' budget 5-percent enrollment decline projected

Doug Blackburn

Jim Murdaugh has no desire to get on the governor's bad side.

Murdaugh, the president of **Tallahassee Community College**, had been planning to propose that his board of trustees approve a 3-percent tuition increase during their budget workshop Monday afternoon. But Rick Scott's veto of a 3-percent tuition hike included in the \$74.5 billion state budget OK'd by the Legislature changed Murdaugh's approach, even though the college — which did not raise tuition for the 2012-13 academic year — still has the authority to request an increase.

"The governor has spoken. He has made it very clear how he feels about tuition," **Murdaugh** said. "Asking for an increase would be violating the spirit of what the governor did (Monday)."

None of the six members of **TCC's** board voiced any disagreement.

The bottom line: **TCC's** board will be approving a budget in June that is as grim as any it has dealt with during the past six years of economic woes.

"It's very tight, very tight. If it's been tighter, it's been quite a while," **Murdaugh** said. "This is the tightest I can recall."

How tight? Consider some of the following:

TCC has projected a 5-percent decline in enrollment for the 2013-14 school year, the first time anyone at the college can remember a drop in students being part of the budget planning process.

TCC's 18 deans, directors and department heads have been told to prepare for a 20-percent decrease in non-salary personnel and a 10-percent cut in expenses such as supplies. Unfilled positions will remain that way, unless Murdaugh personally approves a hire.

Teresa Smith, vice president of administrative services, was charged with presenting the details to **TCC's** trustees. While the college is scheduled to receive \$1.6 million in new revenue from the state, more than two-thirds of that money — \$1.1 million — is already committed to increased contributions to the Florida Retirement System, Smith said.

It didn't take long for Smith to turn to dark humor during Monday's workshop. The college, which didn't receive any Public Education Capital Outlay funding for new buildings and maintenance last year, is set to receive \$1.2 million this year.

"I'll take 14 cents at this point," Smith said. "We thought we were going to get zero. The good news is we didn't get anything vetoed, but we didn't have any (new projects) on the list."

Trustee Allison DeFoor encouraged **Murdaugh** and his leadership team to develop new streams of revenue. He suggested licensures, and the possibility of developing an enterprise zone for a homeland security incubator.

Dana Callen, chair of **TCC's** board, urged her colleagues to deliberate carefully during the next month as they prepare to approve the college's budget. "I think it's a huge issue that requires a lot of inner searching. In the end, I hope we'll do the right thing for as many people as possible," Callen said.

Orientation: Identifying what your next four years won't be

Blair Stokes

FSUCard photos: the immortalization of that necessarily awkward post-high-school, pre-college purgatory, evident in the timid half-smile smeared across a face that will never belong to you again. As a form of ID, FSUCard photos accurately identify what you will spend your next four years striving not to look like.

When the FSU Card Center hastily snapped mine and thousands of other kids' mugs at Orientation 2011, I expected that no makeup, blinding side-bangs and thick-rimmed rectangular glasses would be my lasting collegiate look. I now have short, center-parted hair and opt for myopia and mascara over corrective lenses. Every time I swipe into Stroz, the card's dated photo is a reminder of prior ignorance and impending development on the horizon.

Freshman orientation is another hastily captured snapshot; its two overwhelming days inundated with obnoxious, pandering pep, tours of brick buildings that blend together, subjective advice and rumors from all directions, condescending and/or leering stares from upperclassmen and other general disorientation. Never will a day in your freshman year be as busy as an orientation day, let alone as grossly early.

Chances are your orientation experience will vastly differ from your actual experience as a Florida State student. Being paired as roommates with the nearest person of the same sex and placed in a group with twenty kids with last names alphabetically nearest yours isn't always conducive to making forever-friends, though it can happen. Tumbling off your four-foot-high mattress in Wildwood Hall is also something that can happen. Incessant programming and being the only one who can't juggle isn't exactly "living the dream." And losing your way and humiliatingly asking for directions is another standard orientation ritual repeated often.

Embarrassing icebreakers and name-games will initially sour you on the orienting process. Trite information about FSU's many fascinating traditions will be filtered through your personal process of designating hottest person(s) in your orientation group. The skits are cute but painfully dull. You'll about those kids who get kicked out of orientation and FSU entirely, for illicitly drinking or smoking in their orientation dorms. Or maybe you are one of those kids.

To me, the whole process seemed very contrived and far too regimented. The Orientation Leaders' striped polos were dizzying in Tallahassee's summer heat and garnet and gold actually became visually aggravating after hours of prolonged exposure. Plus I hated having to wear a name tag affixed to a string of yarn around my neck at all times when all I wanted was to be a nonchalant college kid. But as long as you're being shuttled around campus by an OL and twenty of your closest (alphabetically) peers, you're an almost-freshman with no clue.

I remember one OL told me that Tallahassee boasts the largest homeless population in Florida. Not entirely sure that's true, but on night's out you will see a few stragglers around the infamous Strip asking for spare change or a cigarette. Then again, another OL also told me that there were penguins in the Antarctic Research Facility, across from the FSU Card Center. There aren't.

And just because orientation has taught you that Fresh Foods has those cute little FSU-stamped waffles and better food Suwannee doesn't mean your on-campus education has prepared you for your new surroundings. Orientation gives you an insular introduction to the campus, as if FSU were the main feature of Tallahassee.

Yet it's also the state capital and home to fellow colleges Florida A&M University and [Tallahassee Community College](#) among other strange local attractions. There is so much more to experience beyond FSU. Don't get trapped on campus freshman year. (But also don't completely disregard your personal safety while exploring because Tallahassee is also fairly dangerous.)

Orientation is a mandatory nuisance; we all went through it and most probably didn't enjoy it. Get it over with and truly orient yourself later on. While informative on many fronts, freshman orientation is not wholly indicative of your future at FSU. Although there aren't any penguins, there is certainly more to be seen. Take a look at the photo on your newly printed FSUCard photo. It's not you anymore. And remember: FSUCards are acquired at Orientation and lost at many a drunken frat tailgate.

Double student loan interest rates or the Smarter Solutions for Students Act?

ELLIOTT CURRY

Tallahassee is the capital of Florida, home to Florida State University, Florida A&M University, and **Tallahassee Community College**. These educational institutions account for approximately 43 percent of the city's population.

A large number of these students finance their education through federal student loans. This attractive option offers students convenient repayment options, loan deferments, and extremely low interest rates. Unfortunately, those rates are set to take an extreme upward hike on July 1, 2013 unless Congress reaches an agreement.

On July 1, the legislation that guarantees low federal student loan rates, such as 3.4 percent, is set to expire. Without another bill in place, federal student loan interest rates will double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

In preventative efforts, Minnesota and North Carolina Republican Representatives, John Kline and Virginia Fox, have chaired the Smarter Solutions for Students Act. The Republican bill mandates both unsubsidized and subsidized Stafford student loans be refigured each year based on the 10-year Treasury notes, plus an additional 2.5 percentage points.

Today, the Obama administration portended to veto the Republican legislation. The White House suggested the bill would burden families with uncertainty due to the proposed flexible interest rate. The suggested veto was met with staunch resistance from the bill's chairman, Kline.

He stated, "Today's announcement proves the president would rather pick a partisan fight with Congress instead of work in good faith on a bipartisan solution. The

president's unfortunate position does not alter our intent to advance the bill through the legislative process or our resolve to develop a long-term solution that both the House and the president can support."

In contrast, the White House states, "The bill's changes would impose the largest interest rate increase on low- and middle-income students and families who struggle most to afford a college education."

President Obama's plan has similarities with the Republican bill, in which both would review student loan interest rates annually and base it on the market's rate. However, Obama's plan would not adjust the interest rate on all student loans. His plan provisions for a fixed interest rate for existing loans, while new loans are established on the new adjusted interest rate. The Smarter Solutions for Students Act would place every student loan on market based flexible rates.

Currently, the bill is scheduled to be put to vote by the House of Representatives on Thursday. If passed, Obama may be forced to kill the bill with his presidential veto. Regardless, the Democratic-led Senate, which supports freezing interest rates until 2015, would have to approve the bill before it is enacted.

Our Opinion: Beyond tomorrow

TMH expansion is a big part of Tallahassee's future

When Tallahasseeans talk about shaping the future of their city, those discussions range from grassroots-generated ideas promoting small-business ownership and sustainability to bold, long-range plans that call for multimillion-dollar investments. The common theme is preparing Tallahassee for the years ahead — not next year, but five, 10 and 20 years down the road.

Take, for instance, Florida State University earning the designation of a pre-eminent university, which gives it an extra \$15 million a year for each of the next five years on a path that President Eric J. Barron hopes will take FSU into the top 25 of nationally ranked public colleges and universities.

This will benefit the growth and academic reputation of FSU, and strengthen Tallahassee's reputation as a city with strong universities and colleges graduating students with skills for the workforce of the future.

A key area of local interest is the growth of the health care industry, which is resulting in millions of dollars being invested here.

A leader in that effort is Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare.

On Thursday, the Tallahassee Democrat reported first on TMH's game-changing venture — the construction of a new surgery, adult intensive care facility.

This is an important development in this city and this state for many reasons.

TMH plans to build a complex that initially will include 20 state-of-the-art operating rooms, with space for creating up to 16 additional rooms.

In addition, the hospital will replace its current 40 adult intensive care units with 48 new ones, with the ability to expand to 72.

According to its 2012 annual report, TMH recorded 100,888 emergency or urgent-care visits, and its medical staff performed 18,773 surgeries.

The cost of the five-story, nearly 300,000-square-foot medical complex is estimated at between \$150 million and \$175 million, making it one of the largest single building construction projects in the city's history.

What this represents is a benchmark investment in health care options for this community, confidence in the region's economic outlook and a clear plan for a health care system that will be relevant over the next few decades.

More immediately, the new center will provide jobs in the construction and health care industries and create an expanded medical complex complementing TMH's existing emergency room operations, its cancer center and the academic and training opportunities through its partnership with **Tallahassee Community College**, clustered nearby off Miccosukee Road.

This is a major step in shaping Tallahassee's future.

The TMH project, and recently completed expansions at Capital Regional Medical Center, make Tallahassee a hub for health care education and treatment and also are in keeping with future health care needs in our area.

Patients who in the past might have opted to go out of town for certain treatments now will have plenty of options locally.

Not only is this a sound business plan benefiting both the nonprofit TMH and the HCA-owned Capital Regional, but it also adds to the quality of life that will help this community grow.

Consider that:

- TMH also has under construction an emergency center at Thomasville Road and Interstate 10 that will provide care primarily for geriatric and pediatric needs.
- In February, Capital Regional Medical Center opened two new floors to accommodate patient demand and technological advances at its main building on Capital Medical Boulevard, growing from six stories to eight. The privately owned hospital recorded 89,000 emergency room visits in 2012. Just 10 years ago, CRMC completed a \$100 million redesign.
- In nearby Thomasville, Ga., the Archbold Medical Center last year opened its North Tower, a 250,000-square-foot addition that represented a \$110 million investment. It included a complete replacement of its emergency, surgery and intensive care departments.

Our Opinion: Beyond tomorrow

TMH expansion is a big part of Tallahassee's future

continued

Projections provided by the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department show that Leon County's population will grow to 284,800 by 2015; 298,400 by 2020; 322,900 by 2030 and 341,500 by 2040.

According to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida, between 2011 and 2040, Leon County residents age 65 and older are projected to increase from 9.9 percent of the population to 16.7 percent.

With these statistics in mind, planning for the future in health care is essential to meeting this community's needs.

TMH is making a giant step in that direction.

Soldier killed in Afghanistan remembered

Jade Bulecza

Memorial Day is a tribute to those who died paying the ultimate sacrifice.

A north Florida family like so many others are remembering their loved ones.

The family of Brandon King says they'll spend this Memorial Day at the veterans cemetery in Jacksonville, remembering Brandon at his grave.

Carolyn King has a huge hole in her heart and soul nearly three years after her son's death.

"He was shot in the head by a sniper while he was on duty in Afghanistan so it was a total shock," said Carolyn King, Brandon's mother.

Twenty three year old Brandon King was in the army and was killed July 14, 2010.

Memorial Day is a painful reminder for the King family but an important time to honor him and others who paid with their lives to serve our country.

"We're not alone we've no the only missing a loved one that fought and died for our country," said King.

She says King was hoping to finish school at **Tallahassee Community College** and had goals of becoming a video game designer. His name is etched on a memorial at the college campus.

"He was just full of life," said King. "He was fun. He enjoyed life. He was always waiting. He was looking forward to joining the army and come back and begin his educational journey."

The family says they're learning to live without Brandon King but at the same time, keeping his memory alive.

The family says they work to turn this tragedy into something positive.

A scholarship fund set up in his honor at **Tallahassee Community College**.

Fallon, FSU's 'Mr. Theatre,' dies at 89

Beloved dean also school's first chair

Gerald Ensley

DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER

Richard Fallon, who practically invented the nationally renowned Florida State University School of Theatre, has died.

Fallon, 89, died at Big Bend Hospice early Thursday morning.

Fallon came to FSU in 1957 as an associate professor of theater, when the program was only a division within the university's Department of Speech. In 1969, theater became a full department with Fallon as chair. In 1973, Fallon became dean of the newly created School of Theatre.

Fallon, hailed as FSU's "Mr. Theatre," retired as dean in 1982. In 1989, FSU's Mainstage Theatre was renamed the Richard G. Fallon Theatre.

"There's a reason why the theater is named after him. He's synonymous with the quality of the place," FSU President Eric Barron said Thursday. "I have so many people who come from outside the community and they go see something at that theater, and they say this is the most professional student performance they've ever seen. You can trace that quality right back to Richard Fallon."

Under Fallon, FSU produced a steady stream of actors, directors, producers and technicians who went on to successful careers on Broadway and in Hollywood: Alan Ball, Chip Chalmers, Davis Gaines, Tom Hulce, Christine Lahti, Nancy Oliver, Henry Polic, Paul Reubens and Steven Lee Sears. Fallon also embraced numerous non-theatre majors from FSU who went on to fame in the entertainment industry, such as Burt Reynolds and Robert Urich.

Fallon, a tireless impresario, continually attracted the spotlight to FSU. In the 1960s and 1970s, he annually persuaded notable playwrights to premiere their newest Broadway plays in Tallahassee.

Famous for the parties he and his wife, Suzanne, held at their San Luis Ridge home, Fallon brought famous names to Tallahassee for seminars and talks. He attracted everyone from stage legends Helen Hayes, Mary Martin and Mel Ferrer to acting coach Lee Strasberg, playwright

Tom Stoppard and critic Clive Barnes to film stars Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Danny Glover and Olympia Dukakis to TV actors Dwayne Hickman ("Dobie Gillis"), Werner Klemperer ("Hogan's Heroes") and Tina Louise ("Gilligan's Island").

Fallon was a co-founder (1960) and longtime director of the Asolo State Theater in Sarasota. He founded the state theater board and FSU theater outreach programs such as Asolo Conservatory, Jekyll Island (Ga.) Music Theatre and Burt Reynolds Institute for Theatre Training in Jupiter. He served as president of the American Theater Association.

After his retirement in 1982, Fallon continued as dean emeritus, heading up a professional development program for the School of Theatre and teaching classes for many years at FSU and [Tallahassee Community College](#).

"Dick was a visionary who dedicated his energies to creating a bridge between educational and professional theater," said Gil Lazier, who succeeded Fallon as theater dean in 1982. "Dick took innumerable risks to develop the theater program at FSU and they paid off. Dick was one of a kind."

A native of White Plains, NY, where his father was a corporate attorney, Fallon began his career as a radio actor in the late 1930s. He was one of six actors who played "Jack Armstrong, All American Boy," a popular radio show from 1933 to 1951, a role that landed his face on boxes of Wheaties cereal. He also worked on radio series such as "Young Doctor Malone," "Mr. District Attorney," "The Shadow" and in numerous documentaries.

In 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Stationed in London, he led a drama troupe at the Savoy Theatre. He directed many plays, including the first by famous playwright Paddy Chayefsky.

In 1945, he married English native Suzanne Bowkett. They were married for 56 years, and had a daughter, Diane Tomasi, a retired Big Bend Hospice director, and a son, Rick Fallon, a retired food company vice president.

Fallon, FSU's 'Mr. Theatre,' dies at 89

Beloved dean also school's first chair

continued

After the war, Fallon returned to acting, mostly doing commercials for products such as Crisco shortening. While dean, Fallon acted occasionally in university productions, drawing rave reviews in 1966 as Willie Loman in "Death of a Salesman." And in retirement, he often trod the boards at the Tallahassee Little Theatre.

"I was OK but not great (as an actor)," Fallon said. "I didn't think I was going to be another Laurence Olivier or John Gielgud."

Before the war, Fallon attended Brown University. After the war, looking for steadier employment, he enrolled at Columbia University, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in theater.

He taught four years at Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY, where he also founded a community theater. In 1952, Fallon accepted a teaching position at Maryland State Teachers College (now Salisbury University). In 1955, he became director of the Jacksonville Little Theater, where he also landed acting roles in a pair of movies, "Naked In the Sun" and "The True Glory."

After two years, he accepted a position at FSU — over the objections of his wife.

"I felt as if I had been folded up and put in a corner. There was nothing around Tallahassee at the time," Sue Fallon said in a 1982 interview with the Democrat. She died in 2002. "We decided one year here would be it. (But) Tallahassee grows on you."

By the time he retired as dean, Fallon had won many awards.

Fallon was FSU alumni professor of the year (1971), outstanding scholar (1971-1973) and Robert O. Lawton distinguished professor of the year (1975).

In 1970, he received the national E. Harrison Harbison Award for Gifted Teaching, which "meant more to me than anything else I ever got."

"His love of theater changed men's lives, including my own," Michael Richey, a former FSU theater faculty member and actor, wrote on Facebook. "His courage to

set a standard for all of us who make a life in the arts. ... I believe we are his legacy."

Fallon always admitted he wasn't a great administrator. He said, "paper-pushing is not creative." Instead, his magic was instilling a love for theater in students, faculty, university officials and community supporters.

At the start of each semester, he gave students an "I have a dream" speech to inspire them to set goals. In January 1982, he used that occasion to announce his retirement, but exhorting students:

"Whatever else you've got, you're going to have to love the theater and each other to make theater happen as it should. Our mission is to bring the joy that people need — God they need it."

After retiring as dean, Fallon started a couple of theater companies; directed plays at theaters around the state; served as director of the Asolo Theatre in Sarasota and the Burt Reynolds Theatre in Jupiter; helped raise money for various projects including major renovations of the Tallahassee Little Theatre; and was active in state and national theater councils.

He also helped create URTA, or University Resident Theatre Association, for students applying to theater graduate schools. Based on their interviews and auditions with URTA, students are often recruited to top schools or improve their applications for specialty programs at all schools.

"(Fallon) shaped not only theater but theater training," said Cameron Jackson, executive director of the FSU School of Theatre, now a part of the College of Visual Arts, Theatre and Dance. "He just cared and loved so much that he wanted everyone to succeed and he gave everything to see that happen. He touched so many lives."

In recent years, Fallon appeared frequently at FSU and civic functions, where he was an engaging and spontaneous public speaker — "I don't believe in writing anything down (for a speech) because then they can't hold it against me."

Fallon, FSU's 'Mr. Theatre,' dies at 89

Beloved dean also school's first chair

continued

Yet off the cuff, he told jokes that earned guffaws at a retirement dinner for Dick Puckett, the former director of the LeMoyne Center for the Visual Arts. He told heart-warming stories that brought sighs at a memorial service for Wayne Minnick, his first boss at the FSU speech department.

"Working with Dick was like being on a perpetual roller coaster," Lazier said. "You kind of knew where you were supposed to end up, and the ride was fast, bumpy and fun."

A memorial service for Fallon will be at 4 p.m. May 29 at the Richard G. Fallon Theatre, in the Fine Arts Building at FSU (540 W. Call St.).

Mustian hopes to launch literary, music festival

TaMaryn Waters

DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Mark Mustian is the conservative voice on the City Commission. Commissioner Mark Mustian, a founder of Blueprint 2000, will have his last commission meeting Oct. 24. Yet, there's more to Mustian than his elected seat. He's an author of two books; his most recent 'Gendarme' has received praise from best-selling authors nationwide. He also serves as the current chair of the Lutheran Readers Project, a nationwide effort to connect readers and writers associated with the Lutheran faith.

If former City Commissioner Mark Mustian is forced to accept the controversial deferred compensation he never wanted, the Tallahassee attorney wants the whole region to benefit; not just him.

Mustian is putting the bulk of his share — \$100,000 — toward launching a music and literary festival called Word of South, an effort to attract culture lovers from outside of Tallahassee. A 12-member steering committee hopes to begin the first festival in the spring of 2015.

Leon County commissioners will decide Tuesday whether to grant the committee's \$100,000 request for matching funds. If they go along, the committee will leverage Mustian's share and the county match to apply for a state cultural grant due Saturday.

Mustian is using money he received as deferred compensation during his time on the city commission. Deferred compensation is a benefit in which a portion of an employee's salary is placed into an account for use at retirement.

However, at the city of Tallahassee, commissioners got their deferred compensation money not from their salaries but from general revenue, which prompted criticism from some that it was a backdoor raise.

Mustian, who received \$135,000 in deferred comp and donated much of the rest to WFSU, cast the lone vote in 2005 against deferred compensation. Under the measure, which was later eliminated following community outrage, commissioners got between \$16,500 and \$22,000 a year on top of their salaries.

"It was a chance for something good to come out of all of that," said Mustian, who retired last year and was

replaced by City Commissioner Scott Maddox. "It just seemed like rather than putting it back in the till or the treasury, it would be good to kind of focus on something we may not otherwise do."

Following publication of Mustian's second novel, "The Gendarme," three years ago, he was asked to speak at various literary festivals and began to wonder why Tallahassee didn't host such an event.

The idea was born. The twist, compared to other literary festivals, was adding the music component. The projected total cost is \$300,000.

"My only real criteria for this is if we can't do this on a world-class level, I don't want to do it," said Mustian, an attorney at Nabors, Giblin & Nickerson PA, representing Florida cities and counties.

The idea is catching on, especially since the organizing group wants to host it in Cascades Park, slated to open this fall.

"I want anything great I can get into Cascades Park," said committee member John Van Gieson. "I love Seven Days (of Opening Nights) and their writers and musicians. I went to the book festival in Austin, Texas, several years ago and it was huge. It was really cool."

Tallahassee Community College has expressed an interest in playing a role, such as allowing students to help with planning. Details are still being worked out.

"I am excited about that because I do believe the college has an important role as a community institution," **TCC** President Jim Murdaugh said. "I think it will bring a great deal of attention to the community."

Mustian said, looking back 10 or 20 years from now, this kind of two-day weekend festival could be just as popular as the city's Winter Festival or Springtime Tallahassee.

It's just a matter of getting started.

Tallahassee community reacts to ricin letters

By: Jade Bulecza

Officials and officers are on high alert with letters popping up across the country even right here at home in Tallahassee.

The chairman of the **Tallahassee Community College's** criminal justice program weighed in the issue.

"You will have to kill me and my family before you get my guns."

That's what ricin-laced letters reportedly said to New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and a gun control group. The letter to the president is now being tested for the poison.

The criminal justice department at **Tallahassee Community College** weighed in on why someone would possibly do this.

"It's a perception an individual has based on the perceived injustice, they want to right what they see wrong or make a statement," said Chairman of the **Tallahassee Community College** Criminal Justice Department Frank Leonard.

After 9-1-1 there were anthrax scares but now the tactic of choice seems to be ricin.

"Anthrax is in research centers," said Leonard. "It's very hard to get. You can grow castor in your backyard and get castor beans."

Even the recipe for it can be found online.

"It's extremely lethal if inhaled," said Leonard.

Tallahassee has had its own scares.

April 29, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles had to be evacuated after a letter that claimed to contain anthrax. No signs of the lethal substance were found. Just Thursday a mail clerk at city hall came across a letter thought to be suspicious but it turns out the letter contained just crumbs of food.

TCC helps students catch up in math

Statway program brings success

Travis Pillow

FLORIDA CAPITAL BUREAU

Tallahassee Community College is touting new results for a recently created math developmental education program, which is producing better results getting students caught up and earning college credit.

Students get placed in developmental classes if their scores on placement tests indicates they are not ready for college courses, and they have to pass them to start earning college credit.

For many students that creates a barrier to a college degree. Seventy percent of students entering the Florida College System require remediation in at least one subject area, and nine out of 10 of those students need help in math.

TCC was one of three colleges in Florida that adopted the Statway program, which is intended to help more math students in developmental education earn math credits more quickly.

The college announced Thursday that so far, its success rate for the first class of students, who started in the 2011-12 school year, was 50 percent. Jim Smart, a math professor involved in the program, said that's far higher than the success rate for students who need to take two algebra courses before they can start earning college credit.

The program was created with the help of the Carnegie Foundation, and it allows those students to take a catch-up course followed by college-credit statistics course.

Smart said the program is geared toward students in fields like education, nursing, criminology and the humanities. It offers several advantages for those students: They don't have to pass multiple developmental courses before they can start earning college credit, they start learning statistics right away, and rather than having to slog through algebra they may never use in their careers, start learning how to interpret data like polls and test results.

"Our goal is to help these students be better able to look at that sort of information," he said.

New Developmental Mathematics Program at Tallahassee Community College Sees Significant Results

PRWEB

For many community college students developmental math courses can serve as a roadblock instead of a gateway to greater academic achievement. That's why in 2010 **Tallahassee Community College** partnered with the Carnegie Foundation and other community colleges around the country to develop Statway, an innovative new method to teach developmental math. Now preliminary results are in—and **TCC** is excited to announce significant increases in achievement.

"Our success rate is at 50%, meaning half of the students who sign up for Statway earn 3 credit hours of college-level math in two semesters—that's significantly higher than the success rate of students who go through a traditional developmental mathematics path," said Dr. Frank Brown, **TCC** dean of Science and Mathematics. "It's great to see such promising results so early, and our goal is to help our students succeed at even high levels."

The nationwide network of colleges first launched the Statway program during the 2011-2012 academic year. The first cohort of Statway students began in the fall of 2011. This initial cohort of students spanned 19 community colleges and two state universities across five states. In total, there were 50 faculty teaching 55 sections of Statway with 1,133 students enrolled. In Florida, other participating colleges include Valencia College and Miami Dade College.

Statway emphasizes conceptual understanding and the ability to apply mathematical skills to the world around students, particularly when it comes to careers.

For more information on the Carnegie Foundation's Statway program and its other community college pathways, visit <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org>. Student interested in enrolling in the Statway courses at **TCC** should contact the Division of Science and Mathematics at (850) 201-8499 or email [scma\(at\)tcc\(dot\)fl\(dot\)edu](mailto:scma(at)tcc(dot)fl(dot)edu).

For the original version on PRWeb visit: <http://www.prweb.com/releases/prweb2013/6/prweb10788801.htm>

New Developmental Mathematics Program at Tallahassee Community College Sees Significant Results

PRWEB

Tallahassee Community College has seen huge successes in helping students succeed in their developmental math program.

For many community college students developmental math courses can serve as a roadblock instead of a gateway to greater academic achievement. That's why in 2010 **Tallahassee Community College** partnered with the Carnegie Foundation and other community colleges around the country to develop Statway, an innovative new method to teach developmental math. Now preliminary results are in—and **TCC** is excited to announce significant increases in achievement.

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The nationwide network of colleges first launched the Statway program during the 2011-2012 academic year. The first cohort of Statway students began in the fall of 2011. This initial cohort of students spanned 19 community colleges and two state universities across five states. In total, there were 50 faculty teaching 55 sections of Statway with 1,133 students enrolled. In Florida, other participating colleges include Valencia College and Miami Dade College.

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New math program at TCC sees results

Special to The News

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Community center on hold again

County commissioners put off decision on YMCA operating the center for another two weeks

By Amanda Mayor

The citizens of Wakulla County will have to wait another two weeks to find out whether or not the YMCA will be the entity that will run the community center as, at their meeting on Monday, June 3, county commissioners voted 5-0 to table a vote that would either pass or deny an agreement between the county and the YMCA.

On May 17, the Community Center Advisory Council had unanimously voted to approve the contract with the YMCA after making a couple of minor changes to the agreement.

Despite that, Commissioner Howard Kessler made a motion to table the vote in order to consider proposals at the next board meeting with the possibility of exploring additional requests or alternatives.

One alternative named by both Kessler and Commissioner Ralph Thomas was the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC), which currently holds a program at Wakulla Christian School and serves youth enrolled in Pre-K through eighth grade.

Chairman Randy Merritt was quick to point out the fact that this program only goes through grade eight, but Thomas emphasized the fact that it does not have to be the only program held at the community center.

"This is a successful program that is being run now," said Thomas. "They currently have 150 kids in their program and 100 more on a waiting list that they have to turn away."

The program was formed due to an educational enrichment grant that was given by the Department of Education to [Tallahassee Community College](#). Thomas explained that more of the grant funds could be utilized if they had the capacity to house more kids.

"I'm not proposing that the 21st CCLC come in and take over the community center," said Thomas. "I'm not proposing that they come in and replace where we were heading with the YMCA. I'm proposing that they just be one asset of a viable community center."

"I would certainly prefer to move forward with the YMCA," Chairman Randy Merritt said. "We've been working on this a long time."

"This is a major decision for our county, I think we need to work hard to get all the facts together," said Kessler. "In no way am I suggesting that we ditch the Y."

Kessler said he had spoken with some Department of Education officials and had concerns as to whether or not the 21st CCLC could even be housed in a county building.

The Pre-K through eighth grade issue also concerned Kessler.

"The county became interested in providing a community center because we heard from our various sheriffs that we need to provide a safe place for our teens," he said. "I just think it's worth stepping back for another couple of weeks and looking at all of it."

Commissioner Richard Harden was also concerned about the age limitation.

"Everything that I've heard about the 21st CCLC program is positive," said Harden. "It does great academic things for those who are not able to afford it on their own and I hope that we can absolutely incorporate it into the Y's program, but there's a lot of teenagers and adults that want this YMCA and who have been promised it for over a year."

Two citizens and business owners were present to voice their concerns about prices of memberships and that some underprivileged children would not be able to participate in YMCA activities due to costs. They pointed out that guarantee of scholarship for kids wanting to participate was not in the contract.

YMCA President and CEO Ray Purvis attempted to resolve their qualms.

"We carry financial assistance for students and folks of all levels of the socioeconomic spectrum," said Purvis. "To the point of the 21st Century grant, YMCA's operate those grant programs all across the state. We are the largest provider of after school services of any organization in the United States – we know how to do after school programs."

Purvis went on to explain that the YMCA receives funding from federal, state and local governments in order to help provide for students. They do not, said Purvis, discriminate against students who come from lower income families, those that qualify for free or reduced lunch or any other category.

"It ultimately comes down to whether or not you all want to run the community center or if you want to provide it to an outside group," Purvis stated. "Three different times you have voted to provide it to the YMCA. If we have to table it again and go into more conversation we are going to step up and talk about it, but at the end of the day either the county or the YMCA runs the community center."

"I want to move forward with the YMCA," reiterated Merritt.

"I've been opposed to the Y up to this point," said Commissioner Jerry Moore, who said he didn't want any county money put into the project. "But if we can incorporate the 21st CCLC program in with the YMCA, then I will change my position."

Harden brought up the fact that the county has already made an agreement with the state as to how the county will spend money on the community center and that the clock is ticking.

"If we do something with this money other than what we said we were going to do then we'll owe them \$400,000," Harden explained. "If we have to run our own community center it's going to cost us more – we're going to have to go out and find more money to fund the community center. I'm not against the YMCA, I think they can coexist with local businesses."

The matter was set to come back in two weeks.

VCU's Franqua Bedell tabbed to lead Tallahassee Community College women's basketball

Tallahassee Community College director of athletics Rob Chaney has announced the hiring of Franqua "Q" Bedell as the College's new women's basketball coach.

Bedell, a native of Fort Smith, Ark., is a 13-year coaching veteran, including ten at the collegiate level. He recently completed his first season as an assistant coach on Marlene Stollings' staff at Virginia Commonwealth University.

"I am very excited to welcome Franqua Bedell to the **TCC** family," said Chaney. "Coach Q has been highly successful in each step of his professional growth, including one as an NJCAA head coach at Southeastern Illinois College, and I'm confident in his ability to provide the necessary leadership and direction for **Tallahassee Community College's** women's basketball program."

Bedell was a four-year letterman (1995-99) in basketball and earned a bachelor's in general studies at the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville, Ark. He holds a master's degree in sports and recreation management from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, where he also began his coaching career as a graduate assistant in 1999.

"I am humbled, honored and certainly proud to be the next women's basketball coach at **Tallahassee Community College**, and I couldn't be happier and more excited about the next chapter in my coaching career," said Bedell. "I'm ecstatic about competing in the elite Panhandle Conference and what that represents for NJCCA women's basketball and the Tallahassee community."

"I look to the future with great anticipation about the opportunities to win championships and compete on a national level."

Following one season at Hardin-Simmons (1999-00), Bedell served two seasons at Northside High School (2001-03) in Fort Smith, Ark., two seasons at Southeast Missouri State University (2003-05), one season at Notre Dame High School (2005-06) in Cape Girardeau, Mo., two seasons at Southeastern Illinois College (2006-08) and four seasons at Mississippi State University (2008-12).

Bedell, 37, will be introduced as head coach on Friday, June 21, his first official day on the job at TCC.

TCC offers academic/cultural summer program

From June 7 through 29, **Tallahassee Community College's** Talent Search Program is collaborating with Gadsden County Schools to present the 2013 Academic and Cultural Enrichment Summer Program.

This program will provide a variety of activities including several college and campus tours, visits to museums and historical sites, and hands-on biotechnology workshops where students experience what it's like to be a member of a crime scene investigation (CSI) unit.

Registration is open until all spaces are full, so parents are encouraged to call and reserve space. Students can register for as many activities as they like. To be eligible, students must be incoming 6–12 graders currently enrolled or will be enrolled or will be enrolled in Gadsden County schools.

For more information, contact the **TCC** Talent Search office at (850) 558-3643 or e-mail ets@tcc.fl.edu.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Partnership Friction: Private and community colleges offer four-year degrees

Private colleges question the plunge by community colleges into baccalaureate programs.

Mike Vogel

In 2001, St. Petersburg Junior College, as the public community college in Pinellas County was then known, won permission to move beyond its traditional two-year degree offerings and confer four-year degrees.

Allowing community colleges to confer four-year degrees would open access to such degrees to more Floridians — especially working adults — and meet employer needs in a convenient and affordable way. Since then, Florida has embraced the concept like no other state in the nation. In Florida, 23 of the 28 institutions in what's now the state college system can confer baccalaureate degrees; nationally only 31 other colleges do so. In March alone, four colleges won approval from the Florida Board of Education for more four-year programs; the board has now approved 152 degree programs.

Students have flocked to the cheaper programs. More than 19,000 students in Florida (six of the 12 state university institutions have fewer students than that number) are working on a baccalaureate degree that will be conferred by a community or state college.

Baccalaureates account for just 2% of state college degrees, but the share is growing. At Florida State College at Jacksonville, baccalaureate enrollment is growing 22% a year, albeit off a small base. At Broward College, a bachelor's in supervision and management is one of the top 10 programs by number of students. "Florida's looked at as one of the bellwether states, and by bellwether I mean trendsetter," says Dale Campbell, a University of Florida education professor and authority on community colleges.

But a critical voice is emerging against the baccalaureate juggernaut — the state's private colleges and universities. For years, the private institutions have partnered with community colleges: Accepting community college two-year degree holders into their programs to complete a bachelor's without losing any credits and offering bachelor's degrees on community college campuses. Private Flagler College in St. Augustine, for example, offers bachelor's degrees in business, accounting, elementary education and exceptional education at **Tallahassee Community College**.

The collaboration "has been highly successful," says Flagler President William T. Abare Jr. For those students who qualified for the state's Florida Resident Access Grants — the state gave \$2,150 this year to Florida private school students — the cost of a Flagler bachelor's at Tallahassee worked out to no more than the tuition for another two years of community college. "A terrific deal," Abare says.

Pros and Cons of Expanded Offerings

» **Proponents:** Proponents say community college bachelor's programs widen access to higher ed, are more affordable for students, cheaper for taxpayers, relieve pressure on overburdened public universities and meet employer needs, especially in applied degree fields — specialty jobs that once took only an associate's degree now require a four-year degree, specialties that universities don't have experience in or want to invest in offering.

» **Opponents:** Opponents of four-year degrees say the offerings dilute community colleges' two-year degree mission, mean higher-cost faculty, labs and libraries and raise issues of quality and outcomes — a community college bachelor's isn't cheaper if a student doesn't complete it in a timely way.

Those partnerships, however, have diminished as community colleges' own baccalaureate programs have increased, says Ed Moore, president of the Independent Colleges & Universities of Florida. The number of sites where private colleges offer baccalaureates on state college system campuses fell 43% from 2004 to 2011, according to ICUF. "We're not huge fans," Moore says.

Private Saint Leo University, for example, ended its elementary education baccalaureate at public St. Petersburg College after St. Petersburg won approval to confer its own degree. Enrollment overall has been reduced across other Saint Leo programs offered at community colleges.

Private colleges account for 26% of the state's undergraduate degree production — and 25% of degrees to minority students. That's an important

contribution in a state trying to boost its low ranking in degree holders, and the private schools say they're at a price disadvantage to the new programs. Saint Leo's tuition per credit hour, after the state financial aid grant to private students, still is \$160 compared to \$100 at the community colleges.

Private college presidents tread carefully as they raise their concerns, saying they have more than their parochial interests at heart. "It's an important subject, and it's a delicate subject," says Arthur F. Kirk Jr., Saint Leo's president.

In essence, they argue that with Florida public universities and state colleges already living on lean funding, Florida is mistaken to allow such a shift by state and community colleges into the baccalaureate business, diluting emphasis and resources available for the traditional two-year degree mission. They add that recent Florida history shows higher education administrators, boards and their elected representatives will engage in empire building, an expensive endeavor in a state college system with 66 campuses and 181 sites.

The cost is staggering, Abare says. Instead, the state should come up with a master plan, perhaps designating a handful of colleges to confer baccalaureates. ICUF wants to see the state retain FRAG, its grant program for Florida residents who attend in-state private schools. Increasing FRAG aid to its former level of \$3,000 from a budgeted \$2,500 next year would be more a more efficient way to make baccalaureate degrees accessible than adding programs throughout the public system, ICUF argues.

The argument against "mission creep" isn't a new one, though it continues to rankle proponents — "like running your fingernails on the blackboard," says Beth Hagan, executive director of the Community College Baccalaureate Association, a national group based in Bonita Springs that advocates for state colleges conferring four-year degrees.

At Florida State College at Jacksonville, 2,550 out of 51,562 students are in 13 bachelor degree programs. Willis Holcombe, the school's interim president and the retired chancellor of the state college system, says it's "absolutely consistent with our mission, which is to meet the employment needs of the community. In some cases, the most critical unmet needs are at the baccalaureate level. I think the employment needs of the state ought to drive the market. That from my point of view is not a mission creep."

Florida state college baccalaureate offerings don't dilute resources for two-year degree programs any more than any other new program does, Holcombe says. Community colleges, like the public universities, have been raising tuition to cover program costs. And he says the community college baccalaureates often help working adults who need a bachelor's at a nearby location to advance at their government or private employer.

Holcombe says he understands the private schools' concerns and sees how the community college baccalaureate programs threaten the flow of associate degree holders that historically transferred to public and private four-year institutions. But, he says, "I wouldn't lay the blame, if you will, on the fact we're offering degrees. I think it's largely an issue now of the affordability of postsecondary education."

Fishermen become farmers in quest for a new seafood industry

Jennifer Portman

DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER

ALLIGATOR HARBOR — Under a brilliant blue sky, a wet-suit-clad Clay Lovel drops down into waist-deep water, groping in the cloudy jade brine.

He tosses away a predatory conch before his older brother Ben, on deck, grabs a hook, and together they haul aboard their Carolina Skiff what looks like an oversized fry basket. The men pry it open, and onto the boat's stern clatter dozens and dozens of *Crassostrea virginica* — the common eastern oyster.

It's the same type of oyster that grows wild in coastal waters from Canada, down along the East Coast to the Gulf of Mexico, including nearby Apalachicola Bay. But the Lovels' bivalves didn't start off here as an offering from nature. They came from a shellfish hatchery near Tampa, leftovers from an oyster recovery project.

Last summer, the brothers and their father, Leo Lovel, bought 10,000 pinkie-fingertip-size oyster seeds. In August they put them in cages and plunked them down here on their two 1-1/2 acre clam leases in the waters of Franklin County.

"We knew nothing about oysters," Clay Lovel said.

So the men studied oyster history. They experimented with enclosures and planting methods. The fishermen became farmers.

Nine months later, with some 150,000 pieces growing in 500 cages, their first crop is coming in — big, succulent 3-inch oysters that within a couple of hours on this late May day, will be in the family fish house cooler, ready to be served on the half shell to seafood lovers at the Lovels' Spring Creek Restaurant.

"They are snow white on the inside and so salty they will burn your lips," said Leo Lovel, a Tallahassee native who has owned the beloved Wakulla County seafood restaurant perched on the water's edge since 1977. "It's got a lot of people very excited. This could be the rebirth of the seafood industry in North Florida."

A promising start

The Spring Creek Oyster Company is a Florida first. While about a half-dozen people in the state are cultivating

farm-raised oysters and selling them in the shellfish trade, aquaculture officials say no one else has done what the Lovels are doing — growing, harvesting, selling, serving and marketing to the public their own signature oyster.

It's too soon to say if the family will succeed in the long run, but their promising start has raised hopes for the burgeoning of a new coastal economy that could revitalize struggling fishing communities.

"I'm excited," said Kal Knickerbocker, acting director of Florida's Division of Aquaculture. "It's a new way. It appears to be a top-quality product, and right now, when you compare it to the natural set, there is none."

The Lovels' farm-to-table oyster venture comes amid trying times for the wild oyster population in Apalachicola Bay. The famed oysters naturally grew in abundance in the bay's fertile estuarine soup before back-to-back droughts and decades of outdated federal water regulations reduced the freshwater flow coming down the Apalachicola River last year to its lowest level in recorded history.

Oysters love salty water, but in the wild they need freshwater to provide nutrients and keep predators and diseases at bay. As a consequence — and compounded by over-harvesting in the shadow of BP's 2010 oil rig disaster — the oyster fishery collapsed last year.

From September to December last year, oyster landings in the state, of which Apalachicola's catch makes up 90 percent, dropped by nearly half, from about 152,000 pounds to roughly 80,000 pounds.

As state fishery officials work to compile the most recent harvest data, oystermen today are coming back from a day on the water with about two bags of oysters, a fraction of the 16 or 17 bags they would normally gather at this time, said Shannon Hartsfield, president of the Franklin County Seafood Workers Association.

"A lot of people are worried right now," he said.

For the last six months, bay oystermen have spent more time tossing empty oyster shells into the water to create new habitat than tonging up the mollusks for market. About 200 oystermen have been getting by with the

temporary re-shelling jobs, but come July, money from a \$2.7 million Department of Labor grant runs out. While oysters in the bay grow fast, those attaching to the oyster bars now are at least a year away from harvest.

Hartsfield doesn't know much about the Lovels' fledgling endeavor, but his curiosity is piqued.

"I'm hoping it works out. That's what we are going to have to do, trial and error," he said. "I don't see how it can hurt our bay. It may give an opportunity for a different way to harvest oysters. That's a plus in my book."

Trying something new

Florida tried to introduce oyster farming as part of a job-retraining effort about 20 years ago, but for a variety of reasons it failed. Unlike cultivating clams, which caught on and now has an annual economic impact of \$54 million, oysters proved too labor-intensive and costly to grow. And with wild oysters so plentiful, it just didn't make economic sense. State and local political decisions also played a role.

"Now that picture has changed a little bit," said Leslie Sturmer, a University of Florida shellfish aquaculture agent who works in Cedar Key, where clam farming has flourished. "There is increasing interest. With decreased supplies from the fisheries and higher prices, the economics may have changed."

State Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam points to the success of Cedar Key clamming as a model that could help Apalachicola Bay's oyster industry.

"Cedar Key is a remarkable example of how the willingness to try new things can save a working waterfront," Putnam said. "It's a tough adjustment to learn a new way to make a living on the water, but the ones that did have done well. This is a rich part of Florida's heritage, and we want to make sure it's not just part of our history."

Putnam is supportive of a request by the Lovels, to be heard this summer by the Florida Cabinet acting as the Board of Trustees, that would allow the family to grow their oysters in cages that float on the surface of their clam lease. Currently, shellfish only are allowed to be grown up to six inches from the sea bottom. Granting full use of the water column would benefit the growth of their oysters and other farmed shellfish they'd like to try, such as scallops, not now commercially cultivated in Florida.

"What we are doing now is the mule-and-plow method," Leo Lovel said. "If we can get on the surface, it will open it up to older fishermen."

Balancing needs

Northeastern University assistant professor David Kimbro, a wild oyster ecology expert formerly with Florida State's Coastal and Marine Laboratory, called Alligator Harbor a "marginal habitat" for oysters. Because of its lack of direct freshwater sources and reduced flows into the bay, salinity has steadily increased in the last five years.

"There aren't many things as hardy as oysters," Kimbro said. "They love the variations of estuaries. It stresses them out, but it wipes the slate clean of predators."

Grown in cages, farmed oysters are more protected from marine predators, but a lack of freshwater can still make them susceptible to diseases.

"The same environmental conditions that would affect the wild resource would affect the cultivated product as well," Sturmer said.

Oyster spawn float in the water for two to three weeks, and Kimbro said it is unknown if, over time, those that are selected to favor saltier water will eventually impact the wild oysters on Apalachicola's reefs.

Others say the increase in spawn will help the natural production, improve water quality and attract other desirable marine species. There are pros and cons, Kimbro said. Like growing corn, farming oysters is a gamble. Still, he added, "People need some good news."

Allowing floating oyster cages on state-leased submerged lands also presents a resource management challenge. Balancing the desires of boaters and other water users can be tricky, but it is one Putnam and others say can be overcome.

"Aquaculture within the water column is something we should pursue on an experimental basis," he said. "Regulators need to be open about new ways to save the industry, and the industry needs to be open-minded about doing things differently."

Oyster cultivation is far more expensive and involved than harvesting what grows naturally, and history has shown that not all watermen are able to make the transition to farming.

"Instead of Mother Nature doing 90 percent of the work, you've got farmers doing 100 percent of the work," DAC director Knickerbocker said. "It's labor-intensive, to say the least."

If a new industry takes hold, Sturmer, who has been actively involved in state aquaculture efforts for decades, said early on there could be tension. But considering the state's intransigent water war with upstream Apalachicola River system users, the prospects for wild oysters in the bay don't look great.

"It will be interesting to watch this," she said.

Signs of success next door

In neighboring Alabama, where water-column farming is allowed, as it is in other oyster-farming states, aquaculture officials have been working since 2009 to build a new oyster industry in their Gulf waters.

Bill Walton, an Auburn University assistant professor and extension specialist with the university's shellfish laboratory at Dauphin Island, said the effort there is in its "baby-step" stage, with two commercial oyster growers selling farmed boutique oysters to high-end restaurants in the region. But, he contends, there is room for more.

"A market has developed for these niche oysters," Walton said. "I know there is enough of a market for people to make money, but I'm not sure how much. All the numbers we've run suggest you can make a living doing this, but you aren't going to get filthy rich."

Chris Nelson, vice president of oyster procurement for Alabama-based Bon Secour Fisheries, tried to grow oysters 20 years ago. The oysters were great, but he couldn't make any money because of the high cost, extensive labor involved and the lack of a specialty market.

"What I did was build a business plan on too high a price," he said.

More and more customers today, however, aren't looking for the most oyster for their dollar. An increasing number are seeking out oysters with an "appellation" — one coming from a distinctive place with unique characteristics, like a fine wine.

Still, Nelson cautions against upstart oyster farmers having unrealistic expectations.

"The Gulf is going to come back. For whatever reason, nature smiles and the next thing you know you've got all

these oysters and everyone was convinced the oysters were dead and gone," he said. "It is feasible, but you have to be prudent."

Farmed oysters, Walton said, never will be able to compete with the abundance of those in the wild. But cultivation allows a grower to develop a consistent, specialty product that can command a higher price — as much as \$2 apiece or more in some places — to cover higher production costs.

Growing oysters off the seafloor makes them cleaner and more uniform. They also can thrive in saltier water, he said — like that of Alligator Harbor — because they are able to mature before common diseases brought on by saline conditions can take hold.

"We are not trying to displace the traditional Gulf Coast oyster industry. What we are trying to do is add a new product," said Walton, who met with the Lovels last year. "I see it as an opportunity for the whole Gulf Coast. It provides as much opportunity for Florida as anywhere else."

A 'game-changer'

Back at Spring Creek Restaurant, optimism abounds. At a tasting party last month, Wakulla County officials slurped the Lovels' oysters and mused about what the future may hold. The family also has applied for a new state lease out their back door, where a first-magnitude freshwater spring boils in the Gulf and clams don't grow well, but oysters might.

"This is huge," said Bob Ballard, head of **Tallahassee Community College's** new Wakulla Environmental Institute, which is under construction and will offer aquaculture training. "This could really be a game-changer for this area to make Wakulla the new oyster capital of the United States."

Wakulla County Commissioner Jerry Moore, who had to stop eating the oysters for fear of leaving none for others, said the Lovels' undertaking has "unbelievable possibilities."

"We don't do a lot of things until we get desperate," Moore said. "This is a new day if this system works. It's a way for us to produce a continuous supply of great oysters."

The Lovels are optimistic, but are keeping their heads, as are state aquaculture officials.

"These things look attractive now because the natural resource is in trouble," Knickerbocker said. "It might work great this year and next year, and the third year some condition might change and it could be a total bust."

But if anyone can make a go of it, Knickerbocker said, the Lovels can. The family is well respected, has a track record of seafood success and can showcase their product at their renowned restaurant. Their reverence for the North Florida Gulf Coast runs deep, as evidenced in Leo Lovel's folksy collection of outdoors essays, "Spring Creek Chronicles."

Leo said he and his sons are constantly reminding themselves that what they are doing now is farming — and it's a risky business.

"There can always be something that throws a monkey wrench into to," he said. "We are feeling our way."

The excitement, however, is contagious. The area's seafood industry has been depressed since the gill-net ban 20 years ago, and the recent wild oyster decline has dealt a further blow. While Ben Lovel said his family hopes and prays every day the oysters in Apalachicola will rebound, he believes what they've stumbled upon can help everyone and hurt no one.

"If something doesn't come along — and we think this is it — the culture and lifestyle of the seafood watermen in the bay is over," he said. "We aren't just excited about this for us, we are excited about this for the whole area. If this thing goes in the right direction, there is no way to talk about what we might be working on in five or 10 years."

HIGHER EDUCATION - FLORIDA'S COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Chart: Florida College System

Ranked by enrollment.

Rank	Institution	Main Campus	Enrollment 2012	President
1	Miami Dade College	Miami	60,014	Eduardo J. Padron
2	Broward College	Fort Lauderdale	35,533	J. David Armstrong Jr.
3	Valencia College	Orlando	35,263	Sanford C. Shugart
4	St. Petersburg College	St. Petersburg	27,033	William D. Law Jr.
5	Florida State College at Jacksonville	Jacksonville	25,938	Willis N. Holcombe (interim)
6	Palm Beach State College	Lake Worth	25,902	Dennis P. Gallon
7	Hillsborough Community College	Tampa	24,060	Kenneth Atwater
8	Seminole State College of Florida	Sanford	17,522	E. Ann McGee
9	Indian River State College	Fort Pierce	13,510	Edwin R. Massey
10	Santa Fe College	Gainesville	13,464	Jackson N. Sasser
11	Daytona State College	Daytona Beach	13,262	Carol Eaton
12	Edison State College	Fort Myers	12,840	Jeff Allbritten
13	Tallahassee Community College	Tallahassee	12,698	Jim Murdaugh
14	Brevard Community College	Cocoa	12,501	James H. Richey
15	Pensacola State College	Pensacola	9,511	Charles E. Meadows
16	State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota	Bradenton	9,315	Carol Probstfeld
17	Polk State College	Winter Haven	9,184	Eileen Holden

HIGHER EDUCATION - FLORIDA'S COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Chart: Florida College System

Ranked by enrollment.

18	Pasco-Hernando Community College	New Port Richey	8,134	Katherine M. Johnson
19	College of Central Florida	Ocala	7,421	James D. Henningsen
20	Northwest Florida State College	Niceville	5,824	Ty Julian Handy
21	St. Johns River State College	Palatka	5,098	Joe H. Pickens
22	Gulf Coast State College	Panama City	3,775	A. James Kerley
23	Lake-Sumter State College	Leesburg	3,648	Charles R. Mojock
24	Florida Gateway College	Lake City	2,119	Charles W. Hall
25	South Florida State College	Avon Park	2,050	Norman L. Stephens Jr.
26	Chipola College	Marianna	1,770	Gene Prough
27	Florida Keys Community College	Key West	1,012	Jonathan Gueverra
28	North Florida Community College	Madison	976	John D. Grosskopf



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