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A blue banner with a white gradient at the bottom. On the left, the text "Ask a higher education professional" is written in white. In the center, three BlackBerry smartphones are shown in a row, each displaying a different screen. On the right, the BlackBerry logo and the word "BlackBerry" are displayed in white.

Ask a higher education professional



Feb. 25

## Quick Takes: Adjunct Dismissal Questioned, Indiana Buyouts, Temple U. Suspends 4 for Possible Anti-Semitic Attack, Obama on Books, Honor for Ex-Internees, Brown Adds Aid, Win for Upward Bound, Apps Up in New Orleans, 'Unplugged' Frost, Pay to Play in NJ?

- The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education is taking up the case of June Sheldon, who lost her job teaching science courses at San Jose City College after a student complained about Sheldon's discussion, in a class on heredity, of the causes of homosexuality. Sheldon was talking about the "nature vs. nurture" debate with regard to why some people are gay, and students complained that her comments suggested that she did not believe anyone could be born a lesbian, and that the way she endorsed the "nurture" side of the debate was offensive. [FIRE's Web site](#) details the case, and provides many of the relevant documents, and FIRE officials noted that Sheldon disputes the way her statements were described by college officials, and maintains that she was describing arguments on both sides of the debate. FIRE's complaint charges that Sheldon is losing her teaching position in punishment for expressing controversial views that were appropriate for the class topic, and in violation of due process rights. Michael Burke, the president of San Jose City College, noted that Sheldon was an "at will" employee and said she had been granted more rights of review than her contract required. He said she was removed from teaching following an investigation that raised questions about what she was telling her students, and that the process was consistent with college guidelines.
- It pays to *not* work at Indiana University. After much negotiation, Kelvin Sampson — facing charges that he had violated National Collegiate Athletic Association rules — agreed to accept \$750,000 to quit Friday as the Hoosiers' head men's basketball coach. An investigation in [The Indianapolis Star](#) found that since 2000, Indiana has agreed to pay more than \$4 million to coaches and athletic administrators after they quit. One comparison in the article: The funds for Sampson's buyout would cover tuition for 95 Indiana students this year.
- Temple University has suspended four students who are under investigation for allegedly assaulting two non-students while using anti-Semitic language, [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reported. The incident took place outside the former house of a Jewish fraternity, and started when the Temple students allegedly

asked the two men, who had left a nearby restaurant, if they were fraternity members. Reports said that the attack started when the men answered that they were not members. Ann Weaver Hart, Temple's president, said in an e-mail that "hate crimes will not be tolerated by Temple University."

- If Barack Obama is elected president, students upset about textbook prices may have an ally. While he hasn't proposed any legislation on the topic, he used an appearance Friday at the University of Texas-Pan American to criticize the way professors benefit from writing expensive texts. The [Chicago Tribune](#) quoted him as saying: "Books are a big scam. I taught law at the University of Chicago for 10 years, and one of the biggest scams is law professors write their own textbooks and then assign it to their students. They make a mint. It's a huge racket. [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported that in a discussion in which Obama reiterated his criticism of private student loans, he also urged students to be careful about their own spending. "Just be careful about those credit cards, all right? Don't eat out as much," the *Journal* quoted him saying.
- The University of Washington plans to award honorary bachelor's degrees to up to 440 former students who were forced into internment camps during World War II because of their Japanese ancestry, [The Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#) reported. It is unclear how many of the former students are still alive. Officials credited a two-part series in *Columns*, the university's alumni magazine, with drawing attention to these former students, leading for the push to honor them. The articles may be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- Brown University has become the latest elite university to announce a new financial aid policy, designed to replace loans with grants. [Brown's shift](#), announced Saturday, will eliminate loans from the aid packages for students from families with incomes under \$100,000 — while also eliminating contributions of any sort from families with incomes less than \$60,000. In a related announcement, the university said that [its endowment payout rate](#) will increase to 5.89 percent, up from 5.5 percent.
- Faced with significant Congressional opposition, the U.S. Education Department has formally abandoned [a controversial system for evaluating the performance](#) of the federal Upward Bound program, department officials announced in [a letter to recipients](#). Under the system, announced in September 2006, of grants from the program, the department began requiring officials who run campus Upward Bound chapters to recruit at least twice as many students as they can serve and use half of the recruited students as a control group against which to compare the performance of those actually admitted into the program, which helps needy middle and high school students prepare for college. Department officials said the approach would inject a level of scientific rigor into the evaluation process, while Upward Bound officials balked that the setup would turn those not chosen into "guinea pigs." In several recent bills, Congress took steps to bar the department from using any of its funds to carry out the evaluation system, and department officials said in their letter last week that they had "concluded it would be best to terminate the evaluation and to engage stakeholders, including Congress, in discussions about a new evaluation that would be responsive to our collective needs and concerns." Arnold L. Mitchem, president of the Council for Opportunity in Education, which lobbies on behalf of Upward Bound and the other federal TRIO programs, said its officials were "greatly relieved that this ill-advised evaluation is finally behind us," and that the methodology "harmed individual low-income students (who were first aggressively recruited and then denied Upward Bound services) and reduced access by leaving program slots unfilled.... We support Upward Bound evaluation that builds on program effectiveness and improves services to students."
- New Orleans colleges are reporting a surge in applications, with Katrina-related fears apparently diminishing, [The Times-Picayune](#) reported. Compared to last year, applications are up nearly 100 percent at Tulane University, 85 percent at the University of New Orleans, 43 percent at Our Lady of Holy Cross College, 28 percent at Xavier University, and 24 percent at Loyola University. Officials told the newspaper that they are seeing a significant decline in "the mama factor," the term used by Xavier President Norman Francis to describe the challenge of parents who post-Katrina discouraged their children from considering New Orleans institutions.
- Off-the-record discussions between Robert Frost and Dartmouth College students 60 years ago may provide new insights into the poet, as transcripts are about to be published, the [Associated Press](#) reported. The sessions were recorded on reel-to-reel tapes and are becoming public because of the work of an editor at the Poetry Foundation who came across them while an undergraduate at Dartmouth. The first transcript will be published this month in the journal *Literary Imagination*, whose editor described the conversations

as “Frost unplugged.”

- The lobbyist who was helping the University of Medicine and Dentistry seek millions of dollars in federal support for a research complex sent e-mail messages to university officials outlining the importance of their attending fund-raising events for two members of Congress who were helping the effort, [The Bergen County Record](#) reported.

— [Scott Jaschik](#) and [Doug Lederman](#)

*The original story and user comments can be viewed online at <http://insidehighered.com/news/2008/02/25/qt>.*

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