

New student liaisons begin discourse with Champaign, Urbana

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO
STAFF WRITER

The Illinois Student Senate will be sending student liaisons this year to regularly attend Champaign and Urbana city council meetings.

Matt Gold, junior in LAS, and Peter Hughes, senior in Engineering, are the two student senators from the Illinois Student Senate, or ISS, elected to act as student liaisons as part of

the student government's outreach efforts to local government. The two will attend city council meetings in their respective cities.

"I'm really excited to reach out to the student government," Gold said. "The city government often tends to be overlooked. However, if we express our issues to them, it will provide a position for us to work from."

The ultimate goal of this endeavor is

to incorporate student concerns into the consideration of the two cities' governments, said David Pileski, student body president.

ISS and local government outreach is something Pileski said he envisioned upon starting his term. He said ISS had not attempted an outreach of this kind in recent years and thought it was a priority to ensure constant communication with our local governments this year.

He said lack of communication was hurting the general student body's relationship with the two cities and letting important student issues "fall on the wayside." The ultimate goal is to strengthen that relationship so that both councils more frequently consider concerns of student interest, such as housing issues.

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Some members of the Champaign City Council discussed their opinions on the Illinois State Senate's decision to send student liaisons to the Champaign and Urbana city council meetings. The goal is to develop a stronger relationship between University students and local government by encouraging discussion between the two, said David Pileski, student body president.



"I am really excited to have another avenue to connect with the students of this campus. We hope to improve upon the good relationship we have with them. I've gotten along with the liaison, and it's been very nice to see (Gold) out there."

DON GERARD,
Champaign mayor



"I like to see the city engaged with the greater stakeholders. I consider the students great stakeholders of this community. The University (students) should be a part of greater discussions, particularly with our local government."

PAUL FARACI,
councilman, District 5



"It's students taking a part of their own city government. Students, being a part of a transient community here for however long, should be productive members, and I agree with (ISS's) approach."

WILL KYLES,
councilman, District 1

STUDENT LIAISON

FROM PAGE 1A

"There are areas where students could aggressively advocate in a way that would help both sides," Pileski said, referring to students and local government.

Both Pileski and Gold said they look

forward to working closely with city officials. Gold said he has already talked to Champaign mayor Don Gerard and he's been pleased with the response from the mayor.

"He's very optimistic to work with the student government," Gold said. "He's a very friendly and understanding mayor."

The long-term goal is to make these

positions a more permanent part of the city councils. Pileski said discussions are underway with the local governments to discuss what each side would like to see from this developing relationship.

"I do not want this to be a one-year thing," Pileski said. "I am looking forward to the experience this program will have for student and local governments."

THE REPUBLIC



UIC gets \$2M grant to help Asian-American students

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

First Posted: October 14, 2011 - 4:02 am

Last Updated: October 14, 2011 - 4:03 am

CHICAGO — The University of Illinois at Chicago says it has received a \$2 million grant to help recruit and retain Asian-American and Pacific Islander students.

The five-year grant comes from the U.S. Department of Education. It'll fund academic and writing skills development, college preparation, career advancement and financial aid.

Kevin Kumashiro is a UIC professor of Asian-American studies and education. He says the federal support recognizes the challenges faced by Asian-American students, especially those who are learning English and those who have limited financial resources.

UIC also will award \$200,000 in scholarships annually to Asian-American and Pacific Islander students, and its College of Education will lead tutoring for K-12 students and field-projects for prospective teachers.

About 20 percent of UIC students identify as Asian-American and Pacific Islander.

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Quinn to Madigan: End legislative scholarships

BY MONIQUE GARCIA
Tribune reporter

Gov. Pat Quinn said Thursday that he will ask House Speaker Michael Madigan to run legislation this month to eliminate the scandal-plagued legislative scholarship program.

The governor's comments came a day after Madigan indicated he would not let members vote on Quinn's rewrite of a bill that would get rid of the

program, citing concerns that Quinn overstepped his veto powers.

But Quinn said he isn't giving up and will ask the powerful Chicago Democratic leader to sponsor legislation abolishing the program when lawmakers return to Springfield for the fall session.

"It's time for the Legislature to wake up," Quinn said following an appearance at a Chicago Ideas Week event. "This particular priv-

ilege of legislators is a relic that needs to be abolished. It's been abused over and over again by too many legislators. I don't think the taxpayers are at all happy with that."

A Madigan spokesman said the speaker could not immediately be reached. Madigan previously has supported efforts to repeal the program, but the real challenge is in the Senate, where lawmakers have rejected attempts to do away

with the perk.

Senate President John Cullerton, D-Chicago, supports reforms to prevent abuses but questions whether the program needs to be eliminated, an aide said.

"If the program can be reformed to address the specific abuses of the past, why does it need to be abolished?" said spokeswoman Rikeesha Phelon. Cullerton wants a review of all tuition waivers handed

out by the state, not just those granted by lawmakers, she said.

Senate Republican Leader Christine Radogno, of Lemont, called the back-and-forth over legislative scholarships "a shell game," saying it's time for Senate lawmakers to realize tweaks around the edges aren't good enough. Radogno called on Cullerton to release a bill she sponsored earlier this year to get rid of the program, which has

been held up in committee.

"This is more hide the ball that we've seen over the years," Radogno said. "Interesting, right now it focuses on the House, where in my opinion the real problem is in the Senate. ... If this is a procedural matter, why don't we pop that out of committee and hear it and pass it so the governor can sign it?"

mcgarcia@tribune.com
Twitter @moniquegarcia

Rush teaming with doctors in DuPage

Partnership to bring high-level cancer care to western suburbs

BY GREGORY KARP
Tribune reporter

Following a growing trend of U.S. academic medical centers extending their reach to suburban communities, Rush University Medical Center has teamed with a major doctors group in DuPage County in an effort to bring an advanced level of cancer treatment to the western suburbs of Chicago.

Rush and DuPage Medical Group, an independent physician group with more than 300 doctors, announced Thursday an affiliation deal that includes building a new cancer-treatment center in Lisle and collaborating on patient care, research and educational programs, as well as melding electronic health records to provide more comprehensive treatment.

"If you look at cancer programs across the country, there is this push to put cancer treatment in the communities," said Mike Kasper, chief executive of DuPage Medical Group.

That push has taken the form of consolidations — university medical centers buying out community hospitals and physician groups or partnering with them, said Larry Goodman, chief executive officer of Rush University Medical Center. "Academic medical centers across the country are looking at a whole host of new strategies," he said.

Similar links have been formed by the Mayo Clinic and locally by the University of Chicago Medical Center and Silver Cross Hospital in Joliet, said Brent Estes, a vice president at Rush. MD Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas is also known for similar collaborations, Kasper said.

Such deals make sense for patients and make business sense for the teamed medical groups, health care experts say.

For patients, such affiliations can bring top-notch medical care and advanced treatments closer to home. That's especially important for such diseases as cancer. Chemotherapy or radia-

tion treatments, for example, require frequent return visits to a cancer center. Traveling in heavy traffic from the suburbs to a city hospital several times a week can be a hardship for patients and their families.

"Having the same services within five minutes rather than 55 minutes really does make a difference in helping a person get better," Kasper said. Community doctors and Rush doctors will work side by side and hold group meetings on how to treat patients, he said. "This will raise the bar for cancer care in the western suburbs."

For Rush, the deal is a first with an independent doctor group, although it has similar agreements with four hospitals, Estes said. The linkup gives it access to patients where it currently has no presence, he said. Rush will provide chemotherapy services at the new facility. "It's a trend in the sense that there's a desire among leaders in markets to further expand their scope or their health systems and gain access to new sources of patients," Estes said.

The move is in line with a relatively new strategy at Rush, to "be extremely accessible to our patients and be an easy place to get to," Goodman said. And it raises the profile of Rush in that area. "When they see the kind of care provided in partnership with DuPage Medical Group there, patients might think of us for other services as well."

For the medical group, which already offers some cancer treatments, the affiliation will allow for expanded offerings and keeping patients in-house, rather than referring them to other facilities, Kasper said.

The planned three-story, 95,000-square-foot cancer center will be built and owned by the DuPage Medical Group, which currently cares for 375,000 patients at 45 offices in the western suburbs. The center will be located near the intersection of Interstates 88 and 355.

Rush will lease 13,000 square feet on the second floor. The center is expected to be complete by the end of next year or early 2013, Kasper said.

Civil union dispute at NU

Straight partners get
fewer health benefit
options than gays

BY JODI S. COHEN
Tribune reporter

Soon after Northwestern University professor Robert Fourer entered into a civil union, he did what many others in newly recognized relationships have done: He applied to add his partner to his health insurance.

But Northwestern denied his request because his partner is a woman.

The university's top-tier PPO insurance plan is available to same-sex partners in a civil union, but not to heterosexual couples in the same type of legal relationship. Male-female partners are eligible only for the university's HMO plan — unless they marry, in which case they can pick either plan.

Fourer and DePaul University professor Sandra Maria Benedet, an Evanston couple in their early 60s, decided to enter into a civil union shortly after it became legal in part because they support equal rights for same-sex couples. So they were shocked to learn that when it comes to Northwestern's health insurance, same-sex pairs get a better deal.

"The (civil union) law

continued...

Civil union law spurs NU health plan dispute

Continued from Page 1

makes no distinction, but somehow they are making a distinction," said Fourer, an engineering professor at Northwestern for 33 years. "I am not happy with it. It is somewhat intrusive. Why should they be bugging me about the gender of my partner?"

At a time of year when employees are signing up for next year's health insurance coverage, Illinois' recent civil union law is raising new, and sometimes unexpected, complications about eligibility.

Among other developments, some employers that previously offered benefits for same-sex domestic partners now require proof of a civil union to get insurance.

Before Illinois' civil union law took effect June 1, Northwestern offered domestic partner benefits only to same-sex couples. Since then, the university has had five requests for health insurance coverage for partners — four same-sex couples and Fourer and Benedet, who have been in a relationship for about four years.

The university decided to continue the health benefits it had been offering to same-sex couples in domestic partnerships. However, when Fourer applied to add his female partner after their July 30 union, the university decided not to provide the same choices to heterosexual couples in such relationships.

The law in this area is complicated. Employers



PHIL VELASQUEZ/TRIBUNE PHOTO

Northwestern professor Robert Fourer couldn't add Sandra Maria Benedet, his civil union partner, to his health plan.

who offer fully insured health coverage have to provide benefits to civil union partners to the same extent they provide them to married spouses, but employers with self-insured plans can choose who gets the benefits. Northwestern has both — the fully insured HMO and the self-funded PPO.

"After further discussion regarding insurance eligibility for civil union partners, it was determined that in a heterosexual relationship, the partner is eligible only for the fully insured plans," the benefits specialist wrote in an email to Fourer, which he provided to the Tribune.

Fourer, however, was enrolled in the university's PPO plan. Therefore, "Sandra is unable to join your plan at this time," the employee wrote, adding that Fourer could switch to the HMO plan, and add her, effective Jan. 1.

Fourer, who plans to retire in August, does not want to switch plans. Benedet has coverage through DePaul, where she is on a one-year contract as a visiting Spanish professor. The couple said they were adding Benedet to the Northwestern insurance as they planned for their future together.

Northwestern spokesman Alan Cabbage didn't provide a specific rationale for distinguishing between same-sex and opposite-sex couples, but he said university officials plan to assess whether to change their policy for opposite-sex couples.

"We are evaluating the potential demand for this among Northwestern University faculty and staff, and we will evaluate again a year from now," Cabbage said. "We are trying to get a handle on what the implications would be for the university in terms of the

benefits that we provide."

While Northwestern's distinction might hold up under a legal challenge, some are disappointed in the policy.

"It is discriminatory and it is wrong," said Camilla Taylor, the Marriage Project director for Lambda Legal, a group that helped draft Illinois' civil union bill. "Employers interested in best practices and doing the right thing will provide health insurance to different-sex couples on the same terms that they do to same-sex couples because that is fair."

Todd Solomon, a partner at the law firm McDermott Will & Emery, said it has been common for employers to offer benefits to unmarried same-sex partners, but not to unmarried opposite-sex partners, who have the option to get married.

But since the civil union law is so new, there likely have been few, if any, tests to whether employers will distinguish between same-sex and opposite-sex civil unions when deciding on insurance coverage.

The University of Chicago has taken a different position from Northwestern, for example, offering the same health insurance choices to employees and their dependents regardless of their sex and whether they are married or have civil union or domestic partnerships.

"All of this is something an employer needs to think through, how the benefits are going to be perceived

and what are the employee-relations concerns," Solomon said.

John Knight, who specializes in gay and lesbian rights for the American Civil Liberties Union in Illinois, said the law did not intend for situations like the one at Northwestern.

"The intent of the law was to allow same-sex and different-sex couples to be provided equality with respect to married couples," Knight said. "I do think it's bad policy in that it sets out discrimination.

"I assume the reasoning is that different-sex couples can get married," Knight added.

Fourer said that's the explanation he got when he called Northwestern's benefits office.

"They said, 'Why don't you get married?' which it doesn't seem like something they should be saying," Fourer said. "Why is Northwestern in the business of telling people they should get married? What difference does it make to them?"

Illinois was the sixth state to allow civil unions or their equivalent, which provide the same state-level rights that come with marriage. In the first month of the law, about 1,600 civil union licenses were issued across the state, according to Equality Illinois, a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender advocacy group.

Cook County had issued 1,634 civil union licenses through Thursday. Of those, 110, or fewer than 7 percent, were for heterosexual couples.

Fourer and Benedet, who met at an event for Stanford alumni, had their civil union granted on a Saturday morning by a judge at the Marriage and Civil Union Court on the lower level of the Cook County Building. They took a few pictures to mark the occasion, but it was otherwise a low-key affair.

They said that as a relatively older couple with no plans to have children, they never felt compelled to get married. They also viewed marriage as patriarchal and felt more positive about a civil union, which developed out of the gay rights movement.

The health insurance benefits were among the reasons they opted for a civil union, as Fourer wanted to make sure their benefits were squared away by the time he retires next year.

Benedet said the joy she felt about the civil union has turned to anger over Northwestern's policy.

"We were so happy that we were able to do that and take part in that," Benedet said. But then, she said, "I was not only disappointed by Northwestern's position on opposite-sex civil unions, but was angered by it, and knew that Bob and I had to do something about it."

jscohen@tribune.com

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News

Cross-State Cooperation

October 14, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Most distance education experts agree that the eventual solution to the new requirement that colleges be authorized by every state where they operate is reciprocity -- states will agree to accept each others' authorization, as they do for driver's licenses and other credentials.

But although some efforts are already under way, finding a reciprocity agreement that appeals to a large majority of states will be a challenge, state officials and representatives of interstate associations said in two panel discussions Thursday at the annual meeting of the Presidents' Forum.

The state authorization requirement, part of the "program integrity" rules the U.S. Education Department issued in October 2010, requires colleges and universities that offer distance education programs to get approval from every state where they operate, even if "operate" means only "enrolling a student in a particular state." Over the past year, the House of Representatives has tried to overturn the regulation, for-profit colleges have challenged it in court, and a budget proposal for fiscal year 2012 would block its implementation.

Even if such efforts are successful, though, the state laws requiring colleges to get permission to operate will remain in place, and colleges can no longer plead ignorance, panelists said at Thursday's event.

The Council of State Governments, which has worked on reciprocity compacts in areas ranging from emergency assistance to thoroughbred horse racing, is collaborating with the Presidents' Forum on a distance education compact and aims to have a first draft by year's end. "This is not a new concept," Pam Goins, the council's director of education policy, said of reciprocity compacts. "The difficulty is to get to a common set of ideas."

One big question confronting reciprocity efforts is where to set the bar for authorization. The authors of the compact must decide whether to set minimum standards that all states are likely to agree on, or higher standards that would ensure better quality but might seem too onerous for some states. A second is how to deal with fees: authorization can be a costly process, and institutions with students in most states currently pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in individual authorization fees.

Two participants in the state officials' forum illustrated the dilemmas. George Roedler, manager of private institution registration and licensing at the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, described himself jokingly as a "poster child" for stricter regulation. Minnesota has some of the strongest regulations on distance education, including application fees of up to \$3,500, with an additional fee of up to \$1,000 per degree program, and a nine-page application. Some institutions will reject students from Minnesota rather than deal with the requirements, according to a survey in August by WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, part of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

Next to Roedler was Marshall Hill, executive director of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education in Nebraska, a state that Hill said is traditionally averse to regulation. Unlike Minnesota, Nebraska does not require authorization for programs that enroll students only in online courses and do not have a physical presence in the state.

Any reciprocity compact would have to satisfy legislatures at both extremes. "It's possible to come up with a way to do this work reasonably," Hill said. "But it's a real challenge."

A perfect agreement "just isn't going to happen," said Russell Poulin, deputy director for research and analysis at WCET. The goal should be to reach an agreement whereby states function differently, but trust that each other's systems are effective -- still a tall order, given that some states have few or no regulations for distance education.

Even with legal challenges ongoing, the state authorization rule has already made an impact in Minnesota. Before the federal rule, institutions still were supposed to get permission, but few did, Roedler said. "Needless to say, ignorance is bliss," he said. "We know now that there aren't just a few (colleges), there are several hundred of them."

— Libby A. Nelson

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Advertisement

Quick Takes

October 14, 2011

Portrait of Minority-Group Professors in the Sciences

African-American scholars who earned their Ph.D.s at highly research intensive universities are significantly less likely than white, Latino and Asian peers to be employed at similar universities, a new National Science Foundation study finds. The NSF study examines numerous characteristics of minority Ph.D. recipients in science, engineering and health fields -- from where they earned their doctorates, where they work now, and their rank, status and fields of study at those institutions, among other things -- and the finding on black Ph.D.s is among the most interesting.

While 41.5 percent of all professors who earned doctorates in science, engineering and health fields at American universities with "very high" research activity were employed by such institutions in 2008, the figure was much lower (30.8 percent) for African-Americans. (No other racial group was below 39.1 percent, the figure for Latino scholars.) The study finds that the black scholars were likelier than others to work instead at master's-granting universities, and attributes the finding, in part, to the fact that meaningful numbers of them work at historically black universities, which by and large are master's institutions. That probably accounts for about a third of the gap, estimates Ansley Abraham, director of the Southern Regional Education Board's SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program, and while some of those professors are at HBCUs by choice, because they believe in the institutions' mission, "we don't know how many ended up there because they didn't have other good choices."

Among the study's other findings:

- Black scholars were significantly less likely than science and health Ph.D. recipients of other races to have earned their doctorates from U.S. universities with very high research activity (63 percent vs. 80 percent for white Ph.D. recipients, 77.1 percent for Hispanics, and 79.3 percent for Asians).
- About one-third of black, 37 percent of Latino, 91 percent of Asian and 11 percent of white recipients of science, engineering or health Ph.D.s from American universities were not born in the United States.

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Canada Ties International Education to Economic and Trade Policy

October 13, 2011, 3:30 pm

The Canadian government has tapped a group of prominent educators and business leaders to sit on a new panel to develop a strategy on how international education can be integrated into economic and trade policy. Thursday's announcement, made at the China Education Expo in Beijing, signals that Canada's recent push to attract foreign students and scholars will continue with the backing of the federal government. The panel, which is chaired by Amit Chakma, president of the University of Western Ontario, will provide a report early next year. Universities and colleges have welcomed the move, as has Canada's major international-education organization, which notes that the people on the panel are widely experienced in the field.

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The Chronicle of Higher Education 1255 Twenty-Third St, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20037