

Trustees look the other way on presidential fraud

Students and faculty ask why academic integrity rules don't apply at the top

WHEN TALKING ABOUT FRAUD in New Jersey, the trail of cynicism goes all the way to the top.

For example, in a trailer for the recently release documentary "The Soprano State," the governor himself acknowledges, "When people talk about New Jersey, they bring up one of two things: Political corruption or 'The Sopranos.'"

Still, on the campus of Kean University, allegations that the university president, Da-

Kean students aren't happy with the KU president's integrity lapses.

wood Farahi, has violated the academic integrity rules of the university are upsetting everyone—students and faculty—

except those who would be held accountable, i.e., the administration and the board of trustees. Farahi is alleged to have lied repeatedly on his resumes, going as far back as 1983.

This, in turn, has raised red flags at the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the agency responsible for accrediting Kean. On March 1, the commission announced on its website that it had asked the institution for a monitoring report of its compliance with Standard 6, which has to do with "the periodic assessment of integrity evidence in institutional policies, processes, practices and the manner in which these are implemented." That report is due Sept. 1.

In November 2011, the Kean Federation of Teachers wrote to the Kean board of trustees asking for a full investigation of charges that Farahi's resume and application for employment contain false claims of scholarship. According to research by Kean faculty, Farahi's curriculum vitae claims "over 50 technical articles in major publications," but extensive searches of scholarly databases find no such publications. And Farahi's application for employment claims several publications that cannot be substantiated and several that have been refuted by the editors of their respective journals.

Kean's board released the results of its investigation on Feb. 15 and attributed the false claims to "carelessness." It cited some of the president's explanations: "Farahi acknowledges that four articles he said were published were not; that in other parts of his resume, the 'type must have skipped;' and that some of the representations he made that the union refuted 'must have been true or he wouldn't have made them.'" The board expressed its confidence in Farahi's leadership.

Students don't share that view. Junior Ashley Kraus, 22, of Vernon, N.J., read the school's academic integrity policy at a February board meeting. If students have to abide by it, she asked, why shouldn't the administration?

"Any faculty member would be fired for one violation," says KFT president James Castiglione. Farahi "has dozens on at least eight different resumes over 30 years. 'We have no personal grudge against the president. But his academic fraud is threatening the accreditation of the university and the value of a Kean degree.'"

Faculty have come to refer to Kean as "Soprano State University," he adds. See extensive documentation of the KFT's charges at www.kft2187.org/farahi.



CHERYL HEE/UNION COUNTY LOCALSOURCE

Seeking more from the 1 percent

California ballot initiative would set a more progressive tax policy

THE MILLIONAIRES TAX initiative is no more; long live the Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012.

The California Federation of Teachers is rallying in support of a new ballot initiative that takes some of the best features of its "millionaires tax" proposal and merges them with features of a tax initiative Gov. Jerry Brown has been pushing to get on the November ballot.

The governor and the CFT, working with Restoring California, a coalition of educators and community leaders, reached a compromise on March 14. Now they must scurry to redo signature drives to ensure the language qualifies for the ballot.

The original CFT initiative would have increased tax rates on personal incomes in excess of \$1 million to provide an estimated \$6 billion annually to finance education and

public services.

The governor had been pitching a ballot proposal to increase the sales tax by one-half cent per dollar and raise the income tax rate on those with personal incomes over \$250,000, to achieve a comparable revenue increase.

The compromise reflects a smaller sales tax increase than the governor wanted—one-quarter cent per dollar—and imposes a three-tier income tax hike for joint filers with incomes over \$500,000, \$600,000 and \$1 million. It would increase revenue by an estimated \$9 billion in the first year, and \$6 billion annually for the next few years, with the sales tax increase ending in 2016 and the income tax hike ending in 2018.

A CFT-sponsored poll last year showed what national polls have been showing since

the start of the Occupy Wall Street movement: Californians overwhelmingly support taxing the rich over seeing further cuts to schools and other vital services.

"The values and principles of fair, progressive tax policy are clearly reflected in this joint initiative," says CFT president Joshua Pechthalt, who is a co-chair of the Millionaires Tax Campaign. And "the funds will benefit the communities that have been hit hardest by budget cuts and provide assistance for our cash-strapped higher education institutions."

Another tax initiative on the ballot is sponsored by civil rights attorney Molly Munger but is not popular among state residents, polls show. It proposes raising income taxes across the board, extending to earnings as low as \$7,300 per year.