THE DAILY CLIPS

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Onward, upward

Pitt well balanced for economic recovery

As 2009 closed with continued rising unemployment for many areas of the state and nation, the fact that joblessness in Pitt County was holding steady speaks to this area’s strong foundation of economic forces. The strength of that foundation lies in its diversity — an attribute for which residents can be thankful, but one that must be maintained and built upon nonetheless.

The worst period of the economic recession gripping national and world economies is past, Rick Niswander, dean of the East Carolina University College of Business told members of the Greenville-Pitt Chamber of Commerce last week. Niswander said Pitt County’s steady unemployment figures released last week (9.9 percent for November) is a sign of regional recovery.

That recovery will likely come faster to Pitt County, where strong contributions from agriculture, higher education, health care, business and industry keep the economic engine running relatively smoothly, even in hard times. A look around confirms the consistent strength of local economic forces.

Home sales were on the rise during the last quarter of 2009, and the unemployment rate fell from its highest in June (11.2 percent) to 9.9 percent in October and November — the latest month for which figures are available.

As 2009 was proving to be a good year for crop yields in North Carolina, it was announced that the previous year marked an all-time high for agricultural exports in the state. What’s good for the state where agriculture is concerned is great for Pitt County, still one of the state’s largest producers from farming.

ECU in October announced that its plan to establish a dental school remains on track, with three of 10 sites for regional learning centers named. The school is set to open next year with its first 50 students.

Prospects for future industrial development remain strong here, as recruiters are staying committed to bringing manufacturers and other companies to LandsEast Industrial Park, a new site on the border of Pitt and Martin Counties and operated by both county governments.

To accommodate present and future growth, a $10 million project is under way that will double the size of the terminal at Pitt-Greenville Airport.

Those are just a few of the more notable statistics and commitments showing the economy in Pitt County has remained on the move during tough economic times, providing a driving force behind recovery for eastern North Carolina. That should served to bolster our thankfulness for having such a diversified economic foundation, and our determination to make it even stronger.
Community activist honored at service

Edith Webber volunteered with the Little Willie Center and taught at East Carolina University for 23 years.

BY KATHRYN KENNEDY
The Daily Reflector

She was adored. Respected. Emulated. Actually, the long-time Greenville resident still is.

To say Edith Webber was much beloved is an understatement.

An advocate for peace, simple living and service to others, the 89-year-old Webber passed away Dec. 26 following heart-weakening pneumonia. More than 200 people gathered to celebrate her life Sunday afternoon at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

“I don’t know if I’ve ever seen the congregation this full,” the Rev. Ann Marie Alderman said, looking over the room as other UU members retrieved brown folding chairs to accommodate the growing crowd.

“We don’t claim to know what happens after death,” she said. “We do know it is impor-

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tant what we do in this life.” There was plenty for those who loved her to recount.

Greenville residents may know her best for her 15 years of work with the Little Willie Center, whose children became her grandchildren. They’ve named a library and a garden in her honor, founder Renee Arrington said Sunday.

“She taught us many things,” Arrington said. “How to love people. To look past their color, their culture.”

She previously served on the city’s Bicycle Task Force’s Education Committee — Webber lived without a car for more than 15 years — and the Recycling Committee, and helped allocate funds for Church Ministries United. Webber co-founded the Greenville Peace Committee, formed against continuation of the Vietnam War, and maintained its relevance by fighting for nuclear disarmament.

“A lot of people are talkers,” Ed Day said. “She was a doer. She saw something that needed to be done, she’d do it.”

“She was important to the community, she was important to the church, and she was certainly important to me, as an individual.”

Webber also taught English at East Carolina University for 23 years, specializing in teaching those hard of hearing and serving as faculty sponsor for the East Carolina Gay Community. Pitt County Coalition Against Racism leader Don Cavellini declared Sunday that they will march in her honor on Martin Luther King Jr. Day next week.

“She always saw the best in people,” Eleanor Lepinski, Webber’s youngest daughter, said. “Sometimes she bent over backwards to see the best in people.”

Her widower, Carroll Webber, stood at the side of the room for most of the service. He looked on as people wept, but laughed just as often when recalling her quirks and cheerful spirit. At the close, he took the podium to read samples from countless e-mails, letters and telephone calls he’s gotten — all remembering Edith.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or (252) 329-9566.
Four major ECU building projects to increase capacity

BY KATHRYN KENNEDY
The Daily Reflector

There is a three-ring binder that Bill Bagnell keeps close by. “Bill’s Book,” the front cover declares.

He needs it in order to stay abreast of all the construction projects underway at East Carolina University.

The associate vice chancellor for campus operations said there are four major endeavors due for completion this year, spread between the primary and medical campuses. So far everything is progressing on schedule, he said.

Scott Residence Hall, a 1960s dormitory on College Hill Drive, is undergoing a total gutting and renovation. The work, which began last summer, will add 116 beds to the hall and cost $28.5 million. Bagnell expects everything will be ready for occupancy in August — just in time for the fall semester.

September will bring a new Family Medical Center at Arlington Boulevard and Heart Drive. The 110,000-to 112,000-square-foot building will cost ECU $32 million and is expected to increase its patient capacity by 8 percent.

Athletics improvements include the addition of a softball field by Scott Residence Hall, a 1960s dormitory on College Hill Drive, is undergoing a total gutting and renovation. The work, which began last summer, will add 116 beds to the hall and cost $28.5 million. Bagnell expects everything will be ready for occupancy in August — just in time for the fall semester.

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**ECU**

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March at the intersection of Greenville and Charles boulevards. Costs are estimated at $4 million. A track, women’s soccer field and teams building will come later.

Pirate football fans will have 7,000 more seats available at home games as the university expands the east end zone along Berkley Drive. It should be complete when football season returns, to the tune of more than $17 million.

Though it won't be finished until January 2011, Bagnell is also overseeing the demolition and reconstruction of the Croatan Dining Hall on the 10th Street side of campus. The new $8.5 million structure will be two stories and twice the square footage of the old hall.

Additionally, work on the dental school site will begin in March or April, with some facilities open for the first class in August 2011. The utility tunnel project, which will provide infrastructure for that facility and the Family Medicine Center, is almost complete.

Most of these projects will pay for themselves — the residence hall through housing fees and the dining hall through meal plan costs, for example. Both medical facilities received state funding from the General Assembly, with the Family Medicine Center also netting grant money.

ECU has experienced nothing but growth since Bagnell arrived in the mid-90s, he said, even as the nation’s financial struggles loom large.

"In this economic climate, we are thankful to have the projects we do have and be able to keep things going," Bagnell said. "What's on the horizon? We don't know."

But all projections claim the future will bring more students.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or (252) 329-9566.
Silent auction benefits, honors medical residents

ECU News Services

Two family medicine residents at East Carolina University benefited from the generosity of their peers during a silent auction held Dec. 21.

ECU and Pitt County Memorial Hospital employees and friends contributed a total of $3,800 in winning bids for photos by John Stanton, a Brody graduate; photo calendars by Laura Zimmerman, an ECU resident physician; dinners at local restaurants; and more, all to raise money to help Katherine Strickland and Anna Hudson, who are battling cancer, cope with medical expenses.

Daniel Becerra, one of the auction organizers, is a fellow family medicine resident. “The last thing these two people, who’ve inspired a lot of people at Brody, should have to worry about is medical bills,” he said.

Becerra was a classmate of Strickland’s at the Brody School of Medicine; they graduated in May. Hudson is a 2008 graduate.

Strickland was diagnosed with maxillary osteosarcoma, a cancer of the jaw, in 2005 and has had two recurrences. She praised her fellow residents for their work.

“It has been incredibly beautiful how the residency program has come together to support Anna and (me),” she said. “The support has been a real source of strength for us. And I personally am so pleased that there are plans to help the program continue to help other residents having medical issues.”

At Match Day in March, when graduating medical students received their residency assignments, Strickland received a standing ovation when her name was called and she walked up to retrieve her envelope.

“Katherine was a M1 student when she was diagnosed with cancer,” said Dr. James Byrd, a clinical professor of internal medicine. “The first year of medical school is the most challenging. During the time away from Greenville, when the diagnosis was confirmed and treatment initiated, she never missed a beat and finished the year in good academic standing. And she did it with a fabulous smile and inspiring attitude.”

Byrd said he and his wife, Dr. Lee Byrd, also a faculty member at Brody, bought 100 bracelets Becerra had made to “tell Katie’s story to current M1 students.” The bracelets are inscribed with “always believe” and “never back down.”

Becerra said he would like not only to help Strickland and Hudson but also establish an emergency fund to help any resident faced with unexpected expenses. He thinks such a fund would help recruit residents to ECU and PCMH.

“We not only care about patients; we also care about each other,” Becerra said.

ECU to host Great Decisions lecture series

ECU will host the sixth Foreign Policy Association’s Great Decisions Program beginning Saturday and continuing through March 6. Sponsored by the World Affairs Council (WAC) of Eastern North Carolina and ECU, the program will run for eight Saturdays, 10 a.m. to noon, at the Rivers West Building auditorium on campus.

The lecture series will feature a range of topics and discussions hosted by experts:

Jan. 23: Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution hosted by John Williams ECU’s international studies program. U.S. campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that military force alone cannot ensure peace in all conflicts. How can the United States successfully integrate the tools of peacebuilding into its statecraft? At what point do poverty, disease and climate change threaten national security?

Jan. 30: US-China Security Relations, hosted by Yang Zhong, University of Tennessee’s Department of Political Science. China’s influence is growing, along with its military expenditures. How will this growth affect China’s relations with its neighbors and the United States? Partial funding for this session is provided by the ECU international studies program and the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Feb. 6: Global Financial Crisis, hosted by Randall Parker, ECU’s Department of Economics. The global financial crisis revealed major deficiencies in the regulation of markets and institutions. Emergency measures to prevent a full collapse of the global financial system have had mixed results. How will governments and the world community respond to this challenge?
Full-time students and teachers can attend for free and purchase the program book for $18. The fee is $32 for all eight sessions for WAC members (textbook included) and $42 for the general public (without the textbook). Individual sessions cost $6.

For more information, see the Great Decisions webpage (http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/greatdecisions/home.cfm) or contact Dr. Sylvie Debevec Henning at 252-328-5520 or at hennings@ecu.edu. To register, visit the World Affairs Council of Eastern North Carolina Webpage at http://www.worldaffairscouncilnc.org/.

SAT, GRE and GMAT review courses offered

The College of Business at ECU will offer three intensive review courses in early 2010 to prepare individuals for the SAT, GRE and GMAT examinations. All classes will be held on the main ECU campus.

The SAT prep class will be held on Saturdays from Jan. 30 to Feb. 27. Ben Worthington, an English teacher at J.H. Rose High School, and Maureen Green, a math teacher at North Pitt High School, will provide the course instruction. The cost is $140 on or before Jan. 22, and $155 after the deadline. The cost includes two SAT review books.

On Mondays and Wednesdays from Jan. 27 to Feb. 24, the College of Business is offering evening review courses for the GRE. A GMAT prep course is also offered; it will meet on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from Jan. 28 to Feb. 25.

The GRE prep course cost is $195 on or before Jan. 20, and $220 after the deadline. The cost includes a GRE review book.

The GMAT prep course cost is $195 on or before Jan. 21, and $220 after the deadline. The cost includes a GMAT review book. Both GRE and GMAT course instruction will be provided by ECU faculty members Philip Adams, coordinator of the University Writing Center, and Mark McCarthy, professor of accounting.

For more information or to register, call the ECU College of Business Office of Professional Programs at 328-6377 or visit http://www.ecu.edu/cs-bus/programsoffered.cfm, or e-mail the College of Business at cobprofpro@ecu.edu.
Picking up the reins, picking up the pieces

Randy Woodson will be the new guy at N.C. State. But being an outsider may not be a bad thing.

The Purdue University provost who will be NCSU's new chancellor is a fresh face from the Midwest with no links to the prior university regime. That may be an advantage for Woodson as the leader of an institution trying to shake past controversies. In 2009, questions about the hiring of former first lady Mary Easley culminated in the resignations of former Chancellor James Oblinger and other campus leaders. Here are five tasks ahead for Woodson as he takes the helm of the state's largest campus, according to university administrators who have faced similar challenges.

Job 1: Be transparent

Woodson will have to win over students, faculty, staff and alumni groups that may have become skeptical of university leadership after last year's turmoil.

"It's all about relationships," said Joseph Johnson, an educational leadership professor at Fayetteville State University and former dean of education there.

Transparency and openness are buzzwords these days at NCSU. Woodson is an outsider, which may help on a campus where people will likely expect change and even welcome it, said Steve Ballard, East Carolina University's chancellor. Ballard took over in 2004 after a series of financial foul-ups forced his predecessor from office.

"I think there will be a great deal of support for the chancellor and a willingness to go along with it," Ballard said. "But you have to communicate what you're doing and why you're doing it. That's very important."

Woodson has already pledged openness. He said it was clear during the hiring process that NCSU's leaders were "ready for the university to move on from its last chapter."

The selection process itself was secret, prompting questions about the overall commitment to transparency.

Job 2: Break with past

Woodson has not indicated a desire to make sweeping changes. In fact, he was effusive in his praise for NCSU. He should keep that up, advised Johnson.

Johnson has watched his university rebound over the last two years under the leadership of current Chancellor James Anderson, hired in 2007 to clean up after some messy financial audits there. Anderson did so by spending a great deal of time analyzing the university's structure and then making firm decisions without dwelling on past problems, Johnson recalled.

"It's not about focusing on what's transpired," Johnson said. "I just think he needs to be very clear about
what his purpose is there."

Job 3: Don't fix what isn't broken

At its core, NCSU is a strong, forward-looking university with a deep well of alumni support and a solid reputation in science and technology, say supporters. Woodson should promote and build on those strengths, others advise.

"N.C. State is not really in bad trouble," Johnson said. It "does not need to be fixed."

The university is in much better shape than in 1989, when Larry Monteith was tapped to pull the school out of an athletics scandal that had resulted in the resignation of Chancellor Bruce Poulton. Rabid fans blamed Monteith for the departure of popular basketball Coach Jim Valvano. Once, a man spit on the new chancellor at a basketball game; a plane flew over a graduation ceremony with the message, "Fire Monteith."

But the calm, unassuming Monteith, who was chancellor of NCSU for nine years, would eventually be credited with righting the ship and leading NCSU to a path of growth and academic prominence.

Job 4: Seek advice

UNC-Chapel Hill was in mourning in 1999 when Bill McCoy stepped in as its interim leader after the death of Chancellor Michael Hooker, who died of cancer at 53.

Then came chaos, including a budget deficit and a four-day sit-in by student protesters against sweatshop practices at T-shirt factories.

The key was to seek advice from those around him, keep his eye on the university's major priorities and work through the problems, said McCoy, a retired executive. To turn an organization around, McCoy said, leaders must assume that the people around them are capable and interested in doing the right thing.

McCoy sought advice from students, professors and staff on issues such as how to schedule snow makeup days or what to do about a losing football program. "Everybody was on the same wavelength and wanted to be a part of the team," he said.

Job 5: Jump in quickly

New leaders, particularly those without prior knowledge of their new university, often get grace periods.

Woodson may not be so fortunate, cautioned Claire Van Ummersen, vice president for the Center for Effective Leadership with the American Council on Education. Woodson is slated to begin work no later than May 1, which means he'll take over during the heart of budget season -- no small task these days with public universities grappling with budget deficits.

"The honeymoon period may not be as long to get things accomplished," Van Ummersen said. "He'll have to weigh in on the needs of the campus."

Staff writers Jane Stancill and Jay Price contributed to this article.
ECSU keeps lid on student info

By Kristin Pitts

Staff Writer

Saturday, January 9, 2010

Requests for graduation records reveal that Elizabeth City State University is the only institution in the University of North Carolina system to deny the public access to directory information about its students.

The university's no-access policy came up when ECSU officials were asked if two students — Rainey Dorothea Bowden and Ynisha Robinson — were allowed to graduate after the pair allegedly assaulted another student last year.

Interviewed this week, Chancellor Willie Gilchrist said he could not say definitively whether the two graduated in December.

"What I can say to you is, at this point, because of (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) I can't say anymore than what I've said," Gilchrist said in an interview Wednesday.

But representatives from other UNC schools said that the rules outlined in FERPA are precisely why they are required to release information about their students.

The federal law protects the privacy of student educational records, but does not protect directory information, which includes a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance.

When asked Friday, representatives from Appalachian State University, Fayetteville State University, UNC-Wilmington, Winston-Salem State University, East Carolina University, UNC School of the Arts, Western Carolina University, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, and UNC-Chapel Hill, all said that they release directory information — such as whether a student has graduated — when asked.

"That's public information," said Jane Nicholson, director of university news for Appalachian State University.

Nicholson's remarks were echoed by a number of other university representatives who said that directory information is considered public, and must be provided upon request.

"That's public information," said Dana Fishetti, media relations manager for UNC-Wilmington. "There are very specific guidelines (in FERPA) on what the university can provide."

Other universities polled used the National Student Clearinghouse, a system that allows employers and members of the public to verify a student's degree for a fee. Once the party seeking the information pays the $9.50 fee, they are privy to directory information about the student, according to the company's Web site.

UNC-Charlotte, North Carolina State University, UNC-Asheville, UNC-Greensboro, UNC-Pembroke, North Carolina Central University, and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University all utilize the National Student Clearinghouse.

In a telephone conversation Thursday, Gilchrist said that the university's legal staff did not view a student's graduation as directory information.

He added that he would consult with UNC officials regarding the correct interpretation of FERPA guidelines.
The issue was not cleared up by Friday as questions regarding Bowden's and Robinson's possible graduation were not answered.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's Web site, schools are required to notify parents of students of FERPA rules once per year. Most, like ECSU, do so through their policy manual.

Students then have the option of concealing directory information, but according to FERPA, a student or parent must give the school "a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them."

Most students choose not to conceal their directory information, making those students, as one school spokesman put it, "fair game."

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NEWS

Doctor: Reform is local

By JONATHAN CLAYBORNE
Staff Writer

Published: Sunday, January 10, 2010 2:16 AM EST

GREENVILLE — Far removed from negotiations under way in Washington, D.C., Dr. Paul Cunningham assayed the congressional formula for health-care reform from a moderate's perspective.

“Washington, D.C., seems to be a long distance away,” he mused Thursday.

Cunningham, dean of the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, said that some outcomes of the still-solidifying legislation are yet unclear, and that important changes are taking place out of public view.

“It’s like reading tea leaves,” he said in his office at the Brody Medical Sciences building.

Yet, what is clear is that health care in the United States is undergoing seismic shifts, albeit in gradual tremors.

“None of this is going to happen overnight,” Cunningham observed. “The efficiencies will not be realized for years.”

Asked to define the patient’s role in health-care reform, Cunningham prescribed some pointed advice: “When you hear the rhetoric, go talk to your doctor.”

He didn’t say anything about seeking the wisdom of politicians, editorial writers, industry lobbyists or other special-interest advocates.

“Wait and see,” he said. “Be patient. Remember to continue to advocate for your needs at the community level.”

Though the full spectrum of health care has been dissected thoroughly in this ongoing debate, one thing that appears to have emerged intact is patients’ trust in their doctors, Cunningham said.

He added that patients should “learn as much as they can, and speak to their physicians.”

Whether one classifies it as insurance reform, patient protection, affordable care or a mistake, the regulatory requirements of the coming law will be set in the rarified air of the nation’s capital.

But the measure’s directives will be put into practice on the ground, Cunningham said.

“That’s where the fine tuning will take place,” he said.
He suggested that it will take the cooperation of the medical community and the people it serves to make the altered system work — that, at some point, policy debate will give way to the hands-on job of redefining health-care parameters.

“The ideology has been so divisive at the political level that the public has been injured by the rhetoric,” he said.

Cunningham avoids highly charged phrases like “death panels,” a term preferred by some reform opponents. He said the term was created to induce anxiety.

“Why bother?” he said. “I don’t think it’s necessary to go that far.”

The doctor also steers clear of utterances like the scuttled “public option” favored by House Democrats, noting that the same goals can be arrived at with different terminology.

He said that, personally, “I’m not married to the public option,” and “All of these catch words have generated their own political wind, it seems.”

Effect

Cunningham does see some benefits coming down the pike.

For instance, he contends that North Carolina hospitals are poised to take advantage of a universal electronic-records system that currently doesn’t exist, but could be created in response to reform.

The medical school and Pitt County Memorial Hospital have a working relationship, recognizing that the two are separate entities, but reform could deliver opportunities for increased connectivity, he related.

“Investment in innovative delivery models may be supported by this legislation,” Cunningham said.

The legislation being hammered out by House and Senate leaders could extend coverage to most Americans, and is intended to blunt the skyrocketing costs of treatment and insurance, he relayed.

In order to expand coverage, “One has to create new structures,” he said.

“There seems to be some aspect of the health-care reform that speaks to pilot programs or initiatives that might be helpful to us,” he said, referring to the medical school.

The doctor had hoped to see more educational slots identified via reform, explaining that he forecasts more of a reallocation of graduate-level resources to be shared by rural and inner-city areas.

“We’re looking for a more robust response than that because the community is facing a physician shortage,” he said.

One of the expressed goals of the reformers was to create a benchmark for insurance premiums and curtail costs while shifting part of the tax burden to so-called “Cadillac” insurance plans, Cunningham said.

The nonprofit exchanges through which people would be able to buy their health insurance are supposed to have cost controls, he said, cautioning that any one of these constituent parts “is going to require enormous investment at the grassroots level.”

Overall, the changes will come, but they will be incremental, and the medical community will have to figure out how to implement them, Cunningham asserted.

Health-care reform is “a modernized vehicle,” he continued, “but it still needs drivers and passengers and others to make this vehicle perform.”
And, of course, medicine will continue to be imperfect.

No one foresaw the emergence of H1N1, also known as the "swine flu," Cunningham said, adding that no one anticipated that obesity would become an epidemic that costs billions of dollars per year.

"We haven't even begun to figure out how to cure most cancers," he said. "We can treat them; we don't know how to cure them."

But more effective controls can be put into practice if enough smart people get to work on making that happen, and it's up to physicians and other professionals to make health-care reform work, he reiterated.

Still, there will always be glitches.

"The human elements, the biology of who we are as human beings, drives this process in ways that are beyond our complete control," he said.

In the final analysis, from a local perspective the shakeups in medicine matter less in Washington, D.C., than in eastern North Carolina, he indicated.

"All politics is local," Cunningham concluded.

The key is to keep trying new modes of care and keep discarding what doesn't work, in essence changing the means of production to achieve better results, he said, summing things up this way: "I'm not aware of any other so-called industry that does that on a regular basis."

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UNC system scales back leave pay

CHAPEL HILL -- The UNC Board of Governors has revised a policy that wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars on UNC administrators who were supposed to return to teaching but instead retired, took other jobs or were eased out of their jobs.

Campus chancellors - and the UNC system president - will now get a six-month leave after stepping down at a salary comparable to what other faculty members in their academic departments earn. Previously, the "retreat rights" policy allowed a year of leave at the full administrative salary.

But the policy does let the president offer a candidate for chancellor more than six months, at the lower pay rate, if deemed necessary during negotiations.

The Board of Governors' actions follow reports in The News & Observer that showed the retreat rights policy was being abused.

A provost at N.C. Central University, for example, was paid $104,000 for a six-month leave and then retired, while a provost at Fayetteville State University received $72,500 to go on leave for five months only to be let go shortly after she returned. UNC-Asheville paid a provost nearly $59,000 to go on leave while knowing he was out looking for another job, which he eventually won at a different university.

The policy also now includes a "clawback" provision. If a departing chancellor takes administrative leave but doesn't return to a faculty job later, he or she must return the money earned during the leave.

The campus leader also must spell out plans for the leave, and write a summary report afterward detailing the experience. Until now, there was no such requirement.

"I think it has accountability to us and to the taxpayer," said Hannah Gage, the board's chairwoman. "We know what the chancellors will be doing during their leaves and after, and I think that makes sense."

Over five years, public universities paid 117 administrators leaves totaling $8 million.

The university system will now look at amending a similar policy governing other top administrators such as vice chancellors and provosts.

State Rep. Nelson Dollar, a Cary Republican, said Friday that he was encouraged by the change.

"We criticize it in the corporate world when we see someone who fails get a golden parachute," said Dollar, vice-chairman of the education subcommittee on universities. "We shouldn't be doing that with taxpayer funds."

Though the retreat rights policy came under scrutiny last year, many campus leaders said restricting it could cost the system top leaders.

"It is true that other universities have more generous policies, and we'll just have to see what the impact
of it is," said Holden Thorp, the UNC-Chapel Hill chancellor. "Most people, when they take these jobs, think about success, not what happens if things don't work out."

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Ex-Purdue provost set to take helm at NCSU

Purdue University tried everything to keep Provost William "Randy" Woodson from leaving Indiana to become N.C. State University's next chancellor.

The university offered more money than the $420,000 he would make here.

It hinted that he could be the next president of that five-campus, 72,000-student system.

Even Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels called Woodson to beg him not to go, then threatened to have the state police block his escape.

On Friday, though, NCSU officially stole the plant scientist turned fast-rising higher-ed star from one of the nation's top land grant universities. He's expected to take the helm of North Carolina's largest university by May.

After he was formally elected by the UNC System's Board of Governors, Woodson said that despite the enticements from Indiana and offers of jobs elsewhere, he wanted to come to Raleigh. NCSU's potential gives him an opportunity to lift a major university into the ranks of the elite, he said.

"This is an outstanding institution that's poised for even more success in the future," he told the Board of Governors, the system's other chancellors and a host of NCSU officials.

The UNC system's Board of Governors voted Woodson chancellor-elect Friday morning. System President Erskine Bowles nominated him to the board after interviewing three finalists.

"It was clear after all my interviews, and it wasn't even close at the end of the day," Bowles said.

What persuaded Bowles, he said, was Woodson's combination of attributes, including his people skills, vision, experience and passion. Bowles said Woodson had earned a reputation for integrity and sound judgment as he rose to become Purdue's chief academic officer.

Better yet, he said, Woodson was young enough to stay in the post for years and bring stability. NCSU is getting its fourth chancellor since 2004, and last year saw its reputation battered by a scandal over the hiring of former state first lady Mary Easley. That led to the resignation of Chancellor James Oblinger as well as the chairman of the Board of Trustees and the provost.

"Randy's 52, and we need stability at N.C. State, and he said, 'I'd like to end my career here at N.C. State. I'd like to spend 12 to 15 years as head of this university,'" Bowles said during a news conference after Woodson's election. "That's what we need at this university: a great leader who will bring stability, credibility, and a long-term vision, and who can execute, and that's what he can do."

The spring semester doesn't begin until Monday, and with students and many faculty members away from campus, Woodson's welcome was muted. He was honored at a Centennial Campus reception with a couple hundred people - and Wolfpack mascot Mr. Wuf - Friday night, but campus leaders plan a larger
official welcome when students are back.

At Purdue, meanwhile, officials were mourning their loss. University President France Córdova told the Lafayette Courier & Journal that Woodson had been an indispensable partner.

"Randy has really helped me in all aspects of running the entire university," she said. "It will be different without Randy. ... He has just brought such internal strength. His leadership is marked by the harmony he brings and all the elements of the university."

Woodson has no major ties to North Carolina, but said he was familiar with the university because Purdue and NCSU often compete for faculty and staff. Indeed, he said that he had even tried to steal professors from the campus he will soon lead.

N.C.'s reputation

He was clearly eager, though, to steep himself in the culture of North Carolina higher education, and not just with his obligatory Wolfpack-red necktie.

He told the Board of Governors that one reason he wanted the job so badly was North Carolina's national reputation for its financial support of the university system, something reflected in recent top-10 rankings for education value for both UNC-Chapel Hill and NCSU.

And during the board's vote Friday morning, he sat with his family on one side and, on the other, former longtime system President Bill Friday, a hero to many in the room and, as Bowles put it, "N.C. State's most famous graduate."

Woodson said he wanted to learn more about NCSU before talking much about changes he might make, but said one thing he wants is for the university to do a better job of telling its story.

"This is a classic example of a land-grant university," he said. "We're good at hiding our light under a basket and not talking enough about the things that we do."

Land-grant institutions, a category that also includes Purdue, were created with the help of 19th century federal acts inspired by the industrial revolution to teach agriculture, engineering and science.

Part of getting NCSU's word out, he said in an interview with The News & Observer later in the day, is excellence in athletics. He described himself as a passionate supporter of college athletics and said that he understood its importance and tradition at NCSU.

"Sports brings a level of visibility to the institution, and it's a big part of the brand when it's done well," he said. "I will want them to pay as much attention to graduation rates as they do to rankings."

Yanked upward

At Purdue, he was often the university's face in the legislature - always a key role for a chancellor here, where much of the university budget comes from the state. That will be more important now, given a state budget crisis that has triggered unprecedented cuts to the universities.

Woodson has been co-chairman of a Purdue committee responsible for devising ways to cut costs, something that has been a big focus for NCSU administrators lately.
Woodson has been Purdue's provost for about two years. Before that, was dean of agriculture, and in that post partnered with the College of Science to start a climate change research center, sharply increased grants and began the college's Office of Multicultural Programs.

Woodson's rise at Purdue was quick, which has prompted some at NCSU and Purdue to wonder whether he was done climbing.

Former Lt. Gov. Bob Jordan, an NCSU trustee who led the search committee that picked the three finalists for the job, said Woodson hadn't so much climbed the career ladder as he had been yanked upward by superiors who recognized his talent.

Woodson said the potential at NCSU was irresistible, and it was enough of a challenge that he didn't feel as though he would need to move up another rung.

"If I'm successful here, I can be here 10 years or more," he said. "I'm young enough that I have enough time before retirement to leave a lasting, positive impact on an institution, and that's what I want to do here."

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NEWS

Rouse targeting incumbent Jones

By JONATHAN CLAYBORNE
Staff Writer
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A Winterville Democrat wants to unseat U.S. Rep. Walter B. Jones Jr., R-N.C., and he's already launching his campaign in the hope of reaching that goal.

Johnny Rouse, former chairman of the Pitt County Democratic Party, recently announced that he's seeking his party's nomination in the 3rd Congressional District.

"I'm just concerned about the direction that the district and our region, eastern North Carolina, is taking," he told the Daily News recently.

According to a news release from his campaign, Rouse is an Air Force veteran and a graduate of East Carolina University.

A licensed Realtor who maintains a small business on the side, Rouse said he is employed full-time in patient services at the Brody School of Medicine in Greenville.

The Kinston native said his Air Force travels gave him some basis for comparison between his home area and other regions of the country.

"The development that I saw was awing, in many ways," he said of those travels.

Rouse said, that upon returning home, he was puzzled as to why this part of the state hadn't developed as it should have.

"I look at the representation that we have in the House of Representatives, and I'm concerned that there's more focus placed on national politics by the representative (Jones) than there is on issues in our district," he said.

The Jones camp doesn't comment on rival candidacies until after the filing period is closed "because you don't know who all will be filing as a Republican, who's going to be filing as a Democrat," said Glen Downs, the congressman's chief of staff.

Jones normally doesn't focus on his opponents, opting to spotlight his record "and rise and fall on that," Downs continued.

"I think after almost anybody has been in public office for a very long period of time, you end — and it's almost a cliché, but it's really true — but good government kind of becomes good politics," he said.
Jones has his own ideological positions, obviously, "But if you are providing good constituent service, there's nothing political about it per se," Downs added.

According to his online biography and SourceWatch.org, Jones took his seat in Congress in 1995, following a decade-long stint in the N.C. House of Representatives.

A former Democrat, Jones switched party affiliation after a failed bid to obtain the Democratic nomination to run for the old congressional seat held by his father, Walter B. Jones Sr.

Since being elected to Congress, "He has never faced a serious or well-funded opponent," his SourceWatch profile reads.

In 2008, Jones easily defeated challenger Craig Weber, a former TV weatherman.

Jones scored 201,686 votes to Weber's 104,364, according to the N.C. State Board of Elections' Web site.

According to OpenSecrets.org, Jones' campaign committee has raised $225,332. During the period, he spent $130,122, and was left with $127,766 on hand. The report was last updated on Sept. 30, 2009.

Rouse declined to say how much money he would have to raise in order to wage an effective fight against the entrenched incumbent.

"That's something that I'd rather refer to my budgeting people," he said. "Right now, I've got to focus on winning the primary. I may have competition."

He added that, to the best of his knowledge, no other Democrat had announced his or her desire to best Jones in the 3rd Congressional District, adding, "But I know there's interest."

Rouse did say that Jones' previous political sparring partners might have been well-financed.

"They've struggled in getting that translated into a vote. I'd say my ultimate goal is to make it about the district, about the people," Rouse said.

Rouse's news release pokes fun of Jones for his now-infamous drive to rename French fries "freedom fries," a swipe at France's stand against the Iraq war.

"Frankly, our representative hasn't done much, other than renaming French Fries in the Congressional cafeteria," the release quotes Rouse as saying.

Jones and his GOP colleagues also targeted French toast, reads a CNN.com article dated March 12, 2003.

It's been widely reported that Jones backtracked from the "freedom fries" incident, going so far as to express regret over the fast-food dustup.

Asked how he can appeal to voters in Jones' conservative district, Rouse said he avoids labels, but indicated he identifies with conservative Democrats.

"The bottom line is that, at the end of the day, the least I hope to accomplish in my campaign is to try to hold the focus on what the people of the 3rd District are focused on," he said.
Going smoke-free benefits businesses, locals find in study

Mike Wilder / Times-News
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Smoke-free restaurants are good for business as well as for people’s health.

That’s the premise of a paper written by three Alamance County residents, along with two professors at East Carolina University, that appears in this month’s edition of Health Promotion Practice.

It also may be good news for restaurants here and in other parts of North Carolina as a statewide smoking ban affecting most restaurants and bars went into effect this week.

The article was compiled by Lynn Inman, housing specialist with the Alamance-Caswell Local Management Entity; Karen Webb, a former co-worker of Inman who has also been active in preventing substance abuse; and Cindy Brady, president of the United Way of Alamance County, who worked on anti-smoking efforts as head of Healthy Alamance. East Carolina University professors Hans Johnson and Craig Becker also participated in the study.

The paper includes the results of interviews with 70 owners or managers of smoke-free restaurants in Alamance County. Restaurant owners and managers discussed the results of voluntary efforts to eliminate smoking.

“By far, the majority of respondents indicated no economic loss by being smoke free,” the paper says. “A number of respondents indicated their business had increased.”

Some restaurant owners reported an initial decline in business.

“For the first six months we saw a dip in volume, and eventually it came back,” one said.

The paper says restaurant owners reported a quicker turn-around time as a result of being smoke-free, as well as customer compliments about the smoke-free environment.