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ECU hires interim adviser for student newspaper

BY JACKIE DRAKE
The Daily Reflector

A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist will serve as the interim adviser to the student newspaper at East Carolina University, campus officials announced Monday.

Frank Barrows, former managing editor for The Charlotte Observer, will serve in a consultant role that oversees the day-to-day publication and online needs of students with The East Carolinian, a university news release said. He begins work Feb. 6.

Barrows fills the position held by Paul Isom, who was fired at the beginning of this month. In November, the student newspaper published photos of a streaker at a football game. The university maintains that the dismissal was due to personnel issues and continues to seek permission to release Isom’s records.

Isom said Monday that he has not granted permission for his files to be released because he hasn’t received everything. The university has provided his personnel files from human resources, from his department and from student affairs, as well as a volume of related emails, though there are some emails remaining to be made available, spokeswoman Mary Schulken said Monday.

The university has been checking all materials to make sure no other faculty or students’ privacy would be compromised in the release. The university has made the prepared materials available at several points.

“I have some documents; I’m getting it all piecemeal,” Isom said Monday. “It’s a long, drawn out process.”

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Isom has said there is nothing negative in his files.

“I’m just not going to release anything until I’ve seen it,” he said Monday.

Isom also said he plans to file for a review, which the university offers as part of the termination process. He has 20 working days from his dismissal date to request a review.

If he has not received all his personnel records, he plans to ask for an extension to file the review, which also is stipulated in the process.

Isom said he filed a public records request last week asking for all information related to a “new direction” for student media. When Isom was fired, he said that was the only reason administrators gave him.

Virginia Hardy, vice chancellor for student affairs, said Isom’s dismissal is one of many steps the university has taken to reorganize and strengthen its student media, which also includes the Buccaneer yearbook, channel 31 and the Rebel literary magazine.

“We continue to show our support for our students at The East Carolinian and providing a skilled, trusted resource to advise them has been a high priority,” Hardy said.

Barrows’ career spans five decades in journalism and includes 13 years as managing editor of The Charlotte Observer, the largest daily newspaper for the Carolinas. In that role, he directed news-gathering efforts, overseeing a staff of 240 and an $18 million annual budget.

Barrows was one of two local-news editors whose hands-on supervision guided the 1987 reporting on evangelist Jim Bakker that earned the Pulitzer Gold Medal, print journalism’s highest honor.

“Frank Barrows’ impressive journalistic career makes him the perfect person to ensure that the students’ rights are protected while at the same time offering all the guidance necessary to make challenging and often difficult decisions every day,” Hardy said.

Barrows will provide journalistic guidance to students in news reporting, feature writing, story development, online journalism, editing, photography, formatting and layout, production techniques and processes, business operations, communications and public relations.

His role includes working on campus as well as regular and consistent communication with The East Carolinian’s editor-in-chief and student journalists via phone, conference call and other means as necessary.

While working with The East Carolinian students, Barrows also will assist in developing a strong orientation and training plan for incoming and outgoing student news staff and provide recommendations for building more consistent and sustainable long-term business plans for The East Carolinian.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567 or follow on Twitter @jackiedrakegrdr.
Now there is proof that Greenville is one of the most generous communities in the nation. The Reach Out and Read Program at the ECU Pediatric Outpatient Center received 7,398 new children’s books for our young patients, donated by Greenville area customers during a local bookstore’s annual holiday book drive. More books were donated from the Greenville site (by far!) than any of the other stores’ sites in the East Coast region. For this amazing support, we want to say thank you to our community and to Rob McDaniel, who led the effort.

The ECU Pediatric Outpatient Center participates in Reach Out and Read, a national organization that prepares America’s youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books. Our providers give out brand new books during every well-child check-up for children through age 6, and we encourage families to read together every day.

We at ECU Pediatrics thank the bookseller and the many generous customers who donated a book as they made their other holiday purchases. Because of this outpouring of good will, many children who have never had a book of their own will have one to read with their family tonight.

ROBERT C. HOYER, M.D., MAT
Director, ECU Pediatric Outpatient Center

CAROLYN MERRIFIELD
North Carolina Regional Programs Director
Reach Out and Read Carolinas
The Wilmington Star News

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Civil War wreck to get anniversary attention

By Ben Steelman
Ben.Steelman@StarNewsOnline.com

A coalition of local historians and archaeologists is banding together to celebrate the heritage of a Civil War blockade runner.

Under pursuit by Union warships, the 520-ton steamer Modern Greece ran aground off Fort Fisher on June 27, 1862, and was sunk to evade capture – 150 years ago this summer.

For decades, the wreck was thought to have been totally destroyed. In the spring of 1962, however, a storm uncovered the wreck in 25 feet of water, just 300 yards offshore.

Beginning that summer 50 years ago, divers from the U.S. Navy and what was then the state Department of Archives and History spent two years exploring the Modern Greece, recovering a treasure trove of military artifacts.

"That was basically how the Underwater Archaeology Branch got started," said Mark Wilde-Ramsing, assistant state archaeologist and director of the branch, a division of the state Department of Cultural Resources based at Fort Fisher.

The British-owned Modern Greece had been bound for Wilmington with a cargo of Whitworth cannon, Enfield rifle-muskets, bayonets, bullets, hand tools, cutlery, medicine and other items meant for Confederate forces.

Much of that cargo was salvaged in the weeks after the 210-foot-long vessel sank, but much remained. Twentieth-century divers recovered thousands of wood, metal and glass artifacts.

The trove provided a wealth of laboratory samples on how to treat and preserve items that had been submerged for a century, Wilde-Ramsing said.

The Modern Greece became a training ground in underwater archaeology, he added. Divers would apply those lessons in exploring other shipwrecks off the North Carolina coast, notably the historic ironclad USS Monitor, sunk off the Outer Banks, and the Queen Anne's Revenge, the pirate Blackbeard's flagship, which was sunk in 1718 and rediscovered in the 1990s not far from Atlantic Beach.
Now, Wilde-Ramsing and Chris Fonvielle, associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, are organizing a series of programs and activities to mark the double anniversaries of the Modern Greece.

Plans call for a public symposium about the wreck in late June on the UNCW campus and the unveiling of new materials at Fort Fisher.

Fonvielle, who calls the Modern Greece an "iconic" blockade runner, would like to see a beach pavilion erected, with panels of educational materials, where visitors can view the wreck offshore. Organizers would also like to see an expanded exhibit pavilion for the Underwater Archaeology Branch, near the present visitors' center of the Fort Fisher State Historic Site, as well as a mini-theater.

Fonvielle hopes to raise funds to film a documentary about the Modern Greece and its excavation, with release targeted for 2014. Filmmaker Don Koonce of Greenville, S.C., a former area resident who prepared the documentary for the Bellamy Mansion Museum, has agreed to tackle the project.

The nonprofit N.C. Maritime History Council would serve as the conduit for private fundraising. Mike McCarly of Carolina Marine Terminal has already made a "generous" donation toward the Modern Greece program, Fonvielle said, and organizers hope to get help from other private sources.

Plans also call for new surveys of the wreck site, using modern remote sensing technology, tentatively in March and April, with Underwater Archaeology Branch staffers aided by marine technology students from Cape Fear Community College.

Completing the task

Also in March, conservation students from East Carolina University are scheduled to gather at Fort Fisher to complete the removal, cleaning and cataloging and assessment of the remaining Modern Greece artifacts, still stored in saltwater tanks in the branch's shed.

Thousands of items from the Modern Greece still have not been processed, 50 years later. Wilde-Ramsing acknowledged that some have deteriorated and some have been pilfered.

"Having all that stuff in the back has always bugged me," he said.

At least one student intern from UNCW with a focus on anthropology and archaeology, would help in the work.
Fonvielle also hopes to collect oral histories from divers and others who worked on the Modern Greece excavation.

For more information on the Modern Greece program, contact Fonvielle at 962-3449 or fonviellec@uncw.edu, or Wilde-Ramsing at 458-9042.

Ben Steeelman: 343-2208
Jharel Cotton throws the kind of stuff that stirs images of an old-time baseball cartoon, and East Carolina skipper Billy Godwin found the island treasure without getting a vacation out of the deal.

Cotton came to the mainland U.S. from the Virgin Islands, but before arriving in Greenville this winter as an almost certain starting pitcher for the Pirates, his baseball journey carried him to Virginia and Florida and nearly into the professional ranks.

Now that he’s decided to see out his collegiate career at ECU, Cotton is unfurling a changeup that Godwin called a Bugs Bunny pitch — like the one Bugs used to strike out three consecutive Gas House Gorillas on a single pitch before it crossed the plate.

Add to that the fastball of freshman fellow Virgin Islander DeShorn Lake — Godwin says it might be the best on the club — and the Pirates seemingly have quite a Caribbean connection in recruiting.

“Everybody says, ‘Boy, that was a nice recruiting trip,’ but really, honestly, we never went to the Virgin Islands,” said Godwin, whose team opens the season Feb. 17 at home against Milwaukee. “They were recruited independently from the same program, Menchville (Va.) High School.”
The Menchville pipeline initially produced promising sophomore right-hander Austin Chrismon and that paved the Pirates’ path to the Virgin Islands, at least sort of.

“We recruited Cotton as a JUCO kid out of Miami-Dade knowing he had gone to Menchville but had no conversations with him when he was there,” Godwin said. “We actually recruited him out of the Coastal Plain League (a summer wood bat league for college players). He pitched between his freshman and sophomore year for Peninsula (Va.), and I actually got to watch him pitch a couple of times watching some of our guys.”

Since donning purple and gold for the second time in their career (Menchville has similar school colors to ECU’s), Cotton and Lake have created some buzz on a staff that Godwin estimated lost 400 of its 540 innings pitched from last year.

“My journey ends here,” said the well-traveled Cotton, a junior transfer who figures to jump right into the Pirates’ depleted weekend rotation along with senior southpaw Kevin Brandt and junior lefty Tyler Joyner. “I hope to take the team really far. I came here because I wanted to be a Pirate. It’s a great atmosphere, the fans are great, the coaches are great.”

For both newcomers, getting here was more a matter of recruiting themselves than the other way around.

In fact, Cotton said he knew if he was going to live a baseball dream similar to childhood idol Pedro Martinez, it would require him going to where the baseball was.

“From a scale from one to 10, the exposure in the Virgin Islands is about a three and in the United States it’s a 10,” Cotton said. “There are a lot more players being watched, a lot more scouts and colleges that will come out and watch. The baseball is better here because the coaches are great, they help you a lot, they work with you to make you better.”

Cotton thinks his personality is a lot like that of Martinez, known for having a childlike demeanor away from the field but also for being one of baseball’s fiercest competitors on the mound.
Using a solid fastball and an improving curve to help set the stage for the off-speed pitch he credits Martinez for inspiring him to throw, Cotton seems to think he has vast room for improvement.

Despite coming to ECU from a vacation paradise, he said he always wanted to experience life on the mainland and is relishing every minute.

“I used to watch TV and I saw the shows from the States and I wanted to experience how it is,” he said. “I wanted to experience the cold, and the different cultures. I kept doing my thing, working hard, and baseball just kept bringing good things to me. It brought me this far and I’m not going to stop.”

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Mark Gail/The Post - The University of Maryland president’s residence will be demolished in order to make way for a new mansion.

U-Md. president Loh saw new home as important, but also potential ‘crisis’

By Jenna Johnson

Soon after being named the University of Maryland’s president in 2010, Wallace D. Loh visited campus and learned that the president’s house was scheduled for demolition. While a university foundation built a new home, Loh and his wife would be living in a donated house near campus.

“Let me just say, I was surprised,” said Loh, who is in his second year in the job. “The first thing that came through my mind was: ‘Wallace, you have a crisis here.’ I knew that once the public heard about this, it would be a firestorm.”

Loh firmly believes that the old home had a long list of costly problems that needed to be fixed and that the new home and events center is “a necessity of the modern presidency.” Private donors will pick up the $7.2 million price tag, and about 20 people have given about $4.5 million so far.

But Loh said he knew that no matter how rational the reasons or the source of the funds, constructing this house would rouse emotions. “To the average person on the street, it doesn’t make sense,” he said.

Loh was correct in his prediction that the project would cause a firestorm. Although the new house has been in the works for more than a year and has
been approved by several layers of school and state authorities, outrage didn’t set in until this month, when the Maryland Board of Public Works was asked to approve demolition of the previous house. Then, the old house fell.

From a public relations standpoint, the construction comes at a complex time, not long after Loh announced that the school was cutting sports programs to address massive budget shortfalls and as Maryland has been asking donors to support students who might have to drop out because they can’t afford tuition.

To give himself “a political cover,” Loh said he turned down use of the donor’s home and purchased a house near campus, where he and his wife pay their own mortgage and utilities. He said he also ordered an “absolute firewall” between himself and the project. Loh said he learned the price of the “University House,” as the structure is being called, from reading the student newspaper.

“I knew the one thing that brings down presidencies is building a new house,” Loh said. “I did not want my presidency to end before it begins.”

Once the house opens in late summer or early fall, the Lohs will make that their primary residence but plan to keep their current house as a “private retreat,” Loh said.

School officials and donors have been working to make it clear that the home is not a luxury but a fundraising necessity. On Tuesday, Brodie Remington, vice president for university relations, sent a mass e-mail to everyone on campus that challenged the media’s characterization of the project as a “mansion.”

When the university’s regents approved the project, Remington said they requested a clear distinction between the two sections of the house: a private residence that will cost about $2 million and a venue for entertaining that will cost $5.2 million. Still, looking at a rendering of the outside of the structure, it’s impossible to see where one section starts and another begins.

“That is a distinction that’s difficult for people to grasp,” Remington said.

The University of Maryland College Park Foundation, a nonprofit organization housed in the school’s University Relations department, is leading fundraising efforts for the project. Remington leads both the foundation and the department.

So far, the foundation has “official, formal, booked commitments” from about 20 donors for about $4.5 million, Remington said. Many of the donors
are longtime Maryland supporters who have already given millions to other projects on campus, including athletics and scholarship funds.

One of the project’s largest donors, Barry Gossett, said the new house will be a symbol of the university’s upward trajectory. The foundation is building it at a time when construction prices are lower in preparation for more aggressive fundraising and partnership-building in the future.

“It’s only going to get more competitive, not just for the public dollars but for the private dollars,” said Gossett, who is also a major supporter of Maryland athletics and scholarships.

The foundation plans to meet its fundraising goal in June with gifts from 40 to 50 donors. Originally, it had planned on about 30 donors picking up the tab. When asked what would happen if the foundation could not raise the full amount, Remington said: “One cannot fail. We will keep fundraising until we raise all the money that we need.”

The foundation gave potential donors a color brochure that includes paintings of the University House, floor plans and a list of naming opportunities.

If a donor is willing to give $10 million, he or she could name the place. For $300,000, a donor’s name could grace the “master bedroom suite” where the president will sleep. There are also opportunities to name the driveway ($1 million), the service bar ($250,000) and two coat rooms ($50,000 for the larger, $25,000 for the smaller).

The foundation also has started a maintenance endowment for future upkeep of the house and has collected $400,000.

Remington and his staff also have reached out to students who might have questions about the project, including the Diamondback student newspaper. In a glowing editorial about the house published Tuesday, the newspaper concluded: “This project isn’t about fancy digs for the president, it’s about raising money for the university: Who can complain about that?”

The foundation announced this month that the first major event hosted at the house in the fall will be a dedication ceremony focused on scholarship fundraising.

“We’re going to put the house to work early on,” Remington said, “for the benefit of the campus and all students.”

In his first year as president, Loh hosted more than 200 events. He and his wife invited people to their home for meals, but their dining room table only seats eight. He hosted fundraisers and major events in the student and alumni
centers, which he said seemed impersonal. He met with students in his office, which seemed too intimidating, or at a reserved table in the noisy cafeteria.

Faculty members kept asking why he never invited them over.

“It’s like playing basketball without home court advantage, like being an ambassador in the nation’s capital who holds receptions in a Hilton ballroom,” Loh said. “I really can’t be as successful as I want to be, and as people expect me to be, without a University House.”
Claremont McKenna College/ President Pamela B. Gann said “a senior administrator” had admitted falsifying test scores since 2005.

College Says It Exaggerated SAT Figures for Ratings

By DANIEL E. SLOTNIK and RICHARD PÉREZ-Peña

Claremont McKenna College, a small, prestigious California school, said Monday that for the past six years, it has submitted false SAT scores to publications like U.S. News & World Report that use the data in widely followed college rankings.

In a message e-mailed to college staff members and students, Claremont McKenna’s president since 1999, Pamela B. Gann, wrote that “a senior administrator” had taken sole responsibility for falsifying the scores, admitted doing so since 2005, and resigned his post.

People briefed on the matter said that the administrator was Richard C. Vos, vice president and dean of admissions, whose name was removed in the last few days from the college’s online list of top officials.

Mr. Vos, reached at his home Monday night, said: “No comment. It’s an internal personnel matter.”

The critical reading and math scores reported to U.S. News and others “were generally inflated by an average of 10-20 points each,” Ms. Gann wrote. For the class that entered the school in September 2010 — the most recent set of figures made public — the combined median score of 1,400 was reported as 1,410, she said, while the 75th percentile score of 1,480 was reported as 1,510.

Such small differences might influence the rankings, and the deception underscores the importance those rankings have taken on, as colleges fret over the loss of even a notch or two against their competitors.
Robert Franek, the senior vice president of publishing for The Princeton Review, which provides preparation for the SAT and also ranks colleges, said that he had never heard of a college intentionally reporting incorrect data.

“We want to put out very clear information so that students can make an informed decision about their school,” Mr. Franek said. “I feel like so many schools have a very clear obligation to college-bound students to report this information honestly.”

The Princeton Review bases its college rankings on student opinion rather than test data, Mr. Franek said, so he was uncertain whether a change as small as that reported would make a difference.

“It’s hard for me to say, but that is a small percentage,” Mr. Franek said. “That is a pretty mild difference in a point score. That said, 10 points, 30 points to a student that isn’t getting that score on the SAT could be an important distinction.”

Claremont McKenna, a liberal arts school with about 1,200 students and a strong focus on political science and economics, is part of the Claremont colleges cluster east of Los Angeles. Long considered a good school, in the last generation it has moved into the elite ranks — at least as measured by the most-popular ratings.

The current U.S. News rankings list Claremont McKenna as the ninth-best liberal arts college in the country, a fact noted on Ms. Gann’s biography on the college’s Web site. The Princeton Review gives the college an academic rating of 97 out of 99 and an admissions selectivity rating of 96 out of 99, comparable to some Ivy League schools. It remains to be seen whether the revelation of falsified test scores changes that status.

Ms. Gann wrote in her message that she was first warned of inaccurate reporting this month and asked other administrators to investigate, leading to an administrator’s admission of guilt and Monday’s announcement.

“At this time, we have no reason to believe that other individuals were involved,” she wrote. “As an institution of higher education with a deep and consistent commitment to the integrity of all our academic activities, and particularly our reporting of institutional data, we take this situation very seriously.”

She added that the college has alerted the publishers of college rankings and has hired the law firm O’Melveny & Myers to investigate further.
After Mistake, a Mea Culpa From Vassar

By MATT FLEGENHEIMER

After 76 applicants were mistakenly told they had been accepted to Vassar College, its president has apologized for the “considerable confusion and hurt” caused by the “terribly upsetting event,” and said the college would reimburse the students’ $65 application fees.

“Vassar prides itself on providing a professional and personal relationship with everyone in our community,” Vassar’s president, Catharine Hill, wrote in an e-mail to the applicants on Sunday night. “Obviously we have failed dramatically to do so in this instance.”

On Friday, around 4 p.m., 122 students who had applied for binding early admission to Vassar saw what the school later called a “test letter” congratulating them on their acceptance. Hours later, the students received a message saying the letter had been posted in error. Once the correct decisions were displayed, only 46 of the students were told they had been accepted.

Some parents have called on Vassar to accept the rest of the students anyway, reasoning that because early decision applications are binding, the school should be held to its initial answer as well, even if it was delivered in error. One family in Connecticut said it was considering legal action.

But reversing the admissions decisions would be unfair, Ms. Hill said.

“The admissions process is a careful set of decisions made over a number of months, intended to give every student a fair assessment and full consideration for admission,” she wrote. “To do anything but honor that process would in effect deny places in the class to other students who are counting on that fair assessment.”

Ms. Hill acknowledged that the reimbursement of application fees would be “of very little consolation” to students. The college is also offering to contact other schools to “explain the situation” if any students withdrew their other applications and need help reinstating them. Administrators from the admissions office also placed calls to the students Monday to offer support, said Jeff Kosmacher, a school spokesman.
Dylan Leggio, a student at Somers High School in Westchester County, said the response was “a decent consolation.”

“I would still love very much to be accepted,” he wrote in an e-mail, “but I didn’t expect anything further than what they did.”