

THE COOPER UNION ALUMNI & PIONEER

The Education of Mark Epstein

by Barry Drogin, EE '83

Abstract

As The Cooper Union Board of Trustees considers charging tuition for graduate programs and reducing the full-tuition scholarship for undergraduate programs by 24%, *The Alumni Pioneer*, using the immortal technique of a parody video, makes one last effort to keep the college from the point of no return.

(What follows are the text and images of “The Education of Mark Epstein,” as embedded in a YouTube video of the same name <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N35kqNDY--o>>. The video combines music and lyrics from Immortal Techniques’ “The Point of No Return” with audio selections (and transcriptions) from the November 7, 2011, Open Forum with Mark Epstein videos <<http://www.youtube.com/user/notuitionever>>. Aside from some minor edits and minimal post-processing to eliminate The Great Hall reverb and make the audio easier to hear, the quotations are not presented out of context although, by rearrangement, some contradictions become apparent. Each set of quotations is provided with a response.)



Introduction: The purpose of this video is to educate the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Cooper Union – and other trustees – about what we know and what he needs to know.

Part One: The History of Tuition: There is a history of tuition here. This is not the 1859 model where every student is an immigrant with no money and no other way of getting an education. In the early years of Cooper Union, tuition was charged. Admitted students got in for free, full-tuition scholarships, and if there was room in the classes – Jamshed recently discovered some of this in the early paperwork – if there was room in the classes, other students were allowed to come in on a tuition basis. Be assured that if anybody who is truly needy, will still get a full tuition scholarship. We’re currently giving full tuition scholarships to some students that don’t really need it, they come from families of means. If a student comes from a family in extreme means, why shouldn’t they pay the full rate? The question of tuition didn’t just come up. It has been on the table literally for over 20 years except this is the first time it’s been out of the board room. We can try to keep it as merit-based as much as possible.

Response: In 1858, the pre-existing School of Design for Women moved into the under-construction Foundation Building with a ratio of 2 free certificate and diploma-seeking female students to 1 “amateur” paying female student. When construction was completed in 1860, the night school for men and women opened, and all of its students attended “absolutely free.” The ratio of free day school women to “amateurs” was reduced to 10 to 1, then to a single off-hours course, and by 1887 they were gone. Since admission was on a first-come first-served basis, there was no “room” for the amateurs; in fact, both Cooper and Hewitt were desperate to become financially able to move the ground-floor stores and upstairs business out to make more room for more students. The number of students and number of classes and lectures that were fit into the Foundation Building - minus the two stories added later - would astound you. Although admission to Cooper was always limited - with preference given to the truly needy - the implementation of merit criteria came many decades later.

Part Two: Financial Crisis: I’m not the financial wiz on the board. Had the capital campaign been completely successful and had the market not crashed, and had the economy not been so slow to recover, we were sustainable for a couple of decades at least with things the way they were. So all these then snowballed into a situation where, you know, tuition may have to be looked at again. We still consider tuition a last resort strategy. I want to say we’re not in a crisis right now, but if major changes don’t take place, we will be in a crisis in a few years. We are looking at a looming disaster and trying to rectify it before it reaches that point. It would be great if there were somebody I could point my finger to and said, it’s his or her fault, but that’s not the case. The problem is a systemic deficit, it’s nobody, no one person’s fault.

Response: Listen to yourself. If not for (1) The capital campaign (2) The market crash (3) The slow economic recovery we were sustainable for a couple of decades. We had a balanced budget in 2008. We’ve only had a “systemic deficit” for 4 years. Apparently, Ron Drucker, William Sandholm, John Michaelson, Robert Bernhard, and yourself were the only people in 2009 to believe the recession would last only a year because you didn’t reject a Campbell budget until 2013.

Part Three: Competitive Salaries: There is no one cause. The cost of higher education keeps going up, salaries go up, we have to pay competitive salaries to get the faculty and the administration that we need. When we were doing the search for the new president, when the numbers were revealed to some of the candidates, they were pretty shocked at how much we do with a little bit of money compared to the other schools. We did not hire Jamshed with any plan in place to charge tuition or change things in any structural ways. When we narrowed down the search to a few finalists, they were all given full disclosure about the school’s finances. We didn’t want to have somebody hired as president, not knowing where we were and then saying, “Well, you didn’t tell me this,” and buying the first ticket to Nepal and disappearing.

Response: Here’s George Campbell Jr. in the top 10 of 400 college president salaries in the United States, and here are increases in administration staff. Would you like to ask the full-time faculty about their annual raises, and the part-time faculty about their benefits?



Executive Compensation at Private Colleges

Updated December 5, 2011

On Campuses, the Income Gap Widens at the Top

By Jack Stripling and Andrea Fuller

The economic divide is not confined to Wall Street and Main Street.

Within the world of private higher education, there are a handful of college presidents who earn considerably more than professors on their campuses, or gobble up a notable share of their institutions' budgetary pie, a *Chronicle* analysis has found. There are also significant pay gaps among presidents, 36 of whom earned more than \$1-million in 2009.

A typical private-college leader made 3.7 times as much as the average full professor on his or her campus in 2009, but six presidents reviewed by *The Chronicle* made more than 10 times as much as their faculty colleagues, according to national faculty-salary data and the most-recent available federal-tax filings. While most colleges spent less than \$5 on presidential pay for every \$1,000 of their budgets, 14 of the institutions *The Chronicle* reviewed spent two times that.

The question of how much is too much money for a college leader has particular resonance at a time when the national conversation is increasingly focused on the haves and the have-nots. Looking at what college leaders earn relative to their faculty counterparts and the size of their campus budgets, as *The Chronicle* has for the first time in this year's survey, helps identify outliers whose take-home pay appears disproportionately high.

Included in *The Chronicle's* overall analysis are 509 private-college presidents whose institutional budgets exceed \$50-million. Among that cohort, the median total compensation was \$385,909 for 2009, a 2.2-percent increase over 2008.


Struggling College, Well-Paid Chief

This year's highest-paid presidents include many of the usual suspects, such as the leaders of Ivy League institutions and other colleges with large endowments. But the million-dollar club also includes the presidents of a number of colleges with lesser national name recognition. Among them is the president of Mountain State University, a college based in West Virginia that has not been featured in previous *Chronicle* surveys because its budget fell below \$50-million until this year.

Charles H. Polk, who earned \$1.8-million as Mountain State's president in 2009, ranked sixth on this year's compensation list, ahead of the presidents of such places as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Swarthmore College, and Yale University. Mr. Polk's pay constituted 3.5 percent of Mountain State's budget. No other college in the survey devoted such a substantial share of its resources to a president.

The Outliers

Leaders earning the most in 2009 compared with their budget %

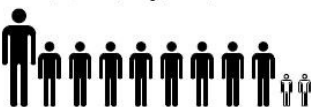
Chief executive	Percent of budget	Total compensation	College expenditure
 1. Charles H. Polk Mountain State University	3.5%	\$1,843,746	\$52.0M
 2. Frances Lucas Milliways College	2.4%	\$1,214,112	\$51.5M
 3. Kevin J. Manning Cleveland University	1.7%	\$1,493,655	\$86.8M
 4. J. Timothy Cloyd Benedict College	1.8%	\$1,095,255	\$65.4M
 4. Jack P. Varsolona Williamson University	1.8%	\$1,157,002	\$74.4M
 6. Chaffin Wright Hawaii Pacific University	1.6%	\$1,381,193	\$92.5M
 7. Nido R. Gubein High Point University	1.4%	\$1,390,813	\$96.4M
 8. Esther L. Barozone Chatham University	1.3%	\$665,097	\$52.9M
 9. Joseph J. McCowan Bellarmine University	1.2%	\$539,155	\$51.5M
 10. Gary Brahm Brandman University	1.0%	\$688,404	\$67.7M
 10. George Campbell Jr. Cooper Union	1.0%	\$668,473	\$65.5M
 10. Gary R. Cook Dallas Baptist University	1.0%	\$834,224	\$85.4M



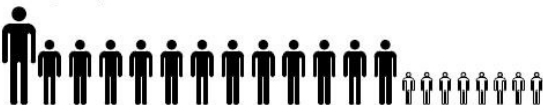
SCHOOLS
Art, Architecture, Engineering, Humanities



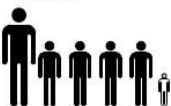
EDUCATIONAL
CUCC, AV, CURF, Design, Lubalin, Public



STUDENTS
Housing, Library, Admissions, Services



BUILDINGS
Maintenance



ADMINISTRATION
Development, Business, President's Office, Affairs



CHANGES IN STAFF
COOPER UNION 1996 - 2010

STAFF INCREASE

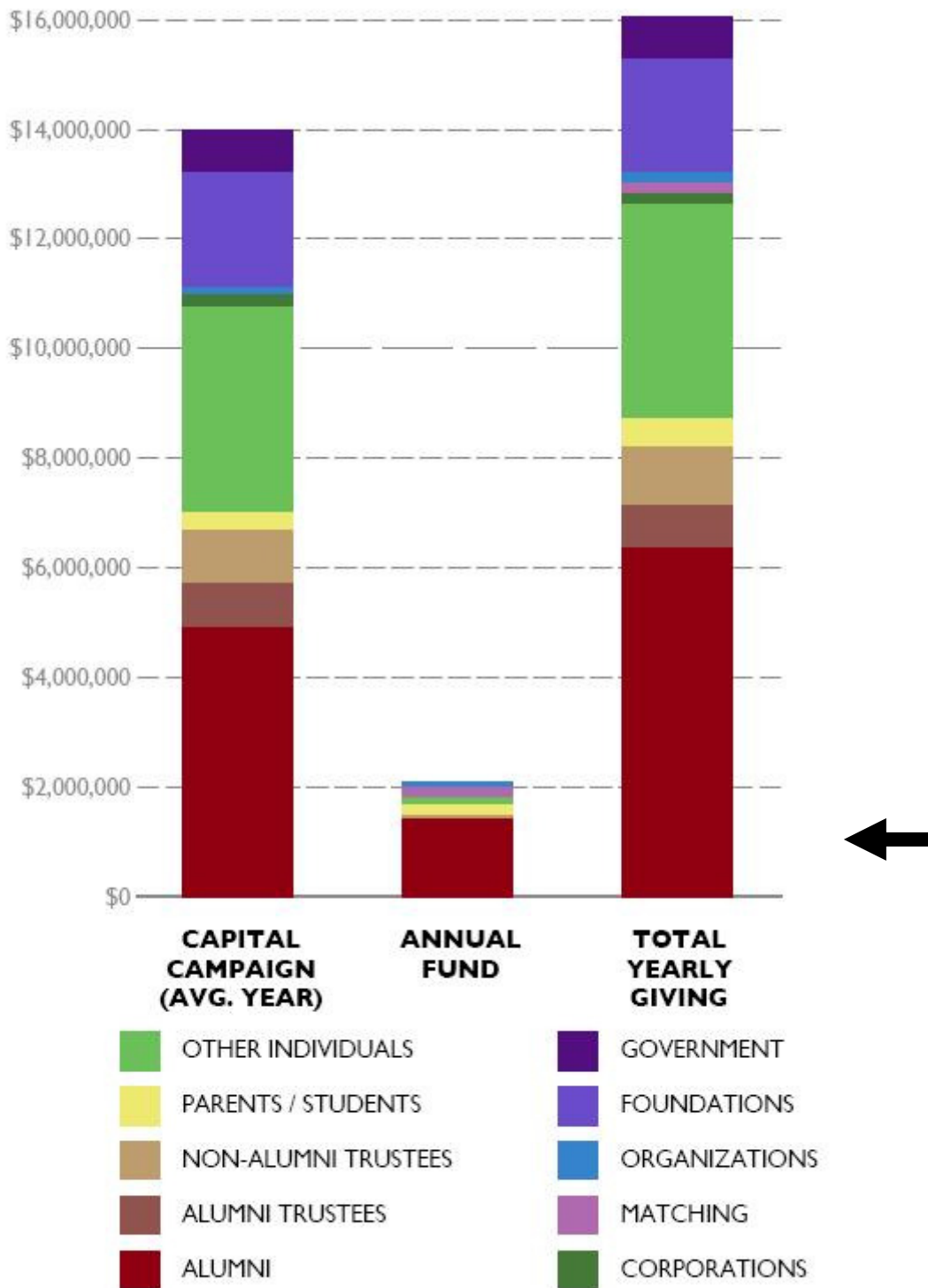


STAFF REDUCTION



Part Four: Blame the Alumni: I would blame the lackluster performance of the alumni. What efforts failed? Well, we made an investment in a lot of students that are now alumni, and only 20% of them donate back to the school so I think that's a failed investment, as far as that's concerned. There are alumni who won't give back to the school because they're annoyed that Green Camp was sold in the 70's. There are alumni who complain about a particular professor giving them a hard time on a test and they don't want to give back to Cooper Union. I mean there's a thousand reasons why people claim they don't want to give back to Cooper Union. There was one alum who said she didn't realize that the school needed money and she was going to start giving every year now. I think that's wonderful. Why don't people give back to a school that gave them a free education?

Response: At the First Community Summit on December 5, 2011, (which you attended), you heard a statement read aloud written by Marilyn Hoffner Greenberg (now of blessed memory). "From the mid 70's until 2000, Annual Fund figures reflected only contributions made specifically to the Annual Fund. Before 2000, Cooper Union was one of eight schools cited by CASE for its high level of alumni giving – somewhere between 35% to 40%. After 2000, creative fundraising stopped and resorted to simply letters, and the rate of alumni giving went down and stayed flat." Where did all of the creative fundraising go? To the Capital Campaign. (You know, the Building Fund.) If you track it year by year, the Capital Campaign only fails after 2009. You know, when you hired "professional development staff." Or maybe the slow economic recovery is to blame, no?



ANNUAL GIVING COOPER UNION

Part Five: The Shareholders: The public are the shareholders. The Board of Trustees are a group of people that are charged with protecting the trust that was set up for The Cooper Union. And the goal is to protect the finances of the school and to follow the charter as stated by Peter Cooper. Everything that the Board does is done by committees. There's no one person, really, in charge of any one particular thing. We have committees for the investments, a communications committee, a facilities committee and budget committee, a committee

for academic and student affairs, the development committee, an audit committee. Who monitors the Board of Trustees? The answer is to the Attorney General of the State of New York.

Response: Eric Schneiderman, Office of the Attorney General, The Capitol, Albany, NY 12224-0341, 1-800-771-7755, NYAG.Pressoffice@ag.ny.gov



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