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Ruffin McNeill was a picture of irony on many game days in his first season as East Carolina's football coach.

Whenever a player got hurt, whether it was one of his own or the other team's, McNeill would slowly make his way onto the field to check on the player's well-being.

But in most cases, McNeill's pain likely was worse than theirs. As is true for almost any college football coach, McNeill had trouble escaping the day-to-day concerns of 120 student-athletes to make the time to deal with his own, including a painful, degenerative hip condition. But he's now made the time, and a much healthier McNeill will be the result.

“My job is to take care of others, but on the other hand, I knew it was necessary to be able to do my job at the highest level,” said the coach, who is recovering from having bariatric surgery two weeks ago and who will have hip replacement surgery following spring practice in April.

For now, McNeill is forced to devote some of his attention to his other team, the six Greenville-based physicians and trainers who are guiding the coach's procedures and recovery.

“It wasn't a fly-by-night plan,” McNeill said. “It was a methodical plan. The team that's working with me thought out the dates, the plans and the best time of the year so that I can be ready by the start of the season.”
McNeill said his schedule, including any travel plans, must first meet the approval of his doctors.

As a veteran coach who's made a name for himself as a recruiter, it was difficult for McNeill to be forced to miss some of his in-home visits recently in advance of next Wednesday's national signing day.

“It's been different for me because for 20 years I've been on the road during this time,” McNeill said. “Recruiting is such an important lifeline to the program, and we take a lot of pride in getting the right kind of guys for this program.”

A Lumberton native and an ECU alum, McNeill can appreciate the fact that because of ECU's Brody School of Medicine and the rapid growth of Pitt County Memorial Hospital and Orthopedics East, he can get the care he needs in Greenville.

“Growing up, everybody had to go to Duke,” McNeill said of the ease of being able to stay in town for all of his medical needs. “Nothing against Duke, but coming back to Greenville this past year, I witnessed personally how professional and first class and top notch our medical facility is here in Greenville.”

What's in it for McNeill in the long term is immeasurable.

Even through his decade as an assistant at Texas Tech prior to coming to ECU, McNeill maintained a regular workout schedule. In addition to losing weight through the bariatric surgery, a new hip will mean a new lease on life for a man who has learned to live with more and more pain almost every day.

“It was pretty painful,” McNeill said of his game days this season. “The pain, (the doctors) didn't know how I was able to stand it. Now, I'll be able to do my job at a very high level. My health is No. 1, but being able to do my job is right there after it.”

McNeill's team of doctors includes bariatric surgeon William Chapman III, orthopedic surgeon Chris Hasty, pulmonary doctor Sunil Sharma, personal physician James Powell, ECU team doctor Joe Armen and ECU head trainer Mike Hanley.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or (252) 329-9595.
Dave Odom makes return trip to Greenville

By Ronnie Woodward
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, January 27, 2011

Dave Odom used Wednesday's trip to Greenville to get reacquainted with East Carolina University and longtime friend Terry Holland.

The former ECU, Wake Forest and South Carolina men's basketball coach hung out at the ECU athletic offices, planned to attend the Pirates' men's basketball game against Southern Miss and spent a good portion of his speech to the Greater Greenville Sports Club discussing his relationship with Holland, East Carolina's athletics director.

Odom described his time as an assistant under Holland at Virginia from 1982-89 as some of the best years of his life.

“We had an absolute ball for seven years,” Odom told the crowd at the Greenville Hilton. “We had a great time and Terry was great to work with because he knew the game and he taught the game the right way, but he also taught me so much about the way to coach and the way to behave.”

Holland, who introduced Odom, also touched on the friendship between the two, while pointing out Odom's strong suit as a coach.

“He was a terrific recruiter,” Holland said of Odom, who grew up in Goldsboro and compiled a 406-278 record during 22 seasons as a head coach. “He had national contacts and he had contacts everywhere. ... He knew everybody in town.”
Possibly his greatest recruiting accomplishment was bringing Tim Duncan from the Virgin Islands to Wake Forest in 1993. Duncan was the National Player of the Year his senior year and the top pick in the 1997 NBA draft.

Odom, who coached the Pirates from 1979-82, praised Holland's work with East Carolina's sports programs. He attended ECU's home victory over Charlotte earlier this season and said he was impressed with Minges Coliseum.

“It's entirely different,” Odom, one of six coaches since 1970 to have a winning season at ECU, said of the arena. “When I was here, the structure of Minges was more like a big high school (arena). Now, you have a true arena that gives fans the opportunity to get involved in the game. ... The fans have responded, the students have responded and it gives the team a much better chance to be successful.”

Odom left ECU and was an assistant at Virginia before starting his tenure with the Demon Deacons. After a losing season in 1989, Odom led Wake to 11 straight postseason appearances and was National Coach of the Year in 1995.

Having been a coach in the Atlantic Coast Conference and at ECU, Odom said he thinks the Pirates can achieve success despite their lack of tradition compared to other schools in the state.

“(ECU) can be successful in its own way,” said Odom, who praised first-year coach Jeff Lebo for his success this year. “You don't want to constantly compare yourself to what's going on (in the ACC). Right now, they have good things going on in Conference USA and they need to be concerned about that, not what's going on in the Atlantic Coast Conference.”

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 UNC-CH doesn't foresee overhaul

BY ERIC FERRERI - Staff Writer
CHAPEL HILL UNC-Chapel Hill does not anticipate a major academic restructuring - in the manner of N.C. State University - to deal with budget cuts.

"We're going to continually make changes," Robert Winston, chairman of the UNC-CH Board of Trustees, said recently. "There will be some restructuring here and there. But nothing that will shock people and blow them away."

Last week, NCSU Chancellor Randy Woodson announced a sweeping plan to eliminate some degree programs and merge departments and, potentially, entire schools. Woodson wants to rethink the entire university structure instead of gradually slicing away at every department's budget, as it and other public universities have done for the last several years.

Though NCSU doesn't yet know what schools, programs and departments might be affected, leaders are moving quickly. Woodson has appointed Provost Warwick Arden and Vice Chancellor Charles Leffler to develop a plan by March 15, with changes to begin June 1.

Woodson has said NCSU faces budget cuts next year of up to about $80 million, or about a 15 percent reduction in NCSU's state appropriation - a worst-case scenario. After much debate a year ago, the budget cut for the entire UNC system - of which NCSU is one member - was $70 million. That's less than 3 percent of the university's state appropriation.

A permanent cut
UNC-CH faces a budget cut of similar size next year but is handling it differently. The state asked universities to prepare budget-cut scenarios of 5 percent and 10 percent for next year, which for UNC-CH would be $26 million and $52 million, respectively.
To get ahead of these cuts, UNC-CH Chancellor Holden Thorp has announced a 5 percent permanent budget cut effective July 1. That gives deans and department heads a half year to plan for reductions.

"We'll try to shield teaching and research and protect our ability to provide need-based financial aid," Thorp wrote in e-mail to faculty and staff.

Thorp conceded that in departments heavily reliant on state funds, these cuts will lead to layoffs.

That has folks on edge.

"The budget cuts are scary," said McKay Coble, chairwoman of the UNC-CH faculty. "Because now we're down to people."

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Troubleshooter: Complaints rise over state-employee driving

BY LEAH FRIEDMAN - Staff Writer

The number of complaints lodged against state employees driving state-owned vehicles has skyrocketed over the past four years. Last year, there were 752 complaints compared with just 176 complaints in 2006.

Complaints range from speeding to reckless driving to having sex in a state car.

In nearly every instance, documents show, the state employees driving the vehicles deny the allegations and usually are not punished. If an agency doesn't respond to the complaint, the case is closed.

According to documents dating to 2000, only two people have lost their state-vehicle driving privileges after complaints made against them. One was the UNC-Chapel Hill employee who was caught in a sexual act in a parking lot.

So why the big jump in complaints? Jill Lucas, spokeswoman for the Department of Administration, which oversees the state's Motor Fleet Division and the driver complaints, said the department has made it easy for citizens to complain.

There are bumper stickers on each state-owned vehicle with a phone number. In addition, the department, which oversees the state's motor fleet, created an online complaint form in 2008.

Lucas added that people are extra vigilant these days because of the state budget crisis. They question when they see things like a state vehicle at an Orlando, Fla., resort, for instance. (Turns out that was a coach on a soccer recruiting trip, she said.)

Also, nearly every one has a cell phone.
The Motor Fleet Management division has 8,214 vehicles. Of those, 7,938 are permanently assigned to employees in agencies across the state. That does not include vehicles assigned to local governments, state universities or law enforcement.

Since 2000, there have been 5,242 complaints made about drivers of state vehicles.

The Department of Administration fields all complaints, both by phone and online.

But the department does not investigate the complaints. Instead, it sends them to the drivers' managers in other departments, Lucas said. It is up to the managers to investigate the allegations and take the proper action.

Most state vehicle drivers who have complaints made against them deny the allegations, and no disciplinary action is taken. Sometimes, the state employees are counseled about the rules.

The Department of Administration refused to include the names of employees who had bad-driving allegations made against them in recent years, citing state personnel law.

But lawyers for The N&O say the department should provide the names. "Anyone who checks out a car should know they could get a call if a taxpayer sees them at the Cracker Barrel," said Hugh Stevens, an attorney for the N&O.

**Not me. Didn't happen**

In one 2007 complaint, a caller alleged that two men were putting beer from one car into another vehicle registered to ECU.

According to the response to the allegation, "Faculty transported beer from car to car to transport to a conference. Faculty realizes this was a careless mistake but there was no illegal intent. Policy has been discussed with faculty."

No disciplinary action was taken.
Four cases that alleged speeding and reckless driving by ECU's state vehicles were closed "due to no response," documents show.

An employee getting out of a car registered to N.C. State University was allegedly seen going into a store at the Prime Outlets in Gaffney, S.C. A caller wanted to know whether that was state business, documents state. The driver denied being in that location, according to the documents.

**Those who get caught**

Of all the complaints, it appears that just two state employees admitted to the allegations made against them.

A Department of Transportation employee acknowledged he was smoking in his state vehicle in Burlington in 2009 after a complaint was made. The driver "was counseled about regulations," documents say. "He was also told that if he did not adhere to state policy his driving privileges can be revoked."

In 2006, a Department of Juvenile Justice employee admitted he was speeding after he received a speeding ticket while driving his state car. That employee appears to be one of only two state employees whose driving privileges were revoked since 2000.

The other was the UNC-CH employee, who, on April 19, 2002, was engaged in an "intimate physical act" with another person inside a state van belonging to UNC-CH in the Greystone shopping center in Raleigh, documents show. The incident was witnessed by students and adults.

The Department of Correction has the most driving complaints of all state agencies, with 1,287.

Keith Acree, a Department of Correction spokesman, said the agency has the most vehicles on the road, which explains its high number of complaints.

News researcher David Raynor contributed to this report.
Former Charlotte a QB fit for Pirates

BY DAVID SCOTT - Staff writer

After playing at four different high schools in four years, Cody Keith has landed at East Carolina.

His new coach is happy to have Keith, a strong-armed 6-foot-4, 195-pound quarterback who started his high school career in Charlotte but finished it after crossing the country twice to play at two other schools.

"We throw the ball here for a living, not a hobby, and Cody fits right into that mode," East Carolina coach Ruffin McNeill said. "We feel really good about him meeting our needs here."

Keith enrolled at ECU earlier this month, a practice that has become increasingly common for incoming freshmen football players. He is taking part in offseason workouts with the Pirates and will participate in spring drills.

McNeill said he expects Keith to redshirt next season. Pirates starting quarterback Dominique Davis is returning for his season year.

"Something might happen and we might need him," said McNeill. "But we want to give him that extra year to prepare."

Keith's arrival in Greenville was a long time in the making.

He began his high school career in Charlotte at Myers Park, where he was a backup as a sophomore. He transferred to South Mecklenburg to get more playing time. He started as a junior and directed the Sabres' run-oriented offense.
The following year, the Keith family - his dad Greg is a real-estate developer - moved to California. Cody Keith played his senior season at Pasadena's Maranatha High, a private school where he had attended football camps.

After throwing for 1,212 yards and 21 touchdowns at Maranatha, Cody spent last season at prep school at Connecticut's Cheshire Academy. In one game, he threw for 637 yards and eight touchdowns.

Keith is rated a two-star prospect by Scout.com.

McNeill said Keith is built for ECU's pass-first offense.

"He understands that the quarterback is the key for us," McNeill said. "He's a major designer of what we're doing. Our quarterback [calls a lot of audibles]. He's got to get us into the correct run or pass play. He's going to do very well with that."

Keith came to campus ready to go.

"When he got here, the first thing he asked me was, 'Where's my workout gear, coach?' " McNeill said. "I told him, 'You've got to register for classes first, then we'll worry about that.' "

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Record Level of Stress Found in College Freshmen

Todd Heisler/The New York Times
A student activities room at Stony Brook University's Health Services Building, where therapists meet with students.

By TAMAR LEWIN
The emotional health of college freshmen — who feel buffeted by the recession and stressed by the pressures of high school — has declined to the lowest level since an annual survey of incoming students started collecting data 25 years ago.

In the survey, “The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2010,” involving more than 200,000 incoming full-time students at four-year colleges, the percentage of students rating themselves as “below average” in emotional health rose. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who said their emotional health was above average fell to 52 percent. It was 64 percent in 1985.

Every year, women had a less positive view of their emotional health than men, and that gap has widened.

Campus counselors say the survey results are the latest evidence of what they see every day in their offices — students who are depressed, under
stress and using psychiatric medication, prescribed even before they came to college.

The economy has only added to the stress, not just because of financial pressures on their parents but also because the students are worried about their own college debt and job prospects when they graduate.

“This fits with what we’re all seeing,” said Brian Van Brunt, director of counseling at Western Kentucky University and president of the American College Counseling Association. “More students are arriving on campus with problems, needing support, and today’s economic factors are putting a lot of extra stress on college students, as they look at their loans and wonder if there will be a career waiting for them on the other side.”

The annual survey of freshmen is considered the most comprehensive because of its size and longevity. At the same time, the question asking students to rate their own emotional health compared with that of others is hard to assess, since it requires them to come up with their own definition of emotional health, and to make judgments of how they compare with their peers.

“Most people probably think emotional health means, ‘Am I happy most of the time, and do I feel good about myself?’ so it probably correlates with mental health,” said Dr. Mark Reed, the psychiatrist who directs Dartmouth College’s counseling office.

“I don’t think students have an accurate sense of other people’s mental health,” he added. “There’s a lot of pressure to put on a perfect face, and people often think they’re the only ones having trouble.”

To some extent, students’ decline in emotional health may result from pressures they put on themselves.

While first-year students’ assessments of their emotional health were declining, their ratings of their own drive to achieve, and academic ability, have been going up, and reached a record high in 2010, with about three-quarters saying they were above average.

“Students know their generation is likely to be less successful than their parents’, so they feel more pressure to succeed than in the past,” said Jason
Ebbeling, director of residential education at Southern Oregon University. “These days, students worry that even with a college degree they won’t find a job that pays more than minimum wage, so even at 15 or 16 they’re thinking they’ll need to get into an M.B.A. program or Ph.D. program.”

Other findings in the survey underscore the degree to which the economy is weighing on college students.

“Paternal unemployment is at the highest level since we started measuring,” said John Pryor, director of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at U.C.L.A.’s Higher Education Research Institute, which does the annual freshman survey. “More students are taking out loans. And we’re seeing the impact of not being able to get a summer job, and the importance of financial aid in choosing which college they’re going to attend.”

“We don’t know exactly why students’ emotional health is declining,” he said. “But it seems the economy could be a lot of it.”

For many young people, serious stress starts before college. The share of students who said on the survey that they had been frequently overwhelmed by all they had to do during their senior year of high school rose to 29 percent from 27 percent last year.

The gender gap on that question was even larger than on emotional health, with 18 percent of the men saying they had been frequently overwhelmed, compared with 39 percent of the women.

There is also a gender gap, studies have shown, in the students who seek out college mental health services, with women making up 60 percent or more of the clients.

“Boys are socialized not to talk about their feelings or express stress, while girls are more likely to say they’re having a tough time,” said Perry C. Francis, coordinator for counseling services at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti. “Guys might go out and do something destructive, or stupid, that might include property damage. Girls act out differently.”

Linda Sax, a professor of education at U.C.L.A. and former director of the freshman study who uses the data in research about college gender gaps, said
the gap between men and women on emotional well-being was one of the largest in the survey.

“One aspect of it is how women and men spent their leisure time,” she said. “Men tend to find more time for leisure and activities that relieve stress, like exercise and sports, while women tend to take on more responsibilities, like volunteer work and helping out with their family, that don’t relieve stress.”

In addition, Professor Sax has explored the role of the faculty in college students’ emotional health, and found that interactions with faculty members were particularly salient for women. Negative interactions had a greater impact on their mental health.

“Women’s sense of emotional well-being was more closely tied to how they felt the faculty treated them,” she said. “It wasn’t so much the level of contact as whether they felt they were being taken seriously by the professor. If not, it was more detrimental to women than to men.”

She added: “And while men who challenged their professor’s ideas in class had a decline in stress, for women it was associated with a decline in well-being.”
Naval Academy expels 7 in 'spice' case

By Daniel de Vise
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, January 26, 2011; 11:24 PM

Seven midshipmen have been expelled from the U.S. Naval Academy for possessing or using "spice," a relatively new recreational drug that has yet to take hold on most other college campuses.

Also Wednesday, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel announced the settlement of a First Amendment complaint by an academy professor who said he was denied a merit raise after he publicly criticized school policies on minority applicants. The terms of the settlement, involving English professor Bruce Fleming, were not disclosed.

The midshipmen in the drug case were "separated" from the service academy in Annapolis on Jan. 20 for violating the Navy's zero-tolerance policies, Cmdr. Joe Carpenter, an academy spokesman, said Wednesday.

Unlike most colleges, the Naval Academy tests students at random for drugs in their urine, but such tests cannot detect spice. That might explain why the drug, sometimes called "synthetic marijuana" and sold under the brand names Spice and K2, has appeared in the brigade while it remains relatively unknown on some other Washington area campuses.

Until recently, spice was legal. States have rushed to outlaw it, and the federal Drug Enforcement Administration has banned five substances commonly found in the chemical potpourri. Spice is also banned by the Navy.

"A lot of people who are on drug testing are very interested in it," said Irina Alexander, a recent University of Maryland graduate who chairs the international organization Students for Sensible Drug Policy. Alexander said she hadn't heard of the drug making inroads at U-Md. or any other local college campus, mostly because marijuana is readily available.
A student government leader at College Park said he surveyed several friends Wednesday and found none who had heard of spice. A student leader at George Washington University said he had to look it up in the Urban Dictionary.

Spice has appeared in head shops and gas stations in the past decade, marketed as incense but sold at a price that suggested other properties. Some who have smoked it describe an experience akin to a cannabis high, albeit shorter and less predictable.

The drug is so new that no one knows much about its use on - or off - college campuses.

"Not only has there not been reporting done, there hasn't been research done on it, either," said Erin Artigiani, deputy director of the Center for Substance Abuse Research at U-Md.

In Annapolis, allegations against the seven midshipmen were brought to brigade leaders "by other midshipmen" last fall, Carpenter said in e-mailed comments. He did not rule out further expulsions.

"This remains an ongoing investigation, and any additional allegations will be fully investigated," Carpenter said. "Where allegations are substantiated, violators will be held accountable."

Academy leaders did not identify the expelled students, except to say that they were sophomore and junior males.

Drug violations are uncommon at the 4,000-student academy. Aside from the seven students recently expelled, four others have been cited for offenses in the past year. The expelled students could face discharge from the Navy and might have to repay the cost of their education, which is paid by the federal government.

The First Amendment case concerns an article by Fleming that was published in the Annapolis Capital newspaper in June 2009. In the article, Fleming said the academy operated a two-tiered admission system that favored minority applicants.
Three months later, Fleming "learned that he was being denied a merit pay increase that year, although his immediate supervisor had recommended him for one," according to a release from the Office of Special Counsel.

The agency’s probe "uncovered evidence indicating that USNA illegally denied the employee a merit pay increase because of his public statements," the release said.

One academy official told faculty members that Fleming "should not be rewarded" for going public. A subsequent warning letter advised the professor that he could face disciplinary action if he continued "making inappropriate statements," the release said.

Carpenter said in a statement that the academy "subscribes to and continues to support the academic freedoms afforded faculty."

Fleming said he pursued the case "to ensure that an institution whose military members swear to uphold the Constitution does not infringe the civilian rights to free expression the military is meant to protect."

Staff writer Martin Weil contributed to this report.

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