

ORANGE BOWL | SPORTS, B7

LUCK SKILLFUL IN CARDINAL'S ROUT

HEISMAN RUNNER-UP THROWS 4 TDS AS STANFORD ROLLS



WATSONVILLE CRIME | EXTRA, B1

FAMILY, FRIENDS MOURN VICTIM

MAN STABBED TO DEATH HAD
DROPPED OUT OF GANG, POLICE SAY

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Cabrillo students passing up financial aid

Applications for grants, loans at community colleges lag behind four-year counterparts

By **TOVIN LAPAN**

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APTOS — At the start of the 2010 fall semester Cabrillo College implemented a new imaging system to cut down on the paperwork for the strained financial aid office, and the college

is thinking of more new ways to reach out to students who are passing up both grants and loans.

Last summer the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center issued a report showing community college students lag far behind their counterparts at four-year institutions in apply-

ing for financial aid.

Not only are students not filling out the paperwork to be eligible for loans, but they are also passing up opportunities for funds such as federal Pell Grants, which are not paid back.

SEE **CABRILLO** ON **A2**

CABRILLO

Continued from **A1**

The study found that, nationwide, 58 percent of students eligible for Pell Grants who attended community colleges either full time or part time applied for federal financial aid, compared with 77 percent of students at four-year public institutions who are eligible for Pell Grants.

The report specifically pointed to initiatives in California — such as Puente, which places counselors in both high schools and colleges to provide extensive academic, personal and financial aid counseling, and I Can Afford College, which set aside money from the community college budget to increase awareness about financial aid opportunities and hire additional staff — as steps in the right direction. Yet, Cabrillo Vice President of Student Services Dennis Bailey-Fougner says it has not been enough.

According to data from 2007 to 2008, only 26 percent of Cabrillo students applied for financial aid, a figure that Bailey-Fougner calls “horrible.”

“Puente only serves 30 students [at Cabrillo], and, to be honest, it doesn’t affect enough students to make a difference,” he said. “We have the I Can Afford College project. ... We have a person in financial aid who specifically does in-reach and outreach. He goes to local high schools and also does about 20 different workshops on campus. At the end of the day, we don’t have enough students who apply.”

Computer-based applications have made the Free Application for Federal Student Aid easier to complete, yet some students still struggle with the process. At Cabrillo, from 2007 to 2008, 6,200 students applied for the state-sponsored Board of Governors fee waiver that covers the full amount of enrollment fees, but only 2,500 applied for Pell Grants.

“When I first started at

AT A GLANCE

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

All the forms and information needed to apply for financial aid can be found online. Here are some useful websites:

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL AID: www.fafsa.ed.gov

CABRILLO FINANCIAL AID DEPARTMENT: www.cabrillo.edu/services/finaid

UC SANTA CRUZ FINANCIAL AID DEPARTMENT: financialaid.ucsc.edu

Cabrillo I didn’t understand what BOG (fee waiver) was,” said second-year student Elizabeth Habara. “I started going through the process, and it’s a lot of work. Now, I always get the BOG waiver, but I have not been able to get my FAFSA through. The financial aid office has limited hours due to budget cuts, and when they are open there is a mile-long

wait out two different doors just to see them.”

Bailey-Fougner admits the office is operating at capacity, which is one reason administrators sought to reduce paperwork earlier in the school year by implementing the imaging system that allows students to scan documents and submit them online.

He is considering starting up a program on the Aptos campus that he also implemented while working at Portland Community College in Oregon. The campus would open on a Saturday or Sunday so students could come in and fill out their FAFSA applications with the aid of advisers, no matter where they were planning on going to college.

“Students are leaving money on the table,” he said. “No matter people’s perception of aid, they should apply. It’s a free process, and it’s maybe 15 to 20 minutes of your time to possibly get free money. If you don’t get a grant, and only a loan, you can choose not to take the loan.”