

College aid formula looks good in speech

A state aid formula is one thing. The cash is something else.

In Oakland Community College's case, there's nearly a \$4 million difference, said Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson following Gov. James Blanchard's budget message and State of the State address.

"I support continued refinement of the community college funding formula, first implemented in 1985," said Blanchard, "especially in addressing year-to-year changes in enrollment and program offerings."

"A BASIC problem for us," said Nicholson in an interview, "is the state funding formula, according to which we should get as much as \$17 million."

The formula takes into consideration the numbers of students and kinds of programs to determine a "gross need." From that, the state subtracts 1) tuition revenue and 2) local property tax revenue raised by a rate of one mill.

On that basis, Nicholson said, OCC should get \$17.3 million from Lansing.

"But the governor actually recommended \$12.5 million for next year."

He added it's still an improvement over the \$12.4 million OCC is getting in the current year.

FOR THE current fiscal year, OCC, with some 28,000 students, operates on a budget of \$44 million.

Sources are: property taxes, \$15.9 million or 36 percent; tuition and fees, \$14 million or 31 percent; state aid, \$12.4 million or 28 percent; and vocational and other grants, \$1.6 million or 4 percent.

Because of its growing economy, Oakland County has a strong local tax base, and so that deduction from the formula is large. In a recent sample year, OCC got state aid of \$1,666 per student while most others get in the neighborhood of \$2,000 per student.

FOR A WHILE, Nicholson and OCC administrators talked of seeking a millage increase, possibly earmarked for high-tech equipment.

That talk died down, especially as county interests stepped up talk of a roadwise fuel tax for roads.

Is a tuition increase in the offing?

"It's premature to say," replied Nicholson, noting that May is budget month.

'Guaranteed retraining'?

'Better to do it right first time' — OCC chief

By Tim Richard
staff writer

One college chief is cool toward Gov. James J. Blanchard's suggestion that community colleges guarantee employers the technical skills of graduates.

"A worker whose skills did not measure up as advertised," said Blanchard, "would be retrained by the community college at no cost to the employer."

But at Oakland Community College, Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson argues that "it's better to do it right the first time. I'm more comfortable keeping faculty and equipment on the cutting edge."

Nevertheless, he thinks "several of the other colleges will adopt it."

BLANCHARD MADE a splash in community college circles with his State of the State message suggestion.



"Henry Ford Community College has pioneered this concept of guaranteed competency," the governor said, "and my administration will work with the community college system to expand this concept." Blanchard again gave the two-year colleges a public pat on the back for their role in Michigan's economic redevelopment when he said, "We expect community colleges to continue to play a major role in job training and retraining activities. Better coordination of the delivery of such services is needed, and I am asking the colleges to work with the Department of Labor to make sure that it takes place."

HENRY FORD Community College, located in Dearborn, last fall began a guarantee program: Up to 16 semester credit hours of training will be provided free to graduates of HFCC's associate degree career education programs if an employer certifies, in writing, that the graduate lacks the technical skills normally expected of entry-level employees.

So far, there have been no reports on the numbers of HFCC who have been rejected and have asked for free retraining. But that, to OCC's Nicholson, isn't the point.

"THERE'S AN Indiana proverb: 'Why is there never enough time to do it right in the first place, but always enough time to re-do it?'"

"If we have adequate advisory committees in place and keep abreast of what employers need, there should be no need to retrain," Nicholson said OCC is doing fol-

low-up work with students and employers to ascertain the adequacy of OCC's programs. "We want to do a better job on that," he added.

The problem isn't entirely solved by having a college guarantee retraining for those who flunk job skills, Nicholson said.

EXAMPLES of unsolved problems that retraining doesn't address:

- "Why don't you (employers) test them out — get the skills you need before you have them come to work? That's not a popular position, but it has some merit."

- What about the student who completes a couple of semesters of a two-year course, finds he can get a job and drops out before getting his associate's degree? OCC has many such cases which wouldn't be eligible for retraining under the HFCC-Blanchard plan.

- "There is a gap between theory and practice," between the ability to pass courses and the ability to do a job, for which a college can't take responsibility. That's why, Nicholson said, such professions as law and medicine require state examinations before college graduates are admitted to practice.

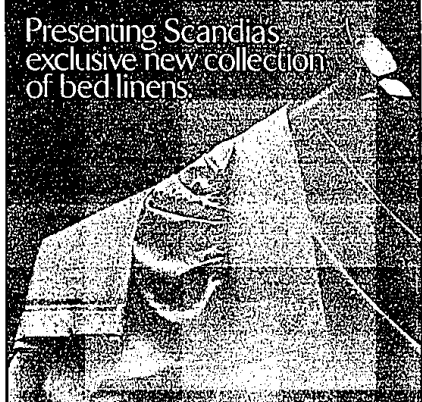
Bieber due at OCC

Owen Bieber, president of the United Auto Workers, will discuss "Industrial renewal" in Oakland Community College's distinguished speaker series.

Bieber will speak at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, March 19, in the Smith Performing Arts Theatre of OCC's Orchard Ridge Campus, Orchard Lake Road at I-696, Farmington Hills. Admission is free.

Besides his 39 years in the labor movement, Bieber is a member of the Governor's Commission on Jobs and Economic Development, the Economic Alliance of Michigan and the President's Advisory Committee for Trade Negotiations.

The UAW is currently campaigning for protection from Japanese and other foreign imports.



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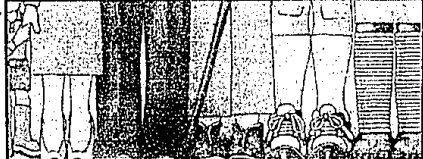
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