THE DAILY CLIPS

January 28, 2008

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

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
  The New York Times
  The Wall Street Journal
  USA Today
  The Charlotte Observer
  The Fayetteville Observer
  The Greensboro News & Record
  Newsweek
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  Business Week
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Grant enables ECU to study emergency communication

Professors will research how coastal residents seek and respond to information during the threat of inclement weather.

**ECU News Bureau**
Special to The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University has received funding from the N.C. Sea Grant to study how the state's coastal residents receive and use emergency information.

The $120,000 grant will enable researchers from the departments of English and sociology to study how to more effectively deliver to the public information about weather-related risks and hazards.

"Almost every disaster after-action report identifies communication as a major failing, yet both practical guides on natural hazards and academic scholarship neglect communication as an influence on perception and behavior related to risk," said Catherine Smith, an ECU professor of English.

Smith is the principal investigator and will work on the grant along with English colleague Donna Kain and sociology professor Kenneth Wilson.

Working with ECU colleagues John Howard in communication and Tom Crawford in geography, Smith and Kain conducted a pilot study in Dare County that suggested residents in coastal communities seek, process and use risk and emergency information in complicated ways.

"They tend to synthesize expert assessments, past personal experience with storms, family wishes, and practical concerns that may include pet ownership, medical conditions, or congested evacuation routes," said Kain, who is director of outreach for RENCI's Center for Coastal Informatics and Modeling at East Carolina University.

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**ECU Notes**

University.

RENCI, the Renaissance Computing Institute, at ECU will provide technical and facilities support for the project that will begin in February. The researchers are also faculty affiliates of the university's Center for Natural Hazards Research.

Through surveys and in-depth interviews, the researchers will develop a model of risk and emergency communication that would help characterize how people seek and respond to information about coastal weather events. Such a model could help assess vulnerability or resiliency in eastern North Carolina as well as in coastal communities nationally.

**ECU hosts safety symposium**

Attorney General Roy Cooper will deliver the keynote address for East Carolina University's second annual Campus Safety Symposium on Thursday and Friday.

Designed to attract school administrators from community colleges and universities from across the region, the two-day conference at the Hilton Greenville will address the legal and safety challenges academic institutions face today, crisis communications, and strategies for safer campuses.

Other speakers include representatives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service's Threat Assessment Team; safety and student life administrators from across the region, including Virginia Tech and the N.C. Community College System. For more information, contact Peter Romary at 737-1067.

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Reading for ECU
professor

In celebration of the publication of his second book, "Anticipate the Coming Reservoir" (Carnegie Mellon University press, 2008), John Happenthaler will give a reading at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in Bate 1032.

Happenthaler, a poet and professor of English at ECU, is author of "Lives of Water." His work has also appeared in publications that include Ploughshares, Virginia Quarterly Review, McSweeney's and the Southern Review.

Thomas elected vice-chair

Stephen Thomas, dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences, has been elected vice-chairman of the Council for Allied Health in North Carolina.

Thomas will assume leadership of the council as chairman in 2009. The Council for Allied Health in North Carolina was formed in 1991 by allied health practitioners, educators and employers to ensure that North Carolinians have access to a well-prepared, well-distributed allied health workforce that is representative of the diversity of the state's communities.

Thomas became dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences in 2003, having served as interim dean since 2001. He came to ECU in 1980 and has served as chairman, professor and graduate program director in the college's Department of Rehabilitation Studies.

Thomas also serves on the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, the board of the Eastern Area Health Education Center, the ECU Medical & Health Sciences Foundation, N.C. Agromedicine Institute and the Governor's State Sector Strategies: Innovative Workforce Policies to Address Worker and Employee Needs.

He is secretary of the Southern Association of Allied Health Deans in Academic Health Centers.

Professor pens book chapter

An engineering professor has contributed to a new book about organizational leadership.

Gene Dixon, whose research focuses on corporate leadership processes and organizational management, wrote a chapter for "The Art of Followership... How Great Followers Can Create Great Leaders and Organizations" (Josey-Bass, 2008).

The book, the latest in the award-winning Warren Bennis Signature Series that tailors to corporate leaders, will be released Thursday.

Dixon's chapter examines the interdependent relationship between leaders and followers. He explains that followers must assert their goals, desires, and expectations, while leaders must create a positive environment to allow for growth.

Dixon said he was honored that his work was included in the book.

"It is extremely humbling to be associated with the editors and fellow contributors as well," he said. "Perhaps something I have contributed will help someone, some organization, or some business meet the demands of leading and following in the home, in church or in a global market place."
Visiting scholar offers lectures

Julian Lethbridge, ECU's distinguished visiting Rivers professor of International Studies, will offer a series of lectures that examine the role of the humanities as they relate to the natural and social sciences.

Lethbridge, a professor of English visiting from the University of Tübingen in Germany, will present the free lectures at 4 p.m. Feb. 12, 19 and 26 in Bate 1032. They will focus respectively on the topics of history, theology and literary criticism.

He will conclude the series with "The Function of the Humanities at the Present Time," March 4 at 5:30 p.m., with an introduction by Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor Marilyn Sheerer.

Professor Lethbridge will address the big questions that face us as human beings: Why do we need to think both scientifically and humanistically? What would life be like without either the sciences or the humanities?" said ECU classics professor John Given. "What does it mean to live a complete human life?"

Biologist to study 'process' ecology


The lecture is sponsored by Robert R. Christian, Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences distinguished professor of biology.

Tourism expert to speak Feb. 6

Brian Mullis, a sustainable tourism expert, will present a lecture at 3:30 p.m. Feb. 6 in C-307 of ECU's Science and Technology Building.

Mullis, co-founder and president of Sustainable Travel International, will discuss sustainable tourism trends in business practices, public policies and personal travel.

He is an outspoken supporter of responsible travel and is working to facilitate the travel and tourism industry's move toward sustainability.
Wetherington joins staff of local law firm as associate attorney

Kitty H. Wetherington has joined the firm of Colombo, Kitchin, Dunn, Ball & Porter as an associate attorney.

Wetherington received a bachelor's degree from East Carolina University in 1996 and a law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1999. Admitted to the North Carolina Bar in 1999, she served as the East Carolina University attorney from 2000-07.

A native of Huachuca, Ariz., Wetherington is also admitted to practice before U.S. District Court in the eastern, middle and western districts of North Carolina.

She joined Colombo, Kitchin, Dunn, Ball & Porter in December and will practice primarily in the area of employment law.
Jitka Virag, who is recovering after being hit by a car while bicycling on Oct. 19, has returned to Greenville and is moving into a new home with her family.

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Jitka Virag's birthday was Friday. In the face of recent events, it was more than just another day.

Jitka was struck by a car Oct. 19 while bicycling home on MacGregor Downs Road from her work as a faculty member and researcher at the Brody School of Medicine. The accident left her paralyzed from the mid-torso down. The 38-year-old has been recovering, and will continue to.

Worn weary by a nagging cold — her immune system's not what it used to be — she was resting up Saturday morning before guests were scheduled to arrive for a joint birthday and homecoming celebration. The crowd consisted of co-workers, friends and neighbors who were all anxious to see her well again. After a hospital stay lasting more than a month, Jitka, whose parents are Egyptian and Czech, spent nearly two more months in rehabilitation at Atlanta's Shepherd Center learning to operate her wheelchair.

Of course, all that time away seems relatively short when you peruse her list of injuries: spinal cord and vertebrae fractures, six or seven broken ribs, two ruptured lungs, tissue damage in her right leg, pituitary gland issues, and other problems.

"My left side is different," she declares simply.

For Jitka, though, it was a lifetime spent away from her 18-month-old daughter, 4-year-old son, and adoring husband Jani. They were in Hungary visiting Jani's parents.

Something to say? Post your comment about this story at reflector.com

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when the accident occurred. Her brother Kal Ismail, who is visiting this weekend, well remembers the nightmare experience of trying to get in touch with both Jani and their own parents, who live in Canada. Kal is endlessly thankful for the medical attention his older sister received in the meantime.

"If she were not here, she wouldn't have made it," Kal said of Pitt County Memorial Hospital's trauma doctors.

Jitka herself has few memories of the days after the accident.

"I've concentrated on rehab and the hospital," she says. "There are a lot of things about the accident that I'm not ready to know."

But there were high points, too, that have escaped her because of a "brain bump," as she calls it.

"I couldn't remember a lot of people who came to see me," she explains. "I couldn't talk then so they were reading my lips."

But though the conversations escape Jitka, the self-proclaimed "huggy person" remembers the physicality of their presence.

"I would reach out and squeeze people here," she says, gesturing around her forearm. "I remember that feeling. Remember holding on to people like that."

Those memories, and talk about how the community has monitored her progress, brings a light to her face. She gesticulates at the pots of roses and orchids lining her kitchen counter.

"I'm looking forward to being able to thank those people," she said.

Talking about those closer to home is harder without an occasional tear. She falls silent trying to describe her husband, but Kal steps in.

"There is no better support system than Jani," he says. "They don't make men like him anymore."

Jitka also describes the day when 4-year-old Rowan told her he was her soldier and he'd take care of her. Her right hand grasped at her heart in memory. "It's so nice to be back home and with my family."

That home is changing to meet the needs of her new body. Jitka and her family can no longer live in the two-story home they bought in 2006. There's no way she can negotiate the stairs and the door frames are too small to accommodate a wheelchair. But they found a new place.

"I don't know if it's faith, coincidence or divine intervention or what you want to call it," Jani said. "But there it was, empty."

The house next to their own was designed by someone handicapped. The bathrooms are exactly what she needs, and everything in the kitchen is wheelchair-accessible.

Jani said it was a mess when they first looked at it, on the market and vacant since the owner died more than a year ago.

While he was visiting Jitka in Atlanta, however, friends and neighbors came in and painted the walls pastel yellow, light blue, and other cheerful colors. Like Jitka, it's coming to life again.

The final doctor's prognosis was that her spinal cord injury was "complete," meaning no healing can occur. She'll never walk again, or ride a bicycle for that matter.

But Jitka has other ideas.

"I have conversations with my feet," she says with a sly smile. "I tell them we need to get a move on."

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ECU delays health waiver

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University won't require undergraduates to carry health insurance next school year, but an insurance mandate may come in fall 2009.

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard has put off a decision on a hard-waiver policy, which would require full-time students to carry insurance or buy it through the university. In an e-mail to administrators earlier this month, however, he said he's "very optimistic" ECU will institute the policy in a year.

"I have concluded that the prudent approach is to first ensure that this significant, additional and escalating cost of education does not reduce access of North Carolinians, and especially eastern North Carolinians, to the vitally important educational services of ECU," Ballard wrote in a Jan. 17 e-mail to his executive council. He added that he supports the University of North Carolina General Administration's recommendation that all UNC schools adopt hard waiver policies.

More financial aid will be available to students next year, Ballard wrote, spurring his optimism for a 2009 hard-waiver launch. On campus, need-based financial aid and access scholarships are growing, he said. At the UNC system level, he wrote that he expects the Board of Governors to introduce a special tuition fee to fund insurance for needy students.

Administrators estimate 9,500 ECU students on financial aid would have to buy the insurance. The university could absorb the insurance costs for only a third of them in fall 2008.

Ballard was traveling and unavailable to discuss his decision.

Since last fall, Ballard has weighed the hard-waiver requirement. In spring 2007, the UNC General Administration began urging campuses to ensure more students have health insurance. Admin-

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istrative supporters of the policy argue that, by joining a systemwide pool of students buying health coverage, ECU could lower the cost of insurance for students.

The hard waiver would apply to graduate students taking at least nine credit hours in a semester and undergraduates taking at least six hours, require them to prove they have minimum levels of coverage before enrolling. Insurance under the plan would cost $700. Campus-based policies cost roughly $1,200 now. Thirteen UNC schools have adopted hard-waiver mandates.

Opponents in the student body said the cost was too high and questioned whether administrators had deliberated enough on the matter. In December, leaders of the Student Government Association and the Graduate Student Council opposed the move in a letter to Ballard.

Student Body President Keri Brockett, a Fayetteville junior, said she supports delaying the policy.

"I know the chancellor really wants to make sure that we have enough funding for students who may not have that additional funding, that are going through financial aid and other means," Brockett said Thursday.

Jimmy Ryals can be contacted at jryals@coxnc.com and 329-9562.
Spending plan will benefit local economy

By Kristin Day
The Daily Reflector

This spring, most Americans will likely come into more money if Congress passes a plan to stimulate the economy.

The announcement Thursday that congressional leaders and the president negotiated a plan to give taxpayers an extra $600 to $1,200 — more if they have children — has everyone thinking about how to spend the extra cash.

But how could throwing out a couple of billion dollars keep the country out of recession?

Rick Niswander, dean of East Carolina University's College of Business, said the idea is that if you give people extra money, they'll spend it rather than put it all directly into savings. This is why people who earn more than $75,000 and couples who earn $150,000 annually will likely not be included in the plan — they'll probably just put it in the bank.

"If you're someone making $30,000-$40,000, you'll probably spend it," Niswander said.

Even those who plan on paying off debt will help the economy, he said.

"You could argue that now you have the ability to spend more," Niswander said.

Another aspect of the plan is giving money to low-income individuals and families who don't pay taxes. Niswander said the plan is expected to basically give these people "free money."

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"That part of the population will most likely spend it," Niswander said.

While it is uncertain if the rebate will have any lasting effect on the economy, Niswander says it's not going to hurt anything. It very well could jump-start the economy and possibly reduce the chances of a recession. Lowered interest rates and a stable national housing market also would help.

Niswander said that as of now, the plan is still a discussion, and government officials could change details at anytime.

Which is part of the reason he's waiting to get the money before deciding what to spend it on.

Kristin Day can be contacted at kday@coxnc.com and 329-9579.
Policy in place for some grad students

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

While East Carolina University won’t require undergraduates to have health insurance by the fall, a small group of graduate students already has to carry coverage.

At the start of this semester, ECU launched a hard-waiver insurance policy for full-time doctoral students employed as full-time graduate assistants. ECU is paying the $768 fee for each of the 83 doctoral students’ insurance.

A subject of debate among undergraduates, many of whom would buy the insurance themselves, the mandate is actually a recruiting tool for graduate programs, said Patrick Pellicane, dean of the Graduate School.

The vast majority of doctoral programs pay for their students’ health insurance, Pellicane said.

“Especially at the doctoral level, it is really imperative that we offer insurance as (part of) a recruitment package,” Pellicane said.

Different factors apply for doctoral students than undergrads and some other graduate students, Pellicane said. They tend to be older and more prone to illness or injury. They also often get insurance through their spouses’ jobs, which can be costly for families.

For full-time graduate status, a student must take nine credit hours per semester, according to policies on the ECU Web site. A full-time graduate assistantship pays at least $7,500 per semester for up to 20 hours’ work per week.

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Man charged in stabbing

The Daily Reflector

A 21-year-old Greenville man has been charged in a Thursday stabbing at a home on Library Street, the Greenville Police Department reported.

Justin Lee Whitehead, 1204 Masters Lane, is charged with assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury. The charges resulted from a dispute in which Stephen Raymond Lilly, 22, was stabbed seven times.

Lilly, who lives in the 127 N. Library St. home where the incident occurred, was listed in good condition on Friday at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Police responded to the house at 12:02 a.m. in reference to a stabbing call, a department news release said. Officers arrested Whitehead at 3 p.m. today, according to the police.

He was being held at Pitt County Detention Center. No bond had been set.

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Operating costs

So, now we know how much Blue Cross and Blue Shield of N.C. pays for an average insured’s heart bypass surgery: $57,280. Assuming we don’t suffer a heart attack from sticker shock, what do we do with that price tag? Shop around for bypass surgery?

Maybe not, but give Blue Cross a dose of credit for making available online, to its 3.6 million members, typical North Carolina prices for hundreds of medical services, from flu shots to heart surgery. The high cost of health care, after all, is a huge problem. It drives health insurance rates ever higher, and evidence suggests this country isn’t getting the payoff in health-care outcomes that its world-leading level of spending should bring.

Bringing specific costs to light can’t hurt. That said, will it help? And if so, how?

For most people with conventional health insurance, knowing the average costs that Blue Cross pays statewide is of little value. They already have a doctor, and they’re probably not keen to switch. When they need medical care they see the doctor, get treated and pay the bill — or rather, hand over their insurance card at the billing office, pay the co-pay and hope that after the resulting blizzard of bills and “This is Not a Bill” notices, the bottom line doesn’t hurt.

That’s our system. It’s accused, with justification, of driving up costs, in that there’s no direct connection between the patient’s wallet and the price of the service or product he or she is buying. So medical providers jack up the fees and insurers clamp down on what they’ll pay — a confusing and unseemly system.

In such a setup it’s not likely that the patient will bargain with the doctor over the fee — either for a physical or for brain surgery, let alone emergency care.

But an emerging alternative to conventional health insurance is the Health Savings Account, or HSA. Touted as a money-saver for consumers and for employers who offer health insurance, an HSA makes you use your own money (or funds set aside by your employer) to pay for medical expenses until a high yearly deductible — $1,000, $2,000 or more — is met. Above that, conventional insurance kicks in.

The cost calculator was created for this sort of plan. One criticism of the high-deductible concept is that, while it puts pressure on patients to act as cost-conscious consumers, cost information has been hard to come by. Now “typical” Blue Cross payments will be online. Individual providers’ charges will not be, so this is a benchmark, not comparison shopping. Yet it’s worthwhile to see how much the costs of certain procedures — colonoscopies, for example — vary with the setting in which they’re done.

Overall, however, there’s a limit to what cost-consciousness can or should accomplish here. Medical expenses are rising for all sorts of reasons, including high-tech equipment, health workers’ pay and the enormous sums spent on people in dire medical straits — not to mention the costs of insurers’ overhead.

Not much of that is under the patient’s control, nor could it be. A focus on patients as consumers/customers can go only so far. These are, above all, human beings in need of health care, and entitled to it. First-rate health care.
Future M.D. says no to handouts of drugmakers

BY JEAN P. FISHER
STAFF WRITER

As a medical student, Anthony Fleg is at the center of the latest wave of rebellion against the pharmaceutical industry's cozy ties to doctors, hospitals and medical schools.

Fleg, in his fourth year of training at UNC-Chapel Hill, is national coordinator of the American Medical Student Association's effort to wean medical schools from their pervasive relationships with drug companies. And he's had quite a year.

Fleg helped AMSA's PharmFree campaign, established in 2002, produce the first scorecard to grade medical schools based on whether they have policies curbing the pharmaceutical industry's influence. The effort generated national press coverage. He also expanded PharmFree's national annual awareness day to an awareness week this fall, giving the issue its biggest splash to date.

In October, Fleg testified before the U.S. Senate, explaining why he believes physicians who accept lunches and even small gifts such as notepads and mugs from drug companies open the door to influence. In the end, he contends, the sacred doctor-patient relationship is compromised. Next month, Fleg will lead a PharmFree delegation to Washing-

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Bound to his cause

Fleg’s zeal for the cause is boundless.

He often wears his PharmFree T-shirt on campus, hoping to spark conversation. And he keeps alert to hospital clinics that overflow with drug company freebies.

Fleg grims as he recalls a “covert operation” at a New Mexico hospital where he recently completed a family medicine rotation. He had a field day carefully plastering PharmFree stickers over the brand names of pharmaceutical products.

“That was some of my best work,” he says.

Fleg’s wife, Shannon Fleg, who is expecting the couple’s first child this summer, jokes that her husband will probably be at her side in the delivery room with a tiny PharmFree sign for the baby to hold.

It would be easy for such a strident advocate to become a figure of controversy and strife. But colleagues and mentors say Fleg, who stands 6-foot-4 and towers over most people, tempers his principles with a genuine respect for others’ opinions, even when they are at odds with his own.

He frequently uses humor to challenge the status quo and invite conversation. Fleg signs his e-mail messages with offbeat taglines such as, “Card-carrying member (with overdue fines), Chapel Hill Public Library,” or “Intramural Debate Team Alternative (occasionally), Atholton High School.” It’s Fleg’s way of getting a smile while poking fun at the self-important practice of following one’s name with credentials and associations — common among physicians.

“I look forward to those. I frequently go right to the bottom,” of Fleg’s e-mails, says Dr. Alan Cross, chairman of UNC-CH’s Department of Social Medicine and a pediatrician whom Fleg considers a mentor. “He uses self-deprecation and a little bit of humor to poke fun at the pomposity of the rest of us.”

UNC-CH also graded

Fleg’s main purpose at UNC-CH this year has been to persuade the medical school to adopt a policy limiting pharmaceutical company involvement in hospital and academic programs. UNC-CH has no formal rules limiting or banning drug company activities on campus.

Drug company-sponsored lunches that feature lectures about the newest medications are weekly or even daily events in some clinics, Fleg says. He says you can’t walk into many clinics without seeing brand names on clocks, staplers, clipboards, mugs, soap dispensers and other drug company freebies. UNC-CH rated a “C” grade on PharmFree’s scorecard.

“The scorecard was a truly ingenious thing,” says Fleg, noting
HUMAN RELATIONS MONTH

UNC-CH medical student Anthony Fleg and his wife, Shannon Fleg, a social research associate for the UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, will speak today as part of Orange County’s observance of Human Relations Month. Together, the Flegs serve as coordinators of the Native Health Initiative, which partners with American Indian tribes in the state to improve well-being.
WHERE: Carrboro Century Center, 100 N. Greensboro St., Carrboro
WHEN: 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. today
WHAT: Kickoff event for Human Relations Month. The event will also include musical entertainment by the band Big Much and a performance by the Chuck Davis African-American Dance Ensemble.

that the ratings were based on data collected by a pre-med student who interned with the student medical association. “Once you start grading schools based on whether they have a policy, it becomes much in their favor to say we do have a policy.”

A vice dean of the medical school recently indicated that UNC-CH will have a policy in place by the end of the school year.

“We were worried that people would get sick of hearing my message,” said Stephanie Wolfe, a second-year medical student at UNC-CH and president of the medical school’s chapter of PharmFree’s parent organization, the American Medical Student Association. “It really hasn’t happened yet.”

Fleg and others involved in the national PharmFree campaign are in the process of finalizing this year’s scorecard, to be released next month. He led efforts to make the ratings more detailed, judging medical schools not just on whether they have a conflict-of-interest policy but on what specific steps they take to limit drug company influence.

Community crusades

PharmFree isn’t Fleg’s only cause.

He and his wife, Shannon, a Navajo Indian from Arizona, established the Native Health Initiative, which partners with American Indian tribes in North Carolina to improve health and well-being. Fleg, who taught third- and fourth-graders in inner-city Baltimore before enrolling in medical school, is in the Chapel Hill public schools on a regular basis as a speaker and mentor. Today, the Flegs will serve as keynote speakers for Orange County’s observance of Human Relations Month.

Fleg is determined that a career in medicine, and the financial rewards that often accompany it, won’t change his principles. It’s a trait he gets from his parents, who are both physicians.

“I never tell anyone up front that I’m a doctor because I don’t want them to treat me any different,” said Dr. Rosemarie Fleg, Anthony Fleg’s mother and a radiologist practicing in Maryland. She said that she and Anthony’s father, Dr. Jerome Fleg, a cardiologist, still live almost as frugally as they did when they were medical students.

“Money doesn’t make you happy. It’s what you do in life.”

It’s a lesson Anthony Fleg has taken to heart.

After completing his residency training, Fleg will practice in a federally designated health-care shortage area as a member of the National Health Service Corps. In exchange for Fleg’s commitment, the U.S. government is footing the bill for his medical education. The deal will allow Fleg to graduate from UNC-CH debt-free, liberating him from the pressure to make money to pay off school debt. But Fleg says serving in an area where doctors are most needed won’t be much of a sacrifice.

“It’s something I’d be doing anyway,” he says. “It’s ultimately what is going to make me happiest.”

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Slain Duke student remembered

BY ERIC FERRERI
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — Abhijit Mahato, a scientist of extraordinary intellect and curiosity, might have been a rare and valuable talent. But mostly, his friends will remember his goofy smile.

His friends loved his toothy, perpetual grin. It summed Mahato up perfectly — the sunny optimist with nary a care.

These recollections came through Friday during a somber memorial at a Duke University lecture hall. Mahato, 29, a native of Bengal, a state in eastern India, was gunned down last week in his off-campus apartment. Police have arrested Stephen Lavance Oates Jr., 19, a Durham teenager who is thought to have killed Mahato during a robbery spree.

Mahato had been in Durham less than two years, arriving in 2006 to do doctoral work in engineering. But his cheerful disposition and caring nature quickly made an impact, both on the local Indian community and on his engineering colleagues, two groups that became his surrogate families.

Tod Laursen was Mahato's doctoral adviser. He was among Mahato's first contacts at Duke. Before the budding scientist decided on Duke, it was Laursen who tried to sell him on the university. The fact that his sales pitch was ultimately successful is now proving difficult to deal with, Laursen said Friday.

"It's kind of an interesting combination of gratitude and pain," he said.

At Duke, Laursen and Mahato teamed up with Michelin, the tire company, to develop software that would make tires safer and longer-lasting. Laursen said that work, he said, should give people some solace.

"It's comforting to know the contributions he made will positively affect people," Laursen said.

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Campuses compete over who can save most water

UNC-CH, NCSU cut consumption

BY ANNE BLYTHE
STAFF WRITER

No one on either side of the latest grudge match between the Tar Heels and the Wolfpack wants to turn it into a full-fledged mud-slinging contest.

That might defeat the purpose.

The students are midway through a competition to see who can conserve the most water during the record-breaking drought, and N.C. State University has a slight edge.

Daily water use in residence halls has dropped by four gallons per student per day on average at both schools. But because NCSU students used less water to begin with, their overall consumption has dropped by 14 percent, compared to 12 percent at UNC.

UNC-CH Chancellor James Moeser told his trustees Thursday that there are different theories why his school trails.

"One reason we're behind is that we have more female students — that was N.C. State's take on it," Moeser said with a laugh.

But as the head of a university that is nearly 60 percent women, Moeser, wisely, distanced himself from that hypothesis.

Brian Sugg, UNC-CH president of the Residence Hall Association, said he would not get into a debate about whether women spend more time in the shower than men.

"Some of my best friends are women," Sugg said before playfully throwing a little mud at the students down the road. "Even if we didn't take as many showers as State students, we'd still smell better than their campus."

The gritty contest began in November, on the day the Wolfpack beat Carolina on the Carter-Finley Stadium football field. It ends when the Tar Heels return to Wolfpack territory on Feb. 20, this time in the basketball arena.

Bobby Mills, NCSU student body president, hopes for a two-fer that day, with victories on and off the court.

NCSU, where just 44 percent of the students are women, started the water challenge using fewer gallons than its counterparts to the west. NCSU residence hall students used 31 gallons per day to Chapel Hill's 34 gallons.

As of mid-December, NCSU students were using an average of 27 gallons each per day, compared to 30 gallons per day per UNC-CH student.

Mills said he didn't mind getting a little dirty to save the Earth. Like others at his school, he said he has shortened his showers and made far fewer trips to the laundry room this year.

"Sometimes I take showers in the gym," Mills said. "But that's not something I'm encouraging others to do."

Staff writer Jane Stancill contributed to this report.

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Medical school expels killer

Student served 7 years for murder

BY KARL RITTER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — A medical student convicted in a 1999 murder with neo-Nazi links has been expelled from Sweden's leading medical school in a case that sparked debate over whether a killer can become a doctor after having paid his debt to society.

The Karolinska Institute, known for awarding the Nobel Prize in medicine, revoked Karl Svensson's admission to its prestigious medical program this week after an investigation into his background, the university president said Friday.

Svensson, 31, was admitted last fall after his application to the program was approved, President Harriet Wallberg-Henriksson told The Associated Press.

However, the university knew nothing about his dark past until getting two anonymous tips that Svensson's original identity was Hampus Hellekant, an alleged neo-Nazi sympathizer who had served seven years in prison for the murder of a labor union activist, Wallberg-Henriksson said.

He was convicted along with two other men in 2000 in the fatal shooting of a member of a far-left

union. Bjorn Soderberg. Prosecutors said the killing was revenge for the Soderberg's public denunciation of a co-worker who belonged to a neo-Nazi organization.

"He had been enrolled for four months when this was revealed," she said.

The discovery put Karolinska in a difficult position because the legal framework is unclear on whether you should be able to receive a doctor's education with this type of background," she said.

In the end, Karolinska never had to address Svensson's criminal record because the background check found irregularities in the high school grades he submitted with his application, which was grounds to expel him.

The case triggered an emotional debate among faculty and students at the Karolinska Institute. After local media started reporting on the case, Svensson told his 130 classmates about his background, Wallberg-Henriksson said.

"He said he was very interested in becoming a doctor and was determined to pursue the education and that he was not the same person today as he was then," she said.

"There was a lot of discussion. The course was divided in two camps. One camp thought he had paid for his crime; others felt uncomfortable," she said.

Karolinska students said that there had been mixed feelings about Svensson on campus.

"We talked about it when it emerged and it was in the paper," said Elin, 21, a biomedicine student who did not want her last name used because the topic was sensitive on campus.

"People felt it was strange that he should be allowed to become a doctor," she said. "On the other hand, people change. Maybe he's become a better person."
Duke move gives downtown Durham a lift

BY JACK HAGEL
STAFF WRITER

Duke University is moving 300 employees to downtown Durham — an important jolt to a reviving center city and a once-lonely office tower.

Duke Clinical Research Institute, a division of the university's medical school, agreed to lease 72,000 square feet at Durham Centre, the 14-story, reflective blue office building on the northern edge of the Downtown Loop.

Financial terms of the 10-year lease were not disclosed.

The space will allow what has become the world's biggest academic clinical research organization to consolidate and expand several offices currently on Duke's campus, while taking further strides to improve its relationship with the city that surrounds it.

"Duke will be taking a more visible role to demonstrate its commitment" to an economically sound future for the city of Durham, said Phail Wynn, Duke's vice president of Durham regional affairs.

The institute conducts and consults with companies on clinical trials, helping to coordinate worldwide drug and medical-device research primarily for pharmaceutical companies and academics.

"Because of its international prominence, it will bring a lot of people to downtown," said Monte Brown, vice president for administration at Duke University Health System, who oversees facilities and construction for the institute.

The deal also ends a long wait for Durham Centre, which will be 90 percent full. The 200,000-square-foot tower has been mostly empty for about half a decade, following the depopulation of anchor tenant Monumental Life Insurance. The vacancy came on the heels of the decline of the tobacco industry.

Growing financial and technology companies have since flowed to the Bull City, expanding downtown's work force almost 25 percent to 16,000 employees during the past four years, according to booster group Downtown Durham Inc.

Meanwhile, downtown's office vacancy rate dropped to 13.1 percent at the end of the third quarter, from 19.8 percent amid a building boom that increased the submarket's office supply by 60 percent, Karnes Research data show.

But the bustle avoided Durham Centre. The revival instead happened several blocks south, in abandoned tobacco warehouses. Capitol Broadcasting converted more than half a million square feet into offices and restaurants, wooing tenants with amenities such as a YMCA and a minor league baseball stadium.

In June, as investors were paying record prices for Triangle office buildings, the lessthan-half-full Durham Centre was sold to Craig Davis Properties of Cary for $19.2 million. That was 6.4 percent less than what seller Edina Park Plaza Associates paid a decade earlier and about 45 percent less than what buildings of its caliber fetched at the time.

The new owner embarked on extensive interior renovation. About $4.2 million in city money also was made available for renovations to a city-owned parking deck under the building — support Jack Dunn, president of Craig Davis Properties, credited for the building's turnaround.

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