

UPDATE



June 2014



Good afternoon,
I want to share some GOOD news with you.
We (the facilities department @ STCC) won the **DEPARTMENT OF THE YEAR** award this year!

We were given the award last week and the Employee Recognition and Award ceremony. We received a plaque and a department pizza party.

Nice recognition for every one's hard work!



College Will Work to Match Massachusetts Life Sciences Center
Grant of nearly \$400,000 - Seen as First Investment in New Innovation Center

President Cox, seen here on the far left, was happy to be joined by Dean Bob Cody (far right) in welcoming (L-R) State Senator Therese Murray, and Susan Windham-Bannister, Ph.D., President & CEO of the MLSC this past Monday, as they awarded nearly \$400,000 to the College for new science equipment over the next two years. This will be a major investment in the transformation of the College's life sciences laboratories that have remained

essentially as built for nearly 45 years, and will be the first step in the College's pursuit of a new Science and Technology Innovation Center, now in the early stages of development through the State's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance.

"We are extremely grateful for this significant award from the MLSC, and thank the MLSC Board for its recognition of our commitment to excellence, and in providing an outstanding student experience. This \$400,000 grant, along with the equivalent leveraged funds to be raised, will allow the College to offer our students, faculty, and community access to state-of-the-art technology that will further enliven our learning in the life sciences, while preparing for tomorrow's career opportunities," stated President Cox.

The \$395,485 grant will modernize facilities used by an average of 900-1100 students each year, including all of the students enrolled in the life sciences and STEM area degree programs, and workforce certificate programs. The estimated cost of the complete equipment upgrade is roughly \$800,000. The college is committed to seeking support from a wide variety of sources to match the MLSC grant.

A Heartwarming Experience

President Pura,

I'm a student at GCC and this past year was my first at this school. I've enjoyed all of my classes, professors, and peers, and I really value the education I'm receiving. However, during finals week something happened that stuck out to me as an example of how our school is truly a community where everyone participates.

I had a final presentation for my Green Building class with Jeremy Toal, and I had been working on it in an empty classroom when one of the custodians went by vacuuming. We recognized each other since he was often around during that class, and sometimes listened to what our class discussed weekly. He asked how my project was coming along, and was sincerely interested when I showed him my plans. We talked about some of the things he had overheard in the class and how it all tied together, and it pleased me to share a common interest with someone who I saw several times per week.

I noticed part way through my final presentation of that project, that he was standing in the doorway watching me explain my plans to my peers and my professor. His presence was supportive, and just the boost I needed during a hectic week of tests and projects. This to me summarizes my whole experience at GCC: one of support, compassion, and curiosity. I hope that all of the custodial staff know how much they are appreciated, and how much they contribute to our beautiful community.

Thank you,
Mariah Kurtz

Table Officers E-Mail Addresses

- **Kevin Hanley** (khanley@bhcc.mass.edu)
• Bunker Hill Community College - 617-228-2154
- **Carolyn Mathews** (cmathews@worchester.edu)
• Worcester State University - 508-929-8647
- **Marzi Carlopoli** (mcarlopoli@Berkshire.rr.com)
• Berkshire Community College - 413-329-4927
- **Thomasine Corbett** (Tcorbett@necc.mass.edu)
• Northern Essex Community College - 978-556-3763

SPECIAL MEETING

Tuesday, July 8th 2014

@ 1:00p.m.

WORCESTER LODGE OF ELKS #243

233 Mill Street, Worcester MA 01602

**This special meeting will be held to explain
Changing the length of terms for all Table Officers
and Trustees to three (3) years from two (2). Also the
number of Trustees from 3 to 2.**

**This meeting will be open to all members to ask and
have questions answered. We will be explaining the
reason for the change at this meeting with a vote at the
next meeting held on August 12th @ 1:00 pm
same location.**

**Please e-mail all questions to
khanley@bhcc.mass.edu**

Nominations for Council 93 Convention



*ANY MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING
WISHING TO BE NOMINATED FOR DANVERS
COUNCIL 93 CONVENTION MUST BE
NOMINATED BY CLOSE OF BUSINESS (5PM)
JUNE 25TH.*

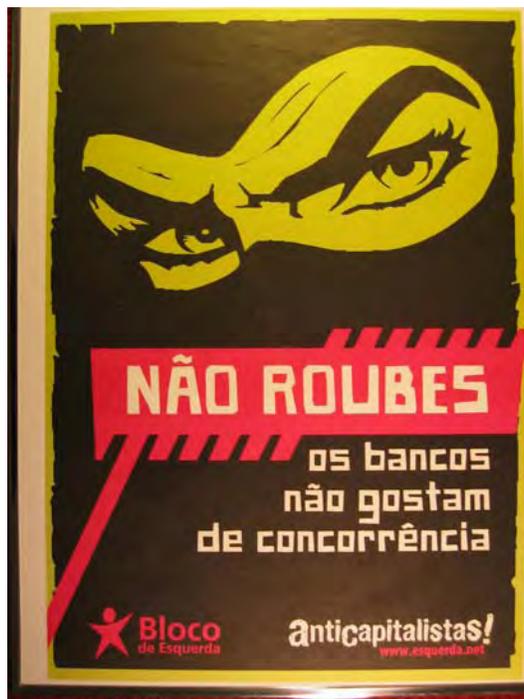
*ALL NOMINATIONS MUST BE EMAILED TO
khanley@bhcc.mass.edu*

*IF AN ELECTION IS NEEDED IT WILL BE HELD
ON CAMPUS JULY 7, 2014 on each Campus.*

SEE UNION BOARD FOR DETAILS!

*BALLOTS WILL BE COUNTED PRIOR TO THE
JULY E-BOARD
MEETING - JULY 8, 2014.*

THE 99% FIGHT BACK



An international labor poster exhibit

From the collection of
STEPHEN LEWIS

at

Fiske Public Library

110 Randall Rd.

Wrentham, Mass.

June 4 through June 30, 2014

Open Weds. Thurs. & Fri. 10:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday 1:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. Saturday 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
fully accessible. For library information call 508/384-5440

This project is supported in part by grants from:
Laborers' Union (LIUNA) Local 1249

Labor Donated

VISION PROJECT | Massachusetts Adopts Civic Standards

Massachusetts is adopting a plan to make civics part of the curriculum at state colleges. The statewide policy is the first of its kind in the United States. The new policy proposed by the Board of Higher Education encourages colleges to track civic engagement - things like understanding the countries' history, government and founding documents. Commissioner Richard Freeland thinks higher education has recently shirked its responsibility to prepare citizens.

VISION PROJECT | Mass. Board Adopts Policy to Spur Civic Education at Public Colleges

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education has adopted a policy that encourages the state's public colleges to sharpen their focus on civic learning. The board called the policy the first of its kind in the country. The state's Department of Higher Education said in a news release that the board would work with the colleges to incorporate civic education as an "expected outcome" for undergraduates, beginning in the 2014-15 academic year. A 2012 report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education called on colleges to recommit themselves to civic learning.

VISION PROJECT | Mass. Colleges Adopt Civics Education Policy

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education has adopted a policy to make civics a key component of every undergraduate student's education at all state universities and community colleges. The board said the policy announced Thursday is the first of its kind in the nation. Higher Education Commissioner Richard Freeland said civic learning is "essential if students are to meet their future responsibilities as citizens."

VISION PROJECT | Massachusetts teacher preparation programs lack diversity

The lack of racial diversity among Massachusetts teachers — a growing concern across the state — can be traced to an insufficient number of people of color enrolling in educator programs at local colleges, according to a Globe review of state data. School staffing statewide hovers around 92 percent white. Teacher preparation programs are the primary pipeline for recruiting a more diverse teaching workforce, but students of color make up just 13 percent of the 22,000 students enrolled in public and private programs ...Worcester State University is already working on that front. Its Latino Education Institute created a teaching corps program three years ago to support students already majoring in education as well as to persuade those in other majors to consider teaching. The program pays students \$1,000 a semester to work in local schools in recognition that many students are struggling to pay for college.

FY15 BUDGET | House OKs \$36.3B budget

After adding more funding for the Department of Children and Families, an anti-gang grant program, and global warming preparedness, the Massachusetts House passed a \$36.3 billion annual budget 148-2 Wednesday night, sending it to the Senate for its markup.

LEGISLATURE | More education urged for those with intellectual disabilities

On what one member described as a "paradigm shift" in how policymakers view the subject, a task force Monday recommended opening up public higher education to all students with intellectual disabilities. Rep. Thomas Sannicandro, House chair of the Task Force on Higher Education for Students with Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ID/ASD), released the task force's report at the Statehouse and predicted reforms, if adopted, could lead to both cost savings in income-support programs and improved outcomes and job opportunities for those affected.

BRISTOL CC | Whatever disabled students need, BCC ready to help

Commencement Day, May 31, will also be very special for Susan Brenner, 52, a busy mother and full-time sales tax assistant at the Acushnet Co. who attends evening classes at Bristol Community College. The New Bedford resident, who previously earned a certificate in accounting at BCC and suffers from hearing loss, says that she's missed out on several promotions at work because she lacked a degree. "I didn't have the credentials," Brenner said, adding that she was encouraged by her supervisors at work to return to school. She plans to continue her studies at UMass Dartmouth in the fall. The accommodations provided by the Office of Disability Services at BCC for Brenner include close captioning of video presentations, and having a C-Print captionist in class to type lecture notes into a laptop computer.

GREENFIELD CC | President Obama to highlight Greenfield Community College in solar energy talk

resident Barack Obama is expected to highlight Greenfield Community College's Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency program Friday when he speaks in California on solar energy and its ability to create jobs while cutting carbon emissions. "We are of course honored by President Obama's recognition of GCC's Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency program. We have long known of the quality of that program, the impact it has on the lives of our students, and so too the community," said college president Robert L. Pura in a prepared release.

NORTH SHORE CC / SALEM STATE U | Op-Ed: By Richard E. Wylie: Collaboration Strengthens Programs and Lowers Costs for Institutions of Higher Learning

In recent years there has been a loud and continuous outcry for institutions to lower costs associated with higher education — a difficult thing to do considering costs that colleges incur continue to rise in every area. Health care, utilities, energy, food service — many costs are beyond a college's control. ...We formed a partnership with North Shore InnoVentures, a non-profit technology incubator that helps early-stage companies increase their probability of success. Three North Shore colleges joined our collaboration — Gordon College, North Shore Community College, and Salem State University — to form the Life Sciences Consortium of the North Shore (LSCNS). Building on our unique strengths, each institution developed a focus — a piece of the puzzle — in the biotechnology field.

QUINSIGAMOND CC | Full STE(A)M ahead

Education nationwide has for years been acutely focused on science, technology, engineering and math. More commonly known by the acronym STEM, those areas of learning have long been seen as key in catching the US up academically to countries such as Japan. In recent years, however, there is a growing acknowledgment that something has been left behind when it comes to preparing students for the future. Critical thinking has been stressed, but many people believe creative thinking was sacrificed – put on a shelf and left to grow dusty and stale. Now, however, the cobwebs are being dusted off and a fresh new look is being given to the “A” word: arts. Don’t look now, but Worcester is right in the middle of the movement to make a five-letter word out of STEM. ...At Quinsigamond Community College (QCC), curriculum planning is being done with an eye toward more project-based learning experiences for students, according to President Gail Carberry.

MULTIPLE CAMPUSES | Springfield Technical Community College student Anthony Grandoit wins pitch contest

Anthony Grandoit, a Springfield Technical Community College student took first place at the Awards Ceremony & Banquet for the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation’s Entrepreneurship Initiative. elevator pitch competition pitching a “faster, cleaner, convenient way to keep your baby fed”. Facing a crowd of more than 450 attendees,. Grandoit convinced a panel of bank judges that his pitch for Baby Keurig was the best. Mike Mullen from UMass Amherst took second place for his business concept Kloudbook, a mobile app to keep track of all of your contact information. Finally, Scott Abdow, a student at Greenfield Community College, took third place with Game On!, an event-based entertainment center for card and board gamers.

BRISTOL CC | Editorial: A jump start on college

The dual enrollment program at Fall River’s B.M.C. Durfee High School, which allows students to earn college credits while they’re in high school, is a success story. There are currently 54 students taking more than 50 college-level dual enrollment classes from Bristol Community College. These students are experiencing high success rates and getting accepted into competitive four-year colleges. They’re also saving on college tuition and fees and getting ahead on the course work needed to earn their college degrees.

WESTFIELD STATE U | Westfield State U. agog over new Google technology

It was a futuristic sight, as about a dozen students, faculty, and community members gathered around a cluster of screens on the second floor of the Ely Library at Westfield State University late last month to behold a wonder of modern technology. The wonder that lay before them, projected onto seven screens standing seven feet tall, is Liquid Galaxy, a revolutionary product developed by Google which utilizes the company’s Google Earth component to take users almost anywhere in seconds, on Earth or elsewhere.

MASS MARITIME | MMA cadets donate \$10K from sea term to wounded warrior project

They could have spent the money in Miami, in Curacao, in Colombia or another port along their sea term voyage. Instead, Massachusetts Maritime Academy cadets gave \$10,330 of money they collected in donations, raffles and auctions in support of wounded veterans.

BRISTOL CC | Bristol Community College honor students propose solutions to poverty in Greater Fall River

Poverty is “evidence of a problem — not the problem.” And to be poor “does not mean to be worthless.” Those were some statements made by 13 Bristol Community College honors students, part of a new “President’s Honors Panel,” who gave a presentation on campus on Wednesday, reporting their findings after looking at poverty on a local level and on a wider scale, and then determining how their school could become a part of the solution.

ROXBURY CC | RCC’s Reggie Lewis Center set for renovation

The Reggie Lewis Center at Roxbury Community College (RCC) has been slated for a \$4 million facelift that will include major building repairs, according to a press release from the Governor’s Office. Keith McDermott, director of the Reggie Lewis Center, said the renovation will be done in phases, the most important being the resurfacing of the indoor track. He said that phase will take four to six weeks and will be done between September and October, finishing in time for the indoor track season, which starts in November.

MCLA | MCLA walk-in care center opens to the public

Five weeks after North Adams Regional Hospital closed, shutting down access to emergency care in Northern Berkshire, Berkshire Medical Center and MCLA have opened a walk-in care clinic. And while patients with true emergencies still will have to travel to hospitals in Pittsfield or Bennington, Vt., the BMC Walk-In Care Center will provide general non-emergency health care services.

BERKSHIRE CC | Graduates of BCC’s Project Reach overcome social challenges

Culinary arts training is a hallmark of Berkshire Community College’s Project Reach. But over the past three years, the program also has helped students with significant learning and social challenges to secure jobs, develop a firm handshake and even muster up the confidence to ask a peer out on a date. This week, the academic, social and kitchen successes of Project Reach were celebrated during a graduation luncheon held at the college.

MCLA | Mass. College of Liberal Arts To Upgrade Performance Venue With \$30K Grant

MassDevelopment and the Massachusetts Cultural Council have provided a \$30,000 grant to Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) in North Adams. The college is using grant funds to determine renovation and upgrade options at the MCLA Church Street Center, its main public performance venue. MCLA hopes to make the center a more attractive, comfortable and welcoming venue, as well as more adaptable and functional. The layout, staging, lighting, windows, sound, projection, acoustics and HVAC systems “fall short of the needs of a modern performance center,” according to a press release.

FRAMINGHAM STATE U / QUINSIGAMOND CC | Marlborough school, business officials celebrate grant

Public school officials celebrated Tuesday night with representatives from local colleges and companies after the recent announcement that Marlborough will receive a \$1.8 million federal grant to enhance science, technology, engineering and math offerings and better prepare students for the workplace. ...The program being rolled out in the three schools is dubbed the Massachusetts Advanced Pathways Program, or MAPP for short. The program will offer students the chance to get some real world experience via district partnerships with local companies, as well as college credit through partnerships with Quinsigamond Community College and Framingham State University.

HOLYOKE CC / WESTFIELD STATE U | Westfield State University and Holyoke Community College partnering to create 4-year online degree program

Westfield State University and Holyoke Community College are partnering to create a new four-year online degree program for students, who will be able to transfer from HCC's online associate-degree program to WSU's online bachelor's program.

CAPE COD CC | Work is play at Lego spectacle

Thirty-eight children had an hour and 600 Lego blocks to build their dream homes Sunday afternoon at the Lego Home-Building contest at Cape Cod Community College. ...The contest, put on by the museum and the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Cape Cod, aimed to get children involved in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), said association executive officer Chris Duren. "I don't think people realize they use STEM every day," she said.

FITCHBURG STATE U / WORCESTER STATE U | Colleges see rebound in endowments

Endowments at Central Massachusetts colleges have bounced back from the depths of the recession, but schools are still working to make up lost ground. A booming stock market and low interest rates helped local endowments grow anywhere from 6.6 percent at Fitchburg State University to 19 percent at Worcester State University during the 2013 fiscal year, which ended June 30 of last year, according to data from the National Association of Colleges and University Business Officers (NACUBO). But endowments at the College of the Holy Cross and Worcester Polytechnic Institute are still lagging at least \$15 million behind pre-recession levels. "Endowments have been treading water," said Ken Redd, NACUBO's director of research and policy analysis. "Schools are still trying to recover." At places like Worcester State and Assumption College, though, endowments hit all-time highs, resulting in better programs and student support.

CAPE COD CC | An education in community at college food pantry

For Kimberly Monteiro, it's the third word in the name of her school that's most important — Cape Cod Community College. Her commitment to the school community is why the 34-year-old South Yarmouth resident spends so much time in a tiny office on the bottom floor of the college's Life Fitness Center. Monteiro's longtime interest in theater — which she is studying at the college — is her passion, second only to her two children. But, in between and after classes, her desire to help people drives her to volunteer at the school's food pantry. Yes, food pantry. Despite the college's relatively inexpensive tuition, for some students trying to better their lives through education, keeping up with basic necessities can be a real struggle

MIDDLESEX CC | MCC increases STEM enrollment

Middlesex Community College has increased enrollment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math — or STEM — programs of study by nearly 10 percent for the spring semester. And STEM enrollment has increased by 84 percent over the last five years. "The increase in enrollment reflects what's happening in the workplace," said Kathleen Sweeney, dean of Health and STEM. "There are more jobs in STEM fields, and people are becoming more aware of that and more interested."

BRIDGEWATER STATE U | Bridgewater State program bridges educational gap

College was not always on Wyllie Junior Da Veiga Semedo Monteiro's radar. But that changed in eighth grade when he flew a small plane as part of the Bridge program at Bridgewater State University. ...The program is part of the legacy of Dana Mohler-Faria, BSU's president who will leave his post at the end of the next school year. Mohler-Faria said that during Bridge, students live on campus for two weeks, where they take classes from both local school teachers and the university's faculty. Students also go on field trips to baseball games, museums and other universities.

MCLA | MountainOne sets up MCLA scholarship for students of former NARH workers

MountainOne has donated \$25,000 to MCLA to establish a scholarship fund for students in families of workers who lost income when North Adams Regional Hospital was closed. According to Kelli Kozak, community development officer at North Adams-based bank MountainOne Financial, bank officers were seeking an opportunity to help the newly unemployed hospital employee community.

MCLA | MCLA Wellness Center Will Become 'Urgent Care' Center

The MCLA campus wellness center will become a temporary urgent care center to accommodate the public's medical needs while they wait for emergency services to return. Berkshire Health Systems, which is in talks to acquire the assets of the former Northern Berkshire Healthcare, will staff extended hours at the center. Gov. Deval Patrick and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts President Mary Grant announced the proposal at the MountainOne Student Wellness Center on Church Street during a press conference Friday evening.

HIGHER ED TRENDS | How Arne Duncan Is Undercutting Senate Democrats On Student Loan Reforms

The Department of Education is stonewalling Democratic lawmakers' efforts to protect student borrowers from sky-high interest rates and dishonest loan practices, driving a wedge between Senate Democrats and the Obama administration over economic policy in an election year. This week, two dozen Democratic senators led by Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts introduced a bill that would enable millions of borrowers to refinance expensive student loans at significantly lower interest rates, allowing many to save thousands of dollars a year.

HIGHER ED TRENDS | Veterans' new battle: Getting credit for what they already know

When Benny Lloyd enrolled in nursing school at the University of South Florida, the Navy veteran brought with him the experience of having been a search-and-rescue swimmer, trained to provide life-saving medical care in some of the most challenging situations. "Looking at the kids next to me, I knew I was going to smoke these kids," said Lloyd, who was 35 at the time. "I had a competitive advantage." But while he may have had a head start over 18-year-old classmates right out of high school, Lloyd got no academic credit for it.

HIGHER ED TRENDS | Sen. Warren Introduces Bill On Student Debt

U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts wants the next debate in Congress on student loans to focus on helping borrowers refinance their debt. Sen. Warren is introducing a bill that would open the door for potentially millions of recipients of federal loans to refinance at the same rate current recipients can get. Undergraduates, for example, qualify for loan at a 3.86 percentage rate.

HIGHER ED TRENDS | Tough Lessons On Debt For College Students

This Spring, Tell Me More and Morning Edition have helped listeners navigate the higher education money maze. David Greene and Michel Martin do a wrap of the "Paying for College" series.

HIGHER ED TRENDS | Student engagement, the latest buzzword

Higher education experiences fads, some of which wane unlamented. Of late, one of the most ubiquitous buzzwords is "student engagement". From funding councils, the Quality Assurance Agency and the National Union of Students to institutions and teaching development units, everyone is pressing the "student engagement" button. However, a bit like the term "student-centred learning", student engagement is now used to refer to so many different things that it is difficult to keep track of what people are actually talking about.

HIGHER ED TRENDS | Close the skills gap: Businesses must help colleges train workers for future needs

Unemployment isn't just about folks who can't find jobs; it includes businesses that can't find workers. A recent report by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education points out that more than two-thirds of the state's employers are having a hard time finding skilled employees. Indeed, at a recent editorial board meeting at the Times, U.S. Rep. William Keating said the German ambassador told him that Germany is willing to invest more than \$1 trillion in the U.S. economy, but German companies cannot find enough skilled workers for the jobs they want to create in America.

HIGHER ED TRENDS | Poll: Skills Gap May be to Blame for Difficult Job Search

The debate in this country about the value of a college degree often centers around job preparation. A new poll out Tuesday from Northeastern University finds business leaders think few recent graduates have the skills to be good workers.

The Department of Education is stonewalling Democratic lawmakers' efforts to protect student borrowers from sky-high interest rates and dishonest loan practices, driving a wedge between Senate Democrats and the Obama administration over economic policy in an election year.

This week, two dozen Democratic senators led by Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts introduced a bill that would enable millions of borrowers to refinance expensive student loans at significantly lower interest rates, allowing many to save thousands of dollars a year. The proposal is a central element of Senate Democrats' election-year "fair shot" agenda, and enjoys broad support from the party's leadership. Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) expects to bring the legislation to a vote after Memorial Day, forcing Republicans to take an unpopular position if they wish to block the bill.

But it's not just the Republicans who pose an obstacle. Over the past year, Education Department officials have refused to share critical information with legislators and outside supporters that could have helped shape the legislation. Members of Congress said they have been denied access to information that would determine how many borrowers could benefit from refinancing programs, how much money individual borrowers could save, and the impact of the legislation on the federal budget deficit.

Instead, department officials have issued vague warnings to refinancing advocates that the cost could run into the hundreds of billions of dollars and force the Education Department — which generates significant profit from student loans — to cut Pell Grants to low-income students. The White House has not taken a position on the bill.

The standoff comes as student advocates grow increasingly frustrated with the Education Department and its leader, Arne Duncan, which they see as key impediments to easing the debt burden on the 40 million Americans who now hold a collective \$1.3 trillion in student loans. It also accompanies escalating tensions between the Obama administration and Senate Democrats over Sallie Mae, the company that contracts with the Education Department to collect loan payments and manage millions of borrower accounts. Sallie Mae is under investigation by nearly a dozen federal and state authorities seeking to determine whether its practices are anti-borrower. Some student advocates, teachers unions and state colleges have demanded that the Education Department suspend the company's contract.

The Huffington Post last month reported that the student debt giant allegedly broke the law by cheating active-duty troops on their federal student loans. Federal investigators discovered the evidence as late as August last year, two months before the Education Department told the company it intended to renew its lucrative contract. The Education Department paid the company \$109 million last year to service student loans, according to Sallie Mae's annual report.

Leading Democratic senators, including Warren, Tom Harkin of Iowa, Patty Murray of Washington, and Sherrod Brown of Ohio, have since expressed outrage at the allegations and have urged the Education Department to hold Sallie Mae accountable.

“What really gets me throughout this whole system is how little accountability there is, and Sallie Mae is a great example,” Warren told HuffPost Live on Monday. “We already have these documented examples of Sallie Mae not following the rules ... and yet what happens? Sallie Mae gets very profitable contracts renewed? That just seems fundamentally wrong to me.”

The company, which recently split into two entities — Sallie Mae, a bank, and Navient, a loan servicer and debt collector — declined to comment. John Remondi, who was Sallie Mae’s chief executive before the split and now serves as Navient’s CEO, told investors on April 17 that the company is “100 percent committed to providing the full benefits and responsive service to those who serve our country in the armed forces.” The company is in settlement discussions with federal authorities to resolve the allegations.

While some Senate Democrats said they expect the Education Department to take a tough stance, the department is unlikely to terminate Navient’s contract. Top department officials, according to insiders, are more concerned about a potential logistical nightmare if the government were to terminate Sallie Mae’s contract and transfer borrowers’ loans to other companies than they are about alleged wrongdoing.

In March, James Runcie, a top Education Department official, told the Senate that the department feared the potential “dislocation” borrowers would face if Sallie Mae’s loans were shifted to a new batch of companies.

“It sounds like your answer, Mr. Runcie, was that they’re too big to fail,” Harkin interjected.

Dorie Nolt, Education Department spokeswoman, declined to address questions about the department’s stance on student loan refinancing or Sallie Mae, except to say that the department “will determine the most appropriate course of action.”

“The department and Secretary Duncan believe it is extremely important that servicers are held to high standards, and of the more than 40 million borrowers with outstanding student loan debt, the vast majority have not expressed any concerns about servicers,” Nolt said in a written statement. “The Secretary is committed to helping keep college affordable and to ensuring that student borrowers are able to manage their debt.” She pointed to the Obama administration’s efforts to expand existing income-linked repayment plans and various incentive programs encouraging schools to reduce the cost of college.

Lawmakers and student advocates said they are increasingly doubtful that the Education Department will hold Sallie Mae accountable. They point to the Education Department’s slow-walking of a 2009 recommendation from its internal watchdog that it recoup more than \$22 million in allegedly improper payments to Sallie Mae. The Huffington Post highlighted the delay in December.

“We continue to negotiate with Sallie Mae to settle the issues raised in this audit,” Nolt said.

On Tuesday, Senate Budget Committee Chairman Patty Murray (D-Wash.) said she was “deeply troubled” by allegations that Sallie Mae had illegally overcharged soldiers, and sharply questioned Duncan over his handling of the controversy.

“The Department of Education spends millions to contract with Sallie Mae,” Murray said. “The Department has not yet levied any fines against the company, and last fall indicated that it will renew Sallie Mae’s contract this year, despite these allegations. Is that still the plan?”

Duncan responded that the department is evaluating its options.

“I’ve never seen this level of inattention to service delivery,” said Barmak Nassirian, a longtime higher education policy expert who now oversees federal relations and policy analysis for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. “Operationally, and I hate to admit this, the department is at the mercy of Sallie Mae and its other contractors. It’s as if the hired help have taken over the place and are calling the shots in their own interest.”

Warren has said the department risks becoming a “lapdog” as a result of its lackluster oversight. Deanne Loonin, an attorney with the National Consumer Law Center, has said that the growing number of government investigations and consumer complaints against Sallie Mae show that “government supervision has been lax at best.”

The Education Department’s efforts stand in contrast to other federal agencies concerned about student debt.

Federal regulators reckon that the quality of loan servicing — the interaction between borrowers and companies that process their monthly loan payments — often determines whether a borrower defaults. And as borrowers take more time to repay their student loans, concerns are mounting among regulators that inadequate servicing may be preventing borrowers from making good on their debts.

Fifty-four percent of borrowers from four-year schools who started paying off their loans from 1993 to 2002 had paid off their debts within 10 years. This share has since dropped to 44 percent for similar borrowers who began repaying their debts in 2002, according to the Education Department.

The amount of outstanding student debt worries the Treasury Department, top financiers and federal regulators overseeing the nation’s financial markets. Student debt has doubled since 2007, according to the Federal Reserve, and the growth is fueling concerns that monthly student loan payments threaten to choke off U.S. economic growth as student debt forces households to delay home and auto purchases, saving for retirement and limit other forms of borrowing, investment and consumption.

Compounding those fears, federal officials outside the Education Department and financial industry executives also worry about the federal government’s capacity to oversee the student loans program. Deputy Treasury Secretary Sarah Bloom Raskin last month challenged the Education Department and its servicers over how they handle borrowers struggling with student debt.

The Financial Stability Oversight Council echoed those concerns Wednesday in its annual report on risks to the financial system.

Singling out the fact that federal student loans feature flexible repayment plans and loan modifications, the nation’s top financial experts said that “high student-debt burdens may dampen consumption and could impact household demand for housing purchases in coming years, as heavily indebted and delinquent borrowers may be less able to access mortgage credit.”

Last week, Ruth Porat, Morgan Stanley chief financial officer, said student loans were among the top risks she sees to the U.S.

financial system. “We’re assuming zero default risk,” she said, referencing the fact that the U.S. government can chase debtors who default on federal student loans until death by garnishing their wages, tax refunds and Social Security payments.

“The question is, ‘Is this the next Fannie-Freddie?’” Porat asked, calling attention to the risk that the government’s student loans program may need to be bailed out. “Will we as a country really garnish Social Security when kids went to school assuming they were following the American dream?”

Thank You!

Again

AFSCME - Local 1067

Members worked extra hard to prepared for the students to have a memorable day on their day of graduation.

Colleges all had commencement, and not one administrator thanked our folks for the hard work they do all year long.



Well



We - Thank You!

The Students - Thank You!

And

The Parents - Thank You!