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Gov. Beverly Perdue talks with ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard, left, and ECU Board of Trustees Chairman David Brody as she tours the construction site of the ECU School of Dental Medicine on Thursday afternoon. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

Perdue’s budget funds dental school
By K.j. Williams
The Daily Reflector
Friday, February 18, 2011

Gov. Beverly Perdue's proposed $19.9 billion two-year budget includes the $5 million in operating funds requested for the fledgling School of Dental Medicine at East Carolina University, she announced at a visit to the construction site of Ross Hall on Thursday.
Perdue was enthusiastic about the dental school's mission to provide family dentists to underserved rural areas, adding 50 students a year.

"It's all really family dentists just like family doctors .... very cool," Perdue said to ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard.
"It's an incredible complex," she said of Ross Hall and its surrounding ECU facilities, including the adjacent College of Nursing and nearby Brody School of Medicine.

ECU administrators have been lobbying hard in the new Republican-led legislature to keep pledged funding in place. Without the $3.5 million in fiscal year 2011-12 and $1.5 million the following year, dental school Dean Dr. James Hupp said the new dental school's accreditation, just obtained this month, could be threatened. The money is needed to hire faculty and staff for the first year, as well for supplies and other expenses.

Ballard said Perdue got behind the idea of a new dental school when she was lieutenant governor.

“She was supporting it when it was just a gleam in our eye,” Ballard said. “This is the first opportunity we’ve had to show her the actual location of the dental school.”
“1 want to see the hole I just funded,” Perdue joked to Ballard at the site. “I thought it would be further along. How can you finish it by April?”
Ballard said construction is on schedule. The steel framework of the building is expected to be finished by April. Concrete is going into the foundation and its structure is beginning to emerge. The four-story, 188,000-square-foot building, with an estimated price tag of $50 million, is expected to be completed by July 2012. In the meantime, the first class of 50 students will start school in August in renovated classrooms at the Brody School of Medicine.

Perdue said she included operating expenses in the budget to ensure the new building would not sit empty, and she's hopeful that funding will remain in the budget. Ross Hall is a “sophisticated building” that needs to be finished, she said.

“The budget I released this morning fully funds it,” Perdue said.

Ballard said he will remain concerned until he knows the final budget includes dental school funding.

“We think we have great support,” he said. “We know the need is huge.”

The General Assembly provided $90 million in capital funding for the school with $30 million designated to build up to 10 community service learning centers where fourth-year dental students would provide low-cost dental care under faculty supervision to underserved areas.

Hupp said that the additional $5 million to the already-funded $12 million in operating funds, which is what remains after a previous ECU budget cut, is needed to continue to hire faculty and staff and to get the dental school open.

“The team from the commission on dental accreditation was given assurances that we would get the money based on a statement and legislation created from the previous Legislature, so if there's any change in our funding our accreditation could be jeopardized,” Hupp said. “The accreditation team relied upon that promise when they made their accreditation decision.”

Hupp said the news of Perdue's dental school funding came as a relief.

“I couldn't be more pleased, but we still have a long legislative session to make it through,” he said. “We're still trying to educate state legislators on the importance of this project.”

Perdue also answered questions from the media about the proposed budget. The budget is nearly $1 billion more than the current year's, a move to close the $1.4 billion gap in discontinued federal stimulus money.

It would cut more than 10,000 state jobs, and it includes a provision that would encourage about 1,000 state employees to take early retirement. Despite fewer judiciary positions, Perdue said remaining personnel will be able to run the system efficiently.
In addition, the governor's budget would extend the life of three-fourths of the one-cent sales tax past its scheduled June 30 expiration.

Perdue said the sales tax continuation is necessary to support education, but she didn't foresee it as being needed much longer.

“North Carolina is beginning to show real signs of robust, emerging growth,” she said.

Budget cuts to education would focus on administrators and middle management positions, Perdue said. Public safety and prison facilities won't be affected, and neither will mental health services with her proposed budget. State parks would see a decrease in hours, with park superintendents choosing which two days a week certain parks would close, or what adjustment to their operating hours would prove the least disruptive.

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Perdue's plan cuts state jobs
By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector
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Gov. Beverly Perdue proposed cutting 10,000 state jobs and keeping an expiring sales tax as the best method for closing a $2.4 billion budget gap and keeping teachers in the classroom during the next two budget cycles.

Perdue submitted her $19.9 billion spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year to the General Assembly on Thursday.

“This is the third year of really hard, tough cuts,” Perdue said during a Thursday meeting with The Daily Reflector. Perdue toured the construction site of East Carolina University's dental school and Ayden manufacturer CMI Plastics Inc. earlier in the day.

Complicating this year's budget woes is the loss of $1.4 billion in federal stimulus money.

“The cuts are horrible, but we did invest about $1 billion to soften the loss of the federal dollars,” she said.

She closes next year's budget gap, estimated at $2.4 billion, in part by keeping intact three-quarters of a penny of the one-cent sales tax set to expire June 30. It will generate about $827 million next year and leave most North Carolinians with a 7.5 percent sales tax.

The Republican-led legislature has vowed to do away with the one-cent sales tax. The House and Senate will unveil their budget proposals in the coming weeks.

“The state continues to grow so it makes sense to me that the needs and demands on service are strong,” she said.

While the state population has grown by 400,000 people since Perdue took office in 2009, state spending per person has dropped 11 percent.

“As I worked to balance the budget I did things I never thought I would do,” Perdue said. Along with eliminating 10,000 positions in state government, Perdue's budget recommends privatizing the state's technology and procurement services, consolidating 14 executive branches into eight, eliminating 68 programs, reducing 71 programs and carrying out another 37 reorganizations and consolidations.
She also suggests closing state parks for two days a week, privatizing welcome centers, and reducing funding to nonprofit organizations.

“You couldn't fire workers the way we are letting them off without doing something to everybody,” she said.

Perdue said out of 10,000 jobs being eliminated, only 3,000 people would be let go. She is hoping 1,000 reductions will come through an employee retirement incentive program.

Teachers, teacher assistants and positions such as prison guards and mental health employees are exempt from the job cuts but any other state employee is vulnerable. The cuts likely will be made in the areas of technology services and procurement, along with accountants, middle managers in public schools and others.

“I'm not happy. Obviously anyone who had to cut these positions and make these choices isn't happy,” Perdue said. “I do believe the reset will make a fundamental, long-term change in North Carolina for the better. Although, it is painful now as we eliminate these positions.”

No one wants people to lose their jobs, she said, but she believes it's the best method for reducing the state's current 9.6 percent jobless rate.

“This is a hard step for North Carolina but it's a right step,” she said.

Perdue said she believes North Carolinians will be happy with the effort to keep teachers and teacher assistants in the classroom. Keeping these positions is the argument Perdue said she'll use to maintain the temporary sales tax.

Perdue launched a website earlier this week that challenges individuals to make budget cutting decisions. She said so far about 10,000 people have submitted budgets and about 73 percent of those budgets called for maintaining the sales tax.

Perdue said she expects Republicans will propose more reductions in the state's education budget. Namely they will try to increase class sizes to reduce the number of teaching and assistant positions. Such a proposal could eliminate up to 8,000 classroom positions, she said.

As a student of the state's history, “I continue to be impressed and actually awed that no governor, no legislature in this state has ever backed away from public schools,” she said. “I am not going to be the one that the history books say that set North Carolina going backwards.”

Perdue said there are reasons for optimism in the budget.

The state is one of eight that maintains a Triple A bond rating.
No debt spending is proposed. She wants to contribute $75 million to the mental health trust fund, ensuring no local mental health programs are cut or reduced.

Her budget also would provide an unemployment tax credit for 135,000 small businesses, spend $75 million on improvements to university and government buildings and set aside $150 million for the state's rainy-day reserve fund.

Perdue also wants to reduce the corporate income tax rate from 6.9 percent to 4.9 percent to make it the lowest rate in the Southeast.

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For most young men and women who come to college at East Carolina University, the college experience will entail far more than the academic challenges required to earn a degree. The four years they spend in Greenville affords them their first chance at independence and to grow into adults, a process that will include mistakes and missteps as well as successes.

As the community entrusted with these young people at this critical stage of their development, Greenville shares responsibly for fostering an environment that provides instruction and accountability. As mistakes are made — as they most assuredly are — guidance and punishment should go hand-in-hand as the university and the city work together to teach the lessons valuable to adulthood.

When the state Legislature decided to locate a new teacher's college in Greenville, lawmakers could not have predicted how citizens would come to embrace the new institution. Though the city is far larger than it was a century ago, the university that sits at its center remains the beating heart of the community. The bustle of thousands of students here when classes are in session serves as its pulse.

The concentration of so many young adults can be both blessing and curse. The youth and life that East Carolina students bring to this city is immeasurable, and Greenville would be a far colder, duller place without them. However, there are also related issues, not attributed solely to the students, in nearby neighborhoods and downtown that the city has sought to address in recent years through partnerships with the university, student groups, homeowner associations and law enforcement, with varying degrees of success.

Alcohol contributes to some of these problems and requires concerned attention and repeated instruction. Last week, an East Carolina fraternity was suspended following an Alcohol Law Enforcement raid resulting in two arrests and more than 60 citations. Officers crashed an event that included shots for sale and a sign urging attendees to “Party til you pass out. Drink til you're dead.” That type of cavalier approach to drinking contributes to the annual deaths, injuries, assaults and sexual abuse that can result from a potent mix of alcohol and youth.

This appears to be a significant mistake by these young people, but the issue is far larger than one party or one fraternity. A community that takes seriously its responsibility to foster their development would recognize this opportunity to review its efforts to address this problem and provide guidance as well as punishment.
Job cuts at UNC system

BY ERIC FERRERI - Staff Writer

A budget plan billed as friendly to universities would cut the UNC system less than other state agencies, but would still eliminate more than 1,400 jobs systemwide.

"I have basically walled off education from any harsh, horrible cuts," Gov. Beverly Perdue said in rolling out her 2011-13 spending plan Thursday. She said she wanted to shelter both K-12 and higher education from the most severe damage.

The UNC system and its campuses would take a 6 percent budget cut under Perdue's plan, less than the 7 percent to 15 percent she proposes for other state agencies. Of the 10,000 jobs eliminated across state government, about 1,450 would come from the UNC system.

University and community college workers would be eligible for an early retirement plan Perdue has floated that she hopes 1,000 state workers will take.

In cutting the UNC system's budget, Perdue advised leaders to focus on senior and middle management positions. But campuses have done that in recent years and may not be able to cut only administrative jobs this time. UNC system President Tom Ross said Perdue's cuts would have a direct effect on classroom instruction.

"With fewer faculty, staff and course sections, many more students would not be able to obtain the courses and academic services they need to graduate on time," Ross said.

Perdue's budget offers $23 million for UNC system enrollment growth - about half of what the system had requested. The university enrolls more than 215,000 students statewide and projects 2,337 more next fall.
System and campus leaders may not oppose slowing enrollment growth a bit, said Hannah Gage, chairwoman of the UNC system's Board of Governors.

"The way we look at enrollment is changing," she said. "Growth is not the most important thing. We're struggling to balance our commitment to quality, and it's never been as difficult."

Perdue said she hopes UNC system students won't face two tuition hikes in one year, as they did last year. The UNC system's governing board just approved tuition increases of about 6 percent, on average, and much of that revenue would be used to mitigate budget cuts. But the legislature could OK a second hike.

Perdue's budget also would create the Career and College Promise, which would pay for a two-year college degree or two years of career training to high school students who meet certain academic criteria. The governor said the program would be free to taxpayers because funding for it would come from a handful of similar programs she plans to either reduce or eliminate.
Gov. Bev Perdue presented a $19.9 billion budget plan Thursday that would keep a portion of the temporary sales tax she had promised would expire this year, while eliminating thousands of state jobs and dozens of programs.

Republicans, who control the state legislature, immediately criticized the Democratic governor for breaking her word on the temporary tax. And they vowed to pass a budget in a few months that will cut even more than Perdue's plan.

Perdue's proposal is just the first step in what is likely to be months of tough negotiations between the governor and the legislature over taxes and spending.

"It's going to be an interesting conversation I look forward to having with them," Perdue said.

The governor said her budget is based on two priorities - increasing jobs and education.

Nearly 10,000 state jobs - about 3,000 of them currently filled positions - would be cut under Perdue's plan, which includes funds to induce 1,000 employees into retirement.

Dana Cope, executive director of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, said the governor's proposal is "way more than what we were expecting."

"It will send this state into a death spiral when you add that many people to unemployment," Cope said.

Republicans criticized Perdue for shifting millions in education costs from the state to local governments.
"The governor would take $800 million out of the pockets of North Carolinians in order to balance this budget," said Senate leader Phil Berger, an Eden Republican. "It's time for government to tighten its belt."

Perdue's plan would keep all state-paid teachers and teacher assistants, but cut state spending on school administrators, central office staff and school bus purchases. Local school districts would have to pay their own workers' compensation claims and school bus accident claims.

State budget director Charles Perusse said the state had been gradually picking up what had been local expenses over the past 10 years and that this budget represents a partial shift back.

"We're making a statement that there has to be shared pain among all of us," he said.

**Tax extension an issue**
Perdue prepared her budget knowing that Republican legislators had promised not to extend the temporary taxes.

Keeping 75 percent of the 1-cent sales tax increase would raise $826.6 million, which Perdue said would pay for 13,499 jobs in schools, universities and community colleges, as well as for community mental health treatment.

Perdue did not keep the temporary income tax surcharges imposed along with the sales tax increase, and she called for a cut in the state's corporate income tax rate from 6.9 percent to 4.9 percent. The corporate cut would begin in January and cost $115 million over six months. Additionally, her plan would offer small businesses an unemployment insurance tax credit at a cost of $65 million.

She anticipates the business tax cuts translating to private sector jobs, though some economic analysts said research does not support Perdue's claims of job growth.

Two years ago, Perdue asked for the taxes to boost a budget that was gasping. Questioned then about how North Carolinians could be sure that the temporary tax increases would not become permanent, Perdue replied: "Because I'm the governor."
Cuts to state agencies
The proposal includes a reorganization of state agencies to cut administrative and middle management jobs. It would eliminate money for 68 of what Perdue called "nonessential programs," and it would cut another 71.

Drug treatment courts and mediation programs would get less money, a youth development center would close and there would be no more money for dropout prevention grants. Smart Start would see a 5 percent, or $9.4 million, cut.

Democratic legislators and public-interest groups praised Perdue for sparing teachers and spending more on mental health. But county governments and local school boards said they were hit unfairly.

The added workers compensation expenses for school districts and accident settlements will likely be higher than Perdue's budget estimates, said Leanne Winner, lobbyist for the N.C. School Boards Association.

"All the costs they're sending down are public-school related," she said. "There's no guarantee the monies will appear at the local level."

GOP seeks more cuts
Republicans are combing the budget looking for more cuts. House Speaker Thom Tillis, a Mecklenburg County Republican, said the budget could lose $1 billion "without affecting core services." But budget writers need not stop at $1 billion, he added.

"If our committee chairs come back and say we've got $2 billion worth of stuff we shouldn't be spending, then there's another $1 billion on the table," Tillis said. "We're not going to stop when it's just balanced. We'll stop when we're spending responsibly."

Republicans criticized Perdue for not including savings from a bill they passed last week that would take money from economic development accounts to help pay next year's expenses. Supporters say it would go a long way toward closing the budget gap, but Perdue doesn't like the proposal. The budget does not include a proposal to legalize and tax video poker, derailing a likely major battle.
"I didn't want the next six months, when quite frankly so much is at stake for North Carolina, to be distracted by this philosophical and moral debate over gambling," Perdue said.

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Breaking down the governor's plan

Gov. Bev Perdue's recommended budget doesn't really have winners and losers. It's more like losers and bigger losers. Here are some specifics:

**K-12 education**
Public schools would see a 3.9 percent cut under the plan, but Perdue said no state-funded teachers or teacher assistants would be cut. Other school positions would face cuts.

**Job cuts**
The governor's plan would cut 10,000 positions across state government. Perdue estimates that 3,000 of those jobs are now filled.

**State parks**
Funding to the state Division of Parks and Recreation would be cut 10 percent, which likely would require closing most parks two days each week.

**Corporate income tax**
The plan proposes cutting the rate from 6.9 percent to 4.9 percent, making North Carolina's the lowest corporate income tax rate in the Southeast and the third-lowest in the nation.

**Sales tax**
Perdue would keep three-fourths of a cent of the 1-cent temporary sales tax that Republicans had pledged to let expire.

**Community colleges**
The plan would create the N.C. Career and College Promise, which would provide two years of career training or a two-year community college degree to high-school students who meet certain academic standards. The community college budget would be cut 4.9 percent.

**UNC system**
The UNC system budget would be cut 6 percent.

**Welcome centers**
The plan calls for closing the state's nine welcome centers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to save staffing costs.

**Video sweepstakes**
The budget does not seek to raise new tax revenues through legalizing video poker and Internet sweepstakes games, which Perdue had considered.

**Consolidating departments**
Under the plan, the Department of Management and Administration would be formed from the consolidation of the Department of Administration, the Office of State Personnel, the Office of the State Controller and the Office of Information Technology Services. The Department of Commerce would be consolidated with the Employment Security Commission.

**School nonprofit programs**
Perdue calls for eliminating the following nonprofits: Kids' Voting, Science Olympiad, Teacher Cadet, Dropout Prevention Grants, and the N. C. Science, Math and Technology Education Center. Communities in Schools and Teach for America would see 10 percent reductions.

**Gas tax**
Perdue is counting on the legislature to allow gas taxes to keep rising this year. The variable tax rate is a portion of the average wholesale gas price, and in January it climbed to a record high of 32.5 cents a gallon. Perdue's budget projects an increase of a penny a gallon. But that would require action by the Republican-controlled legislature this spring to prevent the tax from falling in July to 29.9 cents.

**Textbooks**
The budget reduces the state's public school textbook allotment by 34.6 percent.

**UNC health care**
The governor recommends a 25 percent reduction - or $11 million - in the subsidy to UNC Hospitals for charity care.

**Insurance fees**
The budget recommends raising the license fee for insurance companies from $2,500 to $5,000. The fee for licensed insurance adjusters would rise from $75 to $100.

**Smart Start**
The budget recommends reducing the early childhood program budget by 5 percent.

**Camp Woodson**
Under the plan, the Woodson Wilderness Camp - a voluntary, pre-release program for incarcerated youth in Swannanoa - would be eliminated. Twenty positions would be cut. Also, the Swannanoa Youth Development Center - a 48-bed facility in the North Carolina mountains - would be closed.

**House arrest monitoring**
Perdue recommends that the Department of Correction outsource the monitoring of electronic house arrest equipment. This would cut 11 positions.
Energy funds
The plan would cut $2.6 million in funds to N.C. State University, N.C. A&T State University and Appalachian State University for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs.

Private college aid
Under the plan, there would be a 6.5 percent cut - or $6.7 million - in state aid for North Carolina residents attending private colleges in the state. This includes legislative tuition grants, Bible college grants, private medical school aid and the state contractual scholarship fund.

Marine fisheries
Perdue recommends eliminating the state's Oyster Sanctuary Program, established to rebuild the state's oyster population, and the Shellfish Mapping Program, which maps marine habitats that need enhancement.
Troupe brings contemporary dance
By Kelley Kirk
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East Carolina University's S. Rudolph Alexander Performing Arts Series is known for its top-rate, one-night-only shows that bring in artists from all over the world.

But Wednesday's performance by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company will include local residents.

DCDC will be accompanied by a gospel choir assembled just for this show as well as some local musicians.

The performance will be at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at Wright Auditorium.

Now in its 42nd season, DCDC's style is rooted in the African-American experience with a mission to deliver contemporary dance to a broad audience nationally and internationally through performances and educational programs. When members of the dance company visit Pitt County, for example, they will hold a master class with high school dancers Monday at South Central High School and give lectures and demonstrations at A.G. Cox Middle School and Wellcome Middle School Tuesday and Wednesday.

Michael Crane, producing artistic director for SRAPAS, asked Tara Worrell to direct the local gospel choir.

She graduated in 2001 from ECU with a bachelors degree in family and community services, not a music degree. But that doesn't mean she isn't comfortable in the world of gospel music.
“ When I came to college, I joined the (ECU) Gospel Choir,” she said.
After she joined, she served as the Gospel Choir's director for the two years before her graduation. She continued as director for another year before becoming an ECU faculty member.

Worrell currently works for the Institutional Planning Assessment and Research Department as an administrative support associate.

“I am also a Basic Skills GED Instructor with Pitt Community College,” she said.

Worrell has assembled the choir from all parts of the community.

“It's comprised of faculty, staff, students and community singers from churches, for example,” she said.

Two-hour, bimonthly Saturday-morning rehearsals began in October in ECU's A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall.

“Our last one was Feb. 12,” Worrell said. “Monday and Tuesday will be the mandatory rehearsals with the dance company and then the performance is Wednesday.”

Worrell said the choir will perform three songs including “Welcome Song,” “Hold On” and “Giants.” In addition, two ECU vocal majors, Alden Quick and Marvin Thorne, will sing a special selection of the hymn “His Eye Is On The Sparrow.”

“The song is from ‘Sister Act 2' and you really need experienced singers to pull that song off,” Worrell said.

The soloists were recommended by Carroll V. Dashiell Jr. who heads the Jazz Studies program at ECU and is the coordinator of the annual “Tribute to Motown Concert,” which will be Feb. 26, also in Wright Auditorium.

“He was instrumental in finding students for me,” Worrell said. “His singers and musicians are excellent.”

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Rosalind Tucker Branch

Rosalind Tucker Branch, 91, went to be with her one and only love in heaven Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2011, peacefully in her home. She was a native of Pitt County and the daughter of William and Carrie Tucker.

The visitation will be held at Wilkerson Funeral Home, Saturday at 10 a.m. followed by a graveside service at 11:30 a.m. The officiating minister will be the Rev. Dan Earnhardt from Jarvis Memorial United Methodist Church.

Rosalind was very active in the church, teaching Sunday School and working in the nursery until later years due to health issues. She had a teaching background from ECTC before it was known as East Carolina University. Her mother attended ECTC in 1909 and her daughter graduated from East Carolina University. Her son attended Pitt Community College. The land that is now the new East Carolina University women's softball field, football practice field and baseball stadium was her farm in the early 1940's. She has seen Greenville grow from a small town with a fence and a gate to keep the chickens and cows out, on what is now Charles Blvd. to a prosperous and thriving city. Known as a very smart businesswoman, she helped her husband in the family farms and kept records of their property they owned and developed. She helped to develop one of Greenville's early neighborhoods. One of her favorite pastimes was working in her yard with the many flowers, such as Iris, Day Lilies, Tiger Lilies and Roses.

She was married to David Wilbur Branch Sr. in 1940 who preceded her in death by 23 years. She was also preceded in death by her brother, Ralph Tucker, who is survived by wife, Ramona Tucker.

Other surviving relatives include a son, David W. Branch Jr. and wife, Vickie Dixon Branch, and their children Jessica Blair Branch, David Alexander Branch and Renee' Reed of Greenville, and Christy Dixon of Raleigh; daughter, Carolyn Harris and husband, Sandy, of Greenville, and their children, Matthew Harris of Ashville, and Carrie Harris of Ashburn, Va. and her fiance, Brandon Rigsbee; two great-granddaughters; three nephews and a niece.

A special thanks to caregivers for many loving years and dedication, Sara Whitley, Debra Green, "Tee" Jones, and Loretta Foster.

Flowers may be sent to Wilkerson Funeral Home or contributions may be made to Greenville Fire and Rescue Dept., 500 S. Green St., Greenville, NC 27835.


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The next time lines for electronic filing are this long may be April 15.

People lining up Saturday won't be completing forms for the IRS; they'll be applying for Federal Student Aid for college.

Saturday is FAFSA Day across the state; 100 sites will help students and their parents complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid. In Pitt County, four branches of the State Employees Credit Union will offer free assistance to members from 9 a.m. to noon. Pitt Community College's FAFSA Day is open to anyone who plans to attend college in the 2011-12 academic year.

Lisa Reichstein, director of financial aid services at PCC, said more than 200 students have preregistered for the event. Not all of them plan to attend PCC. FAFSA Day alternates each year between PCC and East Carolina University.

More than a dozen volunteers will be on hand to help students and their parents navigate the online application forms, which are the gateway to everything from Federal Pell Grants to campus-based aid and loans for parents.

Reichstein said the forms, available online at studentaid.ed.gov, are simpler than a few years ago, but many families still appreciate having someone walk them through the process.

“We've been doing it so long, it's almost down to a science,” she said.

Reichstein, who has been with PCC for nearly two decades, has seen the number of Pell Grants increase significantly in recent years, from about 1,200 to more than 4,400 this year. Student loans have increased as well.

“It is difficult with the economy,” Reichstein said. “I've seen our applications more than triple. We've had to increase staff to try to handle it.”

To begin the process, participants should bring 2010 federal tax returns for the student and parents. Families do not have to have filed their taxes to file a FAFSA, but it is helpful to have completed the returns. Applicants who have their W2 forms may begin the process; however, the application will need to be edited once returns are complete.
PCC will host another FAFSA event in late April. Reichstein said it is best to apply early as funding for certain grants may run out.

The FAFSA process takes about 30 minutes. Applicants should arrive at PCC no later than 11:30 a.m. Preregistration continues today, but walk-in appointments are available.

FAFSA Day will be held from 9 a.m. to noon in Room 225 of the Reddrick Building at Pitt Community College. State Employees Credit Union customers should check with their local branch. For more information, visit www.cfnc.org and click on FAFSA Day.
If ever there were a time for baseball cliches to come true at East Carolina, it might be now.

References to pitching and defense winning championships fly around baseball parks as much as actual baseballs this time of year, and the Pirates are set to open the 2011 season today armed with both.

In a college baseball season focused largely on the shift to new bats which will likely cut down on home runs, the Pirates have a potential double whammy for opposing hitters with their veteran pitching staff.

And even though the season will be different without the menacing power of Kyle Roller and Devin Harris in the lineup, the ECU team which was poisoned by errors last season is suddenly burgeoning with new middle infielders.

The Pirates open the season against Youngstown State at 3 p.m. inside Clark-LeClair Stadium, the first of three against the Penguins.

“There is an excitement that surrounds opening day in baseball like no other sport,” said sixth-year head coach Billy Godwin, whose team is trying to rebound from a rare postseason absence last year. “There is always a promise and new hope. What I like about our team is experience combined with youth — you've got guys who have never really been through this and guys who are experienced and are as locked-in as I've ever seen them.”
Senior right-hander Seth Maness will take the ball today after going 10-3 as a junior and being named Conference USA Pitcher of the Year. Maness has made his name with versatility, and is 28-8 in his career with 254 strikeouts.

Following him in the rotation is senior Zach Woods, who quietly mirrors Maness in terms of his numbers with a 24-10 career mark and 251 strikeouts.

Sunday starter Mike Wright, a 6-foot-5 junior, surged into starting rotation this spring after not being in Godwin's mix during the winter. He could feel some heat from experienced junior Kevin Brandt and senior Brad Mincey. Senior closer Seth Simmons enters his final season needing just three saves to become the school's all-time leader.

Junior center fielder Trent Whitehead returns to the leadoff spot after a season in which he embodied his team's ups and downs. After setting a new ECU record with 105 hits as a sophomore, Whitehead managed 81 last season. Also returning in the outfield is senior Austin Homan and sophomores Chris Gosik and Phillip Clark.

Back in the infield is sophomore John Wooten, who Godwin said might play multiple positions after a promising debut season that included nine home runs and 40 RBIs. Junior third baseman Corey Thompson exploded last year, batting .377 with 86 hits, eight homers and 54 RBIs.

Junior Zach Wright returns behind the plate after his 14-homer, 47-RBI campaign last year.

Despite those prominent returns, the handful of newcomers in the middle of the infield has also caught Godwin's eye. Junior college transfers Michael Ussery and Timothy Younger were joined by high school freshmen Drew Reynolds and Jack Reinheimer to vie for starting roles at shortstop and second base, and Godwin said this week he's not afraid to start a freshman.

“They've got unbelievable ability,” Godwin said of his new infielders. “I don't know what they're going to do until the lights come on, but they've got the ability to play this game at a high level and they've shown that to me now for seven months.”

And with a player like 6-4, 259-pound freshman Chase McDonald thrown into the mix as a first baseman and designated hitter, ECU has potential pop as well.

“You're not going to see all those guys like Kyle Roller and Devin Harris with that physical presence, but you put John Wooten, Corey Thompson, Zach Wright and even Chase McDonald out there, they're some pretty physical guys that are potent,” Godwin said.

After the YSU series, the Pirates play three games next weekend at Virginia, a College World Series participant last year. ECU hosts Campbell March 1 before welcoming Pepperdine for a three-game set beginning March 4.
Other notable home dates include a three-game C-USA series with Rice beginning April 8 and a game against North Carolina on April 27.

With all of the new depth, Godwin said he expects to do more customizing with his lineup in 2011.

In fact, he said he would likely field three different lineups this weekend alone.

“‘There is something about this team that I really like,’” Godwin said, admitting it's probably not his best offensive team at ECU. “‘I think we've got a chance to pitch and play defense and mix and match and play some different lineups, and that speaks to the depth and athleticism.’”

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State workers holler at cuts; GOP says go deeper

BY J. ANDREW CURLISS - Staff Writer

As might be expected, Gov. Bev Perdue's proposal to shed thousands of state jobs was met with disgust Thursday by leaders of the state workers' association.

Republicans, now in charge at the legislature, think they can go deeper. Months of uncertainty for state workers crystallized Thursday into some hard numbers - 10,000 positions would be cut under Perdue's plan, and as many as 3,000 of those are now filled.

"I don't sleep well at night worrying about them," Perdue said of the employees.

Under Perdue's plan, there would be no pay raises for state workers who remain. And their health insurance costs would go up.

Perdue, a Democrat, said her choices weren't easy.

"I had a job to do as governor," she said. "At the end of the day, I do know ... that this is the right decision as we move forward with a leaner state government."

Dana Cope, executive director of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, said Perdue is making horrible choices that will hurt - not help - the state. He said the governor is taking no action to close corporate tax loopholes that critics say benefit big companies.

"She's doing away with good, middle-class jobs while she's lining the pockets of the rich corporate CEOs," Cope said. "This is being done on the backs of the taxpayers and the working poor. I can't understand it."

Perdue said she hopes many state workers opt for an incentive program in her plan that is aimed at coaxing hundreds into retirement. Under the plan,
the state would give $10,000 to those eligible to retire with full benefits or $20,000 to those eligible to retire at a reduced benefit.

But Cope said even the retirement bonus is flawed. He suggested that it is connected to Perdue's plan, announced earlier, to consolidate 14 state agencies into eight, a move that would shed middle management and support jobs.

Republican leaders said Perdue has made a good effort, but it is just a beginning.

Asked whether teachers are off limits, a key Republican budget writer, Sen. Peter S. Bruntetter, said no.

Republican leaders said they plan to act on their version of the budget by June 1.

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Every physician pledges first to "do no harm." Political leaders in North Carolina, both Republican and Democratic, know that this year they can't raise their hands to those words when it comes to formulating the state budget. The economic recovery may be showing signs of life, but the breathing is still labored and the unemployment rate in North Carolina, 9.6 percent, remains high. Full recovery will be a maddeningly slow process.

In that context, Gov. Beverly Perdue has come up with her proposal for a state budget that selectively cuts departmental monies, consolidates some agencies and eliminates roughly 10,000 state government jobs. Some 3,000 of those jobs have people in them, which is by some lights a smaller number than anticipated. As Republicans criticize the governor's budget (and they already have) they may float some ideas that would further increase the job cuts, which would not be constructive.

Overall, the governor's proposal seems reasonable. There is some good news. Perdue says she has "walled off" public school teachers and teachers' assistants from job cuts. And she's helping community colleges with a couple of useful programs, including one to provide tuition-free education for two years for high school students who meet high standards.

But public education at all levels will see some funding cuts, though not as substantial as feared. The university system will get money for enrollment growth, but will have to find savings of roughly 6 percent. Public education is looking a cut of 3.9 percent, community colleges 4.9 percent. Overall, the governor said, she's looking at 7 percent to 15 percent cuts in different areas of state government.

Perdue is keeping most of a temporary sales tax hike that was set to expire. The income tax surcharge that went with it would go away. Republicans are saying the governor should let the sales tax hike, passed to help the state through a crisis which is not yet over, also expire as planned.
When the state is looking at a $2.4 billion budget hole, some tough decisions have to be made. Not just choices about where jobs are eliminated or which services and agencies will be cut back, but also moves to maintain the revenue sources on the other side of the fiscal equation. Republicans are welcome to take their shot at budgeting, but if they eliminate a small temporary tax while lowering the corporate tax rate (which Perdue pledges to do) then they're looking at more "outgo" and less "income," which will make book-balancing even more difficult.

So now let's have all parties report to the table, please, and get down to the number-crunching and the political maneuvering and the drum-rolling for the high-wire act that is budgeting the state through what for many, many thousands of North Carolinians remains a severe recession. And should Republicans feel obliged to simply critique the governor, they'd be wise to remember that with control of both houses of the General Assembly, they now have real responsibility for coming up with a budget that is balanced and sensible. In other words, they're on the wire, too.
Cafeteria trays vanishing from colleges in effort to save food

By Jenna Johnson
Washington Post Staff Writer
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When Virginia Tech's largest dining hall reopened several years ago, some administrators jokingly dubbed it the "freshman 25" cafeteria, for the number of pounds some students might gain from the tasty fare.

Students loaded their trays with Belgian waffles, brick-oven-baked pizza, falafel, Brazilian skewered meat, pad Thai, fruit juice concoctions and elaborate desserts - so much food that even the biggest of guys with the biggest of appetites could not always clean their plates.

As food service workers watched thousands of pounds of food go to waste, the university decided to make a move increasingly common at higher-education institutions nationwide: It got rid of cafeteria trays.

The change was immediate. "The plates were coming back basically cleaned," said Ted J. Faulkner, Tech's senior associate director of housing and dining services. "It was astounding."

Most schools in the Washington region have gone "trayless" in at least one dining hall, and several nationwide have banned them altogether.

But perhaps inevitably, there has been a backlash - in part because cafeteria trays had alternative lives as sleds and collegiate souvenirs. When the University of Massachusetts at Amherst got rid of trays in several dining halls last academic year, a group of students formed a "Bring back the trays" Facebook group. One argument posted on the group wall: "What will we use for sleds now?"

Without a tray, students have to be pickier during the first sweep of the cafeteria line and make trips back for more. It results in as much as 25 to 30 percent less wasted food, according to a 2008 study of 25 campuses by food services provider Aramark.
"It's a better pace. You have to get up and walk it off" in between courses, said Cody Erickson, 20, a junior horticulture major from Sandy Spring, sitting with a small pile of cleaned-off lunch plates in Virginia Tech's D2 dining hall last week.

Going trayless is usually sold to students as an environmental move. Less water, soap and electricity is used if there are no trays to wash, and less food is wasted.

Among those that have completely ditched trays are Georgetown, Johns Hopkins, James Madison and Marymount universities and the University of Virginia. Trinity Washington University has "trayless Tuesdays and Thursdays," and the University of Richmond skipped the alliteration with its "trayless Fridays."

American University banished trays from its main dining hall in 2009 after a group of students wrote a paper proposing the move. They called it "Dude, Where Is My Tray?"

Shenandoah University in Winchester, Va., went trayless in 2007 and sold its 600 red cafeteria trays for $2 as a fundraiser for campus sustainability programs. At the University of Mary Washington, officials replaced large trays with smaller ones before phasing trays out altogether last year. St. Mary's College of Maryland went trayless a few years ago, and students there use reusable to-go containers.

At some colleges, the trays disappeared overnight without students really noticing. But many university officials made an effort to involve students in the decision and inform the campus of impending tray bans.

At Virginia Tech, administrators recruited the student government and campus environmentalists to help. It started as an Earth Week experiment during the 2008 spring semester, when student volunteers weighed the amount of food waste in dining halls with and without trays. Without trays, students wasted 38 percent less food. By summer, the trays were gone in the two main dining halls on campus, D2 and Shultz.

Despite intense advertising and the popularity of anything portrayed as Earth-friendly, some Tech students were upset when the trays disappeared.
At the time, Alex Shamy was a freshman pledge at his fraternity. His older brothers were not happy and ordered the entire house to fill out as many complaint cards as possible every time they ate in D2.

"When I go to D2, my goal is to eat as much as possible," said Shamy, now a junior majoring in public and urban affairs. Without a tray, "you can only get one plate and a cup."

Tech isn't the only campus where there was tray-related grumbling.

The president of Dickinson College in Pennsylvania made a number of budget cuts last school year, including getting rid of premium cable in the dorms and removing the red trays imprinted with the school seal from the cafeteria.

The senior class was especially upset, complaining all the way up to graduation day. So to reward them for their pain, President William Durden presented each graduate with a "decades-old Dickinson College cafeteria tray" along with a diploma.

"Seriously, this thing has been stolen by many students over many years," Durden deadpanned to the commencement crowd, "but you are going to get it honestly because you fought for it."

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In Puerto Rico, Protests End Short Peace At University

By TAMAR LEWIN

SAN JUAN, P.R. — Months of unrest at the University of Puerto Rico seemed to be reaching a finale over the last 10 days. Scores of students were arrested or injured by riot police officers. Faculty and staff members held a two-day walkout. The president of the university resigned Friday, the police who had occupied campus were withdrawn Monday and an interim president arrived Tuesday.

But there were only three days of peace.

On Thursday morning, students blocked the stairs to classrooms in the social science department with trash cans and chairs, and also closed down the humanities department. At the social sciences building, students said only one professor had tried to get through the blockade.

The spark for the university’s problems was a budget cut that required students to pay a new $800 fee, increasing their costs by more than 50 percent.
“It is the same situation that many universities in the United States are facing,” said Miguel A. Muñoz, the interim president. “Our budget is about $1 billion, and we have been cut about $200 million. We need the $800 fee to cover the deficit, and our tuition is so low, $51 a credit, that it’s almost a gift.”

The tuition is indeed far lower than most other flagship public universities. But Puerto Rico is poorer than the mainland United States, and two-thirds of the students have incomes low enough to qualify for Pell grants.

As at many public universities elsewhere in the United States, students here worry that the new fiscal realities will restrict who can attend.

“This is a public university, and it should be accessible to everyone,” said Eduardo Galindez, a second-year student. “I work in the physics department, and I know some graduate students who couldn’t come back this semester because they couldn’t afford the fee.”

Student leaders estimate that at least 5,000 of the university’s students were not able to pay the fee this semester. And the administration acknowledges that there are now fewer than 54,000 students this semester, compared with about 60,000 last semester.

Dr. Muñoz, however, attributed the drop to instability, not the new fee. “As a parent, you don’t want to send your son, your daughter to a campus where you see so many protests, and police,” he said. Still, if there are threats to security and safety, he said he would not hesitate to bring back the police.

“A university is not a different place from the rest of Puerto Rico,” he said. Protests may well flare up again. A general student assembly is scheduled for Tuesday, to discuss whether to call a further strike to protest the $800 fee, program cuts, and the unwillingness of the authorities to negotiate. “We have to see if students will ratify a strike or not,” said Giovanni Roberto, one of the student protest leaders. “We know there are alternatives and we have proposed them, but we don’t have any power to get them to listen.”

But the students have flexed their muscles. A two-month strike last spring shut down the university’s 11 campuses. And since the current strike began in December — this time, largely at the main Rio Piedras campus in San
Juan — people across the island have been riveted by television and YouTube videos of violent confrontations between students and the police. Many students were outraged that the police had been called to the campus.

“Calling in the police, for the first time in 30 years, was one of the most rash decisions they could have made,” said René Vargas, a law student who represents the student body on the university board of trustees. “The university’s intransigence and refusal to talk to students has worsened the whole situation. The students presented a 200-page document suggesting alternatives and ways to increase revenues, and the trustees have not even been willing to look at it.”

Some students, like Liz Lebron, a freshman, said they thought the administration had been right to bring in the police, because some students were destroying property and stopping others from attending class.

Whether or not they approved of the police presence, many students said they found it frightening.

“I didn’t go to class when I saw the police because I was scared of getting hurt,” said Carmen Gonzalez, a senior majoring in English literature who supported the protesters. “On television I saw people getting hurt, and if you’re in class and you hear those police helicopters, you can’t concentrate.”

Many students complained about the university’s decision to put several academic programs, including Hispanic studies, “on pause,” meaning they are not accepting new undergraduates.

Some faculty members and students say that local politics have played a large role in the university’s problems.

Puerto Rico has its first Republican governor in decades, Luis G. Fortuño, a pro-statehood conservative who has cut the number of public employees by about 17,000. Last weekend, while the protesters were marching in the streets, Mr. Fortuño was in Washington as a featured speaker at the Conservative Political Action conference.

Even in the lull from protests early this week, students and faculty members alike said they had no illusion that the situation had been resolved.
“We still have a very volatile situation,” said Maritza Stanchich, an English professor who has supported the students. “This all started out over anger about the new fees that were being imposed, but the issues have expanded to the style of governance and the lack of negotiation.”

While it is hard to predict what will happen next, some students may be changing their approach.

“What a lot of people are saying, and I believe too, is that we should be thinking about a movement of protest now, not really a strike,” said Omar Oduardo, a Student Council representative who spent Thursday at the social sciences department lobby, discussing the situation.

“Maybe stopping classes is working against the movement,” he added, “and it’s time to go outside the university, to the legislature and the community, to work for change.”