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Those ‘Gap Years’ Aren’t Just for Students

By TANYA MOHN

DENNIS R. SINAR, 61, a doctor from Washington, N.C., is quick to explain why he took a yearlong break from his job.

“I was pretty burned out after practicing medicine for 26 years,” said Dr. Sinar, a gastroenterologist and professor of medicine at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. “I needed a recharge.”

So he took a “gap year,” from July 2007 to June 2008, to explore things like stone masonry, antique restoration, archaeology and traditional Eastern medicine, in locations spanning from Alaska to Nepal to Romania. “I think everyone in his heart of hearts has some things they have always wanted to do but for one reason or other never does,” Dr. Sinar said.

Taking a break from work is an excellent way for adults to segue into a new career or invigorate an old one, said Holly Bull, president of the Center for Interim Programs in Princeton, N.J., which sets up gap-year programs. The group works mainly with college-age students, but it has also served older adults since it was formed 28 years ago, Ms. Bull said. In recent years, midcareer breaks have been garnering more interest, she said.

A report on adult gap years released in July 2008 by Mintel International, a market research company, described the potential American market for gap years as a “sleeping giant.” And now, with job cuts on the rise, the newly unemployed may find the timing for a gap year to be ideal.

Planning a gap year “takes a little more preparation for adults,” Ms. Bull said. Concerns about finances and job prospects are more common, she said.

Costs range widely, depending in part on location and the types of programs. Ms. Bull estimates that an average gap year runs $6,000 to $15,000, or less “if you keep travel down and do low-cost programs.” Of course, that does not include financial obligations like a mortgage, although some people can rent out their homes to finance their year away.

You don’t have to be wealthy to finance a gap year, said Susan Griffith, author of “Gap Years for Grown-Ups.” If a schoolteacher were to rent out his or her home for six months, “the rent would go a long way to paying their daily expenses in a developing country like Cambodia or Bolivia,” she said.

Dr. Sinar limited expenses by working for room and board on some programs. In Nepal, home stays with local families were arranged, which helped to lower costs.

The entire year does not have to be spent away from home, either. Dr. Sinar was away about seven months during his year off, which included extended stays at home between programs. That schedule made the experience
easier for his partner, Kathryn, who also visited him on location several times.

"A gap year is a challenge for the older individual to step out of a comfort zone and take a risk; I enjoyed that side most," said Dr. Sinar, who kept a daily blog about his experience. His time studying Eastern medicine "reaffirmed the reasons I went into health care" said Dr. Sinar, who returned to practice medicine at his old job, although he works fewer days. "I use those experiences to provide more compassionate care," he added. "And I listen better than I did before."

By contrast, Lee Attix of South Portland, Me., 52, used skills gained during a gap year more than 10 years ago to switch careers from sales and marketing into work focused on wildlife. "I wanted more than just a paycheck and doing a job," he said.

His gap-year volunteer experiences included trail maintenance in Vermont, a stint at a farm in Arkansas devoted to ending world hunger, and study of endangered hawks in Utah. It paid off. He was offered paid seasonal work in loon conservation. Today he is a manager for BioDiversity Research Institute, a small nonprofit in Gorham, Me.

Taking a gap year "was the best thing I ever did career-wise," he said.

Tari Marcou, 54, of Hamilton, Ohio, was working as a program coordinator for an adult leadership program at Ohio State University several years ago when she realized she needed a midcareer break. Her children were grown, and she was able to sell her house for a profit. She gave her dog and her furniture to her daughter for safe-keeping and started a gap year that included time at a meditation retreat in France, organic farms in Italy and a wildlife awareness center in South Africa.

After returning to the United States, she was approached about a new job at Ohio State "for a sizable increase in salary" she said. Instead of pursuing the job, she parlayed her passion for travel into a new career by becoming a certified tour director. "I feel like I finally found where I need to be," she said.

Dennis J. Garritan, chairman of the department of leadership and human capital management at New York University, said a gap-year experience could be worthwhile for employees and companies.

For employees, "investing in themselves and enhancing skill set is a strategic move that will pay dividends throughout their career," Dr. Garritan said. He added that returning employees feel refreshed and have given thought to their careers.

For companies, offering unpaid leaves makes good sense for recruitment and retention of talented employees, and is a more creative long-term way to weather the economic downturn than layoffs.

BUT Dr. Garritan cautions that those returning from a gap year and looking for a new job could run into problems. Some companies may perceive these prospective hires as turnover risks. He also suggests that gap-year workers who intend to switch careers keep the door open to returning to the same profession: if an accountant hoping to become a chef goes to Paris to study culinary arts, he should plan to devote a little time to learning the European accounting system or to doing accounting work for a nonprofit.

"But my hope is that this takes off," Dr. Garritan said. "We're all thinking, 'What's my next act?'"
Those 'Gap Years' Aren't Just for Students

Dr. Dennis R. Sitar, a gastroenterologist, with a patient in Greenville, N. C. Dr. Sitar took a career break to explore several interests around the globe.

By TANYA MCKay
Published: January 10, 2009
Dean Stephen Thomas closes the year for ECU Club

By
Special to The Daily Reflector

Monday, January 12, 2009

Cypress Glen Retirement Community Residents held its final ECU Club quarterly meeting for the year Dec. 17. The speaker was Stephen Thomas, dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences in the Division of Health Sciences at East Carolina University.

Thomas came to ECU in 1998 and was a department chair, professor and a graduate program director within the CAHS Department of Rehabilitation Studies before being named dean in 2001. He earned his undergraduate degree at Texas Christian University and his masters and doctoral degrees and from the University of Arizona.

His comments focused on the many accomplishments achieved by the College of Allied Health Sciences, including the celebration of its 40th anniversary this year.

"As North Carolina's first and only College of Allied Health Sciences, East Carolina is the largest university provider of allied health professionals for the state," he said.

Some of the College's major initiatives include the Research for Older Adult Driver Initiative, gait in diabetic amputees and Project Working Recovery for substance abusers. A "falls risk screening" clinic monitors individuals with fall-related injuries.

"One of the most well-known products invented here is the Speech Easy device to help stutters," he said. "We are currently working with the Department of Defense on a Wounded Warrior program to help injured soldiers get back to a normal life."

The East Carolina University College of Allied Health Sciences, established in 1967, was created in response to the growing need for health care professionals and services in eastern North Carolina and the state. The college offers an array of bachelor's, masters and doctoral degree programs. According to officials, more than 88 percent of past allied health sciences graduates stayed in North Carolina for employment.

Musical entertainment for the evening was provided by the Chamber Chorale of the Greenville Chorale Society directed by Lisa Stockard. The a cappella group sang many holiday favorites and the nearly 90 attendees joined them on several selections. The chorale began in 1969 as a community choir and the group is currently in their 40th season of performing.

The Cypress Glen ECU Club is open to all residents and their guests who have an interest in East Carolina University. Many Cypress Glen residents have close ties to the university, i.e., ECU graduates, family members of graduates, and former employees of the university. Cypress Glen is a continuing care retirement community located in Greenville at 100 Hickory Street, about one mile from ECU.
Holland: No university has asked to speak with Holtz

The Daily Reflector

Sunday, January 11, 2009

While reports out of Boston say that East Carolina football coach Skip Holtz is a candidate to replace fired Boston College coach Jeff Jagodzinski, ECU director of athletics Terry Holland said on the school’s Web site Sunday night that "no one has asked to speak to any ECU head coach."

The Boston Globe reported that Holtz, Florida offensive coordinator Steve Addazio and Richmond head coach Mike London were all leading possibilities to become the Eagles’ next coach.

Holtz did not return a message left early Sunday afternoon, nor did Holland. But the Pirates’ AD did post a message on the school site that he hadn’t been contacted by any schools seeking permission to speak to any ECU head coaches.

“I will not make any further comment on this issue nor will any ECU coach address such situations,” Holland wrote. "There is simply no reason for anyone at one institution to say anything about another institution’s search for a coach. A coach should not be expected to say she/he has no interest in a position at another institution if, for no other reason, than it is not fair to the institution conducting the search."

BC athletic director Gene DiFilippo might also be considering his program’s current defensive coordinator, Frank Spaziani, according to the Globe. DiFilippo reportedly wants the position filled this week.

Former ECU head coach and BC offensive coordinator Steve Logan, BC offensive line coach Jack Bicknell Jr. and associate director of football operations Barry Gallup are also possibilities.

Holtz has been named as a candidate for other jobs each of the last two seasons.

In December, Holtz spent a week in New York with father Lou Holtz during which time he interviewed for the Syracuse coaching job. The Orange offered the job to Holtz, who declined.

Last season, West Virginia was granted permission by Holland to speak with Holtz, who has guided the Pirates to three consecutive bowl games and increased his team’s win total steadily in four seasons — from five in 2005, to seven in ’06, eight in ’07 and nine last season.
The 'heart' of a new facility

By The Daily Reflector

Sunday, January 11, 2009

A slow but steady stream of 100 patients were wheeled down a long corridor from Pitt County Memorial Hospital into the newest local facility for cardiovascular care throughout Sunday.

The East Carolina Heart Institute at PCMH will fully open for business first thing this morning, after several days of moving equipment into place and years of construction and planning.

The staff welcomed their first in-patient group by gurney and wheelchair, depending on individual needs. Six of the patients moved Sunday had suffered a heart attack in the last 24 hours, according to the Heart Institute’s Executive Director and Vice President for Cardiovascular Care Brian Floyd, so the utmost care was required. Each was attended by nurses and physicians the whole way to ensure a smooth transition, and oftentimes family members completed the caravan.

A wide array of PCMH employees, from housekeeping to rehabilitation to medical specialists, worked together to ensure all patients were tucked in and receiving care upon arrival during what Floyd described as an exciting time for all involved.

“It’s been a highly collaborative effort,” he said. “Everybody gets a part of this.”

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ECU appoints '92 grad to leadership position

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, January 11, 2009

East Carolina University will soon have a new official to help guide its mission to become one of the nation’s premiere leadership universities.

Thomas J. “Tommy” Spaulding, former president of Up With People, has been named the first Leader in Residence at ECU.

Spaulding, a 1992 ECU graduate who recently formed a leadership consulting and speaking firm based in Denver, will hold the position for the 2009 calendar year and work with ECU for a week every month.

Provost Marilyn Sheerer said the appointment is part of ECU’s strategic plan to enhance a focus on leadership at the university.

“He is recognized on the national level as someone who champions leadership,” Sheerer said. “There are all kinds of leadership development programs here.”

Sheerer said each college has leadership programs in existence and officials are working on university-wide programs that Spaulding will help develop.

“We will be tapped into the resources that he has,” she said. “He is giving back to us and helping us make this model work. He will be working internally and bringing in speakers on the subject.”

The university has included a commitment to leadership as one of its five objectives in its strategic plan for the future.

“Our world is starving for better leaders,” Spaulding said. “Universities should develop graduates, but, more importantly, they should develop future leaders. ECU has the opportunity to be a true leadership university, and I’m proud to be a part of this tremendous vision.”

The university is in the process of creating an audit system that will allow students to leave with a diploma and a profile of work completed that relates to leadership. There is also a focus on faculty members acting as leadership models in the classroom, Sheerer said.

Spaulding will work on these initiatives and develop similar programs that will make ECU a national model in the area of leadership, Sheerer said.

“Tommy is a perfect match for our leadership initiative,” said Chancellor Steve Ballard.

“He has a proven track record in leadership development and has earned the respect of other well-known leaders. He is one of us and we couldn’t be happier to have him join our team in this critical role.”

While a student at ECU, Spaulding served as president of the senior class, Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity and the Inter-fraternity Council. He also earned the Most Outstanding Leader award.

In 2006, he received an ECU Outstanding Alumni Award.

He holds an MBA from Bond University in Queensland, Australia, and an MA in nonprofit management from Regis University in Denver.

He serves on the board of trustees for the Museum of Outdoor Arts and on the board of directors of Leader’s Challenge.
ECU students to honor King through volunteerism

The Daily Reflector

For some students at East Carolina University, the Jan. 19 holiday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. won’t be a day of rest, but a day of service in which they remember and emulate the Civil Rights leader.

About 150 students will participate in the 2009 MLK Day Challenge. The annual event, organized by ECU’s Volunteer and Service-Learning Center, offers students the opportunity to volunteer with local nonprofit organizations.

“Dr. King was all about bringing people together through service, and this is a way to honor that legacy and involve our students in community projects,” said Shawn Moore, community partner coordinator. “We think it’s a really great way to engage the students.”

Students register online to participate in one of 14 projects. Among the good deeds they will do that day are preparing food items for distribution at the Food Bank at Greenville, packing care packages for deployed troops with Give to the Troops, moving mattresses and furniture at the Greenville Community Shelter and socializing dogs at the Humane Society of Eastern Carolina.

Some students will visit assisted living facilities — Red Oak, Tar River Manor, Spring Arbor and Sterling House — to do painting, landscaping and interact with residents. Others will assist at the Ronald McDonald House, Boys and Girls Club, Little Willie Center, RHA Howell Center, Hope Lodge and ARAMARK Dining Services on campus.

The event begins on campus with breakfast and an inspirational message. Students then take their own transportation to the sites to volunteer from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

“It’s pretty incredible to get 150 kids to come out on their day off to help these organizations,” Moore said, adding that some students use the day to get to know local agencies and start volunteering on a regular basis. “This lets them dip their toe in the water,” she said.

Also planned for Martin Luther King Day are a candlelight vigil, march and tribute. The vigil begins in front of Belk Hall at 5:30 p.m. The march begins at 6 p.m. on College Hill and heads through main campus, where it ends with a tribute.

For more about the MLK Day Challenge, visit https://www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/volunteer/mlk.cfm.

Nature lists ECU biologist’s work as ‘Evolutionary Gem’

The international scientific journal, Nature, recently released a list of 15 papers published within the past decade that it considers to be “Evolutionary Gems,” illustrating the “breadth, depth and power of evolutionary thinking.” Ranked at number six among the 15 prestigious publications is “Natural Selection in Speciation,” co-authored by East Carolina University biologist Jeff McKinnon.

“I am very pleased at this recognition, which I did not expect,” said McKinnon. “I enjoy the fact that two of my former students are on the paper. This is a nice salute to their hard work.”

Within the article, McKinnon and co-authors David Kingsley and Dolph Schluter, examine and confirm the evolutionary theory that divergent natural selection has a key role in speciation.

By studying a species of fish known as stickleback taken from Alaska, British Columbia, Iceland, the United Kingdom, Norway and Japan, McKinnon and his team were able to provide firm evidence that over time the fish has adapted to living in streams. Researchers found that the fish evolved repeatedly from marine ancestors, or fish that previously lived in the ocean, but returned to fresh water to spawn.

Prior to joining the faculty of ECU in August 2008, McKinnon taught at the University of Wisconsin in Whitewater. He now serves as chair of the Department of Biology in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences at ECU.

New Sociology chairman named at ECU

Dr. Leon C. Wilson has been named chair of the Department of Sociology by Dean Alan White, Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences.

Prior to joining the faculty at ECU, Wilson spent 18 years at Wayne State University in Detroit, where he taught courses in applied sociology, social psychology, social statistics, and seminars in social psychology and African American families. He most

WILSON
recently served as chair of the sociology department at WSU.

Wilson received his doctoral and master’s degrees in sociology from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, his master’s degree in religion from Andrews University, and his bachelor’s of theology degree from Caribbean Union College in Trinidad.

Throughout his 40 years in academia, Wilson has held appointments and lectureships at the Ministry of Education in Guyana, South America; Caribbean Union College Secondary School in Trinidad; and the University of Michigan.

Among his professional organizations, Wilson is a member of the American Sociological Association, Association of Black Sociologists, and the Caribbean Studies Association.

**ECU alum recognized with early career achievement award**

A 2002 graduate of ECU’s Industrial Technology program has been awarded the 2008 Outstanding Early Achievement Award by the National Association of Industrial Technology (NAIT). Bryan Derr of Hertford received the honor Nov. 22 at the NAIT’s awards banquet in Nashville, Tenn.

The Outstanding Early Achievement award has been given annually since 2005 by NAIT in recognition of outstanding career achievements by a recent industrial technology graduate. Derr was the single recipient of the national award for 2008.

Nominated by ECU faculty members, Derr works at Command Decision Systems and Solutions Inc., where he is program manager and senior CNC programmer, designing and manufacturing highly-specialized goods for the U.S. Coast Guard.

Derr earned his bachelor’s degree in design from ECU in 2002 and his master’s degree in industrial technology from ECU in 2005.

Additionally, he teaches Advanced CADD and Mechanical Architecture Drafting courses for the College of the Albemarle and served as a consultant in the planning and development of its Mechanical Drafting AAS degree program.

NAIT is a membership association for faculty and administrators in technology and technology management programs throughout the US, students of those programs and graduates working in business and industry.

**Alumni Association staff member receives fellowship**

East Carolina Alumni Association Director of Membership and Marketing Doug Smith ’00, ’07 has been selected as recipient of the 2009 Council of Alumni Association Executives (CAAE) Tardy New Professional Award. Named in honor of Indiana University Alumni Association’s former President and CEO, the late Jerry F. Tardy, the award provides alumni association professionals with 1-5 years experience in the field an opportunity to visit other CAAE member alumni associations and the CAAE summer institute.

The internship is among the highest honors among university advancement professionals. The award brings notoriety to East Carolina University, which now accompanies the Universities of Arkansas, Nevada Las Vegas, Illinois, South Carolina, Houston, Connecticut, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Missouri as CAAE member institutions that have received this honor.

**Upcoming ECU events:**

- **Monday** — “The Prez-in-the-Fez Comes to Town: Provocative Humor in the Service of Peace, Love and Understanding,” a lecture by Khalil Bendib, political artist, will be held 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., Jenkins Fine Arts Center, Room 1220. Through the use of humor, Bendib aims to deconstruct insidious stereotypes.
- **Wednesday** — Charles Cobb Jr., an award-winning journalist and activist, will deliver the keynote speech for Social Justice Month at 6 p.m. at the Science & Technology Building, Room C307.
- **Jan. 19** - A candlelight vigil, march and tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. is planned on campus beginning at 5:30 p.m. in front of Belk Residence Hall.

See [www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm) for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.
Laurels — To today’s inauguration ceremony in Raleigh and the start of a new era of leadership for North Carolina. Governor-Elect Bev Perdue takes her oath of office this morning, as do Lt. Governor-Elect Walter Dalton and the Council of State. The swearing in will be followed by a parade and other events for members of the public in attendance.

Laurels — To the return of students to East Carolina University and Pitt Community College for the start of the spring semester. This community is quite fortunate to be home of these educational institutions, and the resumption of classes is a key date on the Pitt County calendar each year. Best of luck in the new year.

Darts — To problems that forced the cancellation of two functions in Greenville today. Greenville expected to host the Walk for an Inclusive Community this afternoon, but fears about inclement weather prompted its postponement. Planning difficulties scuttled a “Take Your Rake to the Park” day, sponsored by Pitt County Community Schools and Recreation. Hopefully these can take place at a later date.

Darts — To the miniscule turnout at a transportation planning forum this week that intended to inform area residents about the area’s project priorities. Only a handful of people attended, which is disappointing since officials hoped to solicit public input about the project list. Residents should try to do better in the future.

Darts — To the health concerns that will cause N.C. State women’s basketball coach Kay Yow to miss the remainder of her team’s season. Yow, an East Carolina graduate, has battled cancer and says she lacks the energy to lead the Wolfpack given the demands of the job. Here’s wishing a speedy return to the sidelines for the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame coach with local ties.

Laurels — To the improved and modernized Web site for the N.C. General Assembly that debuted this month. The design intends to allow easier navigation and seems more intuitive in how information is organized. Though the Legislature does not begin work for two weeks, it is refreshing to see changes that nod to the need for openness and accessibility in state government.
Companies propose plans for mental health facility

By Tom Marine  
The Daily Reflector

Friday, January 09, 2009

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services held a public hearing Friday to discuss projects to develop a six-bed intermediate care facility for the mentally retarded in Pitt County.

Nobody attended the hearing, other than representatives of the two companies filing the competing applications — RHA Howell Care Centers and the VOCA Corporation — the Tarboro Clinic and the state health department.

As part of the 2008 State Medical Facilities Plan, which identified the need for six local beds, the meeting addressed the projects for the facility. RHA Howell wants to build a $631,000 facility at 1501 Overlook Drive, while the VOCA Corporation of North Carolina wants to build a $515,000 facility at 2929 Beddard Road. Both locations are in Greenville.

VOCA spokesman Steve Jordan said his company already serves individuals nationwide who are in need of intermediate care. He said they encourage and request family involvement for the individuals needing care.

"From a medical standpoint, we would offer direct medical services, dental services, psychiatric and psychological services," Jordan said. "We have experience and a deep history dealing with individuals in intermediate care."

Eric Gabriel, spokesman for RHA Howell, said this facility will serve individuals from the areas of East Carolina Behavioral Health, Albemarle Local Management Entity, Beacon Center and Eastpointe. He said RHA Howell operates two six-bed facilities that specialize in serving adolescents with challenging behaviors, and one facility that specializes in serving children with severe medical challenges.

"Our Tar River facility here in Greenville is included in the clinical rotations for several East Carolina University medical training programs," Gabriel said. "The home we propose to build here will be managed by the clinical and operations staff of these fantastic homes."

The state already has identified the individuals it would transition from state-operated centers to the community.

After the public hearing, the project analyst will prepare the state findings for each proposal, according the department of health and human services. The final decision is expected by the end of April.

Contact Tom Marine at tmarine@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9567.

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NCSU envisions an iconic library

Renowned designer of the 9/11 Memorial is planning a facility to provide needed space at Centennial

BY JAY PRICE, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

RALEIGH - N.C. State University badly needs another library; its sterile-feeling new Centennial Campus needs an inviting centerpiece. They may be getting both in a single bold stroke.

The university is working with one of the hottest hyper-modern architects in the world on an iconic structure that some university officials think could attract international visitors with its design alone. It also would more than double the number of library seats the school has.

The James B. Hunt Jr. Library was one of 29 construction projects state officials decided last week to fast-track to pump cash into North Carolina's faltering economy.

The library building, planned for the new Centennial Campus south of Western Boulevard, will get the single largest chunk, $109 million. It will house both the library and the Institute for Emerging Issues, a think tank started by its namesake, North Carolina's governor from 1977 to 1985 and 1993 to 2001.

The building is expected to cost about $126 million, including $17 million approved in 2007 for planning, and be completed in 2012. University officials -- who had feared the library might be delayed for years by tough times -- were relieved when word came that the Council of State had voted to speed bond sales for the project.

NCSU has long needed more library space. It is ranked last in the UNC system, with seating for less than 5 percent of its ever-growing student body, said Susan Nutter, vice provost and director of libraries for the university. The system standard is 20 percent.

On some days, more than 7,000 students use the main D.H. Hill Library, many standing or sprawling on the floor because it has seats for fewer than 1,600, Nutter said. The Hunt library would more than double that number.

But the new building is expected to carry a greater burden than simply serving as the university's second main library. By its function and appearance, university leaders want it to inspire and be the intellectual and social heart of the new campus.

It would house collections on engineering, textiles and some hard sciences where they make the most sense, on the tech-oriented research campus. It would also provide space for collaboration on such things as research projects, and it would bring more of a campus feel to Centennial, which seems more like an office park than a university campus.

The library is being designed by the Norwegian firm of Snohetta (pronounced "sno-HET-uh"). The firm designed the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center
site in New York and won the award for top cultural building design at the 2008 World Architectural Festival.

The company's marching orders from NCSU were to draw "a signature building... that will be the heart of Centennial Campus, located at the geographical and symbolic junction of academia and the marketplace."

The design will be suggested at least partly by textiles being woven, said university officials. Some major features, such as how many floors the library would have, aren't settled yet, and the university is probably weeks away from having drawings that would accurately convey the look of the building. An early drawing suggests the building's likely footprint: an angular, vaguely Dust Buster-ish shape.

Nutter said the building is expected to feature lots of natural light and usable outdoor spaces and to be heavily "green."

Snohetta's work can be startling. Some of the firm's designs resemble giant blobs of molten metal, and others look vaguely like more-traditional skyscrapers that have started to melt and twist. Others are severely angular.

**Sterling reputation**

The company has a reputation for drawing buildings that are not just beautiful and interesting to look at but that also work well for the people who visit and work in them. That's because it listens and responds to its clients, said Paul Goldberger, the Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic for The New Yorker magazine and professor of design and architecture at Parsons The New School for Design in New York.

"They do things that are new and different, not things that you've seen before," Goldberger said. "On the other hand, they do things that take into account context and surroundings, and they operate from a position of reason rather than one of arrogance."

The new building, Nutter said, may have some brick, the material that dominates the campus, but it is not likely to feature much on the exterior. That and the designers' charge to create something extraordinary would seem to raise questions of how it would fit in, even on a new campus.

NCSU leaders said they don't expect the level of controversy that ambitious architecture sometimes ignites because everyone from students to the Board of Trustees has been involved in the planning, which has been under way for more than a year.

Goldberger, who often consults on campus design, said that fitting in doesn't have to mean imitating. A good campus, like a town or village, needs background buildings, such as shops and homes, and foreground buildings with distinctive architecture, such as churches, he said. For universities, libraries have often been chosen to stand out because their mission has always been central to education.

These days, Goldberger said, university libraries have reinvented themselves not just as places to find books but also as centers for study, socializing, and digitally enhanced research, making libraries all the more central to campus life. Their architecture reflects this. That's exactly what the new building's design will underline, Nutter said.

Goldberger applauded NCSU for trying to give Centennial an inspiring focal point.

"A campus is stronger and better if it has a heart," he said.

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HISTORY OF CENTENNIAL CAMPUS

The planned James B. Hunt Jr. Library is expected to become a landmark on a campus that the former governor helped bring to life 25 years ago.

Hunt approved the land grant that created Centennial Campus in 1984. Now consisting of more than 1,000 acres, Centennial was designed to bring together academia, government and businesses on a single research campus near downtown Raleigh. Nearly 3 million square feet of buildings is complete, and 2 1/2 times that amount is planned. A golf course is expected to open this year.

Related Content

- Get more information on plans for the library
- See more examples of the Norwegian design firm's work

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UNC-CH drops plans for airport

ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer
Comment on this story
CHAPEL HILL - UNC-Chapel Hill has scrapped its plan to look for a new airport site in Orange County.

The decision Friday was a welcome surprise to residents of the rural southwest corner of the county, who have been on edge since a bill the state legislature passed last summer allowed for the creation of an authority to find, build and run an airport. County commissioners, who were not involved in that legislation, had opposed the plan.

"We ended up surprising people with the legislation far more than we should have," UNC-CH Chancellor Holden Thorp said Friday. "It had origins in the university and origins in politics. I'm sorry that this surprised everybody."

The way the authority was created caused too much "distrust" in the community, making the panel unworkable, Thorp said.

As a result of Friday's announcement, the air component of the university's Area Health Education Centers program, which flies doctors and other health professionals to clinics across the state, will have a final home at Raleigh-Durham International Airport. The university had already planned to use RDU as a temporary home for the AHEC program, and it is constructing a $3.5 million hangar there.

The AHEC program is currently housed at the Horace Williams Airport in Chapel Hill, but Thorp reiterated Friday the university's plan eventually to close it. A new law school is still planned for that prime, flat piece of real estate, a linchpin project for UNC-CH's long-planned Carolina North development.

Thorp said the most difficult part of his decision to stop pursuing a new airport was breaking the news to the AHEC doctors who enjoy the convenience of Horace Williams to get quickly across the state to treat sick children and others. The AHEC program accounts for about
one-quarter of all the flights in and out of that airport.

Tom Bacon, AHEC's program director, said he supports Thorp's decision but conceded that some UNC-CH doctors may not be pleased with the long-term plan housing AHEC's air operations at RDU.

"There may be some faculty who are reluctant to travel, and we will have to work hard to make it easier on them," he said. "Faculty are feeling a lot of pressure these days. They're working harder. They're under pressure to find grants and be more productive with their clinical time. So I think it's a general concern that it's one more thing to cut into their time."

Bacon said his office is considering a van service and other ways to make travel to and from RDU easier.

Cliff Leath, whose 32-acre horse farm might have been seized if UNC-CH had built an airport in southwestern Orange County, was among four members of the group Preserve Rural Orange to meet with Thorp, UNC system President Erskine Bowles and House Speaker Joe Hackney in December. He was invited back Friday for Thorp's press conference and said afterward the decision will provide relief to him and his neighbors.

"If we wanted to, we couldn't sell our land," Leath said, "because the airport was hanging over us."

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College grads avoid brunt of layoffs

BY CHRISTOPHER LEONARD, AP Business Writer
Comment on this story

For one group of workers, the recession hasn't hit quite so hard.

Their unemployment rate was nearly half the overall workforce in December. When they do lose jobs, they tend to find work more quickly than others. Their wages are higher, and they typically have enough savings to survive between jobs.

Yes, it still pays to get a college degree.

Despite recent high-profile layoffs of bankers, accountants and other highly educated workers, college graduates are faring much better than the labor force as a whole. For December, their unemployment rate was 3.7 percent, compared with 7.2 percent for everyone regardless of academic pedigree.

The reason is simple: A degree usually leads to higher-paying, more stable jobs. And if that job goes away, a highly educated worker can always take a step down the career ladder. Or, they may not have to.

"We've made a big commitment where we're still recruiting on campus," said Jennifer Allyn, managing director in office of diversity at PricewaterhouseCoopers. "We hired 3,000 people last year and we plan to do the same this year. It's not like it's going into a deep freeze."

College grads "have a privileged position in the labor market," said Lawrence Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington.
That's not to say they haven't been hurt by the recession. The December jobless rate is just shy of the record for college grads - 3.9 percent hit in January 1983.

Tom and Shelley Ziech both have master's degrees and impressive resumes. They both lost their jobs last year.

The Milwaukee couple makes ends meet by drawing on unemployment insurance, severance packages and personal savings. So far, they have avoided spending retirement investments.

Tom Ziech said he's confident the couple will be back at work soon.

"I have felt fairly optimistic, but I don't know why. I don't really have anything to back that up," he said with a laugh. "But I feel optimistic I'm going to find something."

The spread between college graduates and overall unemployment has persisted through every recession since at least the 1970s.

The 3.9 percent unemployment record in 1983 for college grads compared with an overall jobless rate of 10.4 percent. Though the Labor Department lacks comparable figures for college graduates before 1992, other department data suggest the jobless rate for graduates peaked around 3.9 percent in 1983.

The spread is there in good times, too. Since 1992, the jobless rate for college graduates has hovered near 2 percent. It's risen as high as 3.4 percent in 1992 and as low as 1.5 percent during the dot-com boom in 2000. By contrast, the jobless rate for high school dropouts rose as high as 12.2 percent in 1992. The lowest it ever got was 5.8 percent in 1999, and it climbed to 10.9 percent last month.

College grads also earn more.

When workers graduate high school, their average wage jumps about 32 percent, from $11.38 to $15.01 an hour. If they attend college but don't get a degree, their wages rise about 13 percent. But if they graduate, their average hourly wage leaps 77 percent to $26.51 an hour. Getting an advanced degree boosts earnings 27 percent, to $33.57, according to a 2008 study from the Economic Policy Institute.

Still, Mishel predicted the unemployment rate for college graduates will reach a record 4 or 5 percent during 2009 and that educated workers "are going to experience the kind of pain that has been common for people with less education."

The power of a degree also has been partly diluted by broader college attendance. Ten percent of workers had a college degree in 1973, 12.7 percent in 1979 and 21 percent in 2007, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

"Back in the 70s and 80s, a much smaller percentage of the work force had a college degree," said Steven J. Davis, a scholar with the American Enterprise Institute think tank in Washington. "When your mother told you to get a college degree so you can get a secure job, well, that was a much more powerful track to the secure job."

College grads have more options when they're job hunting than people with less education. As a rule, it's easier to move down the work-force food chain than to move up, said Sylvia Allegretto, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley.

Kris Kleindienst, co-owner of Left Bank Books in St. Louis, is used to seeing a few college graduates with a "book disorder" apply for clerk positions. But this year, she is interviewing trained engineers in their 50s who are out of work.

"It's totally ridiculous that they would come here to work, on many levels, but they are applying," she said. "If you have to take a job that is beneath you, then this is a great environment."
Sleuths target online booze

UNC to see if teens can buy

THOMAS GOLDSMITH, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

UNC-Chapel Hill cyber-detectives are heading out on a new quest to track down underage sin.

Students between 18 and 20 -- under academic and legal supervision -- will be recruited for a $400,000 study later this year to test how easy it is to order alcohol from the Web. The same researchers running the alcohol study helped put a major dent in online cigarette sales to minors with similar tests earlier this decade.

The number of underage people who buy booze over the Internet is a matter of controversy. But at some sites, a mouse click asserting that a buyer is 21 appears to be the only proof a minor needs to buy liquor, wine or beer. Offshore locations, variations in law from state to state, and the chance to avoid sales tax have all contributed to the growth of online alcohol-marketing sites.

"They don't do enough to keep underage people from buying," said Laura Borders, 18, a N.C. School of Science and Mathematics senior who's doing a preliminary survey of sites for the project.

UNC-Chapel Hill researchers Rebecca Williams and Kurt Ribisl have secured the $400,000, three-year grant from the nonprofit Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to attempt underage purchases from as many as 100 Internet alcohol sellers.

In the study, UNC students will be given immunity by prosecutors, then order alcohol from Web sites to see how well the sites determine buyers' ages.

Even if relatively few minors are ordering beer, wine or liquor online, the practice should be shut down before it grows, said Traci L. Toomey, associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. As crackdowns on selling beer and booze to minors in convenience stores and other bricks-and-mortar venues continue, online sources may get more underage traffic, Toomey said.

"I don't think we should ignore any possible sources of alcohol," said Toomey, who has researched underage drinking. "If we shut down one source, underage youth most likely will shift to another source."

New laws and other curbs could result from the UNC study, as they did after UNC researchers' groundbreaking surveys of Internet cigarette vendors.

"Most people that you talk to about it are shocked when you say you can buy alcohol online," said Williams, a project director at the UNC-CH Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

"From what we've seen with cigarette sites, the controls are definitely not very strong."
Shutting down tobacco

The work of Williams and Ribisl helped federal and state regulators get credit-card companies and PayPal to agree not to process payments for Web-based tobacco sales. The UNC-CH researchers also helped out as UPS and other carriers agreed to ban shipping tobacco, in 2005.

"Our research made a big difference in forming these laws and voluntary agreements," Williams said.

Craig Lloyd, state executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, said the organization has encountered cases of online alcohol marketing to minors and referred them to the state Alcohol Law Enforcement division, or ALE.

"Someone had received something in the mail soliciting sales with a free bottle of wine," Lloyd said. "It had actually come to someone's young child."

Lloyd said MADD has been watching the issue and waiting for academic and scientific data to be released.

"We applaud [UNC researchers] for doing things like this to keep our roadways and children safe," he said.

Hard numbers elusive

Lawmakers and others have long worried about the ease with which underage drinkers can buy online.

"Unfortunately, indiscriminate direct sales of alcohol have opened a sophisticated generation of minors to the perils of alcohol abuse," U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, a Utah Republican, said during a 1999 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Internet alcohol sales.

Hard numbers on how many teens and under-21s order up Web-based booze are difficult to come by.

Answers from 14- to 20-year-olds in a national survey conducted in 2006 by Teenage Research Unlimited, an Illinois-based research company, indicated that at least 550,000 minors had bought alcohol online. If accurate, the numbers would represent only a few percentage points among underage drinkers.

"We advocate against online access and direct shipping, with access for minors being a primary reason for that," said Nancy White, public affairs director for Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America, a trade group that paid for the study.

However, winemakers groups claim that the study was slanted toward overestimating illegal use of Web marketing so that wholesalers can retain their role and their take as middlemen.

Free the Grapes, a California-based trade group that says consumers should have the right to have wine delivered to their homes, favors restrictions including prominent stickers on packages that stipulate delivery only to people over 21.

Williams, the UNC researcher, says she hopes, under a future grant, to undertake a study determining underage Web purchases of alcohol.

Meanwhile state regulators are left to wrestle with an illegal practice that's hard to get a handle on.

"It's something that we would need to look into," said Bill Chandler, head of the state's Alcohol Law Enforcement division.

"We'd have to sit down with some of our attorneys and some of the DAs to determine how to
proceed.

"How do you prosecute something like that? Where does the crime occur?"

DIFFERENT METHODS

Two examples of online alcohol age checks:

* North Carolina wineries ask that online shoppers type in birthdates, then require delivery companies such as FedEx to have an adult sign for any shipment, said Margo Metzger, executive director of the N.C. Wine and Grape Council.

* The Absinthe Original Liquor Store, based in the United Kingdom, only advises online shoppers that they must be of age before offering to ship the hard-liquor drink absinthe, containing wormwood, which is banned as a toxic substance in the United States.

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