THE DAILY CLIPS

January 20, 2006

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

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
    The New York Times
    The Wall Street Journal
    USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
    Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
    Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@mail.ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Despite complications, many choose gastric bypass surgery

By Karen Bouffard
The Associated Press

ST. CLAIR SHORES, Mich. — Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, Atkins and many other diet plans didn’t keep Kirk Foley’s weight from creeping to 320 pounds.

So the 53-year-old retail sales manager decided to take drastic action: a gastric bypass operation that could enable him to lose weight quickly, but at the risk of serious complications or even death.

“It is very dangerous surgery, but I was a walking poster child for a stroke or a heart attack,” Foley of St. Clair Shores, said. “I decided I was going to die one way or another, so I was going to be proactive and try bariatric surgery.”

Foley is one of an increasing number of people who are turning to surgery to address their obesity. It’s a trend that’s reflected in the growing number of bariatric surgery centers at hospitals and even private bariatric surgery chains.

The surgery has soared in popularity as celebrities, such as singer Carney Wilson and NBC’s “Today” weatherman Al Roker, have publicly touted the success of their own weight-loss operations.

But bariatric surgery is a life-changing and potentially dangerous undertaking, experts say, and patients should carefully weigh the risks as well as the benefits.

A University of Michigan Health System study, published in this month’s Archives of Surgery, found the number of bariatric surgeries in the United States climbed sevenfold from 1996 through 2002, from 9,409 to 68,273.

“The most significant finding is that rates of bariatric surgery are increasing among all age groups, including among people less than 20 years old,” the study’s principal investigator, Dr. Matt Davis, said Wednesday.

The American Society for Bariatric Surgery estimates as many as 171,000 operations were performed in 2005.

Its estimate is based on the number of surgeries believed to have been performed by the society’s members. Not all doctors who perform weight-loss surgery are society members.

The annual tab for bariatric surgeries came to more than $2 billion nationwide by 2002, the Michigan researchers found.

The means cost per surgery was $29,107; about 80 percent was picked up by insurance companies or the patients.

Hospitals are driven to get into the weight loss surgery business not only by popular demand, but also by a growing amount of evidence that the health risks associated with obesity — including Type 2 diabetes, coronary disease and stroke — are greater than the risks of the surgery.

In the Michigan study, fewer than 1 percent of the bariatric surgery patients died in the hospital.

Weight loss surgery is on the rise, in part, because obesity is at epidemic proportions.

Stomach-reducing surgery also has increased as surgeons have developed less-invasive, laparoscopic techniques that allow patients to heal better and faster.

Surgeons generally use one of three techniques in weight loss operations, each involving methods to create a smaller stomach.

One technique uses staples, a second an inflatable band and a third bypasses part of the intestinal tract.

After years of failed dieting attempts, Foley suffered from high blood pressure, sleep apnea and knee and back problems that kept him from exercising.

Today, 10 months after undergoing the procedure, Foley is a trim 165 pounds.

His blood pressure is normal, and his sleep apnea has disappeared.

Health experts increasingly agree that bariatric surgery may be the best option for the morbidly obese — people whose survival is threatened by their weight.

In 1991, the National Institutes of Health said the surgery is appropriate for people with a body mass index of 40 or greater, usually about 100 pounds overweight; or for patients with a BMI of at least 35 who suffer from at least two obesity-related problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure or sleep apnea.

Still, the surgery comes with risks that include bleeding, infections, malnutrition, blood clots and death.

Lauri Griffith, 36, of Lapeer, Mich., has lost 127 pounds since her surgery on May 16. “I’ve been readmitted twice for dehydration and low potassium,” Griffith said. “I developed an incisional hernia, which is a fairly common problem... My sugar and blood pressure have dropped real low.”
Study: Most college students are not literate enough

By Ben Feller
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nearing a diploma, most college students cannot handle many complex but common tasks, from understanding credit card offers to comparing the cost per ounce of food.

Those are the sobering findings of a study of literacy on college campuses, the first to target the skills of students as they approach the start of their careers.

More than 50 percent of students at four-year schools and more than 75 percent of two-year colleges lacked the skills to perform complex literacy tasks.

That means they could not interpret a table about exercise and blood pressure, understand the arguments of newspaper editorials, compare credit card offers with different interest rates and annual fees or summarize results of a survey about parental involvement in school.

The results cut across three types of literacy: analyzing news stories and other prose, understanding documents and having math skills needed for checkbooks or restaurant tips.

“It is kind of disturbing that a lot of folks are graduating with a degree and they’re not going to be able to do those things,” said Stephanie Baldi, the study’s director at the American Institutes for Research, a behavioral and social science research organization.

Most students at community colleges and four-year schools showed intermediate skills, meaning they could perform moderately challenging tasks. Examples include identifying a location on a map, calculating the cost of ordering office supplies or consulting a reference guide to figure out which foods contain a particular vitamin.

There was brighter news.

Overall, the average literacy of college students is significantly higher than that of adults across the nation. Study leaders said that was encouraging but not surprising, given that the spectrum of adults includes those with much less education.

Also, compared with all adults with similar levels of education, college students had superior skills in searching and using information from texts and documents.

“But do they do well enough for a highly educated population? For a knowledge-based economy? The answer is no,” said Joni Finney, vice president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, an independent and nonpartisan group.

“This sends a message that we should be monitoring this as a nation, and we don’t do it,” Finney said. “States have no idea about the knowledge and skills of their college graduates.”

The survey examined college and university students nearing the end of their degree programs. The students did the worst on matters involving math, according to the study.

Almost 20 percent of students pursuing four-year degrees had only basic quantitative skills. For example, the students could not estimate if their car had enough gas to get to the service station. About 30 percent of two-year students had only basic math skills.

Baldi and Finney said the survey should be used as a tool. They hope state leaders, educators and university trustees will examine the rigor of courses required of all students.

The survey showed a strong relationship between analytic coursework and literacy. Students in two-year and four-year schools scored higher when they took classes that challenged them to apply theories to practical problems or weigh competing arguments.

The college survey used the same test as the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, the government’s examination of English literacy among adults. The results of that study were released in December, showing about one in 20 adults is not literate in English.

On campus, the tests were given in 2003 to a representative sample of 1,827 students at public and private schools.

The Pew Charitable Trusts funded the survey.

It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Close to graduation, far from competent

More than half the students at four-year colleges did not have the skills to perform complex tasks. Adults, overall, showed an even greater lack of skill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy levels for college students and adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prose (e.g.: news stories)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to perform complex tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to perform complex tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students in 2-year college  4-year  Adults

SOURCE: American Institutes for Research
Talents refocused

A heart surgeon and a retired educator finally turn the lens on their other love — photography

By Kelley Kirk-Swindell
The Daily Reflector


A love of photography.

Holland and Chitwood have been taking photos, both professionally and on the amateur level, for more than 30 years.

Chitwood showed Holland some of his work that night at dinner. Holland was impressed.

"Ann asked me about doing a show," Chitwood said.

After months of conversations, followed by a visit from Holly Garrick, director of Emerge Gallery Art Center, and some badgering by Holland, the two artists have paired their work for a joint show at Emerge that will run through Feb. 4. The opening reception is from 6-9 p.m. today at the gallery.

"They came and snatched about 30 (photos) from the house," Chitwood said. "I told them that they wiped me out."

Photos in the show date from the early 1960s to the present, and include sports celebrations, international travel, and eastern North Carolina buildings and landscapes.

"If it is beautiful, I take it," said Holland, a retired school teacher who always aspired to be an artist. She's now following her passion full time, renting a studio above Emerge.

If you Go!

What: Opening reception for photography exhibit by Dr. W. Randolph "Ranny" Chitwood and Ann Holland
When: 6-9 p.m. today
Where: Emerge Gallery Art Center, 404 S. Evans St.
Cost: Free
Call: 551-6947

Holland moved to Pitt County in September 2004, when her husband, Terry Holland, accepted the athletic director's position at East Carolina University.

Living in Charlotte, Va., for 25 years, Holland knew of Chitwood and his reputation as a surgeon, but the two did not meet until she moved in just eight houses down from him.

Among his many titles at his "day job," Chitwood is the director of the Eastern Carolina Cardiovascular Institute, senior associate vice chancellor for health sciences at ECU, and chief of cardiothoracic and vascular surgery for the Department of Surgery at the Brody School of Medicine.

While Chitwood is known for his surgical expertise (mainly with robotically assisted mitral valve surgery), few have known of his proficiency with a camera.

Chitwood remembers there always being a darkroom in his home. His father, who was a family physician, taught Chitwood about the art.

"I'd go in (to the darkroom) and watch the photos come up in the pan," he said.

Chitwood received his first camera when he was 9 or 10 — a Kodak Brownie — but did not become serious about photography until he was in high school.

He later worked as a professional photographer to make extra cash during college, shooting everything from weddings to graduation ceremonies.

In 1960, Chitwood even took photos of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.


Photography was put on pause when Chitwood entered medical school. In 1984 — when he moved to Greenville — he was inspired to take up his old hobby anew.
"I think I look at photography as an art form that you can do anything you want," Chitwood said. "My favorite work is in black and white."

Chitwood is partial to his "Sand Fence" photo, also in the Emerge show. It was taken at the Outer Banks in 1968.

Now when he lectures internationally, he insists on having at least one day to shoot photos, and he always carries a camera. "I'll go all day with a bottle of water and eat peanuts," he said. "There is no time for high-end meals."

He has an extensive list of places he'd like to visit and take photographs, including Victoria Falls in Africa, Iguazu Falls in Brazil, and Vietnam.

"I also would be very happy to go into a war zone where they are actively fighting," Chitwood said.

Contact features writer Kelley Kirk-Swindell at 329-9596 or kkirkswindell@coxnc.com.
Fans now better protected at Clark-LeClair

ECU installs additional netting to prevent balls from flying into seating area.

By Nick Zulovich
The Daily Reflector

Fans can relax even more inside of Clark-LeClair Stadium this coming season no matter what the score might be of an East Carolina baseball game.

ECU's athletic department installed additional protective netting to shield spectators from batted and thrown balls leaving the field of play. Several times during ball games a year ago, a check swing by a hitter resulted in a ball ricocheting at a sharp angle into the seating area.

"With the proximity of the stadium seating to home plate and to the actual playing surface, it was necessary that the netting go up," said Gary Overton, ECU's assistant athletic director for internal affairs and the school's all-time winningest baseball coach. "We just felt it was a needed issue."

Overton said the netting, which now stretches all along the main grandstand area, ideally would have been installed during the stadium's original construction a year ago. However, once ECU made its decision to add it, the additional netting was strung quickly on Monday and Tuesday.

"It was no problem whatsoever," Overton said.

Overton added that the original netting that was placed directly behind home plate is now more secure because of the additional safety feature. He also said spectators' views won't be compromised, either.

"Fans certainly don't have to be on guard quite as much as they did in the past," said Overton, who watched every home game first-hand last season as the color commentator for radio broadcasts. "Some fans are more observant than others, but this takes care of all those concerned in the stadium."

Scrimmage time

To enhance preparations for the season, ECU coach Billy Godwin said he plans to conduct intersquad scrimmages on weekends to get into a routine of having game-like situations during the weekend.

While it's still not a foreign opponent, the Pirates are looking forward to participating in something a little more stressful than batting practice.

"As a hitter, you're just waiting for that first time you get out there against a live arm," first baseman Adam Witter said. "You get tired hitting against the coach, who's throwing about 70 mph. You're ready to get out there and see some live pitching."

While the scrimmages should be valuable, Godwin admitted it's difficult to gauge the Pirates' progress of their hitters and pitchers.

"You just hope you go out in intersquads and do some aspect of the game well because the next day you might do a different aspect well," Godwin said. "It's a hard indication because you never win an intersquad. You either can't hit or can't pitch. There's no in-between. If you do one or the other, at least you're doing something good."

Billboard watch

ECU's marketing department started to promote the baseball season by taking out billboards that have Godwin's picture as a significant part of them. He smiled and chuckled at the thought of his picture being taller than the outfield wall on display for traffic driving by to see.

"I'm not a big self-promoter," Godwin said. "I'd prefer to emphasize our club. I don't think that billboard is going to get us any wins come February."

Nick Zulovich can be reached at (252) 829-3593 or nzulovich@coxnc.com.
Nursing the need

Administrators of the University of North Carolina system had the right instincts last year when they directed North Carolina’s public university nursing programs to find and graduate more nurses. Sadly, no money has filtered down to the nursing schools to get the important job done.

North Carolina’s university system and its community colleges (which also train nurses) rely on the General Assembly for money to advance critical programs. The legislature certainly understands the state’s need for a substantial nurses corps.

In 1991, lawmakers created the N.C. Center for Nursing, becoming the first state to fund an agency to monitor its supply of nurses and to take action if the numbers threaten to fall too low. Any state needs an adequate number of nurses, it’s true. But North Carolina’s climate, recreational amenities and wealth of continuing education opportunities have long made the state attractive to retirees, who generally require more medical care.

Now the legislature needs to revisit its support for nursing resources. And not just because North Carolina will need more and more nurses in coming years, as the bulging Baby Boom generation reaches the age when the number and severity of their medical needs will increase.

Nursing is a profession that offers stable work and good wages. Legislators are properly interested in job development, and they should consider support for nursing programs as a way to replace old-line manufacturing jobs. Because nursing skills can be transported from state to state, North Carolina also needs to do all it can to keep the nurses it trains here. A 2003-04 survey showed that just 43 percent of newly licensed registered nurses working in the state received their degrees here as well.

There is no shortage of potential nursing students. More than 32,000 were turned away from North Carolina schools last year. Experts say the need is for professors to train the new caregivers. The legislature, by its exercise of the purse strings, holds the cure.
Party over for frat guilty of hazing

By Jane Stancill
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill - A fraternity at UNC-Chapel Hill is on probation for at least a year after pleading guilty to hazing this week in the university’s student-run honor court.

Beta Theta Pi will not be allowed to have parties at least through the spring of 2007 with the exception of one social event per semester for parents or alumni, said Matt McDowell, a UNC-CH senior and student attorney general.

The hazing charge stemmed from an incident Sept. 21 in which new Beta recruits were forced to wear costumes, subjected to verbal harassment and made to stand close to a bonfire, McDowell said. No one was injured, he said.

The incident had been reported in an anonymous e-mail message to a university official in the Greek Affairs Office, who then investigated. The university official reported a strong odor of alcohol around the underage recruits, McDowell added.

In a hearing Tuesday, fraternity leaders pleaded guilty to hazing. Beta members will have to perform community service, which will include presenting an educational program on hazing for other fraternities at UNC-CH.

Beta fraternity members could not be reached for comment Thursday.

Jonathan Sauls, an assistant dean of students, said the sanction was tough but appropriate. "It certainly recognizes that hazing does not have a place on this campus, and hopefully from our perspective, it sends a message that there are certain standards of behavior we expect from the student body," Sauls said.

McDowell said hazing charges are rare and hard to prove. The last one to make it to the honor court was in the spring of 2003, he said.

Staff writer Jane Stancill can be reached at 956-2464 or janes@newsobserver.com.
Building Pressure

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.

Visitors to the campus of the University of North Carolina here might be forgiven for thinking the Tar Heels had exchanged their trademark Carolina blue for orange.

Brightly colored temporary fences toss near nearly every corner of the campus, as construction crews kick up dust and dirt as part of an extraordinary building boom, fueled, in part, by $3.1-billion in bonds approved by North Carolina voters in 2000 for a backlog of repairs and new construction at the state's universities and community colleges. The $1.3-billion in building projects on this one campus amounts to constructing a medium-size research university in the middle of the 26,800-student campus.

Despite the infusion of billions of dollars, financial support for repairs and maintenance has not kept pace, even with the state's own minimum requirements for upkeep. As a result, the deferred-maintenance bill for the 16-campus University of North Carolina system alone is approaching $1-billion. And as older buildings age and newer buildings come on line, that figure is likely to grow.

So even as higher-education officials celebrate the success of the bond program, they increasingly voice concern that a failure to adequately maintain rundown buildings and brittle infrastructure could lead colleges to actually lose ground in their efforts to expand and improve their facilities.

"If we are not careful, we will find ourselves in the same situation we were in before the bond," says J. Bradley Wilson, chairman of the university system's Board of Governors.

What's more, officials at the two- and four-year colleges alike say they have billions of dollars more in capital requirements. A plan presented to the university system's Board of Governors last year estimated construction needs of $3.8-billion to $4-billion over the next six years. The North Carolina Community College System is conducting a similar survey of facilities on each of its 58 campuses.

Administrators are quick to say they have no intention of taking a spending request to legislators or taxpayers anytime soon, especially since construction financed by the current bonds is expected to stretch into late 2008.

Even if they did, observers wonder if North Carolinians, who backed the 2000 bond referendum by wide margins in all 100 counties, would be ready to endorse another round of higher-education spending, given the size and scope of the earlier bond measure and a serious fiscal downturn in the state in recent years, which has made voters and public officials hesitant to take on large amounts of debt.

North Carolina's experience with its monumental bond measure could serve as a warning to other states, like New Jersey, that are considering similar large-scale borrowing proposals to pay for facilities. Voters may already be becoming skittish about borrowing money for campus construction; last fall residents of both Arkansas and Maine narrowly rejected bond measures to pay for college facilities.

"Other states look to North Carolina" as a model, says E. Landen Swint, executive vice president of the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers, noting that the state's public-bond offering remains the largest ever for higher education. "What they did was landmark."

MEETING THEIR MISSION

Before the 2000 bond measure was passed, college leaders and public officials say, spending for campus facilities was often erratic. Campus leaders were pitted against another one in a competition for funds, and too often support was based on the preferences of powerful politicians rather than on requests from colleges, says Kevin J. MacNaughton, associate vice chancellor for facilities at North Carolina State University.

Infrastructure needs were also neglected, says Mr. MacNaughton, who was then an associate vice president in the university system. "No one wants to put their name on a chiller plant," he says.

Along with assuring steady financing for capital needs, supporters of the bond measure said, the bond measure would allow colleges to meet the state's enrollment and economic-development demands. There is ample evidence the bonds achieved those goals.

At Durham Technical Community College, officials previously had to turn away hundreds of students each semester because of a lack of adequate space to hold laboratory courses, says Wanda S. Winslow, vice president for institutional-support services. The institution used its $15.4-million share of the state-bond funds to renovate several aging classroom buildings, allowing it to expand its science offerings.

Bond money also paid for an education building at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, enabling students and faculty members in the fast-growing major to work and study under one roof rather than in four buildings spread across the campus.

Across town, at Cape Fear Community College, students in Randy Johnson's machining classes now meet in a gleaming facility, furnished with up-to-date equipment, on the college's new North Campus.

"It's like walking into a factory," says Mr. Johnson. "The other building was like a sweatshop out of the 1950s."

The new and remodeled buildings that dot every North Carolina campus have helped the institutions absorb the burgeoning college-age population in the nation's fastest-growing state. Enrollment in the University of North Carolina system has climbed 21 percent, to 196,250, since the bonds' passage, while the two-year colleges are serving 194,770 students a year, a 26-per cent increase.

In addition to accommodating the influx of students, the bond also allowed state institutions to expand their science and research capacity, add new degree programs, and raise their academic profile, says Molly Corbett Broad, who stepped down as president of the university system at the end of December.

"Construction, repair, and renovation are not goals in themselves," says Ms. Broad, one of the most visible champions of the bond measure. "They are a means of achieving our mission."

CATCHING UP, KEEPING UP

While the bonds have allowed North Carolina colleges to tackle their capital needs in a more holistic manner, money for maintenance was not included in the spending package, which had been approved by 73 percent of voters. Spending for repairs continues to be allocated in a piecemeal fashion, despite a 1993 law that requires the state's General Assembly to provide a minimum sum annually to all government agencies, equal to 3 percent of the current replacement value of each state building.
In 12 years, the university system has never received the full amount it is due from lawmakers. (Local governments are responsible for paying the costs of community-college maintenance.) The greatest level of support came in 2003, when the General Assembly approved $138-million for colleges and an additional $162-million for other state agencies.

But that infusion followed two years in which no money was added to the repair-and-renovation fund, as legislators struggled to close a deep budget deficit.

“The state was experiencing financial difficulties,” says Rep. Margaret H. Dickson, a Democrat and one of the leaders of the House of Representatives education subcommittee, which oversees the university system. “Unfortunately, repair and renovation—throughout state government, not just the universities—was one of the things that lost out.”

North Carolina is not unusual in struggling to pay for long-term facilities costs, says Ms. Medlin, of the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers. At least one state, Wyoming, now requires private donors who endow university buildings to pay for their future maintenance and repairs.

University officials say they understand lawmakers’ fiscal predilection. But they point out that inadequate spending for basic upkeep—such as replacing rusty pipes and faltering furnaces—risks undermining the good being done by the bond measure.

On the Chapel Hill campus, the Robert B. House Library, the main undergraduate library, is already beginning to show signs of wear, including scuffed stairs and a malfunctioning main door, just four years after its renovation. Elsewhere on the campus, the roof of the Carr Building, a 100-year-old administrative facility left out of the bond program, was due to be replaced four decades ago.

In fact, the deferred-maintenance backlog on the campus has increased in recent years, from $249-million in 2002 to $269-million in 2005. According to university projections, if repair-and-renovation spending remains at recent levels, the backlog could grow to almost $400-million in five years, and to $530-million in 10 years.

“The revitalization of campus is impressive, but it’s still a little bit of an illusion,” says James E. Alty Jr., director of the university’s facilities-services division. “We’re challenged to keep up.”

PUBLIC SENTIMENT FOR COLLEGES

Reducing the university system’s deferred-maintenance backlog is “the No. 1 issue from a capital standpoint,” says Mr. Wilson of the Board of Governors, who expects it to be a top item when the legislature reconvenes in May. “It’s the more relevant and important conversation in 2006.”

That does not mean the subject of another bond is off the table, and on many campuses, administrators have begun to draw up lists of “Bond II” construction priorities. In addition, a legislatively required study of North Carolina’s economic-development needs, and how public colleges can meet them, due next December, is likely to shape construction priorities.

“I don’t think anybody said the original bond was going to meet our needs forever,” says H. Martin Lancaster, president of the North Carolina Community College System. “No one sold it on that basis.”

Voters may harbor a different understanding, political observers say.

“The natural tendency is for the public to feel that they’ve dealt with that need,” says Ran Coble, executive director of the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research.

The state’s fiscal situation could also dampen enthusiasm for another large bond. The North Carolina economy has endured a beating because of job losses in the vital textile, tobacco, and furniture-making industries, leaving lawmakers to contend with $1-billion budget shortfalls in four of the past five years.

While the state has retained its stellar AAA bond rating, Gov. Michael F. Easley and Treasurer Richard H. Moore, both Democrats, have urged the General Assembly to pass a law limiting state debt.

If there is another bond measure, two-year institutions expect to again play a pivotal role in its passage, thanks, in part, to their hometown clout. Mr. Lancaster says community colleges also are likely to press for a larger share of bond revenue. In the 2000 bonds, two-year colleges received $600-million, compared with the university system’s $2.5-billion.

Still, some observers wonder whether the billions of dollars in future construction cited by higher-education officials amount to real needs or are simply a wish list.

The 2000 bonds “didn’t satisfy the college systems’ appetite for further spending,” says George C. Leef, director of the John William Pope Center for Public Policy, a Chapel Hill-based research organization that studies college finance and curriculum. “It only whet it.”

In fact, some campus officials question if a multiyear bond is the best way to pay for colleges’ capital requirements, or if it risks locking institutions into specific projects, even as their demands change.

“It’s either feast or famine,” says Ronald J. Core, vice chancellor for business affairs at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

Mr. Leef even questions whether taxpayers should bear the costs of improving academic facilities. The users of those facilities should pay for them in the form of increased tuition or fees, he argues, especially when in-state students continue to pay some of the lowest rates in the country, $3,205 this year at the Chapel Hill campus.

But that is unlikely to fly, says Mr. Coble. In 1999 Ms. Broad, who was president of the UNC system, proposed a $100 student fee to raise funds for academic facilities. Only after that proposal flopped did she suggest the bond measure.

Much of what happens next is likely to be determined by Ms. Broad’s successor, Erskine B. Bowles, a North Carolina businessman and former chief of staff to President Bill Clinton, who took office this month. Through a spokesman, Mr. Bowles declined to be interviewed for this article, saying he had not had time to study the issue in detail.

One thing working in Mr. Bowles’s favor, should he push for another bond measure, is that the two-time Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate is highly regarded by members of both political parties. In the end, a bond vote is often a referendum on public colleges and their leaders, says Travis J. Reindl, director of state policy analysis at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

“It is at some level about bricks and mortar,” Mr. Reindl says, “but it’s also about whether there is public sentiment and support for higher education.”