THE DAILY CLIPS

January 23, 2012

News, commentary, and opinion
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East Carolina University News Services
Web site at http://www.ecu.edu/news
252-328-6481
New version of ECU's website to launch
By Jackie Drake
The Daily Reflector
Monday, January 23, 2012

Students and staff at East Carolina University may notice some changes to their home page when they go online today.

The new version of ecu.edu is expected to go live some time during the day, according Clint Bailey, assistant vice chancellor for university marketing.

“There’s usually a surge in traffic first thing in the morning, so we decided to wait until after that,” Bailey said. The exact activation time will be determined by technical services, barring any glitches.

“The ball’s in their court, but last I talked to them they felt pretty confident we are go for launch on Monday,” Bailey said.

The redesigned page features a wider layout with larger fonts and more room for information and pictures. The new format will make it easier to access a variety of content.

“It will offer a much more pleasant and informative experience,” Bailey said.

The design has been developed since the fall of 2010 by faculty and staff from across the university.
Bailey is proud that the new website “is a product of East Carolina” and not an outside consulting firm.

Virtually no cost is associated with the redesign, since everything was done in-house by employees, according to Bailey.

“I think we got a great result for not a lot of extra money,” he said. “We had the talent here at ECU, and they did a great job.”

The updated version has been up for viewing since September as a beta page just a couple clicks away from the main page.

“The two sites have been running in parallel,” Bailey said. “We wanted to give people plenty of opportunity to see it and provide feedback. Overall the feedback has been positive.”

A major feature of the site is called MyLinks, which allows users with PirateID logins to customize a list of frequently accessed pages. There are more than 110,000 individual pages on the ecu.edu domain, according to Bailey, making MyLinks “a really exciting new feature.”

The new site also will be more compatible with special devices for those with disabilities, Bailey said.

“We call this a redesign, but it’s really an evolution,” Bailey said. The website was first set up in the 1990s with lots of separate page, and underwent a major overhaul in 2004 when switching to the common content management system being updated today. The evolution will continue as individual pages will be able to match the homepage.

The ecu.edu website gets more than 75 million visits each year, according to Bailey, with traffic in Greenville and across the nation from alumni and prospective students and faculty.

“We have all these different audiences that can connect to our institution via this website,” Bailey said.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567 or on Twitter @jackiedrakegdr.
Cuts to the higher education budget imposed by the General Assembly have forced difficult decisions across the University of North Carolina system, including here in Greenville. East Carolina University’s Program Prioritization Committee is working to identify areas in which the school can save resources so they may be applied to other pressing needs.

The university community can join taxpayers in applauding any effort to eliminate waste and redundancy in the interest of efficiency and a more narrow focus on East Carolina’s core mission. However, the school — and the state — should be wary of any deeper funding cuts that threaten lasting harm to the UNC system and diminish its capacity for cultivating an attractive workforce in North Carolina.

Last week, East Carolina released the self-study report compiled by the Program Prioritization Committee that examined nine colleges, including 70 departments and schools, and the Brody School of Medicine. The goal was to determine which areas should be targeted for funding reductions, which deserved greater investment and which could continue without adjustment.

If approved, the committee proposal would reduce or eliminate 48 programs throughout the university, out of the 227 evaluated. Some programs that feature bachelor degrees in both arts and sciences will be streamlined and other academic areas that can be serviced differently were identified as such. Additionally, 67 programs are identified for additional investment.

Institutions like East Carolina should conduct this type of thorough self-examination on a regular basis, but this particular effort comes out of necessity. The state budget passed last year handed East Carolina a 16.1 percent or $49 million cut to its funding. The school has already eliminated classes and trimmed resources in response, but this effort looks to make more profound institutional changes to ensure the school’s long-term fiscal health.
Politicians looking to score easy points with budget hawks often use universities as a convenient punching bag, and with good reason. They are notorious for waste and are targets made all the more attractive in an economic climate that demands greater efficiency. However, recall that Chancellor Steve Ballard arguing during the budget debate that deep cuts could threaten the university’s academic mission. This community — indeed, this state — cannot abide by that.

For now, East Carolina is doing its part by collecting input, conducting a thorough evaluation and looking to trim the fat from its budget. Lawmakers should reciprocate by avoiding further cuts to the university system and protecting continued investment in higher education.
East Carolina University is still seeking permission to release personnel information on the student media adviser it fired earlier this month.

The university wants to show that Paul Isom’s termination as adviser of The East Carolinian student newspaper was not a First Amendment issue, officials said in their last statement Jan. 11.

In November, student editors ran unaltered photos of a streaker at a football game as a “factual account” of events. When Isom was fired on Jan. 4, he was only told that the university wanted “to go in a different direction.”

Isom said Friday that he has not given permission for his personnel records to be released because he’s waiting until he can see everything, including emails in addition to his main personnel file, which he picked up on Jan. 10.

“I don’t want to release anything I haven’t seen,” Isom said. “I did get some of my personnel info that was mostly emails not in the file, but my impression is that I don’t have all of it.”

The university has made records available “as it was able to in this era of large volumes of electronic transmissions, and it continues to make them
available," spokeswoman Mary Schulken wrote in an email to the Reflector on Friday.

The university wants to make sure it gives Isom plenty of time to view the materials. Officials also have to make sure no confidential student information would be revealed if the file is released.

Isom has said there is nothing negative in his main personnel file, and that he’s “not really worried” about the emails.

“I’m just trying to move forward and see what happens next,” he said.

Isom continues to teach a basic reporting class at ECU as an adjunct professor and is still looking for a new job.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567 or on Twitter @jackiedrakegr.
Storm: Freedom isn’t always free
Sunday, January 22, 2012

Speak to any veteran or active service member about freedom, and eventually this simple truth will emerge: Freedom isn’t free. Our liberty was built on a bedrock of personal and national sacrifice.

That’s an easy concept to understand when it is framed in terms of soldiers and battles. But the truth is, all our liberties — from freedom of speech to the right of a trial by jury — have a price. To be free means bearing the consequences of that freedom.

That’s what makes freedom hard to come by in this world. That’s also what makes it precious.

I’ve been thinking about freedom ever since the news broke that Paul Isom, student media adviser at East Carolina University, had been fired. Isom’s dismissal came two months after a controversial decision by ECU’s student newspaper, The East Carolinian, to run unaltered photos of a nude streaker at a Nov. 5 football game.
ECU has been careful not to state that Isom was fired because of the photos or subsequent fallout. Still, the timing has led many to conclude Isom is out because the photos went in. It also has raised a great hue and cry among several educational and journalistic societies about freedom of speech, freedom of the press and how Isom’s dismissal flies in the face of these ideals.

But let’s step back for a moment here. There are a couple of points that need to be made.

First, in order for complaints about free speech violations to be valid, free speech actually has to be impinged. In this case, it wasn’t. The photos ran; the paper’s editors were able to convey exactly the message they wanted in exactly the way they wanted to convey it. No student staff members involved in the decision have been dismissed from the newspaper.

Second — and this is the important bit — freedom of speech does not free us from the consequences of that speech. If, for example, you tell a 250-pound bruiser that his wife is unattractive, shouting “It’s a free country!” probably will not be enough to stop his fist from connecting with your nose.

So the question becomes: Is this particular expression of freedom worth the price I may have to pay?

Journalists who decry ECU in the Isom case might do well to take a closer look at the industry in which they serve. The truth is, freedom of speech always has been a rather fragile shield for people in the media. Think carefully. Is there any newspaper in the country in which the publication of full frontal nudity is acceptable? I’ve worked at a number of papers, and I’m willing to go on record with this observation: People who publish nude photos are almost certain to get fired. Heck, people have lost media jobs for far less — including typing a racially offensive remark into a photo caption or a sexist comment into a headline as a joke.

I don’t recall ever hearing such cases championed as vile repressions of our First Amendment rights.

But let’s set journalism aside for a moment and take a look at the wider question of freedom.
The Bill of Rights guarantees Americans can gather peacefully. Yet throughout this country’s history individuals have been harassed, physically assaulted and even arrested for exercising that right. The fact that people continue to gather and protest has less to do with a Constitutional promise than it does with standing up for what they believe in.

It’s called having the courage of your convictions and accepting the consequences of your actions.

It’s also called being a grown-up.

Which brings us back to the Isom case at ECU.

An adviser’s job is largely educational. At a college newspaper, it can be argued that an adviser and the student staff he or she oversees ought to be educated on industry and community standards.

When those standards are not met, it is fair to expect there will be consequences.

Who will pay, and what price is fair? That’s open to debate. But as I mentioned, there are certain offenses the media takes very seriously.

When a fellow journalist loses his job, I can’t take it lightly. We all take whatever shelter we can under the broad umbrella of free speech. We also all make mistakes.

But ECU is an educational institution, and in its own way it has offered its students and the wider community an important lesson:

Liberty doesn’t come without consequences.

And freedom has never really been free.

Contact Janet Storm at jstorm@reflector.com or 252-329-9587.
A new Greenville service delivers a designated driver anywhere in the city limits to drive a customer’s vehicle home with the customer as a passenger.

Owners Needham Cheely, 34, and Martin Tanski, 25, started the company called iDRIVE in late October, modeling it after similar businesses in larger North Carolina cities and metropolitan areas nationwide.

The 24-hour business is based in Tanski’s downtown Greenville home, but plans are to move next month to a storefront location in the 100 block of East Fifth Street next to the Armadillo Grill.

Customers are required to sign a release that states their vehicle can legally be driven and their insurance will cover any accident or vehicle damage. It also states that drivers won’t be held liable. The company has secondary vehicle insurance as a backup.

With iDRIVE, the designated driver rides a collapsible motorized scooter to the customer, then folds it up and stores it inside the customer’s vehicle.
The fee to deliver a customer and vehicle home is $20 if it’s within 5 miles from the pickup point. There’s an additional $1 charge for each additional mile. Cash and charge cards only are accepted.

Students get a discounted base rate of $10 if they live within a specific area surrounding the East Carolina University campus.

The iDRIVE motto is: “You drink, we drive your car.”

Tanski, an ECU graduate, said that iDRIVE generally won’t pick up customers outside the city limits, but they will deliver them anywhere.

“We’ve taken people all the way to Farmville before,” he said.

On New Year’s Eve, Tanski said he returned from delivering someone to Simpson to downtown via his scooter, which can reach speeds of up to 35 mph, depending on the driver’s weight. Some of the part-time drivers are college students. Another driver is a disabled veteran.

If it’s a busy night, Cheely will use a van to pick up an employee for transport to the next designated driver customer to speed up the service.

Tanski said there haven’t been any issues with customers “acting wild” or distracting the driver.

Flyers have been placed in student housing, restaurants and bars.

“It’s such a new business that people really don’t know about us,” Tanski said.

The company has two scooters in use, but it hopes to expand, serving more than the inebriated.

The entrepreneurs hope iDRIVE will evolve into a service that transports people home after inpatient procedures or allows people in assisted living facilities to still make use of their vehicles by having an iDRIVE employee serve as a chauffeur.
Cheely said he used a designated driver service when he was in Raleigh, and after he and Tanski became friends, they decided to start the business together.

Cheely also operates a private parking lot management service called Lindy’s.

Tanski is the owner of a rickshaw taxi service called Peddlin’ Pirates. Last year, rickshaw driver Rob Lovett was shot outside the garage on Rotary Street when he returned there after he was robbed and assaulted in the early morning hours on Johnston Street. An arrest was made in November, and Greenville Police Sgt. Carlton Williams said Thursday that police are continuing to seek information from the public about a second male suspect.

Tanski said Lovett has made a full recovery. Needham was a witness to the shooting, as was Tanski and another driver.

Tanski said that iDRIVE employees are equipped with cellphones and GPS devices. They’re also told to avoid dangerous areas and keep to well-lit roads.

The designated driver service only requires a privilege license since the customers’ vehicles are driven. Last year, Peddlin’ Pirates was required to become a taxi franchise since they transport customers via company-owned rickshaws. Call 916-1704 for service.

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ECU students take polar bear plunge
By Lynsey Horn
The Daily Reflector
Sunday, January 22, 2012

Close to 1,000 ECU students and faculty came out Thursday night to plunge into a pool of icy water just for fun.

East Carolina University held its 16th annual Polar Bear Plunge at the Student Recreation Center. By the end of the night, about 950 students and faculty had taken a plunge into the outdoor pool and reflector.com caught it all on video.

The temperature was 41 degrees, but to be sure the water reached polar temperatures, ice was added to the pool. That did not stop students from diving into the challenge.

“I would regret not doing this,” student Amanda Massey said.

Many of the participants said they were taking part in the event because it was something fun to do and allowed them to beat mid-winter boredom. Some students said they took the plunge for the Pirate swag: the first 1,000 jumpers were given a neon orange Polar Bear Plunge T-shirt.

Temperatures were low this year, but this is not the coldest it has been on the day of the plunge. In 2010 and 2011, the low temperature was in the 30s, and in 2009 the thermostat dipped all the way down to 21 degrees.
ECU is not the only place where a Polar Bear Plunge is held. Plunge events take place all over the country, often in lakes and oceans instead of an ice-filled pool. Members of the Polar Bear Club of Milwaukee have been jumping into the frigid waters of Lake Michigan on New Year’s Day since 1916.

Many plunge events have evolved into fundraisers for charity. Participants in ECU’s Polar Bear Plunge were asked to bring a canned food item for the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina. As the number of participants grew, the canned food stacked up.

ECU’s first polar bear plunge was held in 1997 as a part of the grand opening of the Student Recreation Center. There were only 35 jumpers.

Event chairman John Wall said he thought the water this year was about 50 degrees, “which is pretty cold for water,” but admitted he has never taken the plunge.

“I might do it next year,” said Wall said. “I feel like if I run the event I should at least I should have at least done it one time.”

Visit reflector.com to watch a video of the event.

Contact Lynsey Horn at Lhorn@reflector.com or 252-329-9574.
ECU graduate student Christina Brown-Bochicchio traveled across the country to join ECU's recreational therapy program, where she is now working on research to help wheelchair athletes improve their sports performance. (Photo by Chuck Baldwin, Health and Human Performance.)

**ECU grad student finds career that fits**

Sunday, January 22, 2012

Christina Brown-Bochicchio left Hollywood — and a career that catered to film and television celebrities — to enroll as a graduate student at East Carolina University.

While she enjoyed planning large events with clients who lived in the limelight, she wanted a bigger effect on people’s lives.

“My life was consumed with superficial details,” she said.

Brown-Bochicchio found her path to that goal through ECU’s recreational therapy program, ranked first out of 144 in the nation for producing certified therapeutic recreation specialists. The program is housed in the ECU College of Health and Human Performance.

Brown-Bochicchio’s journey began when she left her Hollywood job to serve as project manager for a start-up company manufacturing a magnesium alloy for automobiles. The company’s financial struggle in a weak economy triggered a “light bulb moment” for Brown-Bochicchio. She said she realized that this kind of work was not what she wanted to do.

At the age of 29, she began to search for her ideal career. Remembering an introductory class in recreational therapy at the University of Missouri,
Brown-Bochicchio began to research the field. She shadowed a therapist working at a hospital.

“I knew I had found a career that would package my talents, interests and love of helping people,” she said.

Brown-Bochicchio began to search for the best recreational therapy master’s degree program and university. She traveled across the country touring universities in California, Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin.

A Google search led her to ECU.

“I wanted to attend a university that was connected to a hospital and emphasized the clinical application of recreational therapy,” Brown-Bochicchio said. “And ECU by far had the most recreational therapy faculty.”

After speaking with faculty in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brown-Bochicchio said she knew ECU was the best fit for her.

“Our graduate curriculum offers contemporary recreational therapy treatment services,” said Thom Skalko, professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. “It is unlike most programs in the country.”

These days as part of her thesis work, Brown-Bochicchio works on a test that may help wheelchair athletes improve their sports performance. She uses the SmartWheel device to gather data points such as the length, force and speed used by wheelchair users as they push the chair.

“Recreational Therapy is about helping people with disabilities enjoy their life and rehabilitate to a place where they can enjoy living again,” Brown-Bochicchio said.

Deb Jordan, chairwoman of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, said recreational services are designed to help patients “change physical, cognitive, emotional or social behaviors to enhance abilities and promote independence.”

“It is the perfect fit for my personality, passion and it just feels right for me,” Brown-Bochicchio said.
Brown-Bochicchio will graduate in the spring of 2012 into a strong job market. The U.S. Department of Labor projects continued demand for recreational therapists, forecasting a 15 percent increase in the need for therapists from 2008 to 2018.

**Conferences on state’s history set**

North Carolina’s distinctive history will be the focus of the first of four conferences slated to develop a new narrative of the state. “New Voyages to Carolina,” hosted by ECU and Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, will take place on Feb. 2-3.

The idea for the conference series originated from Larry Tise, ECU professor of history and former director of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources Office of Archives and History. Tise developed the series in collaboration with his successors in the Office of Archives and History, William S. Price and Jeffrey J. Crow. Each of the four conferences is designed to encourage the examination of important topics and issues in North Carolina’s history.


“The purpose of the conferences is to foster new and original understandings of North Carolina’s past, so that we can chart a general reinterpretation of the state’s history,” Tise said. “We have recruited some of the finest historians in America to participate in this effort — all of them have written books on important aspects of North Carolina’s history.”

The two-day conference at ECU begins with a keynote address given by Bland Simpson, North Carolina native and the Bowman and Gordon Gray Distinguished Term Professor of English and Creative Writing at UNC-Chapel Hill, at 7 p.m. on Feb. 2 in Wright Auditorium.

This portion of the conference also is the Thomas Harriot Lecture in the 2011-12 Thomas Harriot Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series. Additional information on this lecture may be viewed at www.ecu.edu/voyages.
On Feb. 3, the conference continues with registration at 8 a.m. in the Mendenhall Student Union, Room 244. The day begins with various speakers in two morning sessions on “Visions — Old World/New World” and “The Tuscarora Tragedy,” followed by lunch and two afternoon sessions on “The Conundrum of Slavery” and “The Uncompromising Environment.” A closing reception will be held at 6 p.m.

Sponsors of “The New Voyages to Carolina” conference series include ECU, ECU’s Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, the N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources and its Office of Archives and History, the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, and additional participating universities.

Subsequent conferences will be held in October, hosted by North Carolina Central University and UNC-Chapel Hill; in November, hosted by UNC-Asheville and Western Carolina University; and in early 2013, hosted by UNC-Charlotte.

Registration for ECU’s “The First North Carolina” conference is $20 for students with a valid ID, and $30 to the general public. Checks should be made payable to East Carolina University and mailed to ECU’s History Department, c/o Rebecca Futrell, A-315 Brewster Building, Greenville, NC 27858.

Individuals requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should call 737-1016 (voice/TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the event.

For additional information, or questions pertaining to registration, contact Futrell at futrellr@ecu.edu or 328-6496. Inquiries about the conference program may be directed to Tise at tisel@ecu.edu or 328-1026. Also, more information may be viewed at www.ncculture.com.

**Upcoming Events:**
- **Today:** Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival—Next Generation Concert, 4 p.m., A.J. Recital Hall. Free and open to the public.
- **Thursday:** Center for Sustainable Tourism open house, 12:30-4 p.m., Mendenhall Student Center Great Rooms 1 & 2.

See www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.
Brody School of Medicine adds three surgeons to staff
Monday, January 23, 2012

Three surgeons have joined the Department of Surgery at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

**Dr. Mark Manwaring** has joined ECU as a clinical assistant professor. He has a medical degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo and completed residency training in general surgery at ECU and Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Manwaring also completed a fellowship in colon and rectal surgery at Case Western Reserve University/University Hospitals in Cleveland.

Manwaring is board-certified in surgery. His clinical and research interests are the treatment of benign and malignant conditions of the colon, rectum and anus, including anorectal diseases such as hemorrhoids, inflammatory bowel diseases, diverticular disease and colorectal cancer.

Manwaring sees patients at the ECU Physicians practices at 517 and 521 Moye Blvd.

**Dr. David Skarupa** has joined ECU as a clinical assistant professor in the division of trauma and surgical critical care. He has a medical degree from...
Ohio State University and completed his residency in general surgery at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Skarupa also completed a trauma and surgical critical care fellowship at the University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore.

Skarupa’s clinical and research interests are thoracic and vascular trauma, extracorporeal membrane oxygenation in trauma, neurotrauma and emergency general surgery. He sees patients at the ECU Physicians practice at 517 Moye Blvd.

**Dr. Danielle Walsh**, a pediatric surgeon, has joined ECU as an associate professor. She comes to ECU from Nemours Children’s Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla., and had faculty appointments at the University of Florida Health Science Center/Shands Healthcare and the Mayo Medical Center in Jacksonville.

Walsh has a medical degree from the University of South Florida College of Medicine in Tampa. She completed an internship and general surgery residency at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. She also completed a fellowship in fetal surgery and research at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and a fellowship in pediatric surgery at Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Walsh is listed as one of the best doctors in the country by Best Doctors Inc., a Boston-based group that surveys more than 30,000 physicians across the United States who previously have been included in the listing asking whom they would choose to treat themselves or their families.

Walsh is board-certified in general surgery and pediatric surgery. Her clinical and research interests are pediatric surgical disorders including birth defects, cancer and abdominal and thoracic surgery as well as minimally invasive surgery. She sees patients at the ECU Pediatric Outpatient Center.
New home market staying slow
By K.j. Williams
The Daily Reflector
Saturday, January 21, 2012

A large inventory of existing homes for sale has helped mute the sound of hammers on new home construction.

There’s been little discernible difference in permits for new single-family housing in Pitt County when comparing 2010 to 2011, financial experts said.

From 2005-07, the Pitt County averaged about 1,419 new home permits annually, Rick Niswander, vice chancellor for Administration and Finance at East Carolina University, said. In 2005, there were 1,393 permits, 1,548 in 2006 and 1,317 in 2007.

Then came a steep decline.

As of the end of November, there were 310 building permits issued. The number includes estimates for December. That’s 40 less than were issued in 2010.
“That’s a 75 percent drop,” Niswander said, from pre-recession figures. “That mirrors the country.”

There were some gains in permits for multifamily housing: an increase of 21 in 2011 compared to 2010. That also reflects the national trend, where there has been an uptick in apartment permits.

In Pitt County, commercial construction is showing more signs of a turnaround, Les Everett, Greenville’s chief building inspector, said. If all of those projects proceed as expected, the city will exceed last year’s growth for that sector.

Meanwhile, there has been little change in permits for single-family residential housing in Greenville. In the 2007-08 fiscal year, the city issued 431 permits for this market. It went down to 161 for 2008-09. It then increased to 185 in 2009-10. For 2010-11, it went down again to 158.

Economist James Kleckley, director of the Bureau of Business Research at East Carolina University’s College of Business, said new home building can’t really pick up until the glut of existing houses on the market is depleted.

Niswander also said the new housing market nationally is suffering because more houses were built than required to meet the population growth.

While Niswander said the national supply of foreclosed homes could be problematic, Kleckley said it’s not a significant issue in North Carolina.

Niswander said one encouraging sign nationally is a recent drop in the supply of housing to about six-month levels from a 12-month supply in January 2009.

Developer and home builder Bill Clark of Bill Clark Homes, who builds statewide and in South Carolina, estimates North Carolina has about a 6 1/2-month supply of housing, which he said is a fairly healthy number. A supply for fewer months indicates those houses will meet the demand sooner, causing more to be built.
In a market swamped with existing homes for sale, and with foreclosures available, some builders are taking a conservative approach to their trade, selling one new house before beginning another.

It’s a “build one, sell one” mentality, Homer Tyre of Greenville-based Tyre Realty Group Inc., said.

“They just keep replacing inventory versus having a lot of standing inventory,” Tyre said.

Builders also are offering buyers incentives to make the sale.

“They’re having to offer a lot of square footage and amenities at a rock bottom price in order to compete with existing homes and foreclosures,” he said.

The hottest price range and market is for existing houses in the $100,000 to $150,000 price range, but it’s difficult to build in that price range.

“There are very few homes over $300,000; most of the larger builders aren’t building in that price point because they know it’s a harder sale,” Tyre said.

Clark agrees there’s more demand for the less expensive houses than before the downtown of recent years.

“The fat of the market is between $100,000 and $200,000,” he said.

Clark cited the area’s multiple listing service, which showed that 188 new homes were sold last year. He compared it to 2007, when there were closings on 952 single-family residences.

The housing market here and elsewhere crumpled with the recession, which began in December 2007 and ended in June 2009, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research, an independent group of economists.

It hasn’t picked up much.

In January 2011, Pitt County had 143 new home listings, and by the end of the year, there were 102. Those numbers reflect the small number of new homes under construction, Clark said. And that’s partly due to more robust
sales of existing homes, where there’s a high inventory, usually at lower prices.

“New homes used to be about 40 percent of the market,” he said of the Greenville area. “Right now, it looks like it’s about 22 percent.

“We’re one of the few builders that are still building,” Clark said, saying his company has the financial means that smaller companies might not have.

Still, he’s feeling the effect.

“We’re selling housing now for what we were selling houses for in 2004,” he said. “I think 2012 will be slightly better than 2011. But I don’t think it’s going to be any bonanza.”

Tyre said that builders have adjusted to the market conditions, including accepting lower profit margins. He’s the exclusive Realtor of Caviness and Cates Communities, which has some houses under construction in Greenville. He also has other clients.

Local experts said that the housing market won’t recover until there’s lower unemployment and the economy picks up.

“If we’re not going to be creating jobs, you’re not going to have a lot of people buying houses,” Kleckley said.

Niswander said it’s too soon to tell if new home construction is picking up, and it will take time to shed the excessive number of new homes already built nationally.

Meanwhile, the overall residential housing sales picture may have some bright spots.

According to the multiple listing service compiled by the Greenville-Pitt Association of Realtors, the combined markets of Pitt, Greene and Martin counties, saw an increase in combined residential housing sales when the fourth quarters of 2010 and 2011 were compared. During that period in 2010, 291 homes sold, compared to 325 in 2011.

Judy Hardy, the association’s president, said this is encouraging.
“I hope it’s a continuing trend,” she said.

*Contact K.J. Williams at kwilliams@reflector.com or at 252-329-9588.*
The Wilmington Star News

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Editorial:

Continued large UNC tuition increases not a viable solution

North Carolina’s public universities are frequently lauded as a “best value” by publications that rank such things, but a series of tuition increases have begun to price many students out of that education. Conversely, the “value” those institutions give is threatened by budget cuts that university officials admit are eroding the quality of their programs.

That is the dilemma facing University of North Carolina system president Tom Ross as he prepares to recommend yet another tuition increase to the board of governors, designed to help offset deep cuts in university budgets over the last several budget years.

He feels that without a tuition hike, the university system will lose its prestigious reputation for high-quality education at a good price. Twenty former members of the board of governors signed a letter asking this board to reject tuition increases. Similar pleas have come from two former presidents of the University of North Carolina system, Bill Friday and C.D. Spangler Jr. Students and their families can’t take any more, they say.

They’re absolutely right. But so is Ross. Our state university system is considered one of the best in the nation, and it didn’t get there by cutting staff, programs or financial aid – all of which took a beating in the General Assembly’s 2011-12 budget. UNC administrators have scoured their campuses for redundant programs, administrative jobs that could be combined or eliminated and tried to make cuts that did not have a direct effect on the classroom.

That “fat,” if that is what it was, is mostly gone, and to make the type of cuts required in this budget – $16.6 million at UNC Wilmington, $100 million at UNC-Chapel Hill – chancellors have had to make the difficult decision to cut class offerings, increase class size, require faculty to teach more classes and use more temporary or part-time faculty.

During a conference call Wednesday with a number of editorial page editors across the state, Ross also lamented the loss of good faculty to universities that could offer them a raise. In leaving, some of them have taken millions
of dollars in research grant money with them, a trend that, if it continues, will greatly diminish our university system’s “value.”

Even as tuition has risen, our public universities have given students a lot for their money. UNCW ranked second in North Carolina on Kiplinger’s recent list of top values, right behind the state’s flagship university at Chapel Hill. Regionally, it jumped up the list as well.

But more students are having to drop out of our public universities, defer their schooling or drop down to part-time status, taking that much longer to graduate. Those who do graduate are doing so with more debt, and they face a bleak job market that makes it more difficult to repay loans.

Since 2005-06, in-state undergraduate tuition and fees at UNCW have jumped 53.5 percent. Looking at tuition alone, the increase was a jaw-dropping 67 percent. Talk about inflation. And the trustees, like their counterparts at other universities, are asking for 10.7 percent more.

They won’t get that much, not right away. Ross says he’s looking at an average of somewhat less than 9 percent for next year, followed by a smaller hike the following budget year. And some current members of the board of governors, including Wilmington’s Fred Eshelman, have suggested that it’s time for the board to put its foot down with the Honorables and reject the notion that students should fill the funding gap.

Whether the entire board will show such fortitude remains to be seen. But the General Assembly needs to be reminded that our public universities are an investment that reaps enormous returns, and that it is the state’s constitutional duty to make the investment.
Duke Cancer Patient Support Program volunteers Brian D. Kang, left, and Paul Danneberg, center, serve snacks and drinks to cancer patients and their families.

New Duke cancer center could use some help
BY TRACIE FELLERS - Correspondent

Duke University Health System has almost finished building its new seven-story cancer center scheduled to open Feb. 27.

And Phillip Shoe, who coordinates volunteers for the Duke Cancer Patient Support Program, is counting on seeing more people give their time, compassion and support to cancer patients and their families.

In an interview last month, Shoe estimated the number of volunteers at between 225 and 250.

"We have a good number of volunteers for the space we have now," he said. But at 267,000 square feet, the new cancer center - which will connect to the current Morris Cancer Clinic - will require a lot more coverage.

"I think a good goal for us ... to be where we need to be for the new building, is 400 (volunteers)," Shoe said. "So we're a little over halfway there."

Hospital grows

The new cancer center is part of a larger Duke Hospital expansion, which will include a new medicine pavilion for surgery and critical care and a new
learning center for medical students. The total cost is more than $700 million.

The cancer center will bring together outpatient cancer services and clinical research, now housed in several locations across the campus.

Since its founding in 1987, the cancer-patient support program has grown from fewer than 20 volunteers to offering services including clinic and hospital tours; assistance with support groups; counseling for patients and their families, and end-of-life care.

Pat Booth, a retired registered nurse, has been with the program since the beginning.

"I've not been quite as active in this past year or so. I've had some health problems that caught up with me," said Booth, 83, a self-described Durhamite who survived her own battle with cancer years ago. "But I'm there one day a week, and I just meet some wonderful people who need someone there who cares about them, that they can talk to. I'm a good listener ... that's important, too."

Booth's fellow volunteers, along with Shoe, agree.

"The main part of what I do is to talk to people who are there in the clinic for the very first time," said Bob Johnson, 67, who started volunteering in Duke Hospital, then shifted to the cancer center last year.

People come into the clinic with a range of emotions, he said. "My main thing is just making them feel (at) home, and if it helps relieve their fears, terrific."

Johnson, a retiree and six-year survivor of prostate cancer, also values the opportunity to share his own experiences with patients and "put them at ease. ... I know people helped me during my course (of treatment) there, and I just felt like that was something I needed to do and wanted to do."

Kristian Becker, a pediatrics researcher at Duke Clinical Research Institute, is just 26, but he strikes a similar chord when talking about his volunteer work with cancer patients and their families.

"It's a great opportunity to connect with patients and people, (to) sit down and talk with them not just about their cancer, but their lives," Becker said. He hopes anyone interested "will get to know the program a little bit better ... and see that it's something they can do that doesn't require a whole lot of experience or knowledge, but a little bit of time, a little bit of dedication and a little bit of understanding," he said. "That's all that's really needed."
WANT TO HELP?

Interested volunteers must complete an application, train and make a minimum one-year commitment.

Traditionally, all volunteers had four-hour shifts once a week. But with the cancer center’s opening, a two-hour shift has been created. The shorter shift is aimed at docent volunteers in particular - who provide tours and escort patients and families in the cancer center - and is intended to open opportunities for those with tight schedules.

The new facility also will allow the program to work with groups as well as individual volunteers to fill weekly two- or four-hour shifts. Group members could rotate to cover a regularly assigned block of time - for example, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each Tuesday.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, visit bit.ly/ySHU29.
UNC names next book

From staff reports

CHAPEL HILL—The summer reading book for incoming UNC-Chapel Hill students this year will be "The Shallows" by Nicholas Carr.

A committee of students, faculty and staff selected the book from six finalists, the university announced Friday.

"The Shallows" explores how technology and the Internet may be changing the structure of human brains and altering the way people think and experience life.

The book was a finalist for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize.

New students who enroll at UNC-Chapel Hill in the fall are expected to read the book and participate in small group discussions when they arrive on campus.

The program, now in its 14th year, has been controversial in the past.

In 2002, when the university assigned a book about the Quran, several students sued UNC-CH in federal court.
UNC campus progressing

BY DAVE HART - dhart@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL UNC-Chapel Hill officials hope to begin construction on the first building at the Carolina North satellite campus early next year.

A lot of things will have to fall neatly into place for the university to meet that schedule, said Bruce Runberg, associate vice chancellor for facilities planning.

Runberg and Anna Wu, director of facilities planning, held a public information session on the first phase of the university's planned research campus, and on proposed changes to Carolina North conservation plan, Thursday night.

"There are a lot of things we have to have in place before we can build the first building," Runberg said. "In a perfect world, we hope to start construction in early 2013."

Carolina North, to be built in phases over the next 50 years, eventually is projected to consist of about 8 million square feet of facilities on 250 acres of a 947-acre tract two miles north of the main campus. That first building will be 225,000 square feet and house research facilities for the School of Public Health and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research.

It is one of five buildings planned for the first 800,000 square feet of the project - "the first half of the first phase," Runberg said. Also proposed for the initial footprint are: a 250,000-square-foot law school; a second research building of 120,000 square feet; 200,000 square feet of housing; and a small utility building.

The weak economy has slowed progress on Carolina North and in 2010 knocked the original intended first building, a high-tech Innovation Center, off the project.

But with some of the infrastructure work now proceeding, the campus is making headway.

"We're excited to be under way," Runberg said. "We've had a bit of a delay because of the financial climate, but today we have a project or two that are moving forward."
Runberg said work is progressing as planned on a ductbank that will carry telecommunications and electrical lines to the university's facilities on and around Airport Drive, and on a pipeline that will carry methane gas from the county landfill to the Carolina North campus and nearby existing university buildings.

Wu outlined the proposed modifications to the university's conservation plan designed to improve the ecological value of the preserved areas.

Under a 2009 development agreement between the university and the Town of Chapel Hill, 311 acres of the Carolina North tract are designated for conservation.

The original plan featured six scattered conservation areas. Planners have proposed a reconfiguration that consolidates the conservation areas into four spaces that still total 311 acres.

"This modification improves connectivity, removes the conflicts with development areas and preserves more streams, stream buffers, wetlands and mature forest," Wu said.

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What's Next
The Chapel Hill Town Council will take public comment on the university's proposed modification of the Carolina North conservation areas when it meets at 7 p.m. Monday in Town Hall. The agenda is available for review at ci.chapel-hill.nc.us.
Heart valve patient died, contrary to doctor's statement

By Karen Garloch

One of four patients who underwent a new heart valve procedure at Presbyterian Hospital died last week, contrary to a statement from the patients' cardiologist, Dr. Yele Aluko, who said Friday all were doing well.

Family members said Sunday that Thomas Herman Alley Jr., 89, of Charlotte died Wednesday after having been on life support since undergoing transcatheter aortic valve replacement Jan. 12.

"He never came out of the operating room awake," said Alley's grandson, David Benner. "They were keeping him alive on a ventilator."

Benner, 34, was at his maternal grandfather's bedside when a doctor pronounced Alley dead last Wednesday, six days after the procedure. Benner said he and other family members were surprised to read Sunday's Observer article about the new procedure that quoted Aluko saying all four patients were doing well.

Aluko, an interventional cardiologist who leads the Presbyterian team that performed all four procedures, gave that report to the Observer Friday afternoon when asked how the patients were doing. By then, according to the family, Alley had been dead for two days.

Aluko could not be reached for comment Sunday. Presbyterian spokeswoman Sharon Harmon said he was traveling out of the country. She did not address why the paper was told all four patients were doing fine.

In a written statement, she said: "This patient's valve replacement was successfully completed, but he passed away from other complications following the procedure."

Presbyterian is the first hospital in the Carolinas to perform the new procedure outside of clinical trials. Aluko has called the procedure "a game changer" in treating patients with aortic stenosis, a narrowing of the aortic valve that supplies the body with blood.

Aluko's team performed its first two procedures Jan. 12, and did two more Jan. 19. Doctors at Carolinas Medical Center have scheduled their first patients for the procedure this week.
The minimally invasive procedure became available in November after the Food and Drug Administration approved an artificial aortic valve. It is approved for use only in older, high-risk patients who are too frail to have standard valve replacement, which is done during open-heart surgery.

In the single study leading to FDA approval, patients who had the new procedure were more likely to be alive one year later than those who didn't. But those who received the new valve were also 2 1/2 times more likely to have a stroke and eight times more likely to have a bleeding complication than patients who didn't.

Benner said his grandfather was given six months to live without the procedure. "He couldn't go 5 feet without taking a breath." But he walked into the hospital "talking and everything. He drove himself to the hospital," said Benner, a teacher at Presbyterian's child development center.

During or after the procedure, Benner said his grandfather's lungs filled with fluid, his kidneys began to fail and his heart developed an irregular rhythm. He said doctors used electrical shock and implanted three different pacemakers to get Alley's heart working properly, but "there was too much liquid on his lungs. He went in weighing 135 and he (ended up) weighing 180 (because of the fluid)," Benner said.


The second patient who had the procedure Jan. 12 was Fred High, 80, a retired Union County principal, who is at home in Monroe and doing well, his wife, Wanda, said Sunday. Harmon said Sunday the other two patients are recovering in the hospital.

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**Aortic valve disease**

A healthy aortic valve allows oxygen-rich blood from the lungs to flow from the left ventricle of the heart to the aorta, the largest artery in the body, where it then flows to the brain and the rest of the body. A normal aortic valve has three leaflets or cusps that open and close to let the blood flow in only one direction.

Severe aortic stenosis is the narrowing or obstruction of the aortic heart valve, often caused by calcium deposits on the leaflets. As the heart works harder to pump enough blood through the smaller valve opening, it eventually weakens, leading to shortness of breath, chest pain, fainting and extreme fatigue.

Once symptoms occur and without treatment, more than half of patients die within two years. The prevalence of aortic stenosis increases with age.

Source: American Heart Association and Edwards Lifesciences
Online course start-ups offer virtually free college

By Jon Marcus

An emerging group of entrepreneurs with influential backing is seeking to lower the cost of higher education from as much as tens of thousands of dollars a year to nearly nothing.

These new arrivals are harnessing the Internet to offer online courses, which isn’t new. But their classes are free, or almost free. Most traditional universities have refused to award academic credit for such online studies.

Now the start-ups are discovering a way around that monopoly, by inventing credentials that “graduates” can take directly to employers instead of university degrees.

“If I were the universities, I might be a little nervous,” said Alana Harrington, director of Saylor.org, a nonprofit organization based in the District. Established by entrepreneur Michael Saylor, it offers 200 free online college courses in 12 majors.

Another nonprofit initiative is Peer-to-Peer University, based in California. Known as P2PU, it offers free online courses and is supported by the Hewlett Foundation and Mozilla, the company behind the Firefox Web browser.

A third is University of the People, also based in California, which offers more than 40 online courses. It charges students a one-time $10 to $50 application fee. Among its backers is the Clinton Global Initiative.

The content these providers supply comes from top universities, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of California at Berkeley, Tufts University and the University of Michigan. Those are among about 250 institutions worldwide that have put a collective 15,000 courses online in what has become known as the open-courseware movement.

The universities aim to widen access to course content for prospective students and others. At MIT, a pioneer of open courseware, half of incoming freshmen report that they’ve looked at MIT online courses and a third say it influenced their decision to go there.
But the material, which includes videos of lectures, can also be scooped up by others and organized into catalogues of free courses.

Some providers develop their own content. StraighterLine, a Baltimore for-profit company, charges students $99 a month plus a $39 registration fee for each of more than 30 online courses.

These start-ups have a tiny share of a fast-growing online market. An estimated 6.1 million students a year pay for online courses from traditional or for-profit universities.

By contrast, University of the People has registered 1,100 students in two years. StraighterLine says it enrolled 4,000 in the past two years. Saylor.org doesn’t have a count of how many students take its courses; P2PU says that about 25,000 users have opened accounts on its Web site since 2009 but that there is no tally of how many have finished courses.

Still, analysts say the notion of free or very low-cost online college is gaining attention from students who often must borrow heavily to pay spiraling tuition costs at traditional schools.

“Maybe these upstarts don’t have all the bells and whistles of the beautiful campuses. But people are deciding it’s not worth paying for that,” said Michael Horn, director for education at the Innosight Institute, a nonprofit think tank.

To be sure, similar arguments are advanced in favor of community college as a proven, low-cost path toward a degree.

Some students who complete courses through the new online-only providers are able to win credit from conventional colleges. Albany State University in Georgia, for instance, encourages incoming students to take StraighterLine courses to build credits toward a degree.

Still, most conventional colleges and universities refuse to accept transfer credits from these programs. Universities say that they can’t always judge the quality of courses offered by others and that reading online content alone, or even watching lectures, is not the same as attending class in person.

“Libraries are free, too,” says Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. “You can roam around, read books and study. But hardly anyone would say that spending time in the library is a good preparation to work in any economy, much less this one.”
Denial of credits means that students who want a degree from a conventional university often find that they must retake certain courses — and pay for them.

“The last thing universities have to protect themselves is this withholding of academic credit,” said Philipp Schmidt, co-founder and director of P2PU. He contended that conventional schools simply want to prevent competition. “It’s not about a deep concern for the interests of the students. It’s about a deep concern for the interests of the institutions.”

Debbie Arthur of Kingsport, Tenn., who has taken courses from StraighterLine, said many classes at conventional universities are no more personal than the ones online. “The Pollyanna version of college is that you’re learning and discussing things with your professors,” Arthur said. “The reality is that you have 450 kids in an auditorium listening to a teaching assistant.”

Some free-content providers are devising new credentials in lieu of credits or degrees. Saylor.org, for instance, next month will introduce an “electronic portfolio,” more detailed than a college transcript, that students can show employers.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is running a $2 million competition to design digital “badges” that can be used instead of university degrees to prove a job candidate’s experience and knowledge to employers. P2PU and Saylor are experimenting with such badges for students to show they have completed courses.

This spring, MIT will begin offering certificates of completion to anyone who successfully finishes courses the university makes available free online. There will be a small fee for certificates in this project, known as MITx.

Meanwhile, some businesses that offer tuition reimbursement to employees are becoming interested in the free- and low-cost education providers.

CompuCom, a Dallas information technology company with 5,000 employees, has begun to work with StraighterLine. Burck Smith, chief executive of StraighterLine, said such partnerships mean “colleges that want these students later will have to accept StraighterLine credits.”

Ed Rankin, who oversees CompuCom’s tuition reimbursement, said “there’s no question” other companies will follow suit. “If there is a way to lower the price of higher education, you can’t stand there for long and say, ‘I’ll resist this and prevent it from happening,’” said
Shai Reshef, founder and president of University of the People. “Maybe it will be a harder road than it needs to be. But it will happen.”

*This story was produced by the Hechinger Report, a nonprofit, nonpartisan education news outlet based at Teachers College, Columbia University.*