

News from campuses across the nation

College Press Service

Six People At Stanford Infected With Hepatitis A

STANFORD, Calif. - Health officials are trying to determine how a professor and five students at Stanford University contracted Hepatitis A.

They are looking at one of the university's dining halls as a potential source for the illness.

The first case surfaced about a month ago, the latest on Tuesday. All six victims are recovering, and school officials decline to say whether any needed to be hospitalized. Hepatitis A, commonly spread by contaminated food and utensils, attacks the liver. Its symptoms include appetite loss, fatigue, jaundice and stomach aches. The illness is typically treated with rest and fluids and leaves a victim's system during an incubation period of anywhere from 15 to 50 days.

NCAA Puts Basketball Program On Probation

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. - The National Collegiate Athletic Association put Southeast Missouri State University's basketball program on three years probation Thursday after finding several violations regarding

athletes' benefits, recruitment and financial aid.

The NCAA's committee on infractions found that the school provided above-market wages, cash payments, loans, transportation and other forms of compensation to prospective recruits between 1994 and 1997 under head coach Ron Shumate. He was fired in May, and the school did not renew the contracts of three of his assistants.

The NCAA blamed Shumate and his assistants for the violations, not the school. It did, however, fault the university for failing to sufficiently monitor its basketball program.

As a result of the violations, the NCAA announced several penalties, including a reduction in the number of financial aid awards the university gets.

Regents College Another Option For Non-Traditional Students

ALBANY, N.Y. - Regents College, a program run by the State University of New York since 1971, has been granted a charter as private and independent school.

On Thursday, the college became the first independent institution in the state to serve adults choosing not to attend more traditional schools. Stu-

dents take classes through distance learning and are not required to sit in classrooms.

Activists Pledge To Continue Pushing For The Removal Of Illinois Mascot

URBANA, Ill. - Several members of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, including Chairwoman Susan Gravenhorst, skipped a Wednesday meeting with activists who want them to get rid of the university's mascot, Chief Illiniwek.

"I'm not surprised because they have shown disrespect for our presence before," Paula Ostrovsky, a member of the Alumni Against Racial Mascots group, told the Associated Press.

Students and activists who find the mascot offensive have asked the board to attend a round-table discussion in May.

Chief Illiniwek - a student dressed as an American Indian who dances during sporting events - has his supporters. Many say the image, which first appeared on campus in 1926, is a tradition that pays tribute to Native Americans.

Despite the controversy, some trustees have said they don't think the board will act on the issue any time soon.

Indiana University takes bold step to curb grade inflation

By Chad Brooks
Campus Correspondent (Indiana University)

Indiana University thinks it has found a way to fight grade inflation - considered by many to be one of the biggest problems plaguing higher education.

Giving students better grades than they deserve might enhance their resumes in the short run, but will devalue them in the long one, many experts say. After all, what good are good grades if everyone gets them? And if everyone gets good grades, what does that say about a university?

At Duke University, the average GPA rose from 3.0 to 3.3 between 1986 and 1994. And in 1992, more than half of undergraduate students at Stanford University were getting grades of at least an A-minus.

"I am a great example of why the system is failing," said Scott Hayman, a senior at Indiana. "I get great grades and barely do anything for them."

It's clear that grade-point averages are on the rise around the nation. At the University of California at Berkeley, the average undergraduate GPA rose from 2.91 in 1986 to 3.08 in 1996. In 1986, 47 percent of students had a C average. A decade later, only 35 percent fell in that range.

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Officials at Indiana University had similar scores to report. Between 1976 and 1996, the school found that its average student GPA rose from 2.83 to 2.96.

To ensure that a C remains average, and that average students get what they truly deserve, Indiana officials approved the Expanded Grade Context Transcript. Implemented in March, school officials say it is the first grade-reporting system of its kind to be adopted by any

university in the nation.

"What we are trying to achieve by this is a way to put each grade in a context so it can be appreciated and its value can be shown," said Richard Carr, co-chair of IU's educational policies committee.

The new system of reporting offers much more than the traditional information: department, course title, hours of credit and grade. It also includes the instructor's name, the average GPA of students enrolled in a particular class and the overall GPA of students enrolled in a particular section. The report also shows students how many of their classmates scored higher, lower or the same as they did.

Carr concedes that many of Indiana's faculty members don't like the new system.

"I must admit that when brought before the faculty, it did not pass unanimously," he said. "There are many faculty members who want the right to give whatever grade they see fit."

Despite instructors' complaints, many students have embraced the more detailed reports.

"They really let you know how you did in comparison with the other people in your class," said Senior Jason Rosenthal.

Even with the new system, Carr said he believes there is no way to completely stop grade inflation. Many experts agree.

Louis Goldman, author of "The Betrayal of the Gatekeeper: Grade Inflation," wrote that the trouble started in the 1960s, when professors gave students higher grades to help them avoid the draft. Today, however, he cites several factors contributing to the current problem. Among them is one Carr said he has observed at Indiana University: Teachers fear for their job security.

"The younger faculty is concerned, and they do tend to grade higher," he said. "Students want to be challenged, but they aren't going to go into a class knowing that the highest grade they can get is a C."

If given some time to work, the new system will wind up helping everyone in the long run, Carr said.

"Is the average student being put in a bad position by this," he asked. "Maybe. But we have to think of the people we're most proud of. This group will benefit the most."

Students accept arranged marriages for better or worse

By Alex Alfredo
Campus Correspondent (Boston University)

Adnen, a senior at Boston University, never mentions the women he's dating in the letters he sends home to Pakistan.

So far, none of his girlfriends have been Muslim - a religious difference he says his parents would never tolerate.

With graduation just around the corner, the 22-year-old business major suspects his parents are eager for him to find a wife - or have them find one for him. Though Adnen says independence is the best thing about living in America, he's bound by tradition and his Islamic faith.

He's far from being the only one. Many students from families who believe in arranged marriages will be assigned their spouses shortly after graduation.

"Everyone thinks that love is a big thing you have to have beforehand; people can't imagine attaining it after," Adnen said. "I don't think you'll ever know 'Yeah, I love this person.' You have to look for things that are more important ... because if everything else matches - your way of thinking, your ideals - you're going to get along, and love will come."

Thoughts of relying on Mom and Dad to play matchmaker send shivers up the spines of many American students, but in most of the world, arranged marriages are the norm. One survey of urban professionals living in India indicated that 81 percent had arranged marriages. Of that group, 94 percent rated their unions "very successful." More than half of the survey's respondents said they wanted their families to choose their mates "because elders know best." Another 20 percent said because they were guaranteed someone of similar social standing, and about 10 percent said they liked knowing they could count on family support during times of trouble.

"We're the oddballs," said Rebecca Manning, a professor of India studies and religion studies at Indiana University. "We (western societies) seem to be more oriented toward the individual; older cultures think of the culture or community first."

Doing weddings the western way - "love marriages," they're called in

Efforts to level field for college applicants include attacking test bias

By V. Dion Haynes
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

LOS ANGELES - While the University of California's Los Angeles and Berkeley campuses are struggling to maintain racial diversity, Bates College, a small liberal arts school on the other end of the country, has managed to double the number of African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians it enrolls.

At Bates, students from those under represented groups now make up 10 percent of the enrollment, up from 4 percent 15 years ago. The Lewiston, Maine-based college managed to boost its minority ranks when it de-emphasized the Scholastic Assessment Tests, which have long been the target of charges that they are biased against several minority groups and women.

In the last few years more than 250 other colleges and universities have followed Bates' lead in making the SAT optional, one of a variety of methods now being used to boost diversity in the wake of the demise of affirmative action programs in California and Texas, the most populous states.

Bracing for the fallout, educators and lawmakers are attempting to level the playing field by attacking the so-called achievement test bias legislatively, devising experimental tests that would better gauge the potential of blacks and Hispanics and coaching minority students to score higher on the SAT and other school entrance exams.

"Maybe in 1950 you could make the argument that a 95 percent white university that offered a decent education was a good institution. But you can't make that argument today," said William Hiss, vice president for administrative services of the college.

California's anti-affirmative action law, Proposition 209, will have a dramatic effect on UC's freshman 1998 class: At Berkeley, the number of admissions of African Americans, Hispanic and American Indians plummeted 66 percent, 52.6 percent and 60.9 percent respectively. UCLA experienced similar declines.

Proposition 209 backers reason that giving extra points to blacks, Hispanics and other minority groups is discriminatory against other groups who aren't offered a preference. The thinking is that everyone should be considered equally on the basis of their academic merits, putting more weight on the SAT.

But some argue that if the SAT is biased, the test will have the effect of further excluding certain minority groups that traditionally don't do well on it.

"Any discussion on (standardized tests) is more important now because of Proposition 209, which is making

India - hasn't seemed to work, many advocates of arranged marriage say. They're quick to point out that more than half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce, while in India the divorce rate is a mere 5 percent. In middle eastern countries practicing arranged marriage, the rates are also in the single digits.

"When choosing a mate for their children, parents want to make sure their child is compatible with the family of their mate," Manning said. "Since the woman joins the man's family (and typically lives with them), the man's family wants to make sure she is compatible with them."

Until a few decades ago, even the most educated Indian families married their children off without consulting them first. A bride and groom weren't allowed to meet each other before their wedding or to refuse the match.

Marital customs in rural parts of the country among lower classes and highly conservative business families haven't changed much. Recently, a young couple were beheaded at a village meeting because they eloped.

But for most educated Indians and people from the Middle East, much has changed. Families who once relied on neighborhood matchmakers now use computerized marriage bu-

reau more of a selective tool," said Jamillah Moore, an aide to state Sen. Teresa Hughes. The Los Angeles Democrat has drafted a bill that would require test makers to demonstrate that their standardized tests are unbiased.

The SAT, originally called the

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Scholastic Aptitude Test, was developed around the turn of the century as an objective measurement for primarily ivy-league admissions officers to evaluate students from all types of secondary schools. At the time, the admissions officers were partial to prep school candidates and less apt to select students with public school backgrounds.

Critics argue that the tests assess wealth as much as they do academic ability, with scores rising with family income. The same disparities, they add, hold true for other standardized exams, such as the ACT as well as the law school, graduate school and medical school admission tests.

"The problems have caused thoughtful people to pause and say, 'Is this the best vehicle that we should apply to young people as we're making educational decisions about them?'" said Christopher Hooker-Haring, dean of admissions at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa., which made the SAT optional in 1996.

The College Board and Educational Testing Service, which administer the exams, strongly deny that the SAT is biased. They assert that the test is merely presenting the symptoms of a deeply-entrenched societal problem. "More than anything (the scores) show the inequality of educational preparation, you see it in K-12," said Janice Gams, spokeswoman for The College Board.

"In many respects, the scores do better at predicting (college success) than grades. Grades are highly inflated these days," she added.

At Bates, when students opt not to submit test scores, admissions officials rely on personal interviews, essays and grade point averages to select freshmen. They look for unique individuals - an African American woman who patented a scientific de-

reus and highly detailed ads placed in newspapers. In India, young people are playing a bigger role in the selection process and have the power to veto unsuitable candidates, Manning said.

Despite modern influences, the "arrangement" process is difficult,

Thoughts of relying on Mom and Dad to play matchmaker send shivers up the spines of many American students, but in most of the world, arranged marriages are the norm.

many students say.

"It's like you're just waiting for something to happen - waiting for someone to walk into your life," said Sandija, a Pakistani who is pursuing a Ph.D. in engineering at Boston University. "I cannot be proactive because (women) are not supposed to be proactive, and that makes me feel powerless. I'm just sitting around waiting for someone to (choose a husband) for me, and that's not something I'm used to. "But my

vice when she was in high school, a Vietnamese-American man who excelled on his high school debate team. Such experiences, college officials say, have proven to be better indicators of success than the SAT.

Over the years, dozens of studies have concluded that the SAT offers a distorted picture.

One theory contends that the SAT is designed to measure "componential intelligence," reasoning from a white, middle-class perspective. The test, according to researchers, doesn't gauge the "creative" and "contextual" intelligence, or street smarts, that blacks and Hispanics developed in learning to negotiate a racist system.

William Sedlacek, an education professor and testing director at the University of Maryland at College Park, devised what he calls the Noncognitive Questionnaire as a way to better assess black and Hispanic college applicants. The questionnaire, being tested by several schools including North Carolina State University, quizzes students on nonacademic matters such as how they'd handle themselves if they were to encounter a racist, how they overcame adversity and whether they have a mentor.

"If you use a wide net of measures you're likely to get a wide range of people in your class," said Sedlacek, adding that the questionnaire gauges qualities that universities have determined correlate with successful students.

Meanwhile, the Princeton Review Foundation and other education groups are offering low-cost coaching courses to help minority students boost their SAT scores. Blacks and Hispanics often have not had access to the courses because of their high cost - around \$900 - and because the sessions have not been widely offered in their communities.

Some admissions officials at the University of California support this approach, pointing out that dropping the SAT does not guarantee diversity.

For the first time this year, the University of Texas overlooked the SAT and automatically admitted Texas students who graduated in the top 10 percent of their classes. But the ratio of blacks, Hispanics and American Indians remained unchanged from the previous year when a court-imposed affirmative action ban took effect.

If UCLA dropped the SAT "we'd be in the same boat but worse," said Rae Lee Siporin, the school's director of undergraduate admissions and relations with schools.

"We'd have to rely on higher grade point averages, and that would disproportionately negatively impact blacks and Latinos because they have lower grade point averages. We'd have to require more math, more advanced courses, and that would also hurt them."

parents have been right about many things in the past," she continued. "So I don't think I'd like to venture out alone against their wishes."

Not Aisha Kahn, a 19-year-old majoring in international relations and anthropology at Boston University. Though her parents had a successful, arranged marriage in their native Pakistan, Kahn said she wants to choose her husband.

"I think my parents will understand," she said. "They won't force me to marry somebody who I'm clueless about. Imagine marrying somebody you don't know; that's horrible."

Sandija says she not only imagines the scenario, but hopes it will come true before she graduates in 2001.

"I don't want to have a Ph.D. after my name when I go looking for a husband because that would make it almost impossible to find someone," she said. "(Because) men fear that their wives might be smarter, richer ... I would be put in a position where I would (have to) marry someone who has a Ph.D., M.D. or the equivalent."

Why would a such an independent thinker agree to an arranged marriage?

"Because I've seen it work," Sandija said.