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TLC reality star at ECU tonight

The Daily Reflector

The medical director of Texas Children’s Hospital is a “little person” with big accomplishments.

Dr. Jennifer Arnold, the medical director of the pediatric simulation center at Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston, is a dwarf, and she stars with her husband, also a dwarf, in the TLC reality show “The Little Couple.”

Arnold, a 3-foot-2-inch pediatrician, will be speaking about overcoming obstacles and achieving success at 7 p.m. today at East Carolina University’s Hendrix Theatre, located inside the Mendenhall Student Center.

The event is sponsored by ECU’s Campus Living Diversity Education Team, the Residence Hall Association and ECU’s Student Involvement and Leadership. Tickets are $5 for the public. Students, faculty and staff tickets are $1. For ticket information, call 328-4788.

Arnold will discuss how to achieve success despite being judged as different. In media interviews she has said that she found success on her own terms and that her young patients easily accept her small stature when she explains that people come in different sizes.

Arnold is an assistant professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children’s Hospital division of neonatology.
WakeMed President and CEO Bill Atkinson has a long list of grievances against Rex Hospital.

Lawmakers hear Rex Hospital complaints

BY MANDY LOCKE - mlocke@newsobserver.com

WakeMed CEO Bill Atkinson finally found his audience Monday at a legislative committee charged with deciding whether the state should own Rex Hospital, WakeMed's cross-town rival.

For more than a year, Atkinson has lodged the same litany of complaints against Rex and its owner, UNC Health Care. Atkinson's list of grievances is long: Rex doesn't pick up its fair share of charity care, Rex competes unfairly in Wake County with advantages harnessed through ties to UNC, Rex and UNC stole away a cardiology practice that helped offset losses at WakeMed.

Those complaints registered well with a committee dominated by Republicans who have trimmed state spending and vowed to scale back government involvement in areas where it competes with the private sector.

Legislators questioned why Rex is slated to receive 100 percent cost reimbursement for treating Medicaid patients, while WakeMed gets 83 cents on the dollar. And they struggled to understand Rex's standing as a hospital.

"What is it: public or private?" asked Rep. Edgar V. Starnes, a Republican from Caldwell County.

Atkinson said WakeMed has had trouble relating to UNC Health Care since the state's public university bought Rex in 2000. At the time, the attorney general ruled that Rex would remain a private nonprofit even though it would be owned by a state entity.
But, over the years, Rex and UNC leaders have lobbied to be considered public to get higher Medicaid reimbursement rates and for an exemption on filing a 990 tax form that divulges certain financial information.

"You need to be one or the other," Atkinson said. "You can't be one thing on Monday and another on Tuesday."

**No resolution imminent**

Atkinson's presentation Monday stoked a fire that seemed to be dying out over the past two months. After an explosive 2011 that included WakeMed issuing an unsolicited $750 million bid to buy Rex, leaders from both hospitals finally met in private in November to find common ground.

Leaders for WakeMed, UNC Health Care and Rex Hospital have kept the talks quiet and refused to discuss terms and tone with the media. Atkinson signaled Monday that a resolution is not imminent. "We're still a long way from the finish line on those discussions," he said.

Rex and UNC officials declined to elaborate on Atkinson's remarks.

"We will continue to work toward a partnership with WakeMed because we believe it is in the best interest of the people of Wake County," said Alan Wolf, a spokesman for Rex Hospital.

'We need a solution'

Any resolution brokered by the hospitals' leaders would be moot if the legislature decides to move forward with a sale of Rex.

When asked if WakeMed was still in the market to buy Rex, Atkinson hedged before saying that, if the state went ahead with a sale, WakeMed would make a bid. He also said the legislature could intervene and manage some of the troubling aspects of Rex's structure, such as its reimbursement levels for Medicaid patients or the amount of charity care it offers.

"We need a solution," Atkinson said.

Rep. Michael Wray, a Democrat and small business owner from Halifax, suggested the legislature ought to find a way to prevent UNC from expanding in the future and competing with local hospitals across the state.

The committee will review dozens of state-owned properties to figure out whether the state should sell off certain assets. Last summer, Rex was put on the list for consideration.

A report is due to the full legislature when it convenes this spring.

Locke: 919-829-8927
HADDONFIELD, N.J. — Travelers know the Garden State for its congested turnpike and beachfront casinos. MTV fans know it for the reality show “Jersey Shore.” And colleges know New Jersey as the nation’s leading exporter of students.

The state is packed with applicants who have high SAT scores and well-off parents, but it has a relatively lean higher education system. More than half of New Jersey high school graduates who enroll at four-year colleges choose one that’s out of state.

Many of these students land in the Washington region. Several schools in Maryland and the District have more students from New Jersey than from Virginia. Public universities consider these students especially valuable because they pay higher out-of-state tuition. Private colleges like New Jersey, too, because their recruiters can garner many applications from a small area.

“A lot of them would go broke without our students,” said Paul R. Shelly, a spokesman for the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities.
In fall 2008, 31,510 recent high school graduates left New Jersey to enroll as freshmen at four-year colleges, according to the latest federal data. Meanwhile, 4,167 students arrived in the state. New Jersey’s outflow of students is the largest of any state.

On the same measure, Virginia had a net gain of about 3,000 students in 2008, and the District had a net gain of about 6,300. Maryland had a net drain of about 8,600.

It’s not that New Jersey students don’t have options at home. Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, is a top-tier research institution that has become more selective in recent years. There are another nine public four-year colleges and even more private schools, including Princeton University.

But those schools don’t have the capacity for all of the state’s college-bound teenagers. And, as for many college-bound students across the country, there is also the allure of hitting the road for a few years.

At the University of Maryland, New Jersey’s 1,800 undergraduates form the largest out-of-state contingent. During spring and winter breaks, the university runs shuttle buses between College Park and two spots in New Jersey. At Towson University in Baltimore County, 80 percent of undergraduates come from Maryland and 7 percent from New Jersey.

At Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, New Jersey is often the No. 1 feeder state for freshmen classes — so officials weren’t too surprised when a star from a Bravo reality show, “Real Housewives of New Jersey,” asked last summer for a tour for her child and a camera crew. (The university turned down the request.)

George Washington University, in the District, has a regional recruiting office in New Jersey. At freshman orientation in June, the GWU student body president asked how many students were from Jersey. He laughed when a sea of hands shot up. “Some things never change,” he said.

At Catholic University, also in the District, New Jersey was the second most popular state of origin for the latest freshmen class, just behind Maryland and way ahead of Virginia. The school dedicates three of its 10 admissions counselors to canvassing New Jersey every fall. One of them, Patrick Ratke, logged hundreds of miles on a rental car, visiting dozens of schools and staffing booths at college fairs.

One October morning, Ratke pitched Catholic to two dozen boys in blazers at a prep school in Richland, in southern New Jersey. Then he drove an hour north, passing a family of wild turkeys on his way to a co-ed Catholic school
in Haddonfield, where he was one of more than 20 recruiters to visit that week. Then he went back south to an all-girls school. Then back to Haddonfield, near Philadelphia, for a college fair at a public high school ranked among the best in the state.

Through three admission seasons, Ratke has learned that New Jersey students don’t get too excited about Catholic’s Starbucks outlet — but they are guaranteed to laugh when he tells them about a campus convenience store that resembles a roadside institution from home.

“The way that I describe it is as a Wawa without two things: No Wawa iced tea and no made-to-order sandwiches,” Ratke told a group of girls at Our Lady of Mercy Academy in Newfield, where Wawa gas stations outnumber Starbucks. “Kind of a little piece of home there on campus.”

The Jersey affection for Wawa is so strong that a couple years ago, Catholic’s student government rented a bus during finals week to take students to the closest Wawa for late-night comfort food.

The horde of college recruiters who descend on Jersey every year underscore the extent of the state’s “brain drain.”

In 2010, Gov. Chris Christie (R) convened a task force to review the problem. It reported that two decades of state funding cuts have hurt higher education and recommended an immediate funding infusion to avoid serious economic problems. But the task force also acknowledged that fiscal troubles will hinder such investments.

Historically, New Jersey was slow to get into the higher education market. In the 1940s and ’50s, the state created a flagship university by purchasing Rutgers, which was chartered as a private university before the American Revolution. As the baby boomers hit college in the 1960s and ’70s, the state started community colleges and founded three colleges: Ramapo, Stockton and Thomas Edison.

Darryl G. Greer, executive director of the state college and university association, said these schools are being pushed to their limit. To reverse the exodus of students from New Jersey would require a huge investment, he said.

“You can’t turn this baby around in a few years with limited money,” Greer said. One of his staff members jokes that the easiest way to solve the problem would be to annex all schools along Interstate 95 and Amtrak’s northeast rail line.
On that day in late October, Ratke and recruiters from more than 100 schools showed up for a college fair at Haddonfield Memorial High School. The vast majority of the recruiters were from out of state.

Ratke laid out brochures for Catholic at a table sandwiched between displays for Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and Centenary College, a liberal arts school in Hackettstown, N.J.

Devon Vialva, a Centenary enrollment and financial aid counselor, said if the state wants to retain its high school graduates — and their money — it needs to heavily invest in growing sports programs and building up facilities such as dorms and student centers.

“What’s going to attract the students?” he said. “Students are shallow. They are going to go towards what’s shiny.”

Several students and their parents said they felt more wooed and wanted by out-of-state schools than those close by.

“New Jersey does not do anything to keep them here,” said Lo-Ann Riggs Davis, who led a Georgetown University information session. Davis grew up in the area, graduated from Georgetown in 1982 and returned to Jersey to raise her family. Her daughter and twin sons are now enrolled at Georgetown.

Davis’s pitch for “the Ivy League of the Catholic schools” to the classroom full of prospective students that night contained the same selling point touted by other recruiters: a campus in a state other than Jersey.

“You know that it’s in Washington, D.C., right?” she asked the group. ”Everything is going on there.”
Stanford Engineering's Online Introduction To Artificial Intelligence is made up of videos that teach lessons by drawing them out with pen and paper.

**Stanford Takes Online Schooling To The Next Academic Level**

by Steve Henn

Last year, Stanford University computer science professor Sebastian Thrun — also known as the fellow who helped build Google's self-driving car — got together with a small group of Stanford colleagues and they impulsively decided to open their classes to the world.

They would allow anyone, anywhere to attend online, take quizzes, ask questions and even get grades for free. They made the announcement with almost no fanfare by sending out a single email to a professional group.

"Within hours, we had 5,000 students signed up," Thrun says. "That was on a Saturday morning. On Sunday night, we had 10,000 students. And Monday morning, Stanford — who we didn't really inform — learned about this and we had a number of meetings."

You can only imagine what those meetings must have been like, with professors telling the school they wanted to teach free, graded online classes for which students could receive a certificate of completion. And, oh by the way, tens of thousands have already signed up to participate.

For decades, technology has promised to remake education — and it may finally be about to deliver. Apple's moving into the textbook market, startups and nonprofits are re-imagining what K-12 education could look like, and now
some in Silicon Valley are eager for technology and the Internet to transform education's more elite institutions.

Thrun's colleague Andrew Ng taught a free, online machine learning class that ultimately attracted more than 100,000 students. When I ask Ng how Stanford's administration reacted to their proposition, he's silent for a second. "Oh boy," he says, "I think there was a strong sense that we were all suddenly in a brave new world."

Ng says there were long conversations about whether or not to give online students a certificate bearing the university's name. But Stanford balked and ultimately the school settled on giving students a letter of accomplishment from the professors that did not mention the university's name.

"We are still having conversations about that," says James Plummer, dean of Stanford's School of Engineering. "I think it will actually be a long time — maybe never — when actual Stanford degrees would be given for fully online work by anyone who wishes to register for the courses."

Thrun's online class on artificial intelligence or A.I., which he co-taught with Google's Peter Norvig, eventually drew more than 160,000 students who received detailed grades and a class ranking.

"We reached many more students, Peter and I, with this one class than all other A.I. professors combined reached in the last year," Thrun says.

Thrun believes a class that size creates a valuable credential — even if Stanford doesn't recognize it. Students hailed from 190 different countries, including Australia, China, Ukraine and the U.S. They included high school students, women with disabilities, teachers and retirees — and they were all taking the same class Stanford students took, grades and all. But the online participants didn't get credit.

"I think we all realized we were in uncharted territory," Thrun says. "As we move forward, it is my real goal to invent an education platform that has high quality to it, [that] prevents cheating, that really enables students to go through it to be empowered to find better jobs."

**Widespread Impact**

Stanford does award degrees for online work, but only to students who get through the admissions process and pay sometimes $40,000 or $50,000 for a master's degree. Technology could push prices down.

Dean Plummer believes low-cost, high-quality online education will have a profound impact in high education, even at institutions as august as Stanford.
He doesn't think it will diminish demand for undergraduate degrees or Ph.D.s, but he says the impact on master's programs could be profound.

"What it will look like in 10 years or 20 years or 30 years — your guess is as good as mine," he says. "But I think the impact will be large and it will be widespread."

Online education and distance learning have been going on at Stanford and other schools for years, but Plummer believes the technology has reached an inflection point.

Videos stored online let students build course work into their schedules anywhere in the world. Embedded quizzes let students monitor their own progress and give professors much richer data to improve their teaching.

Ng noticed that 5,000 students made the identical mistake in an online quiz. Within minutes, teachers were able to respond and clarify the issue that had led a large fraction of the class down a dead-end path.

**Global Benefits**

Daphne Koller is a computer science professor at Stanford, and a MacArthur "Genius" Fellow. She has been working for years to make online education more engaging and interactive.

"On the long term, I think the potential for this to revolutionize education is just tremendous," Koller says. "There are millions of people around the world that have access only to the poorest quality of education or sometimes nothing at all."

Technology could change that by making it possible to teach classes with 100,000 students as easily and as cheaply as a class with just 100. And if you look around the world, demand for education in places like South Africa is enormous.

Almost two weeks ago, at the University of Johannesburg, more than 20 people were injured and one woman was killed trying register for a limited number of openings. Thousands had camped out overnight hoping to snag one of the few available places and when the gates opened, there was a stampede.

Koller hopes that in the future, technology will help prevent these kinds of tragedies.

**Trying 'Bold New Things'**
Over the past six months, Thrun has spent roughly $200,000 of his own money and lined up venture capital to create Udacity, a new online institution of higher learning independent of Stanford. "We are committed to free online education for everybody."

Udacity is announcing two new classes on Monday. One will teach students to build their own search engine and the other how to program a self-driving car. Eventually, the founders hope to offer a full slate of classes in computer science.

Thrun says Stanford's mission is to attract the top 1 percent of students from all over in the world and bring them to campus, but Udacity's mission is different. He's striving for free, quality education for all, anywhere.

Koller agrees, but she says Stanford and its professors will adapt.

"How it all is going to pan out is something that I don't think anyone has a very clear idea of," she says. "But what I think is clear is that this change is coming and it's coming whether we like it or not. So I think the right strategy is to embrace that change."

Over the years, Stanford has launched dozens of disruptive technologies into the world, but now administrators and professors seem to agree that the school may be about to disrupt itself. This semester Stanford will put 17 interactive courses online for free.

"Stanford has always been a place where we were will to try bold new things," Plummer says. "Even if we don't know what the consequences would be."