Lebo off to solid debut with still struggling ECU

By AARON BEARD

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GREENVILLE, N.C. - Jeff Lebo promised that success really could happen for long-struggling East Carolina. The coach is giving fans hope in his first season.

The Pirates are flirting with their first winning season in 14 years, as well as their winningest record in Conference USA. Attendance is up, too, creating glimpses of the rowdy atmosphere that follows football but has never consistently taken hold in basketball.

"We're in an area with the kids where we're playing meaningful basketball in the month of February," Lebo said. "That's kind of a new position for them to be in."
East Carolina has had 27 losing seasons in the past 35 years, hasn't finished higher than ninth in the league and has just two NCAA tournament appearances — the last in 1993. But the Pirates (13-11, 5-5) have already matched their best win total of the past nine seasons and need one more win for a school record for C-USA victories heading into Wednesday's trip to Tulsa.

And with the Pirates nearing their first winning season since 1997, the program also has its best attendance figures for league home games in eight years.

The 44-year-old Lebo spent the past six seasons at Auburn before he was fired after going 96-93. He was hampered by an outdated coliseum then was let go with the Tigers preparing to open a $90 million arena. He then returned to the state where he is best known for playing for Dean Smith in the 1980s at North Carolina, one of the storied Atlantic Coast Conference programs that have long dominated the spotlight and overshadowed the Pirates.

"I've always believed that while there's not a lot of tradition here at East Carolina with basketball, this is a basketball state," Lebo said. "These are educated basketball fans. And they appreciate and will attend basketball (games) if you can put a product out there consistently that will play hard and hopefully learn to play what I always say is the right way."

"We're not going to win every game, but it's sharing the basketball, trying to play smart, playing with effort," he said. "(Do) all those things, they'll come out. And that's what's happened here — at least to this point."

It hasn't all been easy. Lebo demanded more effort and intensity from his team during preseason, then tossed several players from practices to make his point.

"It sends the message that he's not playing, that we need to listen to what he's saying because it'll help us in the long run," senior guard Brock Young said. "You look at all these other programs like Duke and these other top schools, they do what it takes to win. They put in the time and effort, and that's what he's trying to instill in us."
The Pirates also fought through a stretch that included consecutive losses on last-second shots at Coastal Carolina and George Washington, followed by a three-point loss at Memphis a few weeks later.

On Saturday, the Pirates got off to a miserable start and fell behind by 27 points midway through the second half against Marshall. But they nearly pulled off an amazing comeback, getting within five points with 5 minutes left to send the home crowd into an ear-ringing roar before fading late in a 78-65 loss.

Still, the energy in Minges Coliseum was reminiscent of when rowdy crowds greeted big names like Rick Pitino and Louisville — or when ECU upset Dwyane Wade and Final Four-bound Marquette — before those schools left Conference USA for the Big East after the 2004-05 season. And with 6,741 fans, the program set a season-high for home attendance for the third straight game.

Lebo "has done a tremendous job of pumping new life (into the program)," said Marshall coach Tom Herrion, whose brother Bill was head coach here from 1999-2005. "There hasn't been that atmosphere in this building since my brother was here and some of those other bigger schools were coming in here to play. That says a lot about where the program is headed."

The players have noticed, too.

Lebo recently started pumping in crowd noise for practices before East Carolina's home games because his players didn't communicate well enough, and said his players have even looked tight at home because they want to keep the fans coming back.

Junior Darrius Morrow said some professors even confided that it's the first time they've been excited to come to a basketball game.

"The past two years I've been here, February was just another month away from the season being over," Morrow said. "Now February is very meaningful. ... We're right in the midst of things."

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Casual video games can reduce depression, research suggests

By Mike Snider, USA TODAY

Playing casual video games such as Bejeweled could help reduce depression and anxiety in patients with depression, a study suggests.

Researchers at the East Carolina University Psychophysiology Lab and Biofeedback Clinic found that patients who played Bejeweled 2, Peggle and Bookworm Adventures reduced by more than half their depression symptoms. The study, conducted with 59 subjects between August and November 2010, was underwritten by PopCap Games; the research is expected to be published later this year in Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback.

Researchers divided the 59 subjects with depression: 30 could play one of the games; the other 29 served as the control group by surfing the National Institutes of Mental Health's Web page on depression. Those who played games had significant reductions in depression symptoms: seven who suffered moderate to severe depression moved to minor or minimal depression categories, and five of nine subjects with minor depression dropped to minimal depression.

Dr. Carmen Russoniello, the lab's director and the professor who oversaw the study, says the study is the first to measure the effectiveness of video games in reducing depression and anxiety. Other findings included improvements in all aspects of mood. The effects were short term (30 minutes after playing) and long term (one month later).

"In my opinion the findings support the possibility of using prescribed casual video games for treating depression and anxiety as an adjunct to, or perhaps even a replacement for, standard therapies including medication," Russoniello said in a statement.
Editorial: Tuition hikes harm students
Thursday, February 17, 2011

Though some sections of the N.C. Constitution include vagaries and nuance subject to varied interpretation, one area devoted to education could hardly be clearer. It makes the case for higher education to be as free from expense as is practicable, an unequivocal directive to keep the University of North Carolina system and the state's community colleges accessible to all.

Despite that, North Carolina continues to shuffle away from that principle, hoisting an ever growing burden on the backs of students by raising tuition at a quickening pace. While it is reasonable to expect that the academic beneficiaries should bear some cost for their education, especially with the state facing a massive budget deficit, failing to honor that constitutional mandate would be disastrous to the state's future.

Gov. Beverly Perdue will release details of her budget proposal today, setting off one of the most contentious fiscal battles in memory. The state faces a projected $2.4 billion shortfall and will struggle to marry revenue collections with the current pattern of spending on public services. It will be interesting to see how the governor attempts to offset the cost of proposals like a corporate tax rate cut, since eliminating vacant positions or extraneous boards will not be sufficient.

Areas largely spared in last year's budget agreement, such as higher education, will feel the pinch. At East Carolina University, Chancellor Steve Ballard has predicted cuts that could even exceed 15 percent of current funding levels. So sharp a reduction could threaten the academic mission of the school, as it could across the UNC system.

It is understandable, then, that in a time of recession the UNC Board of Governors would approve a tuition increase of 6.8 percent this week. It comes a year after that board, and then the legislature, raised rates, with some member schools boosting tuition as much as 18 percent.

While a college education at any of the UNC campuses remains a tremendous value, particularly for in-state students, these repeated increases threaten to price a degree beyond the reach of some qualified students, with rural communities like those traditionally served by East Carolina at the most risk.

The UNC system is one of the state's most important resources and its accessibility is a critical component to that success. With each tuition increase, the state closes the door to college a little more and moves further away from that clear and direct constitutional provision that has served North Carolina so well.
Student-owned accessories shop aids local charities

BY KATELYN FERRAL - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL–It's usually a preposition or a numeral, but this spring "for" and "4" have come together in a new boutique in downtown Chapel Hill.

For four months, East Franklin Street will be home to 4 Boutique, a student-run accessories shop where profits will be donated to four local groups.

The shop, which has four part-time employees, is an independent study project for UNC seniors Taylor Walters and Chelsea Crites. It's also a hands-on business course in affinity marketing, in which products are sold to promote and benefit a cause.

4 Boutique, on the second floor of 149A E. Franklin St., opened this month and offers spring handbags, jewelry and scarves at an affordable price. Nothing is more than $60.

Proceeds will be distributed to The Arc of Orange County, The Center for Child and Family Health in Durham, Ronald McDonald House of Chapel
Hill and TABLE of Carrboro, which provides meals to low-income grade school students.

The students each picked two nonprofits based on their past volunteer experiences at UNC.

"I really feel like I know them and have a personal connection," said Walters, who chose The Arc of Orange County and The Center for Child and Family Health.

"It's been a big learning experience; we're kind of trying to bring the whole community together," Crites said.

4 Boutique's inventory was chosen to reflect a variety of styles, Crites said. "We're trying to reach several demographics; some stuff is trendy, maybe artsy, some more conservative, some simple," she said.

The boutique is funded through a grant that included start-up costs and space on Franklin Street. The project is supervised by Dana McMahan, assistant professor at UNC's School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

McMahan said the boutique not only gives students tangible business experience, but also explores the connection between the retail and nonprofit worlds.

"It's almost a template," she said. "It's really integrating nonprofits marketing in the community, this incredible trend across all companies connecting with the community on a different level. In the world of nonprofits, marketing and fundraising are synonymous."

The store will be open through the end of May and, if successful, could serve as a model for future student projects, McMahan said.

"You want to tell your story, but make it an upbeat part of people's lives," McMahan said. "My theory is that this is going to become more common ... this is a path to a relationship with the consumer."

Walters and Crites have used Facebook and Twitter to get the word out about 4 Boutique. About 60 people attended the shop's opening event Feb. 4.
"It's a really good experience in social media; what will move the needle and what won't," McMahan said.

For Walters and Crites, starting a boutique has been an ideal end to their studies, bridging their interests in fashion, business and community service.

"This experience has been the perfect combination," Walters said. "A big part of it is interacting with the customers ... working with people has been the best part for me," Crites said.

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Bucking Trend, College Will Cut Price

By TAMAR LEWIN

For those who wonder how college tuition costs manage to keep rising year after year, apparently defying laws of economic gravity, Sewanee, a liberal arts college in Tennessee, has an answer: they can’t.

On Wednesday, Sewanee announced that it will cut its $46,000 annual bill for students by 10 percent in the fall.

The college, formally Sewanee: The University of the South, is betting that the drop in tuition — which at this point it can afford — will help it compete on two fronts: with the public universities that are siphoning off a growing share of the students it accepts, and with other private colleges where tuition is likely to increase by 4 to 5 percent this year, as it has for the last two years.

“The university has made a bold and perhaps risky move,” said John M. McCardell Jr., who became vice chancellor of Sewanee a year ago. “But
given the realities of higher education in the current economy, we believe that some college or university needed to step up and say, ‘Enough.’”

Sewanee’s move has not been tried by any other institution in the top tier of U.S. News and World Report’s liberal-arts college rankings. And according to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, no college has reduced its tuition this year, and only about a dozen colleges have frozen it.

“Sewanee’s stepping up and out of the box, and it will create some reverberating effects,” said David L. Warren, president of the association. It is a sign of the times — a move prompted not only by the recession, but also by the degree to which small private colleges now compete with large public universities, whose tuition has been rising quickly because money from strapped state governments is declining.

Increasingly, Mr. Warren said, private colleges are competing with the flagship universities in their region. California Lutheran University allows incoming students who have been admitted to some University of California campuses to enroll for the same price they would pay at the public university. Other colleges seek to entice desirable candidates by offering them a similar deal.

Something of that sort was on Mr. McCardell’s mind as well. In the past two years, in head-to-head competitions for students, Sewanee lost 46 to the University of Georgia, 39 to the University of Tennessee, 37 to the University of Virginia and 28 to the University of North Carolina.

The new tuition would put Sewanee within striking distance of the out-of-state tuition at Georgia ($27,000 this year, without room and board, and probably substantially more next year).

Mr. McCardell, the former president of Middlebury College in Vermont, emphasizes that Sewanee is by no means in dire straits, and the pressures and challenges it faces are much the same as those that many — probably most — other small liberal arts colleges are encountering.

Like most, Sewanee has a declining number of students paying full tuition, and a rising number who pay a discounted rate. Nearly 3 out of every 4 students received some financial aid, including loans. The applicant pool is
growing, as students submit applications to more colleges — but the percentage of admitted students who choose to enroll at Sewanee is shrinking, and, at just under 24 percent, is at its lowest level of the past decade.

“The trends are discouraging, and what we definitely don’t want to do is move, however slowly, in the direction of dying,” Mr. McCardell said.

The price cut at Sewanee will mean that, over the next three years, about $6 million to $8 million less will flow into the college’s coffers. That means Sewanee may have to draw more heavily on its $315 million endowment for a few years.

But Mr. McCardell, in a memo to the board of regents broaching the idea of cutting tuition, suggested that other considerations were paramount.

The memo read, in part: “If we believe this is the right thing to do; if we believe it will benefit the university in significant, even fundamental, ways; if we believe in the quality of our product; if we believe that all we need to do is bring Sewanee to the attention of a wider audience; and if we believe that there is a value, however computed, to boldness and leadership, then we will figure out how to cover the shortfall.”

Sewanee’s approach goes against the grain. Of the 19 colleges that have cut tuition since 1996, most have been little-known institutions with serious problems. More common have been decisions to increase tuition and fees sharply, in search of what is widely known as the Chivas Regal effect — the perception that high price equals high quality.

And that has sometimes been a boon to colleges. After Hendrix College in Arkansas raised its tuition and fees 29 percent in 2004, for example, its freshman class grew by 37 percent.

Mr. McCardell, though, is not sure that would work in the current economic environment.

“When you look at those things, you have to remember that that was then and this is now,” he said.

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College Parties, Minus the Beer Binges
By SUE SHELLENBARGER
FEBRUARY 16, 2011

Reports of binge drinking in college have long made headlines. As more schools offer increasingly creative alternatives to shots and beer pong, they say they see noticeable declines in drinking.

Surveys at Purdue University, for example, show a sharp drop in binge drinking among students, to 37.3% in 2009 from 48% in 2006, says Tamara Loew, health-advocacy coordinator. She attributes this in part to a boom in late-night, alcohol-free events on or around campus, from poetry slams and dances to carnivals and "cabin-fever" parties.

Purdue senior Keith Brashaber knew there were other students like him who didn't want college to mean one big hangover. So he raised money and organized a free weekly movie program on campus instead, "Thursday Night at the Theater," screening films like "Zombieland" and "Paranormal Activity."

"I wanted to give students a chance to do something fun, get out of the dorm and be social" without drinking, he says. Since last spring, the films have been drawing up to 150 students for each of two weekly showings.

Other no-alcohol groups and programs around the country offer late-night physical activities, lively entertainment, a party atmosphere and free food.

About 100 colleges and universities do a good job of supporting alcohol-free activities that are frequent, regular and entertaining enough to compete with drinking, says Brandon Busteed, chief executive of Outside the Classroom, Needham, Mass., a provider of student alcohol-prevention research and programs. Some programs are initiated by students; others are suggested and financed by administrators who turn them over to students to run.

About 37% of college students engage in binge drinking, defined as consuming five or more drinks in a row during the preceding two weeks, according to 2009 data from a
long-term study at the University of Michigan. That is down about 3% from 2008 levels, but still higher than high-school seniors and young adults who don't attend college. Binge drinking in college is linked in research to risky sexual behavior, lower grades and a rise in violent crime, accidental injury and death.

To succeed, no-drinking events have to be held regularly during late-night hours when students typically would be drinking, Mr. Busteed says. The most popular alcohol-free options are movie nights, live music or just having an entertaining place to hang out with games and space to socialize, according to a survey by his organization of 500,000 college freshmen. Other tactics include serving free food into the early-morning hours or raffling off prizes at the end of the evening to encourage students to stay.

Still, no-drinking events carry a stigma among many students, who arrive on campus thinking college life "is this huge wild party," says Sarah Geisler, a junior at the University of Pittsburgh. Many think that "if they're not out at a party and doing something that involves alcohol, their weekend was unsuccessful and they have no stories to tell."

The remedy, says Ms. Geisler and other students who organize alcohol-free events, is to make the activities so entertaining that students forget to be skeptical. Pitt lures hundreds of students to such events, from a semi-formal ball at the Carnegie Music Hall to alcohol-free tailgate parties before football games. The university also set up a late-night tea house in the student union with billiards and other games. "It's like a bar without the alcohol, a great environment where students can go and relax," says Anna Vitriol, a Pitt health educator.

At Brown University in Providence, R.I., an alcohol-free "foam party," a dance with the floor flooded with bubbles, draws about 600 students during Spring Weekend, a series of student-run events to celebrate the near-ending of the school year, when drinking is higher than usual, says Erin Hannen, a junior at Brown. And at North Dakota State University in Fargo, students flock to "Club NDSU" nights offering simulated sumo wrestling, gladiator games, and casino nights, says Laura Oster-Aaland, director of orientation and student success.

"Once you pull students in, they find out they can have a good time without alcohol," says Greg Brightbill, a senior who belongs to a 50-member student group that organizes non-drinking activities at Frostburg State University in Maryland.

Student-run groups can take off fast. Rita Della Valle, a non-drinker, says she had a hard time finding social events on campus last year as a freshman at Drew University in Madison, N.J. "If my friends went out on weekends, sometimes it was awkward for me," and she often left campus for her parents' Cranford, N.J., home, she says. But since she joined a new alcohol-free campus group and helped organize a late-night video-arcade party, a "Humans vs. Zombies" foam-dart contest and bowling, she has stopped going home on weekends. The group, New Social Engine, a program of a Rockaway, N.J., non-profit organization called Prevention Is Key, quickly drew 200 members.
Some organizers downplay such events' no-alcohol rule in campus promotions, stressing the entertainment value instead. The University of Michigan's biweekly "UMix" parties draw as many as 1,000 students for roller skating, film screenings or trivia or karaoke contests, but the university doesn't promote them as alcohol-free. That would suggest that "the main event is at a bar or a frat party and the secondary event is here. We want this to be the main event of the evening," says J. Eric Heilmeier, a university program adviser.

Others, however, are up-front. At Brown University, an "Art Gallery Mocktail Party" at fall orientation for the past two years has drawn 20% of incoming freshman," says organizer Halie Rando, a senior at Brown. Students viewed comical art exhibits, such as gym socks hanging from the ceiling, while meeting new, non-drinking friends, Ms. Rando says.

Although the programs are very different, their goals are the same. Frostburg has posted a 27% decrease in binge drinking among students in the past 10 years. The University of Pittsburgh reduced problem drinking 12% between 2007 and 2009, Ms. Vitriol says. At North Dakota State University, alcohol-related violations on campus have dropped 3.7% in the past two years, Ms. Oster-Aaland says.

Critics say such events attract light or non-drinkers. "Philosophically it doesn't matter to us," Ms. Oster-Aaland says. "We feel it's really important to support those students who are non-drinkers, because if there's nothing for them to do they will probably become drinkers."

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