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Paleontologist Paul Sereno has encountered some of the weirdest creatures that ever walked the earth. Yet some of the scariest things he's discovered aren't likely to become extinct anytime soon. Sad to say, mutual fund management fees will probably outlast us all. That's why Dr. Sereno was afraid of getting eaten alive. So he turned to a company famous for keeping the costs down. That meant more money for him and less for the monsters.

Log on for ideas, advice, and results. TIAA-CREF.org or call (800) 842-2776

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Business and law schools offering perks to recruits

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Aspiring attorney Rosie Shatkin was delighted when she was accepted by the law school at the University of California at Berkeley, but not sure she wanted to move 400 miles north or pay for the airfare for a campus visit.

That's when she found out the school was willing to fly her — and any other admitted student — from home to check out the campus.

The enticement seems to have worked. Shatkin is now a first-year student at Berkeley's Boalt Hall law school.

"Coming to this school really had a huge impact on my decision," said Shatkin. "It's like a communitarian spirit. Once you're accepted, we'll do everything we can in order to make the decision and the transition easier for you," she said.

It's all part of an intense campaign to sign up top students as the competition increases to land candidates, admissions officials said.

"Every school wants to put its best foot forward on this one," said Victoria Ortiz, dean of students at Boalt. "There are more highly qualified students who have a great choice."

Across campus, the Haas School of Business doesn't offer free airfare, but it does ditch plain-vanilla acceptance letters in favor of a personal call from an admissions director — to all 500 or so students.

Some schools are turning to technology for an edge.

This year, successful applicants to The Fuqua School of Business at Duke University got an e-mail innocuously titled

"admissions status." A link in the text took the reader to a jazzy slide show with a shot of a jubilant crowd, the sound of cheering and the message "Congratulations! You've been admitted!"

The first round of recipients said "it was the coolest thing they'd ever seen," said Liz Riley, admissions director. Meanwhile, the percentage of admitted students deciding to enroll rose to 54 percent from 52 percent the year before.

"Every school wants to put its best foot forward on this one. There are more highly qualified students who have a great choice."

— Victoria Ortiz
dean of students at
Berkeley's Boalt law school

Berkeley's Boalt has perhaps the most eye-catching enticement with its fly-free program, now in its second year. Tickets are booked at a discount and there's a limit of \$350 for out-of-state and \$150 for in-state travel, which Ortiz said is usually more than adequate.

Boalt, which gets about 7,000 applicants a year and accepts 800 or so for 270 spaces, spent about \$31,000 on the program this year with 123 students accepting the offer.

The percentage of admitted

students who enroll has increased from 31 percent in 1999 to 35 percent.

"There are other things that one might spend money on that wouldn't be as effective," said Ortiz. "We strongly believe that if people are going to spend three years of their life in a community, they really ought to know the community."

Jett Pihakis, director of domestic admissions for the full-time MBA program at Berkeley's Haas School of Business, helps make acceptance calls, sometimes staying up late to call across time zones.

Haas admits fewer than 11 percent of applicants, but "we still put a tremendous amount of effort into enticing admitted students to join the community, because many top schools are competing for the same exceptional young people," said Pihakis.

At the University of Southern California's law school, associate dean Robert M. Saltzman said USC has considered flying out applicants but decided to stay with more traditional methods, such as receptions and putting prospective students in touch with alumni practicing in their area.

Boalt officials are happy with their program, but Ortiz agrees the bedrock of recruiting is treating applicants courteously and making sure they understand the program.

"You need to be able to show them as much as possible what the reality will be for them when they're students, so they don't just get tricked into thinking, 'Oh, well, I'll go to that school because it's in the top 10.'"

"You want them to attend," said Ortiz, "but you want them to be happy."

Politicians cut federal funding of college education behind bars

SAN QUENTIN, Calif. (AP) — Jesse Reed studied nights and weekends to get his associate arts degree, squeezing in extra hours with the lamp turned low to avoid disturbing his roommate. Or cellmate, more exactly.

His alma mater was San Quentin Prison. And the associate degree is as far as he can go behind bars.

Nearly all federal funding for college education in prisons across the country was dropped in the mid-'90s by politicians scandalized at the idea of giving criminals a free ride. Reed managed to get his degree only because the college-behind-bars program was sustained by volunteers.

Proponents argue that such programs pay off by producing inmates who are more likely to stay out of prison after their release, but the programs remain highly unpopular with many.

"It's really unfortunate that society feels that way," said Reed, 42. "You have a lot of men in here who made mistakes in life partly because they didn't feel that they could compete in society. We turned to a life of crime."

Reed, who is serving 25 years to life for murder, was among the first students to sign up when San Quentin's college classes started in 1988, with teachers and textbooks provided by Patten College of Oakland.

At that time, Pell grants, federal financial aid

given to low-income college students, were available to prisoners, and the program eventually encompassed 13 prisons in California.

Before the program was killed, about 28,000 prisoners received \$36 million in Pell grants each year, less than one percent of the total of about \$6 billion. After prisoners were banned from the Pell program by Congress in 1994, almost all the programs shut down.

Federal funds are still available for college courses for inmates under 25 with five years or less to serve, but an effort to get the age limit raised to 35 this year got nowhere in Congress. The state of California supports programs to teach inmates vocational skills and get their high school diplomas, but will not pay for college.

"People feel, 'Why should somebody who commits a crime get a free ride to college?'" That's the position of the state and the Legislature and probably most of the people of California," said Corrections Department spokeswoman Terry Thornton.

At Crime Victims United of California, Harriet Salarno said her group supports vocational and high-school level instruction. But free college just isn't right, she said: "Why aren't we taking care of the victim's children first?"

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