THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU student seeks ‘Idol’ fame

By Jane Welborn Hudson
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University sophomore Emily Minor may get her big break today on “American Idol,” which airs at 8 p.m. on Fox television.

Minor, a native of Wilmington, was among the hundreds of thousands of aspiring singers who auditioned over the summer for a chance to become the country’s next great singing sensation.

She impressed two of the three judges — guess which one didn’t like her? — and was one of the 165 singers ages 16-27 invited to come to Hollywood, Calif., to compete for the 24 finalist spots. The footage from the competition in Hollywood airs today and Wednesday.

“I decided to audition this year because I wanted to be old enough to where, if I made it to Hollywood and my parents couldn’t go, I would be mature enough to handle it on my own,” said Minor.

“I had thought about it years before, but I just didn’t think I was old enough to handle it all.

“So after much encouragement, I went for it this year — and I’m going to Hollywood!”

Her mother accompanied her to the auditions in Charleston, S.C., where Minor was among the 8,000 who waited in line for a chance to sing in front of the “Idol” judges: peppery pop singer Paula Abdul, encouraging rocker Randy Jackson and sometimes surly and always brutally honest Brit Simon Cowell.

“I was incredibly nervous because of the thousands of people, however when it came to actually going into the room and singing, I let go of my nerves,” Minor said. “I sang ‘Somehow...”

See IDOL, A9

IDOL
Continued from A1

Over the Rainbow:

“Simon, Paula and Randy were very nice and extremely positive,” she said. “I received two ‘OKs’ and one ‘no,’ from Simon, obviously. Simon didn’t not like me, he just didn’t like my song choice. He said he was disappointed and thought I’d be more ‘popish.’”

But two yes votes were all Minor needed to receive a golden ticket to Hollywood.

Unfortunately, Minor’s audition was not one of the clips from Charleston that appeared on an earlier show. Minor and her Delta Zeta sisters gathered at the sorority house for a viewing party when that program aired.

“I can’t answer anything about Hollywood, as far as when I’ll be there, but my professors have been very supportive,” said Minor, who sings with the Johnny Dollar Band at local venues.

North Carolinians have done well in previous “American Idol” competitions. Fantasia Barrino of High Point was crowned “American Idol” in season three. Other “Idol” participants from the Tar Heel State who gained exposure on the televised singing competition and now have recording contracts are Grammy-nominated rocker Chris Daughtry of McLeansville, country cutie Kellie Pickler of Albemarle, Broadway-bound Clay Aiken of Raleigh and country singer Bucky Covington of Rockingham.

Contact Jane Hudson at jhudson@coxnc.com.
Country to pay honor to 'Honest Abe'

By T. Scott Batchelor
The Daily Reflector

A two-year celebration centered on the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth kicks off today with what would be Lincoln's 199th birthday.

"This year, it's in Kentucky, which of course is the state of his birth," said David E. Long, a Lincoln scholar and associate professor of history at East Carolina University.

Long and Gerald J. Prokopowicz are department colleagues and fellow Lincoln scholars, and both have written books about the president. They serve on the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Advisory Committee and will be participating in bicentennial events.

"The official kickoff is (today) at 10:30 a.m. at the place near where the cabin was where he was born," said Long, who participated in the planning of the observance.

President George W. Bush is slated to speak at the formal kickoff, Long said.

The national bicentennial committee, along with groups at the state and local level, has planned events, Long said. Lincoln's native Kentucky is one of three states serving as the focus for celebrations.

The others are Illinois, where the adult Lincoln launched his political career, and Indiana, where he spent 14 years as a child and young man.

"Most of the things we feel affected him happened during the Indiana days," Long said.

Events scheduled include a reenactment of the debates between Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas when the two were vying to be U.S. senator from Illinois, and a recreation of the train route that took Lincoln's body from Washington, D.C., back to Springfield, Ill., after his assassination by John Wilkes Booth.

More than a million people lined the train tracks as the slain president's body went by, Long said.

Long said Americans should revere Lincoln because of the signal act of signing the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared as free all slaves held in rebellious states.

The 16th president is "the only American... whose life has literally changed or determined a direction for the country," Long said.

Not as one soldier in an army, or one signer of a civic document such as the Declaration of Independence, he said, "but literally as the person who made the decision and who set down his signature saying we are now working to fight for the freedom of the slaves."

Lincoln took that step knowing the potentially negative political and military ramifications, Long said.

But, Long pointed out, he stood firm.

"Every time that somebody tried to talk him into reneging, into taking it back, he refused to be influenced," Long said.

"He refused to stand down on this revolutionary change that he has proclaimed."

It's unfortunate that the observances called Presidents Day lumps together figures such as George Washington and Lincoln with lesser presidents such as Warren G. Harding and James Buchanan, Prokopowicz said.

Washington and Lincoln "really did transform what our country is all about," he said.

"Lincoln helped to save the union, helped to end slavery" and set a high standard for personal values such as honesty, Prokopowicz said.

T. Scott Batchelor can be contacted at sbatchelor@coxnc.com and 329-9567.

See LINCOLN, A9
East Carolina will take a closer look at its hiring process in light of a 10-vehicle collision involving a university bus.

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

The East Carolina University bus driver who lost consciousness at the wheel of his bus, leading to a 10-vehicle collision, will not be allowed to return to his job, a transit official said Monday.

Because he was a state employee, the driver, Nathan James Rennels, was originally exempted from a medical exam the N.C. Department of Motor Vehicles requires for people seeking commercial drivers licenses, said Wood Davidson, interim director of the ECU Student Transit Authority.

"We're taking a real close look at the exemptions process and whether we should require a valid medical card from anyone who wants to drive for ECU," Davidson said.

Rennels submitted a form the DMV accepts from state employees in place of a certification card that requires an actual physical exam, Davidson said.

"There is a header on the exemption form that requires an applicant to declare certain (conditions). You can work for state agencies if you exempt yourself (from an actual exam) and meet the criteria," Davidson said.

Davidson said he heard reports from Rennels' classmates that the driver had a classroom seizure in 2007. Davidson said he understood the loss of consciousness in class was "induced by caffeine."

See ECU, A9
Continued from A1

"If it had been presented as a seizure issue, it would have prevented him from operating a motor vehicle," Davidson said.

While the university is now considering a new policy that would more likely prevent situations like Rennels', the exemption policy remains in place.

There are other administrative mechanisms that allow the university to prevent Rennels from returning, but only because he has been involved in such havoc on the road, Davidson said.

"At this point, it is our policy that anyone involved in an accident is suspended pending the outcome of an investigation," he said. "That's where we are right now. It's also our policy that when someone causes this type of damage, it would terminate their employment."

At this point, Davidson said, Rennels would have to prove his medical fitness if he wanted his job back.

No serious injuries were caused by the accident, which occurred when Rennels lost consciousness on 10th Street at Charles Boulevard and the bus slammed through several vehicles in the opposing lane. The bus came to a halt on the sidewalk at the corner of 10th and Evans Street, a block away.

Two students were on board the bus when Rennels lost consciousness. One of them, Cameron Kirby, a 20-year-old family and community services major, attempted to steer the bus after Rennels appeared to have a seizure, she said. She sustained minor cuts to her hands and was treated and released the same day from Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

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DUKE'S BONFIRE TRADITION
ON THE BLOCK

BY ERIC FERRERI
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — If Duke beats UNC in basketball March 8, its students may not be able to burn a bunch of stuff in celebration.

The city fire marshal is still deciding whether to issue Duke a permit for a bonfire that night. Long a campus ritual, the bonfire was not in the plans last week when Duke won in Chapel Hill. But some students fired up an illegal blaze on the main quad anyway. Nobody was hurt, but the unsanctioned bonfire was a big no-no that left future fires in doubt.

"It's not looking good for us," said Sunny Kantha, a Duke junior from Ohio and vice president of athletics and campus services within Duke Student Government. "If we do win, people love having the bonfire. It's one of the most memorable Duke moments."

Before deciding, fire officials want to meet with student leaders, said Angelica Stroud, a department spokeswoman. The unsanctioned fire was no joke, she said.

"With the dry wind conditions, that very easily could have gotten out of control," she said.

Permitted bonfires are announced in the student newspaper, said Larry Moneta, Duke's vice president for student affairs. But there is no formal way to let students know when there is no permit.

Duke didn't apply for a permit for last week's men's game. It had one for the Duke-UNC women's hoops showdown last week, but the Tar Heels spoiled the fun, thrashing Duke 93-76.

Duke's men's team is ranked in the top 5 this season, which makes this permit mess all the more sobering.

"Last year we were a far shot from beating UNC," Kantha said. "This year, when we can, we can't even get a bonfire."
Michael J. Schoenfeld of Vanderbilt succeeds John Burness, who retires June 30.

BY JANE STANCIL STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — Duke University has named a new vice president and chief spokesman — Michael J. Schoenfeld, who is Vanderbilt University's vice chancellor for public affairs.

Schoenfeld will be vice president for public affairs and government relations, Duke announced Monday. He succeeds John Burness, who will retire June 30 after 17 years in the job.

A 1984 Duke graduate, Schoenfeld will be the university's chief communications strategist and will serve on Duke President Richard Brodhead's senior leadership team.

Schoenfeld, 45, is the top public, community and government relations officer for Vanderbilt. He also teaches a graduate course on crisis management in higher education. In a telephone interview, Schoenfeld said his alma mater has changed a good bit in the 28 years since he arrived in Durham. "One of the first things I'm going to do is listen and learn," he said, "because Duke is an enormously complex place."

Under his leadership at Vanderbilt, the school's media operations expanded and received a number of honors, including five regional Emmy awards in January for television productions. Vanderbilt's online news network provides extensive audio and video programming, podcasts and interactive features, and has formed partnerships with organizations such as YouTube to Nashville Public Television.

In Nashville, he served on various nonprofit boards and was twice named volunteer of the year by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Before working at Vanderbilt, Schoenfeld was senior vice president at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington. Before that, he was the director of program development at Worldnet, the U.S. Information Agency's global satellite television network. His career also included a stint as chief of staff for the director of the Voice of America, where he also held a variety of executive and news reporting positions.

Schoenfeld has a master's degree in public policy from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He and his wife, Elizabeth, the director of the Vanderbilt Programs for Talented Youth, met while they were undergraduates at Duke. They have one daughter.

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Tree-cutting plan opposed at UNCW

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WILMINGTON — More student housing is needed at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. But some students, faculty and university officials are vehemently opposed to plans that would cut down roughly 13 acres of longleaf pines that are part of the largest contiguous longleaf pine stand in New Hanover County.

Biology professor Steve Ensmie wants the project delayed to study alternative sites that would have less of an environmental impact.

Chancellor Rosemary DePaolo and other administrators said a thorough search has already been done and further delay would increase costs being passed on to students. She also said the plan leaves 140 acres of on-campus forest alone. The university hopes to have the housing in time for the fall 2009 semester.
REDUCING CARBON IS EMERGING ISSUE

State faces challenges in creating alternative energy, speakers say

BY JOHN MURAWSKI
STAFF WRITER

North Carolina is lurching toward a future of solar energy, fuel cells and electricity generated from agricultural waste.

On Monday, about 1,200 business leaders, public officials and academics gathered in Raleigh for the annual Emerging Issues Forum to look at the challenges and opportunities that face the state in this uncertain environment of global warming, depleted natural resources and rising energy costs.

The confab, which continues today, took place against the background of protests against Duke Energy’s planned coal-burning power plant in the Blue Ridge foothills. Protesters outside the two-day gathering greeted arriving attendees by distributing fliers that were critical of Duke Energy. Inside, beefy security guards patrolled to prevent disruptions.

Electric utilities and big oil companies were the whipping boys of the conference, blamed by some speakers for holding back progress on much-needed development of alternative energy. New York Times columnist and author Thomas Friedman predicted that the utilities will be forced to “change or die.”

During his talk, Bill Johnson, CEO of Raleigh-based Progress Energy, joked about the enthusiastic reception from protesters and conference speakers. But Johnson didn’t back off from plans to build power plants to meet the state’s energy demand.

“Splash cold water on the fervent enthusiasm in the conference hall,” Johnson said. “No one you hear here today and tomorrow — no matter how much you agree with them — has all the answers.”

See what Amory Lovins and CEOs of Duke, GE said. PAGE 6D

Carbon called real threat
Greenhouse gas restrictions are next, expert warns

BY WADE RAWLINS
STAFF WRITER

The chairman of the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said Monday that evidence of global warming is unequivocal, the climate is changing, and the United States needs to show leadership on an issue of global urgency.

In speeches to the Emerging Issues Forum at N.C. State University and a state legislative panel studying climate change, Rajendra Pachauri said the world is moving to an economy with restrictions on carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas.

“The global community must understand the urgency for action,” said Pachauri, who earned graduate degrees from NCSU in the 1970s before returning to India to lead an environmental research and policy agency. He was elected to lead the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2002. “Climate change is happening today. It’s not something that is science fiction in the future.”

He said some increases in temperature and sea levels are unavoidable based on the volume of greenhouse gases currently in the

SEE CARBON, PAGE 6D
ENERGY INSIDERS HAVE THEIR SAY

Jim Rogers,
CEO of Charlotte-based Duke Energy

Rogers found himself in an awkward position: defending the company's new Cliffside coal-fired power plant while extolling conservation as a "fifth fuel."

"You're probably thinking: How could a guy that's so committed to living in a low-carbon world be building a coal plant?" Rogers told a nearly-packed auditorium at N.C. State University's McKimmon Center. "Cliffside is my problem and my issue and my opportunity."

Rogers said emerging technologies are not yet capable of meeting the state's growing energy demand. The state will need major power plants as a bridge to a future in which we can manage carbon dioxide emissions. But he said the Cliffside plant would likely be the last coal plant the company would build in North Carolina.

"That plant is just a step, a transition," Rogers said. "We need it now to make that transformation to a low-carbon world."

Amory Lovins, energy efficiency advocate with the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado

Lovins said lack of imagination and ingrained interests are the main impediments keeping us from shifting to high-efficiency technologies.

He said a home's energy use could be cut by 90 percent if it were designed in accordance with the highest energy-efficiency standards.

"A misconception is that fixing climate change is costly, not profitable," he said. "As soon as people understand that that's not true, all resistance will melt away faster than any glacier."

Thomas Friedman, columnist for The New York Times

Friedman said the planet requires innovation, which must be promoted by public policy that penalizes fossil fuels and encourages alternatives.

He called for taxing energy industries for greenhouse gas emissions, saying it would spur innovation in developing alternative energy.

Friedman rebuked radio talk show how Rush Limbaugh and other skeptics of global warming.

"If climate change is a hoax, it's the greatest hoax ever perpetrated, because everything we do to respond will make us more efficient, more productive, more competitive, more entrepreneurial, more respected," he said. "This is a tremendous opportunity for America."

He warned that the "green" economy is not a win-win proposition, but it will be painful for those who don't adapt.

"Have you ever been to a revolution where no one got hurt? That's not a revolution, friends. That's a party," he said.
Editorials

More Doctors

As North Carolina's population grows at one of the nation's fastest clips, it only makes sense that the state will need more doctors. Expansion plans for the medical schools at UNC Chapel Hill and East Carolina University, therefore, appear to be justified.

UNC Chapel Hill would increase the size of its first-year class from 160 students currently to 230, ECU from 73 to 120. Given the cost of training even one medical student, these expansions come with a big price tag.

According to The Associated Press, the UNC Chapel Hill expansion will cost $239 million upfront and $40 million more each year. The ECU costs have not yet been calculated.

North Carolina now enjoys a doctor-to-patient ratio that is about at the national norm. But that appearance can be misleading.

In counties such as Forsyth, which is prosperous and which enjoys the doctor magnet of the Wake Forest University School of Medicine, medical care is readily available. But a good many rural and economically distressed counties do not enjoy that benefit. The state's distribution of doctors is spotty.

So, part of the plan by the two medical schools is to open satellite campuses for third- and fourth-year medical students. UNC Chapel Hill would put one in Charlotte at the Carolinas Medical Center and another in Asheville at a not-yet-announced hospital. ECU would open one, maybe two, satellite campuses in the East.

Satellite campuses appear to be a good idea for several reasons. First, they help bring the benefits of teaching hospitals to new cities in the state and thus closer to some North Carolinians. Teaching hospitals often have the best in technology and the faculty often includes some of the nation's very best doctors.

Charlotte, for all of its wealth and economic influence, is the largest U.S. city without a medical school. Asheville serves as the unofficial capital of the western end of the state.

The presence of a medical school may also help with recruitment of doctors to nearby areas. This would be especially helpful with the western- and easternmost counties, which suffer from doctor shortages. Their presence does not guarantee that doctors will settle there after medical school, however. Doctors tend to set up their practices in the places they grew up or where they did their residencies. So, it would make sense for the medical schools to recruit as many North Carolinians as possible and to establish more residency slots here, too.

Now the question becomes funding. The legislature has been willing to spend on medical care lately, and this is also the kind of expansion that should get private help — especially from the medical communities that will be helped by the satellite campuses.

These two proposed expansions are still a long way from certain, but they enter public discussion with at least the appearance of being worthwhile.
February 10, 2008

GLOBAL CLASSROOMS

U.S. Universities Rush to Set Up Outposts Abroad

By TAMAR LEWIN

When John Sexton, the president of New York University, first met Omar Saif Ghobash, an investor trying to entice him to open a branch campus in the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Sexton was not sure what to make of the proposal — so he asked for a $50 million gift.

"It's like earnest money: if you're a $50 million donor, I'll take you seriously," Mr. Sexton said. "It's a way to test their bona fides." In the end, the money materialized from the government of Abu Dhabi, one of the seven emirates.

Mr. Sexton has long been committed to building N.Y.U.'s international presence, increasing study-abroad sites, opening programs in Singapore, and exploring new partnerships in France. But the plans for a comprehensive liberal-arts branch campus in the Persian Gulf, set to open in 2010, are in a class by themselves, and Mr. Sexton is already talking about the flow of professors and students he envisions between New York and Abu Dhabi.

The American system of higher education, long the envy of the world, is becoming an important export as more universities take their programs overseas.

In a kind of educational gold rush, American universities are competing to set up outposts in countries with limited higher education opportunities. American universities — not to mention Australian and British ones, which also offer instruction in English, the lingua franca of academia — are starting, or expanding, hundreds of programs and partnerships in booming markets like China, India and Singapore.

And many are now considering full-fledged foreign branch campuses, particularly in the oil-rich Middle East. Already, students in the Persian Gulf state of Qatar can attend an American university without the expense, culture shock or post-9/11 visa problems of traveling to America.

At Education City in Doha, Qatar's capital, they can study medicine at Weill Medical College of Cornell University, international affairs at Georgetown, computer science and business at Carnegie Mellon, fine arts at Virginia Commonwealth, engineering at Texas A&M, and soon, journalism at Northwestern.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/10/education/10global.html?th=&emc=th&pagewanted=print
In Dubai, another emirate, Michigan State University and Rochester Institute of Technology will offer classes this fall.

"Where universities are heading now is toward becoming global universities," said Howard Rollins, the former director of international programs at Georgia Tech, which has degree programs in France, Singapore, Italy, South Africa and China, and plans for India. "We'll have more and more universities competing internationally for resources, faculty and the best students."

Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, internationalization has moved high on the agenda at most universities; to prepare students for a globalized world, and to help faculty members stay up-to-date in their disciplines.

Overseas programs can help American universities raise their profile, build international relationships, attract top research talent who, in turn, may attract grants and produce patents, and gain access to a new pool of tuition-paying students, just as the number of college-age Americans is about to decline.

Even public universities, whose primary mission is to educate in-state students, are trying to establish a global brand in an era of limited state financing.

Partly, it is about prestige. American universities have long worried about their ratings in U.S. News and World Report. These days, they are also mindful of the international rankings published in Britain, by the Times Higher Education Supplement, and in China, by Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

The demand from overseas is huge. At the University of Washington, the administrator in charge of overseas programs said she received about a proposal a week. "It's almost like spam," said the official, Susan Jeffords, whose position as vice provost for global affairs was created just two years ago.

Traditionally, top universities built their international presence through study-abroad sites, research partnerships, faculty exchanges and joint degree programs offered with foreign universities. Yale has dozens of research collaborations with Chinese universities. Overseas branches, with the same requirements and degrees as the home campuses, are a newer — and riskier — phenomenon.

"I still think the downside is lower than the upside is high," said Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania. "The risk is that we couldn't deliver the same quality education that we do here, and that it would mean diluting our faculty strength at home."

While universities with overseas branches insist that the education equals what is offered in the United States, much of the faculty is hired locally, on a short-term basis. And certainly overseas branches raise fundamental questions:

Will the programs reflect American values and culture, or the host country's? Will American taxpayers end up footing part of the bill for overseas students? What happens if relations between the United States and the host country deteriorate? And will foreign branches that spread American know-how hurt American competitiveness?

“A lot of these educators are trying to present themselves as benevolent and altruistic, when in reality, their programs are aimed at making money,” said Representative Dana Rohrabacher, a California Republican who has criticized the rush overseas.

David J. Skorton, the president of Cornell, on the other hand, said the global drive benefited the United States. “Higher education is the most important diplomatic asset we have,” he said. “I believe these programs can actually reduce friction between countries and cultures.”

Tempering Expectations

While the Persian Gulf campus of N.Y.U. is on the horizon, George Mason University is up and running — though not at full speed — in Ras al Khaymah, another one of the emirates.

George Mason, a public university in Fairfax, Va., arrived in the gulf in 2005 with a tiny language program intended to help students achieve college-level English skills and meet the university's admission standards for the degree programs that were beginning the next year.

George Mason expected to have 200 undergraduates in 2006, and grow from there. But it enrolled nowhere near that many, then or now. It had just 57 degree students — 3 in biology, 27 in business and 27 in engineering — at the start of this academic year, joined by a few more students and programs this semester.

The project, an hour north of Dubai's skyscrapers and 7,000 miles from Virginia, is still finding its way. “I will freely confess that it's all been more complicated than I expected,” said Peter Stearns, George Mason's provost.

The Ras al Khaymah campus has had a succession of deans. Simple tasks like ordering books take months, in part because of government censors. Local licensing, still not complete, has been far more rigorous than expected. And it has not been easy to find interested students with the SAT scores and English skills that George Mason requires for admissions.

“I'm optimistic, but if you look at it as a business, you can only take losses for so long,” said Dr. Abul R. Hasan, the academic dean, who is from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. “Our goal is to have 2,000 students five years from now. What makes it difficult is that if you're giving the George
Mason degree, you cannot lower your standards.”

Aisha Ravindran, a professor from India with no previous connection to George Mason, teaches students the same communications class required for business majors at the Virginia campus — but in the Arabian desert, it lands differently.

Dr. Ravindran uses the same slides, showing emoticons and lists of nonverbal taboos to spread the American business ideal of diversity and inclusiveness. She emphasizes the need to use language that includes all listeners.

And suddenly, there is an odd mismatch between the American curriculum and the local culture. In a country where homosexual acts are illegal, Dr. Ravindran’s slide show suggests using “partner” or “life partner,” since “husband” or “wife” might exclude some listeners. And in a country where mosques are ubiquitous, the slides counsel students to avoid the word “church” and substitute “place of worship.”

The Ras al Khaymah students include Bangladeshis, Palestinians, Egyptians, Indians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Syrians and more, most from families that can afford the $5,400-a-semester tuition. But George Mason has attracted few citizens of the emirates.

The students say they love the small classes, diversity and camaraderie. Their dorm feels much like an American fraternity house, without the haze of alcohol. Some praise George Mason’s pedagogy, which they say differs substantially from the rote learning of their high schools.

“At my local school in Abu Dhabi, it was all what the teachers told you, what was in the book,” said Mona Bar Houm, a Palestinian student who grew up in Abu Dhabi. “Here you’re asked to come up with your personal ideas.”

But what matters most, they say, is getting an American degree. “It means something if I go home to Bangladesh with an American degree,” said Abdul Mukit, a business student. “It doesn’t need to be Harvard. It’s good enough to be just an American degree.”

Whether that degree really reflects George Mason is open to question. None of the faculty members came from George Mason, although that is likely to change next year. The money is not from George Mason, either: Ras al Khaymah bears all the costs.

Nonetheless, Sharon Siverts, the vice president in charge of the campus, said: “What’s George Mason is everything we do. The admissions are done at George Mason, by George Mason standards. The degree programs are Mason programs.”

Seeking a Partnership
Three years ago, Mr. Ghobash, the Oxford-educated investor from the United Arab Emirates, heard a presentation by a private company, American Higher Education Inc., trying to broker a partnership between Kuwait and an American university.

Mr. Ghobash, wanting to bring liberal arts to his country, hired the company to submit a proposal for a gulf campus run by a well-regarded American university. American Higher Education officials said they introduced him to N.Y.U. Mr. Ghobash spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the company’s fees, talked with many N.Y.U. officials and paid for a delegation to visit the emirates before meeting Mr. Sexton, the university president, in June 2005.

Mr. Sexton said he solicited the $50 million gift to emphasize that he was not interested in a business-model deal and that academic excellence was expensive. Mr. Ghobash declined to be interviewed. But according to American Higher Education officials, $50 million was more than Mr. Ghobash could handle.

So when the agreement for the Abu Dhabi campus New York University was signed last fall, Mr. Ghobash and the company were out of the picture, and the government of Abu Dhabi — the richest of the emirates — was the partner to build and operate the N.Y.U. campus. The Executive Affairs Authority of Abu Dhabi made the gift in November 2007.

“The crown prince shares our vision of Abu Dhabi becoming an idea capital for the whole region,” Mr. Sexton said. “We're going to be a global network university. This is central to what N.Y.U. is going to be in the future. There’s a commitment, on both sides, to have both campuses grow together, so that by 2020, both N.Y.U. and N.Y.U.-Abu Dhabi will be in the world’s top 10 universities.”

Neither side will put a price tag on the plan. But both emphasize their shared ambition to create an entity central to the intellectual life not just of the Persian Gulf but also of South Asia and the Middle East.

“We totally buy into John’s view of idea capitals,” said Khaldoon al-Mubarak, chairman of the Executive Affairs Authority. “This is not a commercially driven relationship. It’s a commitment to generations to come, to research. We see eye to eye. We see this as a Catholic marriage. It’s forever.”

It is also, for New York University, a chance to grow, given Abu Dhabi’s promise to replace whatever the New York campus loses to the gulf.

“If, say, 10 percent of the physics department goes there, they will pay to expand the physics department here by 10 percent,” Mr. Sexton said. “That’s a wonderful opportunity, and we think our faculty will see it that way and step up.”

Mr. Sexton is leading the way: next fall, even before the campus is built, he plans to teach a course in Abu
Dhabi, leaving New York every other Friday evening, getting to Abu Dhabi on Saturday, teaching Sunday and returning to his New York office Monday morning.

"The crown prince loved the idea and said he wanted to take the class," Mr. Sexton said. "But I said, 'No, think how that would be for the other students.'"

Uncharted Territory

While the gulf's wealth has drawn many American universities, others dream of China's enormous population.

In October, the New York Institute of Technology, a private university offering career-oriented training, opened a Nanjing campus in collaboration with Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications, and dozens of American universities offer joint or dual degrees through Chinese universities.

Kean University, a public university in New Jersey, had hoped mightily to be the first with a freestanding undergraduate campus in China. Two years ago, Kean announced its agreement to open a branch of the university in Wenzhou in September 2007. Whether the campus will materialize remains to be seen. Kean is still awaiting final approval from China, which prefers programs run through local universities.

"I'm optimistic," said Dawood Farahi, Kean's president. "I'm Lewis and Clark, looking for the Northwest Passage."

In fact, his negotiations have been much like uncharted exploration. "It's very cumbersome negotiating with the Chinese," he said. "The deal you struck yesterday is not necessarily good today. The Chinese sign an agreement, and then the next day, you get a fax saying they want an amendment." Still, he persists, noting, "One out of every five humans on the planet is Chinese."

Beyond the geopolitical, there are other reasons, pedagogic and economic.

"A lot of our students are internationally illiterate," Dr. Farahi said. "It would be very good for them to have professors who've taught in China, to be able to study in China, and to have more awareness of the rest of the world. And I think I can make a few bucks there." Under the accord, he said, up to 8 percent of the Wenzhou revenues could be used to support New Jersey.

With state support for public universities a constant challenge, new financing sources are vital, especially for lesser-known universities. "It's precisely because we're third tier that I have to find things that jettison us out of our orbit and into something spectacular," Dr. Farahi said.

Possibilities and Alarms
Three years ago, Mr. Ghobash, the Oxford-educated investor from the United Arab Emirates, heard a presentation by a private company, American Higher Education Inc., trying to broker a partnership between Kuwait and an American university.

Mr. Ghobash, wanting to bring liberal arts to his country, hired the company to submit a proposal for a gulf campus run by a well-regarded American university. American Higher Education officials said they introduced him to N.Y.U. Mr. Ghobash spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the company's fees, talked with many N.Y.U. officials and paid for a delegation to visit the emirates before meeting Mr. Sexton, the university president, in June 2005.

Mr. Sexton said he solicited the $50 million gift to emphasize that he was not interested in a business-model deal and that academic excellence was expensive. Mr. Ghobash declined to be interviewed. But according to American Higher Education officials, $50 million was more than Mr. Ghobash could handle.

So when the agreement for the Abu Dhabi campus New York University was signed last fall, Mr. Ghobash and the company were out of the picture, and the government of Abu Dhabi — the richest of the emirates — was the partner to build and operate the N.Y.U. campus. The Executive Affairs Authority of Abu Dhabi made the gift in November 2007.

"The crown prince shares our vision of Abu Dhabi becoming an idea capital for the whole region," Mr. Sexton said. "We're going to be a global network university. This is central to what N.Y.U. is going to be in the future. There's a commitment, on both sides, to have both campuses grow together, so that by 2020, both N.Y.U. and N.Y.U.-Abu Dhabi will be in the world's top 10 universities."

Neither side will put a price tag on the plan. But both emphasize their shared ambition to create an entity central to the intellectual life not just of the Persian Gulf but also of South Asia and the Middle East.

"We totally buy into John's view of idea capitals," said Khaldoon al-Mubarak, chairman of the Executive Affairs Authority. "This is not a commercially driven relationship. It's a commitment to generations to come, to research. We see eye to eye. We see this as a Catholic marriage. It's forever."

It is also, for New York University, a chance to grow, given Abu Dhabi's promise to replace whatever the New York campus loses to the gulf.

"If, say, 10 percent of the physics department goes there, they will pay to expand the physics department here by 10 percent," Mr. Sexton said. "That's a wonderful opportunity, and we think our faculty will see it that way and step up."

Mr. Sexton is leading the way: next fall, even before the campus is built, he plans to teach a course in Abu
Most overseas campuses offer only a narrow slice of American higher education, most often programs in business, science, engineering and computers.

Schools of technology have the most cachet. So although the New York Institute of Technology may not be one of America’s leading universities, it is a leading globalizer, with programs in Bahrain, Jordan, Abu Dhabi, Canada, Brazil and China.

“We’re leveraging what we’ve got, which is the New York in our first name and the Technology in our last name,” said Edward Guiliano, the institute’s president. “I believe that in the 21st century, there will be a new class of truly global universities. There isn’t one yet, but we’re as close as anybody.”

Some huge universities get a toehold in the gulf with tiny programs. At a villa in Abu Dhabi, the University of Washington, a research colossus, offers short courses to citizens of the emirates, mostly women, in a government job-training program.

“We’re very eager to have a presence here,” said Marisa Nickle, who runs the program. “In the gulf, it’s not what’s here now, it’s what’s coming. Everybody’s on the way.”

Some lawmakers are wondering how that rush overseas will affect the United States. In July, the House Science and Technology subcommittee on research and science education held a hearing on university globalization.

Mr. Rohrabacher, the California lawmaker, raises alarms. “I’m someone who believes that Americans should watch out for Americans first,” he said. “It’s one thing for universities here to send professors overseas and do exchange programs, which do make sense, but it’s another thing to have us running educational programs overseas.”

The subcommittee chairman, Representative Brian Baird, a Washington Democrat, disagrees. “If the U.S. universities aren’t doing this, someone else likely will,” he said. “I think it’s better that we be invited in than that we be left out.”

Still, he  said he worried that the foreign branches could undermine an important American asset — the number of world leaders who were students in the United States.

“I do wonder,” he said, “if we establish many of these campuses overseas, do we lose some of that cross-pollination?”