

## College

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state need grant program, more than 30,000 students were eligible for a state grant this fall but didn't get one because there's not enough money to go around, Brown said. About 74,000 students did get a state need grant.

There's no question that some students are beginning to find it difficult to afford college, said Laura Saunders, interim president of Bellevue College.

So the state's largest community college is doing whatever it can to keep them in school.

doing some research this year to gather more information about why students drop out, hoping to find out how much of an impact tuition increases are having on their students, said college spokeswoman Patricia Paquette.

They may want to talk to student Patricia Barnes, 55, who has gone back to school thanks to financial aid, but sees how much some of her fellow students are struggling to afford college. She worries about the student loans they are racking up and the cost of textbooks.

Barnes didn't get a chance to go to college as a young person after becoming a teen mom and went straight to work instead.

"I believe education should be affordable especially in times like this," she said.

Tuition has gone up so much during the recession because the Legislature has been cutting the state higher education budget and told colleges they could charge more to balance their budgets.

Lawmakers have cut more than \$1.4 billion from higher education since 2009, according to the Washington State Budget and Policy Center.

Saunders and Brown said they felt the state had hit the point where tuition rates have become a factor for students considering enrolling in college. She expressed optimism, however, that both candidates for governor would reprioritize higher education in the state budget.

While the state constitution protects K-12

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The college's own fundraising efforts made it possible to distribute \$460,000 in scholarships on top of state and federal grants and loans. A textbook rental program is allowing students to borrow a book for \$30 instead of usual \$100 or more. Students can check out a computer from the school library for use all semester. School officials have made a commitment to not raise student fees.

Seattle Central Community College is

## Election Phone Bank



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Volunteers phone bank from Obama headquarters on Rainier Avenue, 11 days before the election. A steady stream of people have been showing up to doorbell and phone bank as the 2012 campaign winds down.

education, cuts to higher education have become one of the main ways the Legislature balances the budget.

"I suspect we're at the end of that," Saun-

ders said. "I think community colleges are going to say to the Legislature: Don't raise tuition again. Don't balance the budget on the backs of our students."

## Water

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said. "That's where the jurisdiction would end up."

But Teck spokesman David Godlewski said placing the company, formerly known as Teck Cominco, under the Superfund law is not the right way to proceed. They would prefer a collaborative approach in which U.S. and Canada officials work together toward cleanup, which is estimated to cost up to \$1 billion.

Much of the pollution is in the form of a fine black sand that is known as slag. It has washed downstream onto beaches where people camp and swim along the shores of the 150-mile-long lake formed by Grand Coulee Dam. Teck contends the pollution does no harm to humans or wildlife, but a major study of the wastes is ongoing.

Last month, Teck Metals admitted in court for the first time that some of the slag dumped into the Columbia River between 1896 and 1995 flowed into the United States, and some hazardous substances from the slag were released into the U.S. environment.

That admission eliminated the need for a costly trial on the source of the pollution, and allowed the parties to move directly to the issue of who must pay for cleanup.

Teck is one of Canada's largest mining companies, and its smelter 10 miles north of the U.S. border discharged mining waste directly into the river for a century. That waste was carried by swift currents into Washington.

A decade ago, the Colville tribes petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assess contamination in the reservoir. In 2003, the EPA decided Teck was subject to the U.S. Superfund law, and demanded the company pay for studies to determine the extent of the contamination, and then clean it up. Teck objected, and the tribes filed suit in 2004 to force Teck to comply. The state of Washington joined the case.

The next big ruling is expected in December, when U.S. District Judge Lonny Suko is to decide whether the federal court has jurisdiction over Teck, and whether the company's actions made it liable to pay for cleanup.

In its legal brief saying it should be exempt from Superfund, Teck noted it is a

of the lake.

"The extent to which slag and effluent settled in Washington state is not known even today," Teck contended.

The slag itself is an inert, granular substance similar to the natural sand sediments, and would have caused little environmental damage, Teck contended.

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Canadian corporation registered in British Columbia that does not do business in Washington. Those are key facts that establish there is no jurisdiction to bring the lawsuit, the company says.

The company also did not "expressly

Even now, the state and National Park Service advertise Lake Roosevelt as an idyllic setting for boating, fishing, swimming, camping and other water-related activities, Teck said.

Teck also contends it is not the sole source

The next big ruling is expected in December

aim" its conduct at the state, and did not know its actions were likely to cause harm, key elements in proving liability, Teck said.

The company contends that evidence it even knew significant amounts of slag settled into Lake Roosevelt is thin. Instead, its experts concluded that any slag carried into the United States eventually would have passed over the Grand Coulee Dam and out

of any pollution, as almost 1,000 metals mines and mills have operated in the Columbia River watershed above Grand Coulee since the late 1800s, contributing millions of tons of mineral-rich pollution to the river.

"These metals, as well as metals from landslides and erosion, dwarf Teck's discharges," the company contended.

Since 2006 Teck has been engaged in a major study, under the direction of EPA, of mining pollution in the river. The company has spent more than \$55 million on this study. The company contends the study must run its course before any decisions about the pollution can be made.

Godlewski said preliminary findings are encouraging.

"The fish is safe to eat," he said. "The water is safe to play in."

Attempting to hold Teck responsible for the pollution interferes with the sovereign authority of Canada and British Columbia, Teck contends. Canada has repeatedly expressed disapproval over the case, including sending a diplomatic note of protest to the State Department.

The Colville tribes grew concerned about the pollution because their reservation is bordered on the west and south by Lake Roosevelt.

"Teck's actions injured our tribes' lands, waters and other natural resources," Sirois said. "The Columbia River and Lake Roosevelt is a center of our tribal culture."

The tribes and state contend in court documents that as Grand Coulee Dam transforms the free-flowing river into slack Lake Roosevelt, the slag and effluent from Trail sink into the sediments of the lake, rather than flow over the dam.

At least 8.7 million of the estimated 9.97 million tons of slag discharged from the Trail smelter over the decades flowed into Washington, and an unknown portion of it remains in the lake, the state and tribes contend.

"Teck Metals has already acknowledged that it released millions of tons of toxic pollution into Washington state, and we feel confident the federal court will find that U.S. cleanup laws apply to Teck," said Jim Pendowski of the state Department of Ecology.