THE DAILY CLIPS

January 5, 2010

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
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Still proud

Consider achievements, not mistakes

The last kick of the 2010 Liberty Bowl sailed into the frigid Memphis night and through the uprights, setting off a frenzied celebration on the field and throughout the stadium. Yet, the smiles belonged to the Arkansas faithful rather than our East Carolina University Pirates, who found themselves on the wrong end of postseason play once again.

That result may leave a bad taste in the mouths of many fans, but it should not overshadow a remarkable season of achievement from a team that refused to be counted out. Overcoming adversity is a hallmark of East Carolina, and this team added to that tradition throughout its season.

Pirates fans are sure to take away disappointing memories of opportunities missed on Saturday. Such is the nature of spectator sports, and few will feel worse than the players who shoulder responsibility for those mistakes.

However, this championship season is best remembered for those standout performances that carried East Carolina to its second consecutive Conference USA championship. It was a team that began the season with high expectations and refused to yield when faced with the adversity of early losses. Their perseverance and drive should be an inspiration to the university and its fans rather than a reminder of what could have been.

The loss on Saturday hurts, of course. That’s the feeling that comes from being a player or a fan, someone who feels an emotional investment in the outcome. But East Carolina’s achievements this season are greater than one game and should be celebrated.
Coverage of football game misses the mark

Undoubtedly, missed field goals were a major part of the story of Saturday night's Liberty Bowl.

Surely it was significant enough to warrant a secondary headline on the sports page. But a photograph of a dejected kicker filling almost the entire front page? I think not.

This was not a presidential election, not a declaration of war, not a natural disaster with loss of life. This was a football game played not by professionals, but by student athletes.

Anyone who has ever kicked a ball in frigid conditions knows how difficult that can be.

Ben Hartman probably awoke Sunday morning thinking he could not feel worse. The front page proved him wrong. Maybe in the future The Daily Reflector could exercise a little more perspective ... and compassion.

MARK DELLASEGNA
Greenville

Hosting ECU coaches, staff gratifying

For the past week I have been entertaining the East Carolina University coaches, athletic directors, the chancellor's family and the administration.

I have to tell you that this is one first-class operation going on at that campus.

Coach Skip Holtz and his staff along with Coach Terry Holland, Lee Workman and their families were some of the best I've ever hosted for the Liberty Bowl. All of the administration staff, from student trainers to secretaries, were all just as nice and courteous as one could ask. Your equipment manager is one of the best I've ever seen at his job.

Even though ECU lost the game, it was a great memory for me to do this for the second time for the ECU staff.

I see great things in store for this program. Hope to see you next year.

BILL HARPER
ECU hospitality room
Hilton Hotel
Liberty Bowl hospitality committee
Cordova, Tenn.
Kim Glover McDaniel

GREENVILLE


The funeral service will be conducted on 2:00 p.m. Thursday at Friendship Free Will Baptist Church, 758 Friendship Church Road, Middlesex, NC. Burial will follow in Gethsemane Memorial Gardens in Zebulon.

Kim was the daughter of the late Ronald and Marie Glover and was a native of Johnston County. She was a 1981 graduate of East Carolina University School of Nursing and later completed her Masters in Nursing, also at East Carolina University. She was a member of Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society. In 1997 she was awarded the North Carolina Nurses Association Nurse of the Year for continuing education and staff development. During her 28 year career at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, Kim held various staff and leadership positions and was most recently a Surgical Patient Facilitator.

Kim will be fondly remembered for both her warm smile and bubbly personality. She enjoyed the beach, yard work, traveling and was an avid ECU fan. A loving wife, sister, aunt and friend, Kim will be missed by all who knew and loved her.

She is survived by her husband of 20 years, Rick McDaniel; brother, Craig R. Glover and wife, Claudia of Raleigh; nieces, Cara and Courtney Glover of Raleigh; special canine companion, Harley.

The family will receive friends on Wednesday from 6:00–8:00 p.m. at Wilkerson Funeral Home in Greenville.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be sent to The Arthritis Foundation, 1330 West Peachtree St., Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30309 and The Lupus Foundation, 2000 L Street, Northwest, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20036.

Online condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com
January 4, 2010

Gauging the Dedication of Teacher Corps Grads

By AMANDA M. FAIRBANKS

Teach for America, a corps of recent college graduates who sign up to teach in some of the nation’s most troubled schools, has become a campus phenomenon, drawing huge numbers of applicants willing to commit two years of their lives.

But a new study has found that their dedication to improving society at large does not necessarily extend beyond their Teach for America service.

In areas like voting, charitable giving and civic engagement, graduates of the program lag behind those who were accepted but declined and those who dropped out before completing their two years, according to Doug McAdam, a sociologist at Stanford University, who conducted the study with a colleague, Cynthia Brandt.

The reasons for the lower rates of civic involvement, Professor McAdam said, include not only exhaustion and burnout, but also disillusionment with Teach for America’s approach to the issue of educational inequity, among other factors.

The study, “Assessing the Long-Term Effects of Youth Service: The Puzzling Case of Teach for America,” is the first of its kind to explore what happens to participants after they leave the program. It was done at the suggestion of Wendy Kopp, Teach for America’s founder and president, who disagrees with the findings.

Ms. Kopp had read an earlier study by Professor McAdam that found that participants in Freedom Summer — the 10 weeks in 1964 when civil rights advocates, many of them college students, went to Mississippi to register black voters — had become more politically active.

“There’s been a very clear and somewhat naïve consensus among educators, policy folks and scholars that youth activism invariably has these kinds of effects,” Professor McAdam said. “But we’ve got to be much more attentive to differences across these experiences, and not simply assume that if you give a kid some youth service experience it will change them.”

Teach for America is nearing its 20th anniversary. Of its 17,000 alumni, 63 percent remain in the field of education and 31 percent remain in the classroom. (This reporter took part in the program from 2003 to 2005.)

Financed by the William T. Grant Foundation, the study surveyed every person who was accepted by Teach for America from 1993 to 1998. It is being published this month in Social Forces, a journal published by the University of North Carolina.

The study compared “graduates,” who completed their two years; “dropouts,” who entered the program but
left before the two years were up; and “nonmatriculants,” who were accepted but declined the offer. It included 1,538 graduates, 324 dropouts and 634 nonmatriculants. Nearly 45 percent of those sampled returned the 34-page survey.

While Teach for America graduates remain far more active than their peer group, the findings indicate that the program neither achieves an earlier organizational goal of “making citizens” nor produces people who, in great numbers, take their civic commitments beyond the field of education.

“To find that Teach for America graduates are more involved in education but are not serving in soup kitchens is interesting but not surprising — it’s consistent with their current mission,” said Monica C. Higgins, an associate professor at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard who studies organizational behavior. “They’re not trying to make global citizens. They’re focused on education.”

Professor McAdam’s findings that nearly all of Freedom Summer’s participants were still engaged in progressive activism when he tracked them down 20 years later have contributed to the widely held notion that civic advocacy and service among the young make for better citizens.

Ms. Kopp, 42, was curious to know whether something similar was occurring with her corps of teachers. But Professor McAdam, 57, said Freedom Summer was the exception, not the rule.

“Freedom Summer is the odd civic experience, and hardly representative of what happens when young people do service,” he said. “A lot of the impact of any experience is where it’s historically situated.”

Rob Reich, 40, an associate professor of political science at Stanford, shares that view.

“Back in the ’60s, if you signed up for Freedom Summer, it was perceived to be countercultural,” said Professor Reich, who taught sixth grade in Houston as a member of the Teach for America corps. “But unlike doing Freedom Summer, joining Teach for America is part of climbing up the elite ladder — it’s part of joining the system, the meritocracy.”

Last year, 35,000 people applied to Teach for America, 42 percent more than in 2008. Further, at more than 20 colleges and universities, Teach for America was the top recruiter. At Harvard, 13 percent of graduating seniors applied. At Spelman College, in Atlanta, 25 percent did.

“It’s hard to see the incredible outpouring of interest among this generation and think of it as a lack of civic engagement,” Ms. Kopp said.

“Unfortunately,” she added, “it doesn’t seem as if this study looked at Teach for America’s core mission, by evaluating whether we are producing more leaders who believe educational inequity is a solvable problem, who have a deep understanding of the causes and solutions, and who are taking steps to address it in fundamental and lasting ways.”

Cami Anderson, 38, who taught in Los Angeles as a corps member in 1993 and participated in Professor McAdam’s study, is among the graduates who, relative to their peer group, already exhibited high levels of service before stepping into a classroom.

“Not many of us are heads of large public systems, but we’re starting to be,” said Ms. Anderson, who is the
superintendent of alternative high schools and programs for the New York City Department of Education.

“Just give us a few more years.”

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Ten Master’s of the New Universe

By NANCY HASS

ONCE upon a time there were largely two kinds of master’s degrees: one was a way station to a doctorate and the other overqualified you to be underpaid as a social worker or helped you get a salary bump as a public school teacher.

And then came the quiet revolution. Spawned by a realization in university circles that master’s programs could be wildly profitable — especially within low-cost departments of continuing education — and a growing sense that in a shifting employment market the best jobs would require specialized training, such degrees have exploded. Nearly twice as many master’s degrees were awarded in 2008 than in 1980.

These programs provide a field guide to the zeitgeist. There are degrees to fit every niche and new twist in the culture, whether homeland security, social networking, hybrid cars or narrative medicine. The following pages highlight just a handful of them. While there is an argument to be made — and plenty of intellectual heavyweights have made it — that the tight focus on highly specialized career training dilutes the mission of the academy, many say the trend is merely a recognition of modern realities. Colleges are strapped for cash, and master’s programs are a low-cost way to get it: they don’t require undergraduate services like dorms or the high student-teacher ratio of doctoral programs. Master’s candidates, unlike Ph.D.’s, almost always pay full freight, often $30,000 or more a year.

Students, both recent college graduates and career changers, seem to believe that setting their sights on a particular industry and getting the right credential will help them stand out from the throng of applicants — and command better pay. On average, a master’s degree results in 20 percent more pay than does a bachelor’s, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“It’s amazing to see students thronging to these new programs, many of which are extremely unconventional,” says Maria T. Allison, a vice provost and dean at Arizona State, which has created 25 new master’s since 2005. “A lot of them feel this is the time to know what you want and to find the right place to get it.”
January 3, 2010

CAREER U.

Making College ‘Relevant’

By KATE ZERNIKE

THOMAS COLLEGE, a liberal arts school in Maine, advertises itself as Home of the Guaranteed Job! Students who can’t find work in their fields within six months of graduation can come back to take classes free, or have the college pay their student loans for a year.

The University of Louisiana, Lafayette, is eliminating its philosophy major, while Michigan State University is doing away with American studies and classics, after years of declining enrollments in those majors.

And in a class called “The English Major in the Workplace,” at the University of Texas, Austin, students read “Death of a Salesman” but also learn to network, write a résumé and come off well in an interview.

Even before they arrive on campus, students — and their parents — are increasingly focused on what comes after college. What’s the return on investment, especially as the cost of that investment keeps rising? How will that major translate into a job?

The pressure on institutions to answer those questions is prompting changes from the admissions office to the career center. But even as they rush to prove their relevance, colleges and universities worry that students are specializing too early, that they are so focused on picking the perfect major that they don’t allow time for self-discovery, much less late blooming.

“The phrase drives me crazy — ‘What are you going to do with your degree?’ — but I see increasing concerns about that,” says Katharine Brooks, director of the liberal arts career center at the University of Texas, Austin, and author of “You Majored in What? Mapping Your Path From Chaos to Career.” “Particularly as money gets tighter, people are going to demand more accountability from majors and departments.”

Consider the change captured in the annual survey by the University of California, Los Angeles, of more than 400,000 incoming freshmen. In 1971, 37 percent responded that it was essential or very important to be “very well-off financially,” while 73 percent said the same about “developing a meaningful philosophy of life.” In 2009, the values were nearly reversed: 78 percent identified wealth as a goal, while 48 percent were after a meaningful philosophy.

The shift in attitudes is reflected in a shifting curriculum. Nationally, business has been the most popular major for the last 15 years. Campuses also report a boom in public health fields, and many institutions are building up environmental science and just about anything prefixed with “bio.” Reflecting the new economic and global realities, they are adding or expanding majors in Chinese and Arabic. The University of Michigan has seen a 38 percent increase in students enrolling in Asian language courses since 2002, while French has dropped by 5 percent.
Of course, universities have always adjusted curriculum to reflect the changing world; Kim Wilcox, the provost and vice president for academic affairs at Michigan State, notes that universities, his included, used to offer majors in elocution and animal husbandry. In a major re-examination of its curriculum, Michigan State has added a dozen or so new programs, including degrees in global studies and, in response to a growing industry in the state, film studies. At the same time, it is abandoning underperformers like classical studies: in the last four years, only 13 students have declared it their major.

Dropping a classics or philosophy major might have been unthinkable a generation ago, when knowledge of the great thinkers was a cornerstone of a solid education. But with budgets tight, such programs have come to seem like a luxury—or maybe an expensive antique—in some quarters.

When Louisiana’s regents voted to eliminate the philosophy major last spring, they agreed with faculty members that the subject is “a traditional core program of a broad-based liberal arts and science institution.” But they noted that, on average, 3.4 students had graduated as philosophy majors in the previous five years; in 2008, there were none. “One cannot help but recognize that philosophy as an essential undergraduate program has lost some credence among students,” the board concluded.

In one recent survey, two-thirds of public institutions said they were responding to budget cuts with extensive reviews of their programs. But Dr. Wilcox says curriculum changes at Michigan State have just as much to do with what students, and the economy, are demanding. “We could have simply reduced the campus operating budget by X percent,” he says, “but we wouldn’t have positioned ourselves any differently for the future.”

In Michigan, where the recession hit early and hard, universities are particularly focused on being relevant to the job market. “There’s been this drumbeat that Michigan has got to diversify its economy,” says Mary Sue Coleman, the president of the University of Michigan.

Dr. Coleman says she had an “aha” moment five years ago, when the director of admissions was describing the incoming class and noted that 10 percent—some 600 students—had started a business in high school. The university has responded with about 100 entrepreneurship courses across the curriculum, including “Financing Research Commercialization” and “Engineering Social Venture Creation,” for students interested in creating businesses that not only do well financially but also do society good. Next year, the university will begin offering a master’s to students who commit to starting a high-tech company.

At the same time, Dr. Coleman is wary of training students for just one thing—“creating them to do some little widget,” as she says. Michigan has begun a speaker series featuring alumni or other successful entrepreneurs who come in to talk about how their careers benefited from what Dr. Coleman calls “core knowledge.”

“We believe that we do our best for students when we give them tools to be analytical, to be able to gather information and to determine the validity of that information themselves, particularly in this world where people don’t filter for you anymore,” Dr. Coleman says. “We want to teach them how to make an argument, how to defend an argument, to make a choice.” These are the skills that liberal arts colleges in particular have prided themselves on teaching. But these colleges also say they have the hardest time explaining the link between what they teach and the kind of job and salary a student can expect on the other end.
“There’s no immediate impact, that’s the problem,” says John J. Neuhausser, the president of St. Michael’s College, a liberal arts school in Vermont. “The humanities tend to educate people much farther out. They’re looking for an impact that lasts over decades, not just when you’re 22.”

When prospective students and their parents visit, he says, they ask about placement rates, internships and alumni involvement in job placement. These are questions, he says, that he never heard 10 years ago.

St. Michael’s, like other colleges, has adapted its curriculum to reflect demand. The college had to create new sections of chemistry labs and calculus on the spot during summer registration, and it raised the cap on the number of students in a biology lab. “I’d say, given the vagaries of the business cycle, people are looking for things that they know will always be needed — accountants, scientists, mathematicians,” says Jeffrey A. Trumbower, dean of the college. “Those also happen to be some of the most challenging majors academically, so we’ll see how these trends hold up.”

Still, Dr. Neuhausser finds the careerism troubling. “I think people change a great deal between 18 and 22,” he says. “The intimate environment small liberal arts colleges provide is a great place to grow up. But there’s no question that smacks of some measure of elitism now.”

There’s evidence, though, that employers also don’t want students specializing too soon. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently asked employers who hire at least 25 percent of their workforce from two- or four-year colleges what they want institutions to teach. The answers did not suggest a narrow focus. Instead, 89 percent said they wanted more emphasis on “the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing,” 81 percent asked for better “critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills” and 70 percent were looking for “the ability to innovate and be creative.”

“It’s not about what you should major in, but that no matter what you major in, you need good writing skills and good speaking skills,” says Debra Humphreys, a vice president at the association.

The organization has conducted focus groups with employers before and heard the same thing. With the recession, she says, they weren’t sure the findings would hold. “But it’s even more intense. Companies are demanding more of employees. They really want them to have a broad set of skills.” She adds that getting employer feedback is the association service that “college leaders find the most valuable, because they can answer the question when parents ask, ‘Is this going to help in getting a job?’ ”

Career advisers say that colleges and universities need to do a better job helping students understand the connection between a degree and a job. At some institutions, this means career officers are heading into the classroom.

Last fall at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, the career office began integrating workplace lessons into capstone research seminars for humanities majors. In one of three classes taught by Anne Scholl-Fiedler, the director, she asks students to develop a 30-second commercial on their “personal brand.” “When somebody asks, ‘How are you going to use that English degree?’ you need to be able to clearly articulate what you are able to do,” she says. “If you don’t know, employers probably won’t either.”

At the University of Texas, Ms. Brooks says, many parents drop their children off freshman year asking, “How can my child transfer to the business school?” She tries to establish the value of the liberal arts with a
series of courses called “The Major in the Workplace.” Students draw what she calls a “major map,” an inventory of things they have learned to do around their major. Using literature — “The Great Gatsby,” perhaps, or “Death of a Salesman” — she gets students to think about how the themes might apply to a workplace, then has them read Harvard Business Review case studies. The goal, she says, is to get students to think about how an English major (or a psychology or history major) might view the world differently, and why an employer might value that.

“There’s this linear notion that what you major in equals your career,” Ms. Brooks says. “I’m sure it works for some majors. If you want to be an electrical engineer, that major looks pretty darn good.

“The truth is,” she says, “students think too much about majors. But the major isn’t nearly as important as the toolbox of skills you come out with and the experiences you have.”

Kate Zernike is a national reporter for The Times. Rachel Aviv contributed reporting.