THE DAILY CLIPS

February 1, 2012

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by East Carolina University News Services:

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
   U.S. News & World Report
      Business Week
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Educators: technology is more necessity than luxury for teens

By Derrick Rose, Reporter

CHARLOTTE, NC (WBTV) - When it comes to teenagers, technology is the one language that outranks English in fluency and frequency. It's why more schools are using the digital world to help students learn.

Lexington High School French teacher Amanda Hajji wishes she had as much exposure to technology when she was in school.

This year her district handed out 7,000 iPads to every student and their teachers in each of the four high schools as part of a new initiative. The benefits have exceeded expectation.

"Its really increasing communication, those students that are a little hesitant to ask a question in class, in front of their peers are emailing their teachers back and forth and we found that to be an unexpected but wonderful side effect," District One Spokesperson Mary Beth Hill told WBTV.com.

Across the country Wednesday, school districts, students and their parents are participating in Digital Learning Day, which includes an online discussion promoting the importance of technology to help students advance their educational and professional careers.

Another person who can speak to the advantages is Abel Real, who attended high school in Greene County, North Carolina. He told a congressional committee, had it not been for technology sparking his interest in education,
he may have been a dropout like his 3 brothers, or in jail like both of his parents.

"At home there was no inspiration and I truly dreaded the bell at the end of the school day," he said during the Washington hearing, "at least I knew when I left campus, I would be able to instant message my teachers and classmates with questions; the integration of technology opened the world to me."

Real is now enrolled at East Carolina University and works as a certified nurses assistant. Credits for that job were part of his high school curriculum; proving that for a student's future success, technology is more necessity than luxury.

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We Were Wrong

Tuesday's story on ECU hiring an interim newspaper adviser incorrectly quoted Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Virginia Hardy as saying that firing Paul Isom is one of many steps the university has taken to reorganize and strengthen its student media. The correct statement should have read that hiring Barrows is one of many steps the university has taken to reorganize and strengthen its student media.

If you notice an error, give me a call at 329-9560 or send an email to aclark@reflector.com. If I am not available, and you need to speak to someone right away, please call 329-9573.

Al Clark, executive editor
Pirate prospects
By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, February 1, 2012

East Carolina’s football offices will be no different than those at most universities today.

National Signing Day begins at 7 a.m., but ECU and seemingly hundreds of others will likely be waiting well past the a.m. before getting their last signatures.

Check back throughout the day as Nathan Summers will be updating this story with information on who actually signs with the Pirates.

Heading into today, ECU was expecting 19 signatures and was hopeful for a few more at key positions. In fact, the team was still hoping to hear from a few recruits on Tuesday night.

As expected, the Pirates’ 2012 signing class will be dominated by offensive linemen, linebackers and defensive backs.

On offense, the Pirates feel good about four linemen and were still waiting on word from two others.

J.T. Boyd (Fort Mill, S.C./Nation Ford High School) and Ryan Revia (Roanoke, Va./Patrick Henry) remain solid commits, and Jonathan McGlaughlin (Mauldin, S.C./Mauldin) recently made his intentions to come to Greenville known. Also jumping on board recently was Keifer Neal out of Golden West Community College in Huntington Beach, Calif.

The Pirates were hoping to hear from Casey Blaser (Charlotte/South Mecklenberg), but he is likely headed to Duke, and Kameron Davis
(Lauderdale Lakes, Fla./Boyd H. Anderson) appears headed to South Florida.

The running back position has arguably been the most trying for the Pirates this offseason, with a handful of early possibilities now off the table but at least one new face that will likely sign today.

The Pirates were still waiting Tuesday night to hear from Marty Williams (North Augusta, S.C./Fox Creek), who is also giving strong thought to Clemson. Jela Duncan (Charlotte/Mallard Creek) appears headed to Wake Forest but will announce his decision this morning.

ECU is also out of the running for the likes of Tarboro star Todd Gurley, but another find from Golden West C.C. who is expected to sign is back Michael Pierre.

A trio of wide receivers should sign — Jabril Solomon (Hemingway, S.C./Hemingway), Lance Ray (Havana, Fla./Arkansas) and Quataye Smyre (Statesville/South Iredell) — but lone quarterback recruit Kanler Coker has chosen UNC, and the Pirates will not attempt to sign any other passers this year.

A slew of linebackers are set to sign with the Pirates, led by commits Dayon Pratt (Washington, D.C./Coolidge) Reece Speight (Wilson/Beddingfield) and Dre Scarborough (Beulaville/East Duplin). Also on board and expected to sign are Gabe Woullard (Valencia, Calif./Pierce College), Drayvon Fairley (Red Springs/Red Springs) and Quandarius Crump (Lexington/Lexington).

The Pirates will also await announcements from nationally-touted Jamal Marcus (Durham/Hillsde), who has told the Pirates he’s headed to Greenville but was mum on the subject leading into today. Keilin Rayner (Leland/North Brunswick) is likely to choose Duke but also remained on the Pirates’ radar to the end.

In the defensive backfield, five newcomers are expected to sign, including Godfrey Thompson and Adonis Armstrong from Hinds Community College in Mississippi, who are already in school at ECU. Joining them will be Colby Brown from Highland (Kan.) Community College, Lucas Thompson (Winter Garden, Fla./West Orange) and DeShaun Amos (Midlothian, Va./Manchester).

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or 252-329-9595.
The Wilmington Star News

Published: Tuesday, January 31, 2012 at 4:48 p.m.

Cody Hoyt, president of UNCW's student vet association is seen on campus Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2012.  By Mike Spencer

From battlefield to classroom

By Pressley Baird
Pressley.Baird@StarNewsOnline.com

Cody Hoyt is a senior at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. But he doesn't have the same mindset about school as most college students. That's because he's also a 27-year-old Marine Corps veteran.

Making the move from military life to a college campus isn't easy, he said.
"You're going from out working in a field with artillery to a science book," he said. "It's a huge change."

But Hoyt said he chose UNCW because the school tries to ease the shift, starting when students apply. The school is one of only two in the UNC system where veterans are accepted as transfer students. The other is Western Carolina University.

UNCW changed its policy for enrolling veterans three years ago after the post-9/11 GI Bill was passed, allowing them to enter as transfer students. It makes for a much smoother process than at other UNC-system schools, where veterans must get approval for each credit with the correct academic department.
The transfer classification is attracting more veterans to UNCW. They now make up 10 percent of the transfer students who apply to the school.

Veterans submit their military transcript – each branch has its own – along with a traditional application. Courses on a military transcript are broken down into four categories: vocational; lower level, which is equal to a community college class; upper level, which is the same as a class at a four-year university; and credit that parallels a graduate-level class.

Veterans earn credits either in a specific department or as a general elective, said Ann Marie Beall, military liaison for the school's admissions office.

Basic training knocks out PE and health requirements. If a veteran has moved up in rank, they've earned leadership and management credits. If they've worked as a military recruiter, they can get marketing credits. Even intelligence experience gives veterans a general elective credit.

Hoyt got an associate's degree in general studies during his time in the Marine Corps. Almost every class he had transferred over.

"I had a class I took in Japan – it was a Japanese culture class – and that didn't count as my foreign language," he said. "I probably could have talked to the dean and been like, ‘Hey, I learned a lot of the language.'"

UNCW has always accepted military credit, Beall said. But it changed its process in 2008 after the post-9/11 GI Bill was passed and applications began pouring in.

Students applying for undergraduate studies at UNCW are either first-year or transfer students. But many veterans weren't competitive in high school, or they had no college credit, Beall said. They weren't fitting neatly into either category. But they all had a military transcript.

"In looking at those, I realized I was awarding anywhere from three hours to 43 hours of transfer credit to students depending on how many years they'd been in the military, the rank they achieved, their job duties," Beall said. "So why don't we just consider them as transfer students and let the military be their transfer institution?"

That streamlined the process and let several more veterans into UNCW, Beall said. About 66 percent of the veterans who apply get in.

"I went back and picked up a good six to 10 students out of the freshmen pool who had already been denied," she said.
Beall said one of the biggest strengths of UNCW's programs for veterans is the military task force. The force is comprised of more than 30 members who are the go-to contacts for veterans in departments across campus.

"They have years of experience working with military students," Beall said. The veterans can "talk to someone who understands the language."

Hoyt said that support system is part of what made him choose UNCW over other schools.

"I just felt like any time I called, they directed me right to the right person," he said. "I didn't have to call back, and get put on hold, and drop a call and call back again. It put my mind at ease, knowing somebody cared on the other end of the phone."

Pressley Baird: 343-2328  On Twitter: @PressleyBaird
The Department of Justice has charged a former Penn State University professor, who now lives in Raleigh, with fraud, false statements and money laundering relating to $3 million in federal research grants.

The Justice Department said in a release Tuesday that Craig Grimes, 55, of Raleigh, allegedly defrauded the National Institutes of Health between 2006 and 2011, while he was a professor of Material Science and Engineering at Penn State.

Grimes allegedly used a company he owned in State College to request a $1.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, but never delivered on a promise to send $510,000 of that to Penn State's Hershey Medical Center. The Justice Department said that the clinical studies and trials called for in the grant were never done.

Grimes also allegedly made false statements on a $1.9 million Department of Energy grant application, claiming there was no other funding when he had received a grant from the National Science Foundation.

If convicted, Grimes faces up to 35 years in prison and a fine of $750,000.

A message left at a number listed for Grimes was not immediately returned. A spokeswoman for Penn State did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.
ELIZABETH CITY A man shot by police after taking an assault weapon on the campus of Elizabeth City State University has been sentenced to 60 days in jail.

Rashaad Gardner, 25, pleaded guilty Monday to misdemeanor charges of bringing a gun on education property and going armed to the terror of the people. District Attorney Frank Parrish says he'll serve 26 days of his sentence because he received 34 days of credit for time served.

Gardner also was ordered not to go to the ECSU campus. Gardner graduated from ECSU in 2010.

Authorities have said that officers shot Gardner in the leg while trying to arrest him.
Claremont McKenna in California is the latest but not the only college to have admitted submitting false information in an effort to win a high rating.

**Gaming the College Rankings**

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA and DANIEL E. SLOTNIK

Any love-hate relationship must have its share of pain, so the academic world, in its obsession with college rankings, is suitably dismayed by news that an elite college, Claremont McKenna, fudged its numbers in an apparent bid to climb the charts.

Dismayed, but not quite surprised. In fact, several colleges in recent years have been caught gaming the system — in particular, the avidly watched U.S. News & World Report rankings — by twisting the meanings of rules, cherry-picking data or just lying.

In one recent example, Iona College in New Rochelle, north of New York City, acknowledged last fall that its employees had lied for years not only about test scores, but also about graduation rates, freshman retention, student-faculty ratio, acceptance rates and alumni giving.

Other institutions have found ways to manipulate the data without outright dishonesty.

In 2008, Baylor University offered financial rewards to admitted students to retake the SAT in hopes of increasing its average score. Admissions directors say that some colleges delay admission of low-scoring students until January, excluding them from averages for the class admitted in
September, while other colleges seek more applications to report a lower percentage of students accepted.

Claremont McKenna, according to Robert Morse, the director of data research at U.S. News, is “the highest-ranking school to have to go through this publicly and have to admit to misreporting.”

This year, U.S. News rated it as the nation’s ninth-best liberal arts college.

There is no reason to think the U.S. News rankings are rife with misinformation, and the publication makes efforts to police the data, adjust its metrics and close loopholes.

But repeated revelations of manipulation show the importance of the rankings in the minds of prospective students, their guidance counselors, parents, the alumni considering donations, the professors weighing job offers — and, of course, the colleges themselves.

“The reliance on this is out of hand.” said Jon Boeckenstedt, the associate vice president who oversees admissions at DePaul University in Chicago. “It’s a nebulous thing, comparing the value of a college education at one institution to another, so parents and students and counselors focus on things that give them the illusion of precision.”

The mixed feelings in the academic world were summed up in a report last year by the National Association for College Admission Counseling: Most college admissions officers and high school counselors have a low opinion of the U.S. News rankings, yet they use the published material, whether to gather information about other schools or to market their own.

Claremont McKenna, part of the Claremont Colleges cluster outside Los Angeles, acknowledged Monday that a senior officer had resigned after admitting that he had inflated the average SAT scores given to U.S. News since 2005.

People briefed on the matter identified the officer as Richard C. Vos, vice president and dean of admissions, who once said, “We don’t play yield games,” referring to the practice of encouraging unqualified applicants who can be rejected to make a college seem more competitive.

Mr. Vos, whose name was removed from the school’s online roster of administrators over the weekend, declined to comment Monday night and he did not return calls Tuesday.

SAT score averages are also reported to credit rating firms and the Department of Education, which is looking into Claremont McKenna’s
actions, said Justin Hamilton, the agency’s press secretary. He said the department could impose fines and other penalties for supplying misinformation, but rarely did, particularly if the college brought the problem to light on its own.

Mr. Morse, of U.S. News, said that he and a team of four to six people verified much of the information that colleges supplied, comparing it with databases from other sources, and that they performed a service in making the data public. But he conceded that his publication was probably at least part of the reason schools have lied.

Iona’s case was extreme; U.S. News ranked its undergraduate college 30th among “regional universities” in the Northeast, but estimated that with correct data it would have dropped to 50th.

Also last year, the law schools of Villanova University and the University of Illinois acknowledged that they had misreported some statistics; Villanova conceded that its deception was intentional, while Illinois did not say. And at the United States Naval Academy, famous for its honor code, a professor recently accused administrators of inflating the number of applicants, which the academy has denied. In 2009, a number of institutions were found to be inflating their percentages of full-time professors — another criterion used in ranking systems. The impact and extent of Claremont McKenna’s cheating remains unclear. In a statement to the college staff and students, the president, Pamela B. Gann, wrote, “Although the degree of inaccuracies varied over time, we understand that the reported critical reading and/or math SAT scores were generally inflated by an average of 10-20 points each.”

Mr. Morse said that without more precise information, he could not measure how such a change might have altered the college’s ranking, but it might have made the difference in cracking the top 10 of liberal arts colleges, a bragging right that Claremont McKenna reached this year for only the third time.

In the U.S. News rating system, explained in detail on its Web site, SAT scores account for 7.5 percent of the ranking. More heavily weighted criteria include academic reputation, student retention, faculty resources and the school’s finances.

Claremont McKenna’s reputation has risen over the years; as recently as 1990, it was not in the U.S. News top 20. But it is often conscious of the comparison with its neighbor, Pomona College, which U.S. News rated fourth among liberal arts colleges.
Bruce J. Poch, dean of admissions at Pomona until 2010, said of the rankings, “They’re not benign instruments,” but conceded that they are easy for a college to fall back on as evidence of its status. “The pressure is real,” he said. “God forbid you go down in those numbers.”

Mr. Vos had been dean of admissions at Claremont McKenna since 1987. “He was always one of the people that I considered one of the good guys in the profession,” said Ralph Figueroa, director of college guidance at Albuquerque Academy, a private day school in New Mexico.

In her Monday statement, Ms. Gann, the college president, said Claremont McKenna discovered the discrepancy in reported SAT scores and conducted an internal review, during which one senior administrator stepped forward to take sole responsibility.

On the campus Tuesday, students said they were unhappy with the news, but not greatly concerned, and proud of the college for making it public.

“I don’t worry about the rankings or how this will affect them, because they tend to be pretty arbitrary,” said Blake Bennett, a senior who has volunteered in the admissions office. “They change from year to year in order to keep selling books. Working in admissions, we pay attention to them, although we wish we didn’t have to. It’s just sort of a sad state of American colleges and higher education.”

Ian Lovett contributed reporting.
FAMU President stops students from joining clubs

By GARY FINEOUT, Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- Florida A&M University's president said Tuesday that he's cancelling a summer band camp and temporarily blocking students from joining clubs while the university reviews how the groups operate.

President James Ammons announced the move during a campus safety forum held in response to the death of drum major Robert Champion and the arrests of several FAMU students on charges of hazing other students.

The ban prevents clubs and organizations from recruiting, enrolling and initiating any new members during the spring and summer semesters. Any organization that violates the ban will be suspended from campus.

Ammons said the ban will be in place while the university convenes a panel to come up with recommendations on the operation of student organizations.

"Our top priority is the health, safety and wellbeing of students," Ammons said in a statement.

Breyon Love, the FAMU student body president, said he supported the decision.

"This issue of hazing has had a far-reaching impact on the university and I believe that we need to pause for a moment to make sure that all of our students are ready to seriously move in a direction which will result in a complete culture change," Love said in a statement provided by the university.

No arrests have been made yet in Champion's death, which has been ruled a homicide and linked to hazing by the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

Earlier this week Ammons told the FAMU Board of Trustees that police were investigating a hazing case related to a spring 2011 initiation ceremony involving the fraternity Kappa Kappa Psi.

The Tallahassee Police Department arrested four members of the famed Marching 100 band on Jan. 20 and charged them with punching and paddling pledges of a marching band club known as the Clones during a hazing initiation that took place last September.
Back in December police also arrested three people and accused them of taking part in a hazing ceremony that left a band member with a broken leg.

A document prepared for the FAMU Board of Trustees by FAMU police shows that there have been 21 reports of hazing between 2007 and 2011, although some cases were considered "unfounded." Other incidents cited in the one-page memo show that in some cases hazing victims refused to cooperate with police.

Ammons suspended the Marching 100 band indefinitely last November following Champion's death.

He said in his statement on Tuesday that the decision to cancel the band camp came as a result of that investigation and a decision to create an anti-hazing committee that will review how the university should oversee the band.

"In no way have we terminated our curriculum in music," said Ammons. "We have a group of talented music faculty who prepare students for great careers in music and other pursuits. We will continue this very important academic program for the benefit of any current students or future students that might choose to pursue this degree. We have also continued our scholarship support of students who meet the appropriate criteria and will continue to do so, pending the availability of funds."