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Nurses expected to be in high demand during recession

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that nearly a million new nurses will be needed through 2016.

BY JENNIFER CALHOUN
The Fayetteville Observer

FAYETTEVILLE — When Katie Wylie tells her grandchildren about her trials and tribulations during the Great Recession of '09, they might fall asleep.

After all, it's unlikely Wylie will go hungry, or even be forced to cut back. She'll have no tales of wandering from state to state, looking for a job, any job.

In fact, it's highly likely Wylie's salary will grow, along with her benefits and her position in life.

Why? Because Wylie is a registered nurse. And these days, nurses — like other health care professionals — are in such high demand that hospitals are competing for them by offering sign-on bonuses, scholarships and career-advancement incentives in return for work commitments.

The Fayetteville Observer reported that while people in other professions worry about losing their livelihoods because of economic cutbacks, the Department of Labor estimated that nearly a million additional nurses would be needed between 2006 and 2016.

A good nurse shouldn't have any trouble finding a job with plenty of perks, said Phyllis Malone, recruitment manager at Cape Fear Valley Health System.

“This is a national problem,” Malone said. “Nursing needs have changed. People live longer. People are sicker than they used to be. There is such a need.”

Wylie, whose husband is stationed at Fort Bragg, recently left Duke University Medical Center for Cape Fear Valley to be closer to home.

It's been worth it, too, she said. Not only was she offered a $2,500 sign-on bonus and a $1,500 relocation allowance, the health system gave her the opportunity to do what she really wanted to do — work in the cardiovascular intensive care unit.

In addition to the eight weeks of training Wylie will receive, she'll also be paid to attend a 12-week critical care school at the hospital.

The training and educational incentives have become a standard in the industry as skilled professionals become harder to find, Malone said.

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"We have to grow our own," she said.

"Grow our own" is a phrase repeated often by recruiters.

Teresa Barnes, vice president of patient care services and chief nurse officer at Southeastern Regional Medical Center in Lumberton, said most of their nurses come straight from the clinical programs offered in the hospital by nursing schools in the region, including UNC-Pembroke.

"What really positions us well is the clinical sites," Barnes said.

"We pretty much can pick the new graduates that are coming up here."

Retention can be a problem in Fayetteville, because of the rapid turnover that comes with being in a military town, where families can move every few years. Malone said.

"The military is a big draw," she said. "But we also lose the largest number of our nurses to the military."

As a result, the Cape Fear Valley recruiting team spends a great deal of time and money on bringing nurses to the fold, Malone said. Recruiters generally attend 15 to 20 conferences and career fairs a year to find nurses and other health professionals to bring into the fold, Malone said.

In 2006, one of the health system's annual job fairs had a "Casino Night" theme, with poker chips included in the invitation.

No money was involved, but potential recruits were given door prizes and giveaway baskets full of lip gloss, lotions, sun visors and bath products.

The health system's next career fair will be Feb. 9, Malone said.

When a prospective employee's interest is piqued, they roll out the red carpet, Malone said.

But when it comes down to it, recruiters at all of the region's hospitals said the main draw is always personal.

"I try to find out what interests them first before I start selling," said Teresa Sessoms, recruiter at FirstHealth Moore Regional in Pinehurst. "I try to find out what they enjoy."

Christopher Pyne, a recent hire at Cape Fear Valley, said he decided to quit his traveling contract-nurse position so he could spend more time with his wife and 18-month-old son.

In the end, the $3,000 relocation and sign-on bonus he received wasn't really that important, Pyne said.

"I get to be with my son every day," he said.

"And that's worth more than they can pay."
Pair of ECU coaches in running for other jobs

The Daily Reflector

East Carolina’s offensive and defensive coordinators have interviewed for the same positions at other schools in the last few days.

ECU defensive coordinator Greg Hudson, who joined head coach Skip Holtz’s staff in 2005 after four years at Minnesota, was reportedly in Stillwater, Okla., on Sunday to interview for the same post at Oklahoma State. OSU head coach Mike Gundy is looking to replace Tim Beckman, who left to take the head coaching job at Toledo.

Reports have also surfaced that Pirate offensive coordinator Todd Fitch has been offered the same position at Minnesota after interviewing over the weekend. Fitch would replace Mike Dunbar, who resigned on Jan. 6.

Minnesota head coach Tim Brewster told ESPN.com that he would announce his choice today.
Hanging on the issues

BY TOM MARINE
The Daily Reflector

The fabric and thread art of an internationally celebrated artist will be displayed by the Greenville Museum of Art as part of a week dedicated to raising awareness about end-of-life care and aging.

The exhibit stems from a unique partnership uniting the museum, a multidisciplinary team of East Carolina University faculty, local community leaders and the End of Life Care Coalition of Eastern North Carolina.

It showcases the artwork of Deidre Scherer, which will be on display until the end of February. Numerous events, lectures and workshops are scheduled between Tuesday and Saturday, hosted by the members of the partnership.

“We are very excited, us and the artist,” said Annette Greer, co-director of the Office of Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Education at East Carolina University. “All of us are living longer, thanks to the advances in technology. There needs to be some discussion about this issue, about how we are going to be taken care of as we get older.”

Greer said the exhibit of tapestries features two series of Scherer’s work that focus on end-of-life experiences, “Surrounded by Family and Friends” and “The Last Year.”

The art and discussion may help take the fear and stigma out of death, Greer said, which helps with coping skills and allows everyone to celebrate life more.

Scherer has worked with fabric and thread for more than 30 years, according to her biography, and shown her artwork in more than 100 group exhibitions around the world.

“Fabric awakens physical memory through its tactile associations by referring to our senses of touch,” Scherer said. “We are wrapped in cloth from birth through death. Fabric is the perfect vehicle with which to translate human elements that are layered, non-verbal and even invisible.”

Charlotte Fitz, interim director of the Greenville Museum of Art, compared the skill Scherer uses with fabric to the way other artists use paint.

She said the artist is able to

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to use limited materials and still capture the expressions of human faces as they deal with these end-of-life issues.

“She uses fabric to convey what these people are feeling,” Fitz said. “That’s what is so powerful. She is a master of her medium.”

Fitz said the museum will show 23 pieces of Scherer’s art, adding she would recommend the exhibit to everyone for its artistic value alone.

Susan Redding, executive director of the End of Life Care Coalition, said the link between the artwork and end-of-life situations lends itself to the educational events offered throughout the week.

She said art represents a universal language, and she hopes it will touch a lot of people.

“She has caused people to think about their own mortality,” Redding said. “We can’t learn anything until we feel the need to learn about it.”

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Dr. Brian Cabarrus and Dr. Raj Nekkanti have joined the Department of Cardiovascular Sciences at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University as assistant professors.

Cabarrus, a cardiologist, has a medical degree from the Brody School of Medicine, where he was a Brody scholar, and completed residency training at the University of Florida. He also completed fellowships in cardiovascular disease and interventional cardiology at ECU. Cabarrus is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine.

Nekkanti has returned to ECU after a fellowship in clinical electrophysiology and arrhythmia at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. Nekkanti, a cardiologist, has a medical degree from Siddhartha Medical College and Research Institute in India. He completed internship and residency training in India and New York. He also completed fellowships in critical care medicine, geriatric medicine, echocardiography and cardiovascular disease.

Nekkanti is certified by the National Board of Echocardiography, the American College of Nutrition, the International Board of Heart Rhythm Examiners and the American Board of Internal Medicine in cardiovascular diseases and geriatric medicine. His clinical interests are atrial fibrillation, device-based therapy for heart failure and echocardiography.

Cabarrus and Nekkanti see patients at the East Carolina Heart Institute under the auspices of ECU Physicians, the group practice of the medical school.
University preparing for state budget cuts

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, January 17, 2009

East Carolina University is preparing for what may be a lean couple of years.

ECU joined all University of North Carolina system schools in responding to a 4-percent reversion of state funds for this fiscal year, and the school is making plans for reductions up to 7 percent for the next two years.

Gov. Beverly Perdue has asked each state entity to prepare plans for reductions of 3, 5 and 7 percent for the bi-annual budget of 2009-11.

While nothing is final yet, the university is planning for budget cuts in departments campus-wide.

Kevin Seitz, vice chancellor for administration and finance, said the university is looking at many scenarios for saving money without cutting jobs.

"We have looked at every way that you could possible to eliminate costs, from the potential of eliminating vacant positions to conserving energy," Seitz said. "We are going to look at all the options that we have to make the operations as efficient as we can."

But the university does not want to cut faculty.

"We always are concerned about the faculty, because our main mission is to teach, do research and conduct community service," he said. "Our goal would be to minimize the impact on positions, but vacancies is one area that we will be looking at closely."

Chancellor Steve Ballard has formed a committee to work across the university to gather ideas for cutting costs.

"This financial situation is impossible to predict with certainty, but most estimates are that it will be with us for at least another two years, that it will continue to be severe, and that it will have negative consequences throughout higher education," Ballard wrote in a letter on the financial crisis posted on the ECU web site.

Seitz said the university is committed to cutting costs that will have the least impact on the university's various missions and goals — a challenge as the university is slated to grow by more than 10,000 students over the next decade.

"We have to align the growth in enrollment along with the reductions that we know are going to come," he said. "It requires us to find every place that we can save money that will not affect enrollment. The chancellor has really emphasized that we preserve the resources in those directions rather than going across the board and thinning the soup."

Seitz said the process is a long way from being complete, and no one is sure what the state budget will look like when finalized in late June.

"We are a long way away from any final decisions, but we have to think about what would happen and where you would have to make cuts," he said. "We're still refining what we would do and getting ideas.

"We won't know until probably sometime this summer exactly what will be expected of us."

Priorities besides regular funding include operational funding for indigent care provided at the Brody School of Medicine that usually costs the university millions of dollars every year.
The university is also seeking dental school operating funds, medical school expansion planning funds and operating funds for the new heart institute.

ECU has recently received state funding for its two priority projects, the building of the dental school and the family medicine center. The number one priority for capital funding now is the Life Sciences Biotechnology Building, which would cost about $15 million for planning over the next two years, Seitz said.

The planning costs for the $151 million building is also included in the UNC system Board of Governors priority list submitted to the governor and the Legislature.

Also on the horizon for capital projects is a shared academic building for the education and business departments.

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COX
ECU's Hudson not going Cowboys' way

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

After nearly two months of being wooed by Oklahoma State, defensive coordinator Greg Hudson learned Tuesday afternoon he'll be staying put at East Carolina.

OSU alum Bill Young accepted the school's offer to become the next defensive coordinator under head coach Mike Gundy.

Hudson, who pieced together the ECU defense that sucked the life out of West Virginia and Tulsa last season, now knows what he's worth as a coach. His aspirations to ultimately become a head coach have not cooled, and interviewing last weekend for a spot on a Big 12 staff was an important step, Hudson said.

"There was really a bittersweet feeling because I knew how much my kids liked it here, and I enjoy it here," Hudson said of the Tuesday announcement that Young had accepted the position. "But I also knew the Big 12 is probably the hottest conference in football right now and what coach Gundy and what they were doing as a program."

Hudson and Young were the two finalists for the OSU coordinator post, Hudson said.

A big surge in interest came with ECU's upset of offensive powerhouse Tulsa at the Conference USA championship game, where the Pirates forced seven turnovers.

"They called me Sunday morning," Hudson said, referring to the morning after the C-USA title game Dec. 6. "They had gauged my interest Sunday morning. They said they had watched the game, and that sort of increased their interest. So I had to endure this all the way through the holiday and the new year up to now."

Hudson said Gundy wanted to speak with four to six candidates.

When it was narrowed to two, Hudson said OSU tossed out the Xs and Os of football and went with the candidate with direct links to the university.

"I think that's the right decision for them," Hudson said.

With Hudson remaining in Greenville, it means at least another year of growth for a defense that won with youth at many positions.

For Hudson, it also means returning to fellow coaches whose help can't be overlooked.

"I would have to answer questions without (Rick) Smith and Rock (Roggeeman) and those guys in on it," Hudson said of his defensive assistants. "But if a team does the interview process right, and Oklahoma State did, you get a true evaluation of where you are as a coach. You get an answer with specifics about how good you are at what you do."

Speaking of specifics, Hudson said OSU was not shy in asking Hudson about some pretty detailed ins and outs of his defensive scheme.

Knowing full well he wasn't hired yet, the ECU coach didn't budge.

"The top question that you get asked as a defensive coach is how do you defend the spread offenses of a West Virginia or a Tulsa?" Hudson said of the interview process. "I said those answers are going to cost you. I said that's none of your business."
Fitch rebuffs Gophers, plans to stay with Pirates

By Nathan summers
The Daily Reflector

Monday, January 19, 2009

The success of the East Carolina football program is still being measured this offseason by the interest from other programs in ECU's coaches.

Joining fifth-year head coach Skip Holtz, who in December turned down an offer to become the next head coach at Syracuse, ECU offensive coordinator Todd Fitch declined interest Monday in the coordinator's position at Minnesota.

"It's a great opportunity in the Big Ten," said Fitch, who will return to the Pirates for a third season despite meeting with Minnesota officials over the weekend to discuss the opening. "I had to follow up on it, and coach Holtz and I talked about it."

Despite being a lead candidate for the job on the staff of Gophers' head coach Tim Brewster, Fitch said Minnesota could not offer him what he has at ECU.

"Coach Brewster was a great guy, and it was a great experience, but sometimes when you get an opportunity like that, and it was a great one ... I came back here and I realized what a great job I have here," Fitch said. "Hopefully we can get back on the field in one piece this year and have fun with it."

Meanwhile, ECU defensive coordinator Greg Hudson interviewed over the weekend at Oklahoma State for its coordinator vacancy on Sunday. He was unable to be reached for comment Monday.

Fitch, who doubles as the Pirates' quarterbacks coach, shouldered the task last season of trying to score points with an offense severely depleted at wide receiver and running back.

Despite having to use a no-frills attack for much of the year, the Pirates had their best season under Holtz, finishing 9-5.

The postseason attention, according to Fitch, is based on the success of the players and the coaches.

"Everybody is in this thing together, and it should be looked at as a compliment in terms of what we've been able to do," Fitch said. "People across the country see what goes on, they pay attention. It's not about me or Greg or Skip, it's about this program and what it's accomplished."

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