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WGIL NEWS

9:15 AM

LOCAL NEWS

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Illinois' Economy on a Slow Boat to Recovery

The economy in Illinois is improving according to a monthly report, but it's going very, very slowly.

The Flash Index is compiled by the University of Illinois and is published at the first of every month, is at 91.6 for August. That's up from 91.3 the month prior, but is still indicating a shrinking economy in the state, since any number above 100 indicates true economic growth.

U of I economist Fred Giertz authors the report, and says these numbers are while business profits and stock prices are pretty strong right now.

"(Businesses) haven't started to hire yet," Giertz said. "That's the kind of problem that we're facing. It's going to take some more expansion and some more good news before hiring actually takes place."

Giertz says some long-standing political issues being resolved would also contribute to a true recovery.

"There's a lot of things on our plate this last year," Giertz said. "Health care, cap and trade, a variety of things. Now, there's the issue about the continuation of the Bush tax cuts. So, resolving those kind of uncertainties would go a long way to help the economy. There's not going to be a silver bullet that's going to cure things quickly."

Giertz says the small increase in the Flash Index this month means we likely won't have a "double dip" recession, but it's still the longest and deepest recession since World War Two.

08 09 10 by [Newsroom](#)

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Incest Revisited

By Ken Eisold, PhD

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Unconscious Attraction - and Fear

New research suggests that the incest taboo may be more complex and interesting than current anthropological theories suggest. Freud may have been closer to the truth, after all.

Wired recently noted that "researchers found that people are turned on by photographs of people who resemble their close genetic counterparts."

In the experiment, subjects ranked the attractiveness of photos they were shown. In some cases, they were primed by subliminal images of their own parents: in others, the photos subtly morphed into images that incorporated parts of themselves.

"People appear to be drawn to others who resemble their kin or themselves," said psychologist R. Chris Fraley of the [University of Illinois](#). "It is possible, therefore, as Freud suggested, that incest taboos exist to counter this primitive tendency."

Wired summed it up: the "experiments support the Freudian idea that we have subconscious mechanisms that make us attracted to features that remind us of our own, and that cultural taboos against incest exist to override that primitive drive." (See, *You Are Sexually Attracted to Your Parents, Yourself*.)

There is other evidence for this tendency -- as well as parallel perspectives. Neuroscientists now understand that the brain organizes input according to pre-existing categories. So the earlier experiences we all had with caregivers - those who were present and active in caring for us as children - become the templates for later relationships. That may be why, as Professor Fraley put it, we are drawn to others who resemble our kin.

Psychoanalysts have called this tendency "transference," since it seems that attachments to earlier figures in our lives are transferred to current figures with whom we are deeply engaged. That's why the people with whom we fall in love tend to resemble parental figures. That also helps to explain why we reproduce parental expectations in our relationships with the therapists we come to trust and on whom we depend.

But those attachments can also become frightening if they are too intense or if they tempt us into actions that conflict with adult responsibilities. It is touching for a daughter to say she wants to marry her daddy when she grows up, but it would be shocking for her daddy to encourage those feelings and criminal to exploit them. Our culture is in agreement on that - for very good reasons.

It's about the pathways of attraction and the fact that our behavior tends to follow pre-existing patterns. That makes the world more familiar and less alien. But we have to manage those tendencies as they can also get us into trouble.

What we don't know we know is the inexorable force of past experience.

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News

Making Adjuncts Temps -- Literally

August 9, 2010

Last year, a small community college in Michigan considered a plan to stop employing adjuncts and to have a temporary services agency instead do the formal hiring. The idea was to save the college money and also to save the adjuncts from contributing to a retirement system in which few of them would ever vest. Although only a few dozen adjuncts might have been affected, the idea drew widespread criticism from faculty groups nationally and the college's board split on the matter, and put the idea on hold.

Now another community college in Michigan -- Washtenaw Community College -- is planning to move ahead with a similar plan, and this will involve hundreds of adjuncts. The college says that the part-time faculty members will be better off financially, as will the institution, which could save about \$800,000 annually -- at a time when deep budget cuts in Michigan have challenged public higher education in the state.

About 400 part-time instructors for non-credit courses are expected to be moved off payroll in the fall semester, and about 700 part-time instructors for credit courses will be moved off payroll in the spring. While Washtenaw has a faculty union for full-time faculty members, part-timers do not have a union or an organization representing them. About 40 percent of courses at the college are taught by part-timers.

Larry Whitworth, the president of Washtenaw, said that this plan makes sense because of Michigan's requirements for pension payments for state workers. For anyone on payroll, the college must contribute 16.94 percent of salary to the retirement fund, and the employee must contribute 3 percent (which is rising to 6 percent). Hardly any of the part-timers meet the vesting requirements to benefit from the pension fund, Whitworth said, so they aren't losing anything in terms of real retirement savings. He added that, as part of the change, the college is going to boost part-timers' pay by 3 percent (using some of the savings from the 16.94 percent no longer to be paid). So the adjuncts will gain both by not having to make their own contributions to the fund -- and by getting more money in pay.

Asked about the criticism that was raised of the idea a year ago, Whitworth said he disagreed. "This puts more money in their paychecks and the relationships they have with the college are the same," he said. The key thing to remember is that "the contribution the college makes now [to the retirement fund] is basically irrelevant."

Whitworth said he briefed department chairs on the changes and that they were backing them, and would still have the right to supervise (and when needed replace) part-time instructors. He said that the college would provide information on all the part timers to the temp agency with the expectation that many would be hired by the temp agency to do exactly what they have been hired directly by the college to do.

"It's really no different than if you are going to hire a clerical worker for a week or so. They send you two or three people and you supervise them and if you don't like them, you send them back," he said. "Our deans and department chairs would still be very involved in making sure everyone had the proper credentials."

An editorial in [AnnArbor.com](http://www.annarbor.com) praised the idea. The college "is in danger of being eaten alive by the costs of the state pension system," the editorial said. It said that this shift is typical of why many community college leaders want to leave the state retirement system entirely.

Maria Maisto, president of the New Faculty Majority, a national adjunct group, said she was concerned about the situation at Washtenaw -- even if adjunct pay goes up a bit. She said that the organization would be reaching out to adjuncts there to talk to them about how they saw the issue.

Generally, she said that there may be disadvantages to ending adjuncts' status as state employees. It may be more difficult for adjuncts to unionize if they are no longer employed by the college, she noted. And it may be harder for them to earn retirement benefits. Many adjuncts build retirement funds through many small contributions from their various employers, and many adjuncts are pushing for reforms in vesting requirements that may disadvantage part timers, she noted.

Maisto said she saw the move reflecting the way many part timers are treated. "This just represents a further marginalization," she said. "What kind of message does it send to students to be told 'your professor is a temp'?" she asked.

— Scott Jaschik

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News

United Front

August 10, 2010

WASHINGTON -- Call it couples therapy for higher education administrators.

Gathered here Monday, about 30 provosts and chief financial officers began a two-day seminar devoted to the important, fragile and sometimes strained relationship that often exists between their two positions. Co-sponsored by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), the conference proved an opportunity for two of the key decision makers at most institutions to discuss the pressures and pleasures of jobs that are increasingly defined by diminishing resources in a troubling economic climate.

A key theme emerging during the daylong sessions was the tension between a tradition-bound world of higher education and an emerging realization -- particularly among CFOs -- that the business model for colleges and universities needs changing.

Rick Staisloff, vice president for finance and administration at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, said he learned early on that many in academe are sensitive to any rhetoric that appears to have emerged from the business world. When Staisloff would speak of education as a "product" even a few years ago, "people just freaked out completely," he said. Staisloff said he's seen that sort of knee-jerk response diminish considerably in the last year, however, and credited the economic crisis with an increased acknowledgment that the business of higher education cannot remain a taboo subject.

To garner support from groups and individuals who may be skeptical about decisions that appear overly driven by an institution's financial bottom line, it's incumbent upon financial officers and provosts to publicly support each other, a panel of college presidents told the group. Faculty and staff need to be assured that the academic side of the house is working in lockstep with the business side -- even though some may "look for wedges to drive between them," said Carol Cartwright, president of Bowling Green State University. That said, Cartwright was insistent that it's both natural and beneficial for provosts and CFOs to bring different -- even conflicting -- viewpoints to an internal discussion.

"One of the most difficult challenges of a president is to get people to challenge each other," she said.

Steven Poskanzer, who took over as president of Carleton College just a few days ago, agreed that CFOs and provosts should challenge each other -- in private. After a decision has been made, however, their responsibility is to rally around a shared agenda, he said.

"These two individuals must present a united front to the rest of the world," said Poskanzer, who was previously president of the State University of New York at New Paltz.

In some instances, presenting that united front means physically appearing alongside one another, said Sheri Noren-Everts, vice president and provost at Illinois State University. Indeed, it's incumbent upon a provost to demonstrate that she works well with the CFO and understands the college's financial position as well as its academic mission, she said.

"We make a point of being seen [together] in public," Noren-Everts said of herself and her CFO.

A key aim of Monday's sessions was to encourage candid discussion about what can be a challenging relationship, and for that

reason NACUBO and ACE set conditions for *Inside Higher Ed's* coverage of the event. While all but one of the sessions were open, the two organizations stipulated that participants' comments be considered off the record unless explicit permission was given by the participant.

— Jack Stripling

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News

'Gaps Are Not Inevitable'

August 10, 2010

It's well-established by now that African American and Latino students graduate college at lower rates than do their white and Asian peers, so it follows pretty naturally that many individual colleges would have lower graduation rates for those groups than for white students, too.

But in two new reports that the Education Trust released Monday, the advocacy group tries to hammer home the idea that big gaps in the academic performance of minority and white students are not an inevitability. It does so, starkly, by using its College Results Online database to compare the graduation rates of black and Latino students with their white peers at individual institutions, showing widely varying outcomes at colleges and universities with comparably prepared and composed student bodies.

The University of California at Riverside has about 14,700 students, about 25 percent of whom are Hispanic, and an average SAT score of 1040; about 12 percent of California State University at Chico's 14,600 students are Latino, and the institution's average SAT is 1025. Yet Latino students who entered Riverside from 2000 to 2002 graduated at a rate of 63.4 percent over six years, 1 percentage point better than its white students, while 41.5 percent of Chico's Hispanic students do, compared to 57.5 percent of white students there.

Similar gaps exist at more selective public institutions (the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's 2 percentage point graduation rate gap between its Hispanic and white students, compared to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's 16 percent, for example) and all manner of private institutions, too (Rice University's black and white students both graduate at a rate of about 92 percent, while black students at Lehigh University graduate at a six-year rate of 64.5 percent, compared to 86.3 percent for white students).

While some college officials complain that the Education Trust appears to relish pointing out flaws in American higher education, officials at the group said these reports, like their others, are designed not to embarrass (or at least not only to embarrass) but to make the point that no institution is predestined to have different success for different groups.

"We did uncover some large gaps in student success rates and low graduation rates for students of color. But it would be wrong to assume that these gaps are inevitable or immutable," Mamie Lynch, a policy analyst at the Education Trust and co-author of the report, said in a news release. "For many of the 'big gap' schools, we can point to an institution working with a similar student body that graduates students of color at rates similar to those of white students."

That is certainly true, and many of the colleges and universities with small or no gaps have instituted policies, programs and other practices specifically to strengthen the academic success of underrepresented students.

But many of the top-performing institutions cited by Education Trust have also been at it a long time: Cynthia Wolf Johnson, associate provost for academic services at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, said in an interview Monday that her institution's summer bridge program just celebrated its 25th anniversary, and that its Student Advising for Freshman Excellence program, which provides intensive advising and support for between a third and half of first-year students, has been around for nearly two decades. That "longstanding commitment to retention and graduation of minority students" has resulted in a black student graduation that mirrors white students' six-year rate of 50.1 percent. (Rates are significantly higher for participants in the university's bridge and advising programs.)

Salvadore A. Liberto, vice president for enrollment management and associate provost at Loyola University New Orleans, said his institution, too, has all the programs and "best practices" that admissions and retention experts agree greatly increase students' chances of academic success: transition programs for at-risk students, "early warning" systems that alert officials to struggling students, and the like.

But while Loyola certainly works hard to ensure the academic success of its students, it benefits enormously from the fact that, given its regional orientation and history as a Jesuit institution, "we take diversity for granted in the very best way that you can," said Liberto. Without purposefully aggressive recruiting, about a third of its students are members of underrepresented minority groups, and because the university has over time "provided a great deal of support for students who fall into any kind of at-risk categories," it has produced many successful students of all races, Liberto said.

As a result, "when students get to campus, there isn't this culture shock" that minority students at many colleges with smaller cohorts of such students face, he said. Black (65.2 percent) and Latino students (66.0 percent) alike at Loyola graduate at slightly higher rates than do white students (63.2 percent).

The story is similar at George Mason University, which has "many of the interventions and support systems that have proven to be most effective at institutions nationwide" -- learning communities, intensive tutoring, etc., said Andrew Flagel, dean of admissions and enrollment development there. But what most distinguishes the Virginia public university -- but is "virtually impossible to replicate" -- is that it is "intensely globally diverse," such that "nearly every student who comes is going to find a cohort of students that they can see themselves fitting into."

The fact that minority students feel such comfort at Mason, he said, contributes mightily to the statistics showing that black students graduate at a rate 6 percentage points higher than do white students (62.6 percent to 56.8 percent); 58.5 percent of Hispanic students graduate within six years, too.

"I have enormous luxury in my role compared to most of my peers nationwide," Flagel said.

Officials at many of the colleges that show up on Education Trust's list of institutions with big gaps in minority graduation rates know that lacking the historical advantages of colleges like George Mason and Loyola doesn't earn them a pass. It'd be easy for Wayne State University to try to blame the Detroit public schools for the poor academic preparation of so many of its students, and in turn for the 34 percentage point gap between its graduation rates for white (43.5 percent) and black (9.5 percent) students in 2008, said Howard N. Shapiro, associate vice president for student services and undergraduate affairs and a professor of mechanical engineering there.

"But I don't want to whine about that and say it's not our problem. This is the hand we're dealt, and something we need to change," he said.

Two years ago, Wayne State implemented the kind of learning community approach that many colleges have embraced, and strengthened its need-based aid program to try to eliminate the financial reasons that might lead many academically unprepared students to drop out, Shapiro said. The first-to-second-year retention rate for black students rose to 69.6 percent from 56.8 percent from 2007 to 2008, and when the figures for 2009 become available in a month, Shapiro hopes they will show additional progress.

While it will take time for that momentum to affect the six-year graduation rate, the retention rates at the five- and six-semester marks have also turned up, he said.

California State University at Chico also shows up on Education Trust's list of institutions with large graduation rate gaps for black and Latino students as compared to white students -- but those figures fail to capture the progress the university has already made, said Meredith Kelley, vice provost for enrollment management there. The Education Trust report shows the university's six-year graduation rate for the three classes that entered in 2000-2 to be 30.8 percent for African-American students and 41.5 percent for Latino students, compared to 57.5 percent for white students.

Several years after it expanded a minority student success center in its business school to the entire campus and created a Cross-Cultural Leadership Center, Chico has pushed its six-year graduation rate for Hispanic students to 49 percent in 2008 from 39 percent in 2006, and for black students to 51 percent from 31 percent, Kelley said.

More changes are on the way. Like other institutions in the California State University System, which has joined the Access to Success effort sponsored by Education Trust and the National Association of System Heads, Chico has committed to halving its graduation rate gaps for minority and low-income students. As part of that effort, Kelley said, the university is putting in place the sort

of academic early warning system that Loyola and many of the other colleges on Education Trust's "small gap" list use.

"We obviously still have a lot of work to do," she said, "but we're showing that we can make progress if we focus intensely on this."

— Doug Lederman

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