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Officials: Unlikely anyone will lose jobs at ECU

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

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While the University of North Carolina system may be facing the elimination of more than 1,600 jobs, officials say that it is unlikely that anyone will lose their jobs at East Carolina University.

A likely 7 percent cut in the system budget could lead to the loss of 1,679 jobs, including 660 faculty positions, according to UNC system leaders.

But ECU Spokesman John Durham said that ECU has been looking at ways to cut its budget that will not include any terminations.

ECU officials have formed a campus budget task force to look at every possible way to cut corners on campus and save jobs. The university has been leaving many empty positions vacant in anticipation of budget cuts from the state, Durham said.

"Looking ahead, we are making every effort to avoid cuts or layoffs," Durham said. "It all depends on how severe the cutbacks are in terms of state appropriations, but we have seen this coming."

The UNC system this week sent to the state budget director three budget cut scenarios, based on reductions of 3 percent, 5 percent and 7 percent.

Every state agency is preparing reports with those cuts in mind at the request of Gov. Beverly Perdue as she prepares her budget.

Many leaders in Raleigh are expecting to see a 7 percent cut for most or all agencies.

The cut would likely result in the loss of teaching jobs at UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State among others.

Most predictions for the future are not bright.

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard is working with the committee to look across the university to gather ideas for cutting costs.

"This financial situation is impossible to predict with certainty, but most estimates are that it will be with us for at least another two years, that it will continue to be severe, and that it will have negative consequences throughout higher education," Ballard wrote in a letter on the financial crisis posted on the ECU Web site.

Kevin Seitz, vice chancellor for administration and finance at ECU, said last month that the university is committed to cutting costs that will have the least impact on the university's various missions and goals, which is a challenge as the university is slated to grow by more than 10,000 students over the next decade.

"We have to align the growth in enrollment along with the reductions that we know are going to come," he said. "It requires us to find every place that we can save money that will not affect enrollment. The chancellor has really emphasized that we preserve the resources in those directions rather than going across the board and thinning the soup."

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New test gives patients better prognosis for breast cancer

Submitted by savery on 02/09/2009 - 16:04
Tags: Science and Medicine | breast cancer | genetic test | Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center | UNC-Chapel Hill

Patients with breast cancer have for years been aided by tests that give a clearer molecular picture of their tumor and its susceptibility to treatments.

Now doctors at UNC-Chapel Hill's Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, along with three other institutions, have honed that test even further, developing a tool that identifies subsets of cancer types.

Using their genomic test, the UNC-CH team pinpointed two subtypes of cancer that respond well to therapies, and three that did not. They're reporting their findings this afternoon in the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

Charles Perou, associate professor of genetics and pathology at the UNC-CH School of Medicine and one of the study's authors, said in an interview Monday:

"I think it's reaffirmed that breast cancer is not one disease, but many diseases. And now we have a good picture of each of these different diseases. We can, with a better picture in hand, begin to develop more effective therapies."

Perou holds patents on the test and is an investor in the company developing the technology.

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Federal kidnap charge added

ANNE BLYTHE, Staff Writer

Comment on this story

A federal grand jury revised the indictments against Demario Atwater to include a federal kidnapping charge several weeks after the U.S. attorney general gave prosecutors permission to seek the death penalty in his case.

Atwater, 22, is accused of killing Eve Carson, the UNC-Chapel Hill student body president found shot to death 11 months ago.

The murder case against Atwater is in state court, but federal prosecutors have accused him of carjacking, weapons and now kidnapping charges that could bring the death penalty if the actions were done in the commission of a homicide.

In mid-January, several days before the transfer of presidential power, Michael B. Mukasey, the outgoing U.S. attorney general, issued his decision to seek the death penalty in the federal charges against Atwater.

In late January, a federal grand jury indicted Atwater on the federal kidnapping charge, claiming he used automated teller machines, telephones and interstate and public roads in the commission of the offense.

The grand jury's revised indictment, entered in federal court Jan. 30, also lists some aggravating factors that prosecutors plan to use in their push for the death penalty. The homicide was committed in such an "especially heinous, cruel and depraved manner" that it "involved torture and serious physical abuse to the victim," the indictment says.

The first federal charges came in October, more than six months after Orange County prosecutors charged Atwater with murder. Atwater also faces the death penalty in Orange County, where no jury has sent anybody to death row since 1973.

Laurence Alvin Lovette, 18, is also charged with murder and kidnapping in the Carson killing. Because he was 17 at the time of the incident, state prosecutors cannot seek the death penalty against Lovette.

Investigators say Atwater and Lovette kidnapped Carson the morning of March 5 and forced
her to withdraw $1,400 from automated teller machines before they shot her with a .25-caliber handgun and a sawed-off shotgun.

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Bill draws a bead on tuition break for athletes

Comment on this story

The tuition break for out-of-state athletes in the UNC system will get some scrutiny in this tough budget year.

Rep. Pricey Harrison, a Greensboro Democrat and Rep. George Cleveland, a Jacksonville Republican, joined last week to file a bill that would limit a special program that allows out-of-state full scholarship recipients to pay much lower in-state tuition rates. The state subsidy now applies to both scholarship athletes and academic scholars, but the bill would limit it to academic scholars only.

The program began as a provision in the state Senate's budget. Harrison has gotten notice from good government groups for her unsuccessful attempts to end it.

She said she feels better this year about eliminating the estimated $10 million cost.

"At a time when we've got a $2 billion budget gap, it just doesn't make sense that we're subsidizing out-of-state athletes," she said.

She also argued that the program subsidizes the Wolfpack Club, the Rams Club and the Pirate Club, the sports booster groups for state universities.

The bill has more than 40 sponsors and co-sponsors.

Perdue takes a break

Gov. Beverly Perdue is on vacation this week at an undisclosed location.

Chrissy Pearson, Perdue's spokeswoman, said she had long planned a vacation this week with her husband, Bob Eaves.

Pearson said she did not know where Perdue was vacationing, but the unconfirmed gossip at the Emerging Issues Forum was that she was out of the country.

Perdue sent a recorded video message to the 1,000 leaders at the forum's luncheon at the Raleigh Convention Center.

Pearson described Perdue's getaway as a "working vacation," saying she took budget books and other work along with her. The vacation comes less than a month after Perdue took office.

Blogs and libel law

A bill filed last week would specify that blogs can be libelous.

Sen. Steve Goss said he wrote the bill over concern that "fast-moving Internet technology" may be outstripping existing libel laws. He wants the law to specifically say that blogs and other online media can be considered libelous.
"I believe these blogs are getting out of control," he said.

Legal experts say blogs are already covered under common law, though they may not have as many protections in North Carolina statutes as newspapers and magazines.

Mike Tadych, a First Amendment lawyer with the N.C. Press Association, said there have been a number of cases of people suing for libel over things published online. But he was not aware of any cases where bloggers used the state's libel laws to protect themselves.

"We would make that argument, but I don't know that it's been tested in North Carolina," he said.

One statute forces the potential plaintiff to first notify the publication. If the publication issues a "full and fair correction" within 10 days, any fine is limited to one penny. A second statute puts a one-year statute of limitations on libel and slander suits.

The bill calls for making libel conveyed through the Internet, a blog, a bulletin board, news group or e-mail a Class 2 misdemeanor criminal offense.

**Smoking ban**

Rep. Hugh Holliman is feeling confident about his smoking ban.

The Democratic majority leader predicted during an interview on Raleigh talk radio station 680 WPITF-AM that a proposed ban on smoking in bars and restaurants would pass the state House.

"I would think it'll be a very spirited debate, but I think it'll pass probably 70 votes to 50," he said.

A similar proposal lost 61-55 in 2007, though a number of legislators have retired or been defeated since then.

**Fisher gets award**

State Rep. Susan Fisher has received an award from Lillian's List.

The group, which promotes Democratic women, gave the Asheville Democrat its first "Courage Award" last month.

Fisher was recognized for her unsuccessful effort to make comprehensive sex education available in North Carolina schools during the 2008 session.

The award was presented at a recent luncheon in Raleigh.

This session, Fisher is pushing a new bill that would require schools to offer two tracks -- comprehensive and abstinence-only -- and allow parents to choose.

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