ECU faculty speak out on proposed cuts
By Jackie Drake
The Daily Reflector
Monday, January 30, 2012

The ongoing program prioritization effort at East Carolina University has caused considerable reaction on campus and in the community.

Several faculty members and supporters have spoken out in defense of programs recommended to be cut in a report released Jan. 18 from the Program Prioritization Committee. Of the 227 different degrees evaluated, 48 are up for reduction or elimination, and 67 are identified for additional investment. Most programs would be maintained.

The recommendations are not final until approved by the Board of Trustees.

But the list doesn’t tell the whole story, officials say. While some degrees are on the list to be eliminated, that doesn’t mean their classes or content are going away because the recommendations are often based on resolving overlap and redundancy in degree tracks.

For example, if the plan is approved, music students no longer would be able to get a certificate or a minor degree in jazz, but they will be able to play and study jazz music because those classes would be available under the performance major, which is where most of the students are anyway, according to School of Music Director Christopher Buddo.

“The jazz program is alive and well at ECU,” Buddo said. “We’re grateful for the support of our patrons, and we want them to be reassured that we’re becoming a stronger school and that the music they love isn’t going away.”

The recommendations are more like “curricular housekeeping,” according to Buddo. Not many students were taking the certificate option, and the minor was so close to the major in terms of required classes that most students would just take the performance major, he said.

“A program as large and old as ours has accrued various additions that may in 2012 be unnecessary, and those are the things we’re able to whittle away,” Buddo said. “A lot of these things were just on the books.”

Some programs, like textiles, already were undergoing self-consolidation.

“In the report it does state that the BFA and MFA (bachelor’s and master’s of fine art) degrees in fabric design and weaving were up for elimination; however, that is not the full story,” textiles coordinator Christine Zoller said. The two would be consolidated under textile design, she said.

Textile students have been able to choose weaving, fabric design or textile design, Zoller said. Textile design is actually a student’s choice to combine classes from the other two areas.
“We have found that over 90 percent of our students combine, as this gives them a better education in the creation of textile art. Therefore, the degrees in weaving and fabric design were not being used, as textile design is what students are predominately doing,” Zoller said.

Local churches were concerned at the proposed elimination of organ, but future organists can study under sacred music, which is what the majority of student organists pursue, according to Buddo. Organ and sacred music programs were similar.

“There’s not a significant difference; it’s one less entry in the catalog,” he said.

One important thing to remember, Buddo said, is that departments had lots of input and participation with the PPC.

“This wasn’t something imposed on us,” Buddo said. “What the PPC had us do is what good, strong programs should be doing anyway.”

This is an ongoing process, Buddo said.

“If people are in a degree program, they’re going to get to finish,” he said. “We’re not going to pull the rug out from under them. This could take a while.”

The next step in prioritization is for the PPC to release savings and expenditure estimates with each recommendation. Jobs are not expected to be cut; the changes are planned to be absorbed by regular annual turnover. The next trustees meeting is in late February.

Officials from the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences were not available for comment.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com and 252-329-9567 or follow her on Twitter @jackiedrakegdr.
Laurels — To former Mayor Pat Dunn, who was named 2010 Citizen of the Year by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce. The annual banquet allowed the business group to recognize Dunn’s many contributions to the community, and to honor Eddie Smith Jr. with the Legends award for his years of service to the improvement of Greenville and Pitt County.

Darts — To the slight dip in enrollment at Pitt Community College, a figure that is not harmful to the school but could reflect PCC’s constant battle for additional space. The school ranks near the bottom in the state for its student-to-square-foot ratio and needs to continue its efforts to grow, thereby extending the opportunity of higher education to more students.

Darts — To the still-sluggish number of new homes being constructed in Pitt County, a symbol of the continued economic stagnation facing this community. Despite significant population growth, that sector of the housing market has yet to return from previous highs. At least there are promising signs to be found in commercial construction numbers.

Laurels — To the installation of recycling bins in downtown Greenville, receptacles that should help keep that area both clean and green. A private grant helped fund the distinctive green cans, and the initiative was pushed by members of Keep Greenville Beautiful. The community is known for its recycling efforts and this addition should help extend that record.

Laurels — To the CNN documentary about J.H. Rose High School football scheduled to debut on Sunday night. “Big Hits, Broken Dreams” sees Dr. Sanjay Gupta follow the team’s response to the 2008 death of Jaquan Waller from second-impact syndrome. The program shines a light here that may help to serve the interests of young athletes nationwide.

Darts — To the continued back and forth over the personnel records of fired East Carolina University media adviser Paul Isom. The school claims it wants to release the information — which Isom also wants — but has not allowed the adviser to review the material. Doing so would clear up some of the controversy surrounding this issue and allow all involved to move on.

Darts — To a somewhat surprising vote by the Board of Education to reject a proposal that would have changed the seasons for several middle school
sports. County Athletics Director Ron Butler believed flipping some seasons would allow more on-site trainers to ensure players’ safety, but the board voted 10-1 against the plan and in favor of the status quo.
East Carolina University would like to respond to a statement in a Reflector “Dart” published Jan. 28 which contains a serious error in regards to the review of confidential personnel records by its former student media director, Paul Isom. The Dart stated the university “has not allowed the adviser to review the material” in his confidential personnel record.

Upon request, the university makes available to any employee his or her personnel records to the best of the university’s ability and to the full extent required by law. The university has done so in this instance.

The statutory definition of a personnel record is broad and includes email, because it depends upon the content of a document, regardless of where it is located so long as it is in the possession or control of the university. It is not uncommon for a document to contain not only information relating to an employee but also to contain commingled, confidential information regarding other employees and students. Someone who understands applicable privacy laws must review each document. The confidential information of others must be redacted.

It is our belief that Isom has been allowed to view and copy every document that qualifies as a personnel record, with the exception of some email remaining in the voluminous pool currently under review. We provided records in batches as they were available so he could review them on dates he requested.

Specifically, he has been provided copies of his personnel file from the Department of Human Resources, departmental and student affairs personnel files, documents from departmental and student affairs files identified as personnel records, and groups of emails responsive to related queries ranging back to early November 2011. He received these on Jan. 9, 12 and 20, with additional records made available on Jan. 25.

We are unaware in this instance of Isom having claimed he was being denied access to his personnel records.

DONNNA GOODEN PAYNE
Attorney, East Carolina University
Staying safe, being competitive

By Ronnie Woodward
The Daily Reflector
Sunday, January 29, 2012

Tonight's CNN report that features J.H. Rose High School will show that although North Carolina has concussion awareness legislation, some high schools across the country still operate without certified athletic trainers available.

The special report 'Big Hits, Broken Dreams' by Dr. Sanjay Gupta premieres at 8 p.m. During the documentary, Sharon Rogers, an assistant professor in East Carolina’s department of health education and promotion, compares a high school student playing football without an athletic trainer present to a young person swimming in a pool without lifeguard supervision.

J.H. Rose was in that position in 2008 when 16-year-old running back Jaquan Waller died as a result of suffering two concussions in roughly a 48-hour span. Waller was checked out by the team’s first responder, but not a certified athletic trainer.

The report includes Gupta’s examination of the fine line between being competitive and being safe when dealing with adolescent athletes. J.H. Rose head football coach Todd Lipe provided some insight on the topic during a panel discussion earlier this week.

“The ultimate question is, ‘What is it worth?’” Lipe asked. “Do I think that we are at a (competitive) disadvantage? Yes, I do a little bit, but nobody has had to deal with what we’ve had to deal with. When I weigh those two factors, if I’m going to lean somewhere, it’s going to be on the safety of the kids.”

Waller’s death came just weeks after a player from Winston-Salem died from a concussion injury. The tragedies led to Gov. Beverly Perdue signing the Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act last June.

The legislation gives schools a list of requirements for dealing with concussions, including all those involved signing concussion and head injury information sheets on an annual basis and schools having specific emergency action plans for serious injuries.
Markiest Waller, Jaquan’s older brother, was instrumental in the legislation’s approval. “The main thing that we want to get out there is the importance of communication and awareness for the players and the coaches, because we had to deal with this directly as a community and we know the worst-case scenario,” Waller said.

Pitt County was already doing some of the things required by the state and has athletic trainers available to each of its six high schools as part of an agreement signed with East Carolina prior to the 2010 scholastic year.

The CNN report also includes Gupta talking with prep athletes about how often they purposely hide injuries to avoid leaving the playing field, and the risks involved with such acts. It also includes national concussion specialists suggesting major rule changes for high school football.

Pitt County Schools Superintendent Beverly Emory said she hopes the report can be a positive for other communities. “If folks don’t start paying attention, then this sport will not be around because it will get legislated out,” she said.

Dr. Brock Niceler is a sports medicine specialist in Greenville and prep athletes who are dealing with major injuries, especially concussions, are sent to him. Niceler said the team atmosphere that has been created has been the key to preventing another death. “I’m proud of the team that we’ve put together and that we can continue to monitor the athletes so that we don’t have to deal with another tragedy,” Niceler said. “The best thing that we have going for us is that we are a team. ... That team not only includes myself and the athletic trainers, but also the athletes, the parents, the coaches. “When all those people work together, we can create the safest possible environment for the athletes.”

Contact Ronnie Woodward at rwoodward@reflector.com or 252-329-9592.
Younger awarded No. 23 jersey

By Jordan Anders
The Daily Reflector
Sunday, January 29, 2012

With cameras flashing and the crowd cheering, East Carolina senior infielder Tim Younger found himself in the spotlight Saturday.

But Younger wasn’t stepping up to the plate in a crucial situation, he was standing in front of a sold-out crowd inside Harvey Banquet Hall to accept the No. 23 jersey, which is awarded annually to an ECU baseball player in honor of the late Keith LeClair.

“Coach (Billy Godwin) always says no crying in baseball,” an emotional Younger said as he stepped to the microphone. “We’ll see.”

The annual awarding of the No. 23 put a period on ECU’s annual Meet the Pirates event. A large crowd gathered at the Murphy Center to get its first look at this year’s Pirate baseball squad.

Following individual introductions of his team and staff, Godwin gave way to Austin Homan, a former Pirate who wore No. 23 the last two seasons. Homan spoke of what it means to wear the number, which was donned by LeClair when he coached ECU from 1998-2002 before ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease) forced him to give up the post.

LeClair died of the disease in 2006.

Homan also spoke of Younger, with whom he roomed last season.
“This is a guy that does it right,” Homan told the crowd. “There’s not a day that goes by that he doesn’t lead by example, whether it’s on the field with his hustle, in the weight room with his perseverance or in the locker room with his relationships.”

Younger became the ninth Pirate to wear No. 23 since it was introduced as a tribute to LeClair in 2003.

Once he got to the podium and put on the jersey, Younger was so flustered that it took him three tries to get it buttoned correctly.

“It’s a great honor,” he said after the presentation. “Many great guys have worn (it) before me. What it represents and what (LeClair) was all about is what I’m all about.”

Younger is a senior from Clearwater, Fla. After playing his first two seasons at St. Petersburg College, he transferred to ECU in 2011.

He batted .250 with 10 RBIs as a junior last year.

“For him to receive this award, being the first junior college guy (to receive it) and only being here a year and a half, that says all there is to say about Timmy Younger,” Godwin said.
GREENVILLE—In his first two years back at East Carolina, football coach Ruffin McNeill has yet to piece together a winning season. That skid may come to an end soon, however, thanks to what appears to be a top-notch recruiting class scheduled to sign Wednesday.

In his first year with his alma mater, McNeill went 6-7 and lost to Maryland in the Military Bowl. Last season, the Pirates finished 5-7 (3-3 Conference USA) and saw their streak of five consecutive bowls come to an end.

Heading into his third season with an 11-14 career record at ECU, McNeill appears to be on the right track as he approaches Wednesday's National Signing Day.

"On paper this is the best recruiting class in the history of East Carolina since we've been keeping up with them," said Mark Lindsay of Rivals.com and Pirateillustrated.com. "Right now, they're ranked third in Conference USA (behind Southern Miss and Central Florida) and are sitting on a school-record 12 three-star recruits."

East Carolina has an estimated 20-22 scholarships to hand out this year and has already signed two three-star junior college defensive backs from Hinds (Miss.) Community College in cornerback Adonis Armstrong (5-10, 180) and safety Godfrey Thompson (6-0, 205.). ECU has received commitments from 16 others heading into this past weekend, according to Lindsay.

After finishing the season ranked 92nd in the nation in sacks allowed (2.5 per game), the Pirates put a premium on offensive linemen and have secured verbal commitments from five.

DeShawn Byrd, a 6-6, 315-pound junior-college tackle out of Grand Rapids C.C., and Jonathan McLaughlin, a 6-4, 288-pounder from Mauldin, S.C., highlight this year's crop of offensive linemen. Both are considered three-star recruits by Rivals.com.

Of all of ECU's recruits, safety Lucas Thompson (6-1, 185 pounds, Winter Garden, Fla.) may be the highest-ranked at his position: Rivals.com rates him as the 17th-best safety recruit in the country.
Lindsay said Thompson's commitment to ECU is certainly the biggest surprise for the Pirates.

"He made his decision during the Under Armour All-American game in St. Petersburg (Fla.), and he committed on the fifth of January," Lindsay said. "He chose East Carolina over schools like Alabama and Cincinnati."

According to Lindsay, the Pirates have received commitments from three linebackers, two wide receivers, one defensive lineman and two players that are listed as "athletes."

As with every year, there are always some players that get away, and this year one of the main targets that fell off the hook was quarterback Kanler Coker from Flowery Branch, Ga. Coker is expected to commit this week to North Carolina.

Though ECU will be without graduated star quarterback Dominique Davis next season, it will have Rio Johnson, Shane Carden, Brad Wornick and Cody Keith all vying to pilot the Pirates' offense. Johnson, a rising junior, was the No. 2 QB on the depth chart this season.

**East Carolina recruiting**

**Top three commitments**

S Lucas Thompson, 6-1, 185 pounds, Winter Garden, Fla.

S Jabril Solomon, 6-2, 178 pounds, Hemingway, S.C.

OL Jonathan McLaughlin, 6-4, 288 pounds, Mauldin, S.C.

**In the hunt for:**

RB Jela Duncan, 5-10, 190 pounds, Charlotte (Mallard Creek)

LB Jamal Marcus, 6-2, 230 pounds, Durham (Hillside)

OL Kyron Samuels, 6-2, 295, Fairhope, Ala.

Sources: Rivals.com and Scout.com.
ECU Notes: Grant aids research
Sunday, January 29, 2012

An ECU researcher is developing a screening test for prostate cancer with help from a $50,000 grant from Triad Golfers Against Cancer.

Dr. Xin-Hua Hu, a professor of physics, is developing a screening test that uses light to gauge the type and grade of cancer cells in a blood sample.

Hu is developing the test with prostate cancer cells, due to the large number of prostate cancer patients ECU serves.

However, he said he believes the test is adaptable to other cancers. ECU has filed for a patent on this procedure, and Hu has also received a $25,000 grant from the N.C. Biotechnology Center.

Nationwide, prostate cancer is the most-diagnosed cancer in men and the second-leading cause of cancer death in men, according to the American Cancer Society.

Triad Golfers Against Cancer awarded $210,000 in grants in December to researchers at the four medical schools in North Carolina. Golfers Against Cancer, founded in 1997, is a national charitable organization.
Simulation provides lesson on poverty

Approximately 50 ECU students got an idea Wednesday of what it’s like to scrape by on a limited income.

Most were grouped into nine families, where they had to manage a household budget. Others acted as employers or service providers: a bank, a school, a utility company. The hour-long simulation was broken into 15-minute installments representing four separate weeks in the families’ lives.

Extra challenges such as flat tires and medical care popped up throughout the simulation. And participants had to beware of an “illegal activities” actor who might rob them or attempt to persuade family members that crime could help pay the bills.

The Volunteer Service-Learning Center began hosting poverty simulations last fall. The sessions are intended to educate people about the stresses and challenges that come with being short of money.

“We hope students leave the simulation experience … sensitized to the day-to-day realities of life in poverty as well as a stronger desire to engage in service activities related to poverty relief,” Jessica Gagne Cloutier, coordinator of the Service-Learning Center, said.

Study: Cutting class hurts women more

Female college students who skip class score lower on exams than their male peers, according to an ECU study.

Dr. Ron Cortright, a professor in the ECU College of Health and Human Performance, collaborated on the research with colleagues at ECU and Wayne State University in Michigan. Their work was published in the December issue of the journal Advances in Physiology Education.

The researchers tested the conventional wisdom that grades relate to class attendance — primarily that students who attend class more frequently obtain better grades and class attendance itself contributes to learning.
The study compared two exercise physiology classes with 20 female and 31 male undergraduates, anonymously recording students’ attendance and its effect on exam scores.

“It does appear that females may be more susceptible than males to experiencing a lower performance on tests by virtue of poor attendance,” Cortright said.

Each absence was associated with a greater decrease in points for female students, 21.6 points compared to 15 points for male students. The study was small, and additional studies should be done to confirm these results, Cortright said.

He said the study showed students do not learn effectively by reviewing lecture slideshows.

Interactions with the lecturer and classmates are important, he said. That interaction requires class attendance as well as motivated students, teachers and class participation.


**Students help at free dental clinic**

A total of 22 ECU dental students participated in the North Carolina Missions of Mercy dental clinic on Jan. 20-21 at Garber Ministry Center in New Bern.

Several faculty members also participated in the event.

Gov. Beverly Perdue met with dental students and faculty members at the clinic.

The Missions of Mercy program is a project of the North Carolina Dental Society.
Upcoming events

**Tuesday:** “Humble Beginnings,” an art exhibit featuring work by Dr. Lou Everett, professor emeritus of the ECU College of Nursing, runs through March 27 at Laupus Library on the ECU Health Sciences Campus.

**Thursday:** North Carolina native Bland Simpson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will speak on the culture and environment of the coastal plain, 7 p.m. in Wright Auditorium. Tickets are $10 for the general public, free to ECU students, faculty and staff.

**Friday:** Eighth annual Jean Mills Health Symposium, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Greenville Hilton, register online at http://eahec.ecu.edu.

More information about coming events and activities at ECU is online at http://www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm.
Medical toxicologist joins staff of Brody School of Medicine at ECU
Monday, January 30, 2012

Dr. Susan Miller, a medical toxicologist, has joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Miller has joined the school’s Department of Emergency Medicine as a clinical assistant professor and associate chief of toxicology. She comes to Greenville from Drexel University College of Medicine/Hahnemann University Hospital in Philadelphia, where she completed a fellowship in medical toxicology.

Miller has a medical degree from Thomas Jefferson University’s Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and completed residency training in emergency medicine at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey/Cooper University Hospital in Camden, N.J. She also has a bachelor’s degree in bioengineering from the University of Pittsburgh.

She is board-certified in emergency medicine. Her clinical interests are toxicology, acute ingestions and treating patients who are critically ill after poisoning. Miller sees patients at the Vidant Medical Center emergency department.
Dr. Samuel M. Atkinson Jr. has retired from Carolina Women’s Physicians P.A.

Atkinson has been a physician at Carolina Women’s Physicians since April 2009. Atkinson’s medical career spans nearly 50 years. During his time at Carolina Women’s Physicians, he concurrently served as a professor emeritus at East Carolina University’s Brody School of Medicine in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He spent more than 20 years prior to joining Carolina Women’s Physicians as a full-time professor and associate professor.

Atkinson moved to eastern North Carolina in 1985 from Florida, where he served as chief of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Humana Hospital.

Since beginning his career, Atkinson has received numerous awards, including the Excellence in Teaching Award from The Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics Medical Foundation in 2002. He was also awarded the Obstetrics and Gynecology Resident Teaching Award in 1999 and 1994.

Throughout his career, Atkinson has earned three certifications, served on five panels, been cited in nearly 20 journals and has been a member of more than 35 professional committees.

He received his bachelor of arts from Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C., in 1957 and his medical degree from Duke University in 1961.

Carolina Women’s Physicians is at 2450 Emerald Place in Greenville. More information can be found online at www.CarolinaWomens.com.
The North Carolina Biotechnology Center has awarded $1 million in grants to university scientists pursuing improved identification of prostate cancer, developing new membranes and mechanisms for improved drug therapies, and using genetics to improve swine health policy.

Scientists at East Carolina University, N.C. State University and the UNC Wilmington received the $250,000 Multidisciplinary Research Grants. The grant program is designed to support development of preliminary data for federal grant applications. The MRG requires North Carolina scientists in three fields to collaborate equally.

Funding approvals went to:

Qun Lu at ECU, to study the potential effectiveness of using a certain protein in urine as a non-invasive test for prostate cancer.

Ruben Carbonell at NCSU, for development of a fibrous membrane containing a unique antibody-detection molecule that could increase the speed and lower the cost of producing certain drugs.

Melissa Ashwell at NCSU, to study the differences in drug metabolism among various breeds of pigs, to avoid over- or under-medication that can lead to illness in the animals, drug resistance and unnecessary costs. The research could help reduce drug residues in food and contribute to development of more-effective drugs.

Andrea Bourdelais at UNCW, to tackle a major hurdle in the development of new drug therapies — getting them inside cells and to their site of action. She’s developing substances called ladder frame polyethers to act as drug carriers with improved ability to enter cells.

The Biotechnology Center is a private, non-profit corporation supported by the N.C. General Assembly. Its mission is to provide long-term economic and societal benefits to North Carolina by supporting biotechnology research, business, education and strategic policy statewide.
Colleges that fail to meet affordability standards or do not serve poor students could lose federal financial aid dollars under a plan announced Friday by President Barack Obama.

In a speech at the University of Michigan, Obama detailed a sweeping strategy to contain the cost of college, which he said is rising faster than inflation and health care in the United States. For the first time, federal financial aid would be tied to tuition policies at individual campuses.

Obama said colleges are being put on notice that the government can't keep subsidizing skyrocketing tuition. "You can't assume that you'll just jack up tuition every single year," he said. "If you can't stop tuition from going up, then the funding you get from taxpayers each year will go down. We should push colleges to do better. We should hold them accountable if they don't."

The president wants to expand loan funds by $10 billion annually, while steering the money to colleges that act responsibly to control costs.

The plan is likely to stir controversy. "That will be a hotly debated statement in higher education," said UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp, who was among a dozen education leaders to meet with Obama to discuss the cost issue in December. "But I think it's good for him to press on all those things because we do need to look really closely at everybody that's going to college and whether they're being served by the system."

Obama unveiled a multifaceted plan to tackle college costs. Among his proposals:

Incentives. He proposes a $1 billion Race to the Top competition, similar to his K-12 grant strategy, to reward states that adequately fund higher education and create standards for on-time degree completion. Another grant program, called "First in the World," would aim $55 million to colleges to boost productivity and enhance quality.

Transparency. The federal government will create a College Scorecard that helps students and families get data on price and student success indicators such as graduation and employment. Another tool, a financial aid "shopping sheet," will help families compare student aid packages.
Loan rates. The president called on Congress to prevent student loan interest rates from doubling this summer. (The rates are set to jump from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent for Stafford subsidized loans).

Campus jobs. Obama also wants to double the number of work-study campus jobs available for needy students.

Some of Obama's proposals require congressional action. Given the political climate, that's not likely. While some Republicans praised Obama's call for college accountability, others said more could be done. U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx, a Banner Elk Republican, said any discussion about cost should include a review of federal regulations. "Onerous regulations come with a price, and that price is often paid by students," said Foxx, who leads a House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training. "As we take a look at the president's proposal, we hope he will give serious consideration to Republican efforts to rein in the regulatory burden facing higher education."

States must help

In a conference call with reporters, Obama policy advisers did not disclose how his initiatives would be financed. The details will be released as part of the president's federal budget, they said.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said state legislatures have to pitch in, too. Last year, 40 states cut spending on higher education. "States can't keep cutting higher education budgets and expect institutions to make up the differences by raising tuition each year," Duncan said. "We know that these state budget cuts have been perhaps the largest driver of tuition increases at public colleges over the past decade. At the same time, colleges and universities have to act with much greater urgency and creativity to contain costs, and they must hold themselves accountable for ensuring students get an education that really prepares them for success in the workplace."

North Carolina was one of those budget-cutting states, and the ensuing tuition debate is under way. UNC campuses sustained a state budget equivalent to 15.6 percent across the university system last year. This week, UNC President Tom Ross proposed in-state undergraduate tuition and fee increases of 8.8 percent systemwide for the coming academic year. That recommendation is smaller than the hikes proposed by seven of 16 campuses.

Fighting increases
The UNC Board of Governors will vote on tuition in February. But there is a growing chorus against increases at a time when many families are struggling to make ends meet. More than 20 former UNC system board members joined in a petition against the hikes. And this week, UNC-CH students held a screening of a documentary on student loan debt.

Eric Bost, a UNC-CH senior from Huntersville, said he'd like to see officials take a broader look at the tax structure and spending on defense and other categories. But, in general, he praised Obama's plan. "We're certainly glad that he's making moves to hold colleges accountable," Bost said, "but at the same time there's still a lot that's not being done, that's not being talked about."

UNC-CH trustees have asked for an 11.4 percent tuition and fee increase for next year. Thorp said that although UNC-CH tuition has jumped in the past decade, student debt is actually lower. Thirty-five percent of UNC-CH students leave school with debt, and the average level is $15,500, compared to an inflation-adjusted figure of $18,000 in 2000, he said. "That's something to be proud of," Thorp said.

At the December meeting, the chancellor reminded Obama that universities have to pay attention to costs, but also to quality. "We've got to maintain our ability to carry out the nation's research and our commitment to what he acknowledged is the greatest higher education system in the world," Thorp said, "and we've got to figure out how to balance all these things."

Stancill: 919-829-4559

**Obama's college affordability strategy**

Student aid reform: Change the federal aid distribution to favor colleges that keep net tuition down, provide good value and adequately serve needy students. Campuses that do not succeed in those areas could lose federal aid dollars.

"Race to the Top" competition: Create a $1 billion incentive fund to spur states that do more to contain tuition costs and make it easier for students to earn a college degree.

"First in the World" competition: Start a $55 million fund to encourage colleges to develop new strategies to boost degree earners and student success.

Consumer data: Create a College Scorecard to provide students and families with data comparing colleges on costs, graduation rates and potential earnings of graduates.

Loans, tax credits and jobs: Encourage Congress to keep interest rates low for 7.4 million student loan borrowers and to make permanent the $10,000 tax credit for college. Double the number of federal work-study jobs available to low-income students.
The Wilmington Star News
Published: Friday, January 27, 2012 at 9:28 a.m.

UNCW tuition hike 9.2%, chancellor says
UNCW to support system's tuition increase proposal

By Pressley Baird
Pressley.Baird@StarNewsOnline.com

UNCW Chancellor Gary Miller said the university will bring its tuition increase to 9.2 percent to support the tuition proposal handed down by the UNC system President Tom Ross.

Ross' proposal calls for tuition increases in campuses across the state to stay below 10 percent, aiming for an 8.8 percent average increase across the system.

Before Ross' recent recommendation, UNCW trustees voted in December to back a 10.7 percent tuition increase for in-state students.

Miller said the University of North Carolina Wilmington was supporting Ross' plan as a compromise.

"We have to fundamentally change the way we think about the management and leadership and financial position of this university," he said.

Trustee David Swain echoed Miller. Swain called on the school to look at what services it could market to the community.

"We have certain portions of this university that have knowledge that is sellable to the general public," he said. "If we can recognize which parts of this university have the opportunity to bring in revenue, it's a whole new ball game."

The new tuition plan will now go before the UNC-system Board of Governors, which is expected to vote on the proposals for final approval in February.

The trustees also approved an increase to part of the funding for university scholarships. The university bumped the spending rate on its endowment portfolio's interest up to 4.5 percent, adding about $400,000 to bring the scholarship distribution to just under $2 million.

This won't increase the number of scholarships, said Charlie Maimone, UNCW's chief financial officer. Instead, it'll boost the amount of money in each scholarship.
"This improves our recruiting ability," Maimone said. "It makes us more competitive in the marketplace for those students who are academically gifted."

The school had dropped the spending rate to 3.5 percent to relieve pressure put on by the 2008 economic downfall.

Pressley Baird: 343-2328
January 28, 2012

For Some Vassar Applicants, Joy Then Misery as College Corrects Mistake

By MATT FLEGENHEIMER

Yap Zong Yao woke up at 5 a.m. Saturday in Singapore to check his admissions decision from Vassar College. He returned to sleep “overwhelmed with joy,” he said.

Mahmoud Ghedira stayed up with family members until 11 p.m. Friday in Tunisia as they toasted the son who had impressed an esteemed American school.

Megan Curiel, from San Antonio, saw the good news on her iPhone and sobbed. Her father called relatives. She ordered two Vassar sweatshirts — one for her and one for her mother. They popped Champagne.

“I was in,” Ms. Curiel said, “for about three hours.”

About 4 p.m. Friday, Eastern time, scores of early-decision applicants to the college, in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., were mistakenly told they had been accepted, the school said.

Jeff Kosmacher, a spokesman for Vassar, said on Saturday that a “test letter” that had been intended as a placeholder for the real admissions decision had not been replaced before students checked their application statuses online. The error was discovered around 4:30 p.m., he said.

Between 6:30 and 7 p.m. Friday, the 122 students who had seen the test letter — 46 who were, in fact, accepted and 76 who were not — were sent a message from the college that cited a “system error” and apologized for the mistake, Mr. Kosmacher said. The correct decisions, the message said, were now available online.

“If after checking your decision again you still have questions,” the message said, “please feel free to contact the Admissions Office on Monday morning.”

Though some parents have requested refunds of application fees, Mr. Kosmacher said that besides Friday’s message, “no other step is in the works.” A total of 254 students had applied for this round of binding early decisions, he added, and some had logged in while the error was online.
Word spread quickly among the applicants, many of whom had been communicating on the Web site College Confidential in the days before the decisions were to be released, sharing their well-wishes and trepidation.

Ms. Curiel heard from a classmate who had also been told he was accepted. 
Mr. Ghedira found out early Saturday morning. “He was so happy, he wanted to read it again,” his mother, Sonia Ghedira, said Saturday, adding that her son was too distraught to come to the telephone.

At 5:11 p.m. Friday, the first panicked message hit the College Confidential message board: “Now it says I’m declined??????”

“Accepted at 4, reject at 5,” read another. “I don’t understand.”

Some students and parents tried to contact the Admissions Office, demanding further explanation. The parents of one student in Connecticut who was rejected said they were considering legal action because the decision was supposed to be binding.

Other applicants began the unpleasant work of contacting friends and relatives anew.

“My mom called, like, my entire family,” Dylan Leggio, 17, a student at Somers High School in Westchester County, said in an e-mail. “It was just a big letdown.”

Ms. Curiel said she felt an obligation to correct the record with loved ones as soon as possible. “I told everybody I got into Vassar,” she said. “I would be lying.”

Ms. Curiel added that she nearly caused herself an even greater headache by withdrawing her other applications because the Vassar decision was binding. “Take care of this tomorrow,” she recalled her father saying. “Right now we can celebrate.”

Vassar is not the first college to supply false hope to students. In March, 61 applicants to the University of Delaware received misguided congratulations. Similar errors have plagued the University of California, San Diego, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in recent years.

For some students, Vassar’s mistake brought a moment of clarity. Posting on the College Confidential thread, Mr. Leggio mused that perhaps he preferred a school in a city after all.

Kareen Troussard, a student in Paris, said the episode might have saved her. “I want to major in computer science,” she said in an e-mail, “and Vassar doesn’t even know how to use a computer on the biggest day of our lives.”
Et Tu, Harvard?

By JOE NOCERA

If the worst thing that ever happens to Temi Fagbenle is that she gets to play college basketball for only three seasons instead of four, she’ll have lived a blessed life. No question, the wrong being perpetrated on this 6-foot-4 Harvard freshman pales compared with some of the injustices in college sports that I’ve been recounting lately.

Still, Fagbenle’s ordeal is worth telling for three reasons. It illustrates the sheer pettiness of the N.C.A.A. It shows that the N.C.A.A. won’t rectify even an obvious mistake to help an athlete. Saddest of all, it shows that even mighty Harvard won’t stand up to the N.C.A.A. Originally intended to help universities police their athletic teams, the N.C.A.A. has become higher education’s Frankenstein, terrifying its overseers.

Let me tell you a little bit about Temi. Yes, she’s 6-foot-4 and a terrific basketball player, but she’s a lot more than that. Born to Nigerian parents — her father is a prominent journalist — she moved with her large family to London as a girl. When she was 15, her parents enrolled her as a junior in Blair Academy, a New Jersey prep school, hoping the education she got there would lead her to the Ivy League. The Fagbenles had their hearts set on Harvard.

Temi struggled her first year, so much so that she and her parents decided that she should repeat her junior year to better her chances of getting into Harvard. By the time she graduated, she had won letters in track and tennis as well as basketball, had starred in the school play, had improved her grades enough to be accepted at Harvard, and had become one of the most popular students at Blair. Along the way, she turned down scholarship offers from big-time basketball schools like Duke.

If you are wondering how this outstanding high school career could have led to Temi’s being ruled ineligible to play as a freshman, you’re not alone. Her mistake, if you can call it that, was to take an exam, the General Certificate of Secondary Education, required of all British students when they are around 15. Inexplicably — and incorrectly — the N.C.A.A. says that the exam marks a British student’s graduation from high school. Under its rules,
a British high school graduate must enroll in college within two years of taking the G.C.S.E. Because Temi repeated her junior year, it took her three years.

The sheer idiocy of this rule boggles the mind. As Harvard pointed out in a letter to the N.C.A.A., if she had stayed in London until she finished high school, she could have played. If she had started as a freshman in an American high school and repeated a grade, she could have played. But because she repeated a grade after coming to the United States, she is ineligible. It not only seems unfair, it seems discriminatory.

Behind the scenes, Harvard worked to get the N.C.A.A. to reverse its decision, making four separate appeals. All were denied. With Harvard’s help, Temi retained a lawyer, who gave serious thought to trying to get a restraining order against the N.C.A.A., on the grounds that the rule violates state antidiscrimination laws. But, in the end, Temi decided not to sue, to Harvard’s palpable relief. After all, if Temi began playing and then ultimately lost the case, the women’s basketball team would have to forfeit the games in which she had played. Sotto voce, officials also expressed fears that the N.C.A.A. might retaliate in other ways.

Despite its behind-the-scenes efforts, Harvard has never once said publicly that the rule is wrong and that Temi is being unfairly punished. On the contrary, in an e-mailed statement, Bob Scalise, the Harvard athletic director, said, “We at Harvard are fully committed to following all N.C.A.A. rules and guidelines.” Even, apparently, when those rules are wrong and unjust.

And, I might add, deeply hurtful. “When someone has a tremendous talent, you are taking away a fundamental part of their identity,” says Temi’s lawyer, Beth Reilly. “And there is a stigma in being declared ineligible, an implication that you have done something wrong. You have a label attached that the whole world sees.”

I understand why a school like the University of Connecticut won’t stand up to the N.C.A.A. There is nothing bigger in the state of Connecticut than UConn basketball. If it were to start playing Ryan Boatright, the suspended point guard whose mother is the subject of an N.C.A.A. witch hunt, it would risk not only forfeiting games, but missing the N.C.A.A. championship tournament. The price is too high.

But I would have thought that Harvard was made of sterner stuff. Harvard claims to have values that transcend wins and losses. Harvard has often been
a leader in changing how universities act. So long as schools continue to
cower in the face of N.C.A.A. abuses, those abuses will continue.
The Temi Fagbenle case was a perfect opportunity for Harvard to stand up
for what’s right. Maybe next time.