

## 'We seem to be fighting the federal government,' two-year college chancellor says (video)

What gives **Mark Heinrich, chancellor of Alabama's two-year college system**, heartburn?

He listed a few of the items that give him heartburn as he looks toward the future this week while addressing the Alabama Community College Association. Among the state's shrinking workforce and its tendency to produce graduates who lack certain soft skills, Heinrich said this week the federal government's tendency to reward those who don't pursue a career also gives him heartburn.

**"We seem to be fighting the federal government when an individual can make more money staying at home, watching Days of Your Lives (sic.) rather than getting involved in a training program,"** he said.

**With 6 million young folks between the ages of 16-24 not in school or working, it is obvious that many are using programs meant to help the needy to support their unproductive lifestyle. Folks can have whatever lifestyle they want...as long as someone else is not required to pay for it. This is the very essence of principles of personal responsibility. Our job is to convey these principles to our students in order to empower them with the belief and understanding that their success is directly related to their efforts, knowing that these efforts may need to be much more for those who have not had the privilege of practicing this behavior earlier in life. What we cannot allow is a victim or entitlement mentality (opposite of personal responsibility) that gives them an excuse not to accept responsibility for their actions/choices. Our focus for this next term will be training faculty on how to effectively teach these 'life skills' (personal responsibility & critical thinking) with their content, something that is also being addressed nationally.**

See video of Heinrich's address below: ...

[http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/11/we\\_seem\\_to\\_be\\_fighting\\_the\\_fed.html](http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/11/we_seem_to_be_fighting_the_fed.html)

## **STARS: An Alabama higher education success story is in peril (Opinion from John Schmidt and Mark Heinrich)**

Nearly 20 years ago, a team of Alabama legislators, university officials and two-year college leaders collaborated to form a star in the academic arena. This program, called STARS for Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System, is largely taken for granted, despite having saved Alabama college students nearly \$1 billion. Today, it is under-funded and in peril of collapsing.

**If STARS fails, students in Alabama will no longer be assured they will receive credit for classes they take prior to transferring, or they may have to duplicate unneeded classes, despite considerable expense. To remain healthy, STARS requires an infusion of legislative financial support and a renewed spirit of commitment by the team who created a program that has become a model for other states.**

Before STARS, two-year college students in Alabama who wanted a university degree navigated in a virtual minefield of costly duplication and academic inefficiency. For example, standard English, math and biology courses taught at the two-year level were not accepted by most universities, resulting in students having to pay for costly credit hours to retake courses. If we suffer a repeat of this due to the collapse of STARS, the cost to Alabama college students will be steep. ...

[http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2013/11/stars\\_an\\_alabama\\_higher\\_educat.html](http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2013/11/stars_an_alabama_higher_educat.html)

Related article: An Ala. higher ed success story in danger

<http://www.ccdaily.com/Pages/Funding/An-Alabama-higher-ed-success-story-in-danger.aspx>

### **State superintendent proclaims poverty the biggest challenge to public education (video)**

Alabama's public schools served 95 million lunches last year, and 60 percent of them were free due to the child's low-income status.

That's the statistic State Superintendent Tommy Bice called upon this week to demonstrate why he was proclaiming **poverty the biggest obstacle to public education**. *It is important to remember that \$\$ does not make one more educated, but the presence of responsible parents (just ask Dr. Ben Carson) who value the **dignity of work** and the **value of education** have the largest impact on children's educational success.*

*"Poverty without exception is our biggest challenge, because children who come to school without having any sort of experience with reading, with letters or books or numbers are already behind when they enter kindergarten," he said.*

The remark, seen in the video below, came Tuesday in an address to the Alabama Community College Association. ...

[http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/11/state\\_superintendent\\_proclaims.html](http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/11/state_superintendent_proclaims.html)

### **Do football championships boost academic quality? See what Auburn officials have to say (chart)**

Think a winning football team doesn't matter to collegiate academics?

*Officials at Auburn University say they have detected a correlation between winning football seasons and the number of applications they get the following fall.*

For example, in the fall of 2011, the year after Auburn's meteoric rise to snatch the national title after an 8-5 season the year before, applications to Auburn jumped 16 percent, according to data maintained by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. "We attributed some of that increase to the tremendous nationwide publicity as well as increased recruitment efforts both on and off campus," said Cindy Singley, director of university recruitment. ...

[http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/11/do\\_football\\_championships\\_equa.html](http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/11/do_football_championships_equa.html)

### **Alabama education employees could face higher premiums, co-pays to close \$220 million insurance shortfall**

Alabama's health insurance program for public education employees faces a \$220 million shortfall for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1, 2014, officials said Monday. Employees could face higher premiums and co-pays in some cases because the Legislature is not expected to be able to fully close the gap.

Funding that has been essentially flat for seven years and mandates of the Affordable Care Act are factors in the shortfall, officials told the Public Education Employees' Health Insurance Board of Control. Rising medical costs and prescription drug costs are also factors, as well as an increase in the number of retirees and dependents covered under the plan relative to the number of active employees.

Retirement Systems of Alabama officials presented the board ideas for changes to PEEHIP that could help reduce the deficit, but did not ask the board to take action on most of the ideas. ...

[http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/12/alabama\\_education\\_employees\\_co.html](http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/12/alabama_education_employees_co.html)

### **Demand for health care training continues to grow**

As health care providers, patients and employers adjust to national health care law changes, which promise to extend medical coverage to 30 million previously uninsured Americans, community colleges are gearing up to keep pace with **rising economic and societal demands for medical and allied health professionals.**

Even before the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable (**really??**) Care Act, the health care industry accounted for nearly 19 percent of all spending in the nation's economy, and 13 percent of all jobs. Nurses, doctors and allied and support staff account for two-thirds of workers in this sector—and community colleges train more than half of the entire health care workforce.

**By 2020, there will be 1.2 million job openings for registered nurses (RNs), including 470,000 openings for RNs with associate degrees. There will be 370,000 job openings for licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and licensed vocational nurses (LVNs)—134,000 of which will be for LPNs and LVNs with associate degrees.** Other categories include dental hygienists (105,000 projected jobs, including 51,000 for those with associate degrees), **emergency medical technicians and paramedics (121,000 projected jobs, including 32,000 for those with associate degrees),** and pharmacy technicians (166,000 projected jobs, including 34,000 for those with associate degrees). ...

<http://www.ccdaily.com/Pages/Workforce-Development/Demand-for-health-care-training-continues-to-grow.aspx>

### **Asian nations dominate international assessment**

Teens from Asian nations dominated a global exam given to 15-year-olds, while **U.S. students showed little improvement and failed to reach the top 20 in math, science or reading, according to test results released Tuesday. American students scored below the international average in math and about average in science and reading.**

The top average scores in each subject came from Shanghai, China's largest city with more than 20 million people. Singapore, South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong were among the participants with students scoring at the top on average in each subject. **Vietnam, which had its students participate for the first time, had a higher average score in math and science than the United States.** **This just proves that poverty itself is not responsible for the dismal performance in the U.S. After all, most of these countries have folks *much* poorer than those in the U.S. What they are not 'poor' in are character, integrity, work ethic, and a focus on the value of education. The root of the problem is with irresponsible parenting and reproductive habits. Unfortunately for the U.S., much of this behavior is becoming culturally acceptable. As a community college it is our job to compensate for that which parents, K-12, society, and their culture have not done....as well as what the 4-yr universities are not willing to do (accept our level of students). This is a very difficult job, but....it is 'what we do!'**

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan called the results a "picture of educational stagnation." "We must invest in early education, raise academic standards, make college affordable, and do more to recruit and retain top-notch educators," Duncan said. ...

<http://www.ccdaily.com/Pages/Campus-Issues/Asian-nations-dominate-international-assessment.aspx>

## Save Over 60% In College Costs in High School

Attention, parents of teens -you could be saving over 60% in college cost while your student is still in high school (and yes, like Geico insurance, you have to initiate it). We've looked into and this is what we found: **Parents (& their teens) can save an average of \$5,000- \$24,000 each year their high school student participates in a grade acceleration program.** An agreement made between the Alabama Department of Education and several colleges allows high school students to earn college credit through programs like dual enrollment, online classes, early college, or accelerated high school.

Intro undergrad courses like English 101, Science, and History are offered to high schoolers as a way to jumpstart to their college career, with the potential to earn up to 30 credits through many programs. ...

[http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2013/12/save\\_over\\_60\\_in\\_college\\_costs.html](http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2013/12/save_over_60_in_college_costs.html)

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## Learn more by saying less

Tap the power of silence. Try this experiment in your next meeting: Speak only a quarter as often as you usually would. Most people have more valuable conversations when they:

- **Observe.** Don't just listen to what other people are saying. Look closely. What can you learn from their body language?
- **Ask.** Instead of telling others something, ask questions that will lead them to draw their own conclusions. Pose a question and then listen.
- **Wait.** Rather than rush to respond, pause. After a few moments of silence, others may speak up. Those are comments you might never have heard if you took control of the conversation by speaking.

— Adapted from "Why Leaders Should Take a Break From Talking," Scott Belsky, 99%, <http://the99percent.com>.

## Advance your career in 2014

To move up the ranks within your organization—or simply excel in your current position—you need to possess people skills. *Work on honing these skills:*

- **Showing patience.** Manage your stress so that you can stay calm and focused under pressure. You'll be considered first for promotions if you don't lose your cool at the first challenge.
- **Relating to others.** Spend time connecting with people at every level of your organization. Learn to listen to and accept other's viewpoints, and show everyone respect.
- **Empathizing with others.** Having the ability to appropriately show com-

passion when others are going through rough times is critical in life and in business. That doesn't mean that you should coddle others. However, a genuine "I know this is very hard on you. What can I do to help?" shows people you care.

- **Motivating and supporting people.** Cheer on your teammates, praising them when they do well. Share credit with others, and find opportunities to put coworkers in the spotlight. The best leaders know how to motivate their people, and gaining this skill is your key to being promoted.

—Adapted from "The 20 People Skills You Need to Succeed at Work," Jacquelyn Smith, *Forbes*, [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com).

## Become less defensive

It is only natural to want to defend yourself against another person's verbal attack. Even if someone is being honest—and tactful—criticism stings. However, if you can't accept negative feedback, you'll be known as a whiner or hothead, and that is bad for your career.

Follow this three-step process to control your defensiveness—and to protect your workplace reputation and relationships:

**1. Pause.** Imagine what you want to do or say to counter the verbal attack or slight. Then do nothing. Swallow your words, take a deep breath and wait to respond. *Reason:* Your natural reaction will be to defend yourself or justify your actions. That shows that

you aren't open to feedback.

**2. Pause again.** Think of the second statement you would like to make or action you would like to take. Bite your tongue. *Reason:* You'll be more likely to retaliate, responding with your own insults or by becoming sarcastic or rude, so stay quiet.

**3. Speak.** Bring to mind the third response and say or do that. *Reason:* In most cases, once you have prevented yourself from defending your actions or retaliating against the other person, you will be calmer and more focused on finding a solution.

—Adapted from "Don't Get Defensive: Communication Tips for the Vigilant," Mark Goulston, *Harvard Business Review*, <http://blogs.hbr.org>.

## Wipe the slate clean

When you take over a team, chances are you will encounter some lingering issues that arose under the previous team leadership.

Perhaps poor behaviors were overlooked, conflict among employees was ignored, or bad blood between the manager and a staffer was left unaddressed. *When you take over the team, use these tips to start off on the right foot:*

- **Change your mindset.** When a manager has allowed bad behaviors or actions to occur, it is his or her fault, not the fault of the employees.

Don't formulate judgments about your new staffers, and give them the benefit of the doubt. Let go of any preconceived notions and instead focus on correcting problems and improving how the team functions—not on changing employees.

- **Establish clear expectations and rules.** Say to the team "Now that I am responsible for leading the team, I want to establish new goals and expectations for how we work going forward." Avoid telling the team that you require

change; that can draw a defensive reaction, and they will be more likely to resist your new management style.

- **Meet with individuals to set goals.** Sit down with each employee to discuss the person's strengths and weaknesses. Set specific goals for all employees to expand on their strengths and correct any weaknesses.

In addition, set deadlines for those goals, and for any corrective actions you request. Explain to employees that you expect to see marked improvement by that deadline. Discuss steps you will take if you don't see improvement.

- **Prepare for the long haul.** It may not be easy to change behaviors that were accepted by the previous manager. Realize that it will take consistent effort on your part to change the culture of the team.

Keep communication open, provide plenty of constructive feedback, monitor progress and praise accomplishments.

— Adapted from "Ask Skip: How Can I Correct Bad Workplace Behavior That Has Been Allowed to Go On and On?" Skip Weisman, [www.workplacecommunicationexpert.com](http://www.workplacecommunicationexpert.com).

## Don't blame

When things go wrong, too many managers demand to know "Exactly what happened and who is responsible?" While that kind of judgmental questioning may give managers some immediate answers, it may also contribute to a culture of blame and a reluctance to take risks.

A better question is "What was the root cause and how can we prevent the problem from recurring in the future?" That line of questioning will provide answers and encourage brainstorming about prevention.

— Adapted from *The Art of the Question*, John Wiley & Sons Inc., [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

### WISE WORDS

*"Every strike brings me closer to the next home run."*

—Babe Ruth