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ECU officials discuss budget cuts

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

East Carolina University officials discussed budget issues Wednesday in anticipation of further budget cuts in the coming fiscal year.

Kevin Seitz, vice chancellor for administration and finance, explained to a group of about 30 faculty and staff members how the university is paying for reversion of state funding for the current fiscal year.

He also briefly discussed how those cuts may become permanent with the next state budget.

The state has asked that the UNC system return 6 percent of its funding for 2008-09. Other state agencies are giving back 7 percent.

The system may face a permanent or recurring cut of up to 7 percent for the 2009-10 fiscal year after the budget is hashed out in Raleigh.

A budget reduction of 7 percent would mean a cut of $18 million to the university’s operations. Seitz said about 65-70 percent of all funding is used for salaries and benefits.

Chancellor Steve Ballard has formed a budget task force on campus to determine as many ways as possible to cut the budget without having to cut jobs.

The university is already not filling vacant positions, eliminating non-essential travel, eliminating salary increases and working to conserve energy on campus.

"It is possible between now and the end of the year that the state could come in and stop any purchasing that we might be doing," Seitz said.

Suggestions for cutting the budget that are circulating around campus include furloughs for faculty, salary reductions or incentives for early retirement.

But those suggestions are not within the power of the university or the UNC system, Seitz said. Special legislation would have to be approved in Raleigh to allow any of those cost-cutting scenarios.

Seitz said economic conditions nationwide also are affecting the non-state funds available to the university.

Endowments at the ECU Foundation are going below the value of the original donations, which could have an effect on scholarships, he said.

"We are trying to conserve those funds this year so that we have some flexibility going into next year," Seitz said.

The university is working to make sure that budget issues do not affect the overall mission of ECU and cuts to instruction are to be minimized, Seitz said.

"As we go into 2009-10 we are trying to avoid hurting the mission, but when you get up to 7 percent it is very difficult," Seitz said.

"Our service level may come down a little bit but we are trying to do it in a way that will not have a severe impact."

UNC President Erskine Bowles is lobbying to make sure that any cuts to the UNC system are one-time cuts.
But, Seitz said, it could be a political problem for other agencies to receive permanent cuts while the universities receive a one-time cut.

Gov. Beverly Perdue is expected to submit her budget by mid-April, but it will likely be June 30 before any agencies know exactly how much of a cut they will be facing, Seitz said.

Perdue asked each agency in the state to present budgets with 3, 5 and 7 percent cuts. Officials now believe that most, if not all, state agencies will face 7 percent cuts due to the fact that the state’s revenues from income taxes are down by 10 percent.

A permanent 7 percent cut to the universities could mean long-term issues that would not be as harsh if the cuts were one-time, Seitz said.

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Blood recipient says thanks

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

As each person at East Carolina University finished donating blood Wednesday, Kristin Brown would offer them a snack or drink and say thank you.

Brown, a 24-year-old ECU graduate, was diagnosed last year with aplastic anemia, a disorder that stops bone marrow from producing enough new blood cells. She received nearly 100 transfusions to battle the condition.

"I'm here today to say thank you to the people that donate," Brown said about the annual blood challenge at ECU's Student Recreation Center. "Without them, I wouldn't be here."

Her blood platelet numbers are back to normal now, after chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant. She contacted organizers at ECU and the American Red Cross offering to tell her story. The main message, she said, giving blood saves lives.

"I hope they will continue to come back because this type of thing can happen to somebody young." Brown said. "It doesn't cost anything or take up much time, but it could change someone's entire world."

This blood drive, which officials say has evolved into the largest one in Pitt County, aimed to collect more than 430 pints of blood. The drive yielded 391 pints.

The challenge formed several years ago as a competition between ECU's health and exercise classes, led by lecturers Jeannine Rushing and Debra Tavasso.

"We've been doing this (drive) for five years and every semester it has gotten bigger and bigger," Tavasso said. "Our blood supply is always low, so there is always a need."

She said the amount of donated blood has grown rapidly to 387 pints last fall, up from 241 pints during spring 2007.

Both Rushing and Tavasso offer extra credit for their students who donate blood, but said they hope the experience draws them back in the future.

Elizabeth Clark, account manager for the American Red Cross in Pitt County, said ECU is earmarked for 3,000 pints of blood this academic year. The university has collected about 1,700 pints so far, Clark said, but the blood challenge could provide a huge boost.

"These professors are trying to get their students to see the big picture, that there is always a need for more blood," she said.

Chris Goodale, a freshman at ECU who donated for the first time, said he did not realize all the benefits of giving blood until he participated in the challenge. He also recommended the ECU blood drives to anyone who has yet to try one.

"It was easy," Goodale said. "I wasn't expecting to get light headed, but it wasn't painful."

As for Brown, who still lives in Greenville, she said the road to recovery has been tough but sharing her story was invaluable.

"I've been through so much, it means a lot," she said. "I'm just trying to live a normal life again."
Today's blood drive ended at 2 p.m. More are scheduled this week at the following times and places:

**Thursday, Feb. 19**
- Pitt County Memorial Hospital, 2100 Stantonsburg Road, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Eastern North Carolina Donor Center, 700 Cromwell Drive, 1-7 p.m.

**Friday, Feb. 20**
- Pitt Community College, 1986 Pitt Tech Road, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- Greenville VA clinic, 800 Moye Blvd., 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

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Drugs can save hearts and cash

SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

It's much cheaper and just as effective to treat some heart attacks with drugs instead of also trying to snake a stent into a clogged artery, scientists at Duke University report today in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The findings could prompt significant savings for many of the estimated 1.2 million Americans who suffer heart attacks each year. Wire mesh stents open clogged arteries and can save lives when used within a few hours of a heart attack, but they're no more beneficial than clot-busting drugs alone if the attack occurred a day or so before the patient sought treatment.

Forgoing stents in those cases could save an average of $7,000 per patient -- or $700 million for the estimated 100,000 U.S. heart attack patients who don't need them.

Those kinds of savings are key components of President Barack Obama's stimulus plan. Included in the legislation is more than $1 billion to enhance the science behind medical practices, which often favor technology and high-priced interventions over less-expensive approaches such as drugs, even though the health benefits are unknown or dubious.

Though breakthroughs in new drugs, devices and surgeries have contributed to a longer life expectancy in the United States, they haven't come cheaply. Spending on health care in the United States tops $2 trillion a year and has risen nearly 10 percent annually since 1970.

"We need to put more resources into research to know what works and doesn't work for same medical conditions," said Joel Miller, senior vice president for operations at the National Coalition on Health Care, a Washington health advocacy group. "Physicians and patients need better data, and this is a case in point."

Stenting is a potentially life-saving procedure when a patient arrives in the emergency department in the throes of a heart attack. Routed with a catheter up a large blood vessel in the groin, the wire scaffold is expanded in the blocked artery by a small balloon, restoring blood flow and keeping vital heart tissue from dying.

Scanned and stented

Dr. Michael Durfee, 71, a retired pediatrician in Raleigh, said he had chest pains about six weeks ago that he at first ignored. When the pain persisted the next day, his wife drove him to Rex Hospital, where he was immediately scanned, stented and admitted for two days. He said the treatment was life-changing.

"I really feel good now," Durfee said, noting he goes to cardiac rehabilitation three days a week and has begun attending a support group.

But too many heart attack patients wait much longer than Durfee, who kicks himself for not recognizing the pain in his left chest was more than a pulled muscle from loading groceries.
When patients don’t seek care for days or weeks, a blocked artery can do irreversible damage to the surrounding heart tissue.

Stenting doesn’t help in these cases, but doctors and patients alike often choose to implant a stent anyway.

"The thinking was that the heart might still be happier if it had another big pipe of blood flow, even though that part of the heart was not coming back," said Dr. Daniel Mark, lead author of the Duke study.

Research that Mark and others published two years ago disproved that notion. They showed that clot-busting drugs alone provide just as much health benefit to these patients as stents and drugs together.

Now the recent findings add a cost benefit to using drugs alone.

Mark and his team followed a subset of the original 2,100 study participants for an additional two years. Overall, patients who got stents stayed in the hospital 1.2 days longer than those who just got medicine. For the stent patients, the average cost of care during the first 30 days of treatment was $22,859, compared with $12,683 for the drug therapy group. After two years, the cost difference narrowed, but it still amounted to an average $7,000 savings for the drug-only patients.

Dr. Deepak Pasi, a cardiologist with Carolina Cardiology Consultants, said the study’s findings reinforce the need to treat patients individually based on their unique circumstances, rather than follow a universal menu.

"There are several scenarios, and each is treated differently," he said. The bottom line, he said, is intervening early and appropriately.

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HERE'S WHAT THE DUKE RESEARCHERS FOUND:

* About a third of the 1 million heart attacks that occur in the United States each year are treated days or weeks after symptoms arise.

* For many of these patients, heart tissue has already died and will not benefit from a stent to restore blood flow.

* Instead, clot-busting drugs alone do a good job of keeping further heart disease from developing.

* Patients who avoid the stent surgery tend to have shorter hospital stays, recover faster and do just as well long-term.

* The result is a saving of about $7,000 per patient over a two-year period.

HEART ATTACK WARNING SIGNS

* Sudden, intense pain in the chest.

* Chest discomfort that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.

* Shortness of breath.
* Cold sweat.
* Nausea.
* Lightheadedness.
* For women, chest pain or discomfort may especially be accompanied by shortness of breath, nausea and back or jaw pain.
Return ROTC to the Ivys

BY KENNETH HARBAUGH, The New York Times

NEW HAVEN, Conn. - Since the Vietnam War, ROTC programs have been banned from operating on campus at elite universities such as Yale and Harvard. These institutions have also long hindered the military's efforts to recruit their students. But in March 2006, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the military must be allowed back on all campuses.

The door is open.

More important, the students themselves are ready.

I recently taught a course on the obligations of citizenship at Yale, where I also spent three years as a law student. If my university holds some prejudice against military service, its students, in my experience, don't seem to.

The student-run Yale Political Union recently approved a resolution to invite ROTC back on campus. Several pro-military organizations have sprung up, including the Semper Fi Society, which helps undergraduates become Marine Corps officers.

While it is true that few of the students I taught will ever serve in uniform, part of the reason is that no one has bothered to ask them to. To change that, our new commander in chief should order the military to activate new ROTC units. Then President Barack Obama should direct it to step up in-person recruiting efforts on these campuses.

TV commercials showing Marines scaling mountains will not work on Yale students. But programs like Teach for America have great success recruiting from Ivy League colleges, because their recruiters are given time at the end of large lectures to deliver their pitch.

If the military demands similar access, students will respond. Imagine asking a 21-year-old: "How would you like to go somewhere where you are the only person who is capable of helping?" My students were desperate to serve their country in some way. We owe it to them to offer the armed forces as a realistic option.

But rebuilding a connection between America's military and its most selective colleges is about more than providing exceptional opportunities to exceptional young people. It is, ultimately, about our military's relationship to its civilian leaders.

At Yale, which has supplied more than its share of senators and presidents, almost none of my former classmates or students ever noticed the absence of uniforms on campus. In a nation at war, this is a disgrace. But it also shows how dangerously out of touch the elites who shape our national policy have become with the men and women they send to war.

Whenever I encounter animus toward the military at Yale, it is almost always born of ignorance. Students often cite the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military as a justification for the ban on ROTC. They are far more sympathetic when I explain that such policies are enacted by Congress, and that the military has no choice but to comply.
Toward the end of the semester, I took my class to West Point. None of my students had ever seen a military base, and only one had a friend his age in uniform. But every one of them was deeply respectful of what they saw. My students understood that many of the cadets they met would soon be at war. And without my saying it, they also knew that the decisions leading to war are made by elite civilians like themselves.

As a candidate, Barack Obama called top colleges' rejection of the military a "mistake." As president, he can begin to correct that mistake by ordering the military to invest in new ROTC units and redouble campus recruiting efforts.

The door is finally open, but it is up to our commander in chief to lead us through.

**Kenneth Harbaugh, a former Navy pilot, is the executive director of the Center for Citizen Leadership.**

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William Friday is well after heart procedure

Comment on this story

UNC President Emeritus William Friday is recovering from open heart surgery.

Friday, 88, had his aortic valve replaced Tuesday at UNC Hospitals. He was in intensive care Wednesday and resting comfortably, said his assistant, Virginia Taylor.

"He said he already feels better," she said.

Doctors said that the surgery was a success and that having the valve replaced was the right thing to do, Taylor said. "His quality of life is going to be greatly improved."

The surgery was performed by Dr. Brett Sheridan, associate professor of cardiothoracic surgery at UNC-Ch's School of Medicine.

Sheridan said in a statement that Friday had a hardened aortic valve, "a common condition among patients requiring cardiac surgery."

Sheridan said he expected an uneventful recovery for Friday, who could be released from the hospital in a few days.

Friday suffered a minor heart attack in December.

He presided over the university system for three decades, from 1956 to 1986. He is still active. He has an office on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus and tapes a weekly television show, "North Carolina People," which airs on UNC-TV.

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Student Expectations Seen As Causing Grade Disputes

By MAX ROOSEVELT

Prof. Marshall Grossman has come to expect complaints whenever he returns graded papers in his English classes at the University of Maryland.

"Many students come in with the conviction that they’ve worked hard and deserve a higher mark," Professor Grossman said. "Some assert that they have never gotten a grade as low as this before."

He attributes those complaints to his students’ sense of entitlement.

"I tell my classes that if they just do what they are supposed to do and meet the standard requirements, that they will earn a C," he said. "That is the default grade. They see the default grade as an A."

A recent study by researchers at the University of California, Irvine, found that a third of students surveyed said that they expected B’s just for attending lectures, and 40 percent said they deserved a B for completing the required reading.

"I noticed an increased sense of entitlement in my students and wanted to discover what was causing it," said Ellen Greenberger, the lead author of the study, called "Self-Entitled College Students: Contributions of Personality, Parenting, and Motivational Factors," which appeared last year in The Journal of Youth and Adolescence.

Professor Greenberger said that the sense of entitlement could be related to increased parental pressure, competition among peers and family members and a heightened sense of achievement anxiety.

Aaron M. Brower, the vice provost for teaching and learning at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, offered another theory.

"I think that it stems from their K-12 experiences," Professor Brower said. "They have become ultra-efficient in test preparation. And this hyper-efficiency has led them to look for a magic formula to get high scores."

James Hogge, associate dean of the Peabody School of Education at Vanderbilt University, said: "Students often confuse the level of effort with the quality of work. There is a mentality in students that 'if I work hard, I deserve a high grade.'"

In line with Dean Hogge’s observation are Professor Greenberger’s test results. Nearly two-thirds of the students surveyed said that if they explained to a professor that they were trying hard, that should be taken into account in their grade.

Jason Greenwood, a senior kinesiology major at the University of Maryland echoed that view.

"I think putting in a lot of effort should merit a high grade," Mr. Greenwood said. "What else is there really than the effort that you put in?"

"If you put in all the effort you have and get a C, what is the point?" he added. "If someone goes to every class and reads every chapter in the book and does everything the teacher asks of them and more, then they should be getting an A like their effort deserves. If your maximum effort can only be average in a teacher’s mind, then something is wrong."

Sarah Kinn, a junior English major at the University of Vermont, agreed, saying, "I feel that if I do all of the readings and attend class regularly that I should be able to achieve a grade of at least a B."

At Vanderbilt, there is an emphasis on what Dean Hogge calls "the locus of control." The goal is to put the academic burden on the student.

"Instead of getting an A, they make an A," he said. "Similarly, if they make a lesser grade, it is not the teacher’s fault. Attributing the outcome of a failure to someone else is a common problem."

Additionally, Dean Hogge said, "professors often try to outline the 'rules of the game' in their syllabi," in an effort to curb haggling over grades.

Professor Brower said professors at Wisconsin emphasized that students must "read for knowledge and write with the goal of exploring ideas."

This informal mission statement, along with special seminars for freshmen, is intended to help "re-teach students about what education is."

The seminars are integrated into introductory courses. Examples include the conventional like a global-warming seminar and the more obscure, like physics in religion.

The seminars "are meant to help students think differently about their classes and connect them to real life," Professor Brower said.

He said that if students developed a genuine interest in their field, grades would take a back seat, and holistic and intrinsically motivated learning could take place.

"College students want to be part of a different and better world, but they don’t know how," he said. "Unless teachers are very intentional with our goals, we play into the system in place."