THE DAILY CLIPS

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Professor’s spirit remembered at memorial service

Colleagues and students pay tribute on Wednesday to Gay Wilzentz, who died earlier this month.

By Paul Dunn
The Daily Reflector

Michael Bassman, assistant vice chancellor of the East Carolina University honors program, saved his comments for last during Wednesday’s memorial service for the late Gay Wilzentz, an English Department professor who died Feb. 6.

He spoke of the first part of the service with his arms wrapped around Wilzentz’s friends and colleagues, many red-eyed and somber. The popular Wilzentz died after a struggle with ALS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, often referred to as Lou Gehrig’s disease.

Bassman ended Wednesday’s memorial at the university’s Science and Technology Building by leading the audience in a “Kaddish,” a Jewish prayer recited after the death of a close relative. Bassman is Jewish. Wilzentz was too.

Bassman, his reddish hair tied back in a bushy pony tail, drew chuckles from the audience of about 130 — comprised of many of Wilzentz’s students — when he said, “Gay was a hypochondriac; most Jews are hypochondriacs. Gay and I talked a lot about this.”

Despite the sobriety of the memorial, Bassman managed to infuse the event with other comical reflections on his longtime colleague.

“With Gay, of course, you were always arguing,” Bassman said. “Gay was not the least bit subtle.”

By illustration, he referred to a joint ECU project he and Wilzentz undertook during their tenure together that proved acrimonious at times.

“Gay was basically impossible to work with,” he said with a grin. “We were ready to kill each other, but I loved Gay dearly.”

Wilzentz began her tenure at ECU in 1988 as an associate professor and at the time of her death was the university’s director of ethnic studies and co-coordinator of the multicultural literature concentration in the Department of English. In 1991 her research led her to Belize, formerly British Honduras, where on several occasions she was a visiting professor at the University of Belize. Wilzentz died and was buried in Belize, from where she had annually recruited Belize students to earn their master’s of arts degrees at ECU. She’d also encouraged ECU students to study abroad at the University of Belize.

Bruce Southard, English Department chairman, opened Wednesday’s service by saying, “We’re here to celebrate the time we were fortunate enough to share with Gay.” His voice breaking as his brief comments concluded.

Seodial Deena, associate professor of English, followed Southard with a lengthy recollection of his friendship with Wilzentz. The news of his colleague’s death shocked him, he said.

“I closed my office door and wept,” he told the audience.

He grieved, he said, for a friend and a distinguished scholar who “gave both her heart and body to Belize.”

Wilzentz was widely recognized for her professional service and performance as a professor, scholar and researcher. In 2004, she received ECU’s Lifetime Achievement Award for excellence in Research and Creative Activity, the only woman yet to do so.

She received a Fulbright Scholarship to teach at the University of Nigeria and received the Department of English Award for Excellence in Teaching, the North Carolina Board of Trustees Award for Teaching Excellence, the Z. Smith Reynolds Award and a multitude of other honors.

Wilzentz’s books included two critical studies: “Binding Cultures: Black Women Writers in Africa and the Diaspora,” which examined women’s roles in the transmission of culture on both sides of the Atlantic and “Healing Narratives: Women Writers Curing Cultural Disease,” which explores the relationship between culture and health.

Speaking to Wilzentz’s students in the audience, English professor Julie Fay said, “You are her legacy. It’s your turn now to continue on her work.”

Wilzentz’s stubborn refusal to sacrifice her beliefs and ideals underscored many speakers’ remarks. Wednesday. They recalled instances when discussions turned heated, but honest and heartfelt. Robert Siegel, associate professor of English, rarely agreed with his buddy Wilzentz, but the arguments went only skin deep, he implied.

“Gay and I argued about everything — movies, books — but underneath there, was a deep affection,” he said.

Wilzentz’s never lost her love for life, even as ALS ravaged her body, said Deirdre Mageean, ECU vice chancellor for research and graduate studies.

“There was absolutely no mistaking the incredible spirit trapped within that body,” she said.

Lillian Robinson, professor of women’s studies and principal/directrice, Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University — Montreal, worked with Wilzentz at ECU from 1995-2000. She, perhaps, best summed up her former colleague’s character with one sentence: “I have never known anyone — Jew or Gentile — who embraced the concept of healing the world with as much passion as Gay Wilzentz.”

Wednesday’s service also included remarks by Carla Pastor, ECU English lecturer, James Smith, university provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs, and a musical selection by Mike Hamer, ECU English lecturer, and Susan Ludden, ECU art lecturer.

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Science, math school in lurch

UNC system seeks to clarify oversight

BY JANE STANCILL
STAFF WRITER

The UNC system is ready to either take the reins of the N.C. School of Science and Mathematics or cut ties entirely.

UNC President Erskine Bowles wants to resolve the rather fuzzy governance structure of the state’s elite public high school, which is now affiliated with the UNC system but operates independently.

Bowles asked the school recently to consider becoming a full member of the UNC system, which has 16 university campuses across the state. Or, he told school officials, they can opt out of the system altogether.

Either change would require action by the school’s trustees, the UNC Board of Governors and new legislation in the General Assembly. Faculty and administrators at the 25-year-old residential high school in Durham are studying the options.

The possible reorganization comes after internal strife at the school over academic changes by its president, Gerald Boarman. There also has been sharp criticism of top administrators’ salaries and Boarman’s three-year contract approved by the school’s trustees. Boarman’s pay is $198,900, according to records in the UNC headquarters.

Some UNC system board members last year questioned Boarman’s salary, saying it was out of line compared with those of some university chancellors. But UNC officials said they could do little about it because they have no direct authority over the school, which was created in 1980 under former Gov. Jim Hunt. Boarman did not return phone calls Wednesday.

UNC Board of Governors Chairman Brad Wilson said there needs to be clearer oversight of the school.

“The public views the university as responsible for the School of Science and Math, but there is a gap in authority,” Wilson said. “If the university is going to have the accountability, then the university needs to have sufficient authority to take action, depending on the circumstances.”

Wilson added, “There’s not a triggering event.”

But a possible reorganization is on the fast track. School spokesman Craig Rowe said the trustees could take action in mid-March. He said several committees were examining the feasibility and impact of the change.

And the UNC board has listed “resolve the governance structure” of the school on its legislative priorities for this summer. The UNC board appoints a majority of the school’s trustees but beyond that does not have influence over the school business.

Wilson said he and former UNC President Molly Broad discussed the issue last year. The natural time to make a change is now, he said, because a new president has taken office.

School officials say they look at the offer from Bowles as a way to collaborate more with the university and the state on issues important to the future of education in North Carolina.

“It seems like a real opportunity for our missions to merge,” said William Cary of Greensboro, vice chairman of the school’s trustees. “Math and science education is really finally on everyone’s radar screen. We feel like we know as much about it as anybody.”

Cary said UNC officials have made it clear that the school would set its own curriculum and run its own operations. The school is studying the advantages and disadvantages of closer ties.

“There are certain square peg, round-hole issues,” Cary said.

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Medicare to cover surgery to treat obesity

Procedures could save money by heading off health problems

By Julie Appleby
USA TODAY

Medicare said Tuesday that it will pay for three forms of an expensive surgery to treat obesity, so long as the patients are treated in “high-volume centers that achieve low mortality rates.”

The move comes after device makers, surgeons and some patient advocates urged the agency to create a uniform national policy on bariatric surgery, which can cost $15,000 to $20,000 per procedure. Previously, coverage decisions varied by region.

The impact will go beyond Medicare: Private insurers, which vary widely on whether they cover the surgery, often follow Medicare’s lead. For example, when Medicare decided to cover organ transplants, insurers began to pay for them.

Previously, Medicare officials said they were considering limiting the surgery to those under age 65, for safety reasons. But after reviewing new data, Medicare officials said experienced surgeons have similar outcomes for patients of all ages and they will pay for the surgery for any age.

At high-volume centers, the mortality rate from the surgery is less than 1%, Medicare says. Overall, the rate is in the 4% to 6% range.

To qualify for the surgery, patients must have unsuccessfully tried other treatments, have a body mass index of more than 35 and also suffer from weight-related problems, such as diabetes, heart disease or sleep apnea, the agency said.

Medicare paid for about 2,000 such surgeries in the over-65 age group in the past seven years and 20,000 cases in those under 65, who qualify for Medicare because they are disabled.

The agency says it does not have dollar-cost estimates on how much the new procedure will add but says it will be far less than what it spends on coronary bypass or heart defibrillators.

Surgery advocates say the ruling could save Medicare money in the long run because patients’ health will improve and some could even come off of disability rolls.

“It will cost less to take care of them,” says Harvey Sugerman, immediate past president of the American Society for Bariatric Surgery.

The three types covered are:

▶ The Roux-en-Y bypass, the most common bariatric surgery and the only type previously covered by Medicare, uses surgical staples to create a small pouch in the stomach connected to the bowel by a piece of the small intestine, bypassing the majority of the stomach.

▶ Open and laparoscopic biliopancreatic diversions involve surgically bypassing most of the small intestine and pancreas.

About 65% of American adults are overweight or obese, which increases their risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer and many other diseases. And they are increasingly turning to bariatric surgery.

A study published in the December Archives of Surgery found that such operations increased 450% from 1996 to 2002, going from 12,773 to 70,256 cases. That number had increased to 140,640 by 2004, and the 2005 number was estimated at 171,200, according to the American Society for Bariatric Surgery.
Today's debate: Higher education

What high schoolers need: Cheat sheet on universities

Our view:
Data on graduation, teaching also could add to school accountability.

Pity the poor high schooler shopping for colleges. Even the U.S. secretary of Education had trouble making a smart choice.

Margaret Spellings went college shopping last year with her daughter. She discovered what parents have despised over for years: Information on dining plans and intramural sports is everywhere, but data about graduation rates or instructional quality are hard to come by.

Without such information, comparison shopping is difficult. Currently, tuition-paying parents and students have a lot more facts about what students know going into college (SAT scores, grade point averages, etc.) than on what they know coming out.

A commission Spellings organized is looking at ways to make higher education more accountable and to measure the "value added" it provides to students. These are important questions to raise, and Washington's huge financial support for higher education justifies federal involvement.

The USA has some of the finest universities in the world, but many others fail their undergraduates. The recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy, for instance, found that only a third of college graduates qualify as "proficient" readers able to handle complex English texts. And a PBS documentary, Declining by Degrees, reported on large universities where research-oriented professors make few demands of, and hand out inflated grades to, students in big lecture classes.

Parents can't easily learn about such things. Instead, they rely on data supplied by colleges that's often self-serving. Private enterprise has not stepped in to fill the gap. The most popular college guides depend either on student gossip or ratings that mostly measure test scores of incoming freshman and a school's popularity in the eyes of other college officials.

Surely parents and young adults deserve more. At a minimum, they should know whether some colleges are better at graduating their students in four years (thus saving tuition money). Finding a way to track students through college is a proper governmental role if it can be done without compromising privacy.

Tracking college students' academic progress doesn't require mandatory standardized tests, like those used in elementary and secondary schools. That option, at odds with the specialized nature of higher education, has drawn heavy criticism even before Spellings' commission makes any proposal. Instead, testing can be private and voluntary.

More than 100 colleges are experimenting with a privately funded test, called the Collegiate Learning Assessment, that attempts to measure critical thinking skills. A separate effort, the National Survey of Student Engagement, attempts to measure the quality of a student's education. That survey, sponsored by several higher education foundations, could eventually replace less effective college guides.

With more information, parents and students would be better able to judge whether, say, four years at Penn is really worth nearly $100,000 more than four years at Penn State.
Nursing looks to men to fill its shortage

The nursing field is increasingly active in its attempts to lure males into its ranks.

By LORENE YUE, © February 20, 2006

Quick, name a male nurse on TV or in the movies who was neither ridiculed nor portrayed wearing a white dress and cap.

Ben Stiller was derided in "Meet the Parents" for his nursing career by tough-guy and future father-in-law Robert DeNiro. Jamie Farr donned drag as Corporal Klinger in "M*A*S*H," his nurse's cap askew and hairy legs peeking out from beneath his crisp white dress, turning the iconic uniform into his symbol of mental instability.

Overcoming these potent images is an enormous barrier for recruiters as they try to solve the nation's growing shortage of nurses. But after exhausting other hiring pools, recruiters from nursing schools, medical institutions and corporations are turning to the next promising group: men.

"It's a whole area that is untapped," said Jim Raper, president of the American Assembly for Men in Nursing.

It's not a simple task. Beyond the incessant teasing is the perception more than 140,000 nurses this year. By 2020, the shortage is expected to swell to 800,000.

The industry looked overseas for a solution. They recruited in the Philippines, Ireland and Canada to fill in nursing in 2005 than in 2004, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

"Why not nursing?" asked Tim Freeman, a second-year nursing student at West Suburban College of Nursing in Oak Park, Ill. "I am doing what I want to do."
Some men are lured by the job security:
More than 90 percent of 2005 nursing graduates found jobs. And there's the pay, which can start at $40,000. Nursing specialists can earn $100,000. Others are looking to switch to a career that combines medicine, counseling and caregiving.

"You've got to be pretty strong in high school to say you are going into nursing," said Don Houchins, director of nursing education and maternal-child services at Saint Mary of Nazareth Hospital Center in Chicago.

Houchins, who graduated from da for certified English-speaking nurses who could report to work in the United States immediately. While those efforts continue, it's not enough to solve the shortage, nursing professionals said.

Despite the less-than-flattering role models, there are men going into nursing, albeit few in number. Roughly 6 percent of all nurses are men, and there were nearly 2,600 more seeking a bachelor's tition that male nurses are orderlies or failed medical students.

"I've been in nursing for 30 years now, and we still have stereotypes that I see on TV and in the movies," said Frank Moore, a teacher at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., and board member of the American Nurses Association.

The federal government estimates that the industry is short FILE PHOTO high school in 1973, studied nursing in college. Although he endured sly looks and the silent disapproval of his father for a few years, attending college on a wrestling scholarship helped him.

Raper said that despite the shortage, there does not seem to be a concerted effort to give men a financial incentive to consider the profession.

"I don't see many (nursing) scholarships targeting men," Raper said. "If we're really serious, we've got to do more."

The nursing profession has evolved beyond handholding, sponge baths and backrubs. Nurses have shed the perception of being a doctor's handmaid. Nurses provide assessments, educate patients and work with technologically advanced machines. Some suture wounds and order medication. And they are not always roaming hospital hallways; nurses work on cruise ships, corporate America, schools and the military. They become health care administrators or chief executive officers of hospital networks.

"There are a lot more nursing avenues than I thought," said Paul Hernandez, a Chicago Police officer who is attending nursing school. "My only regret is that I should have done this years ago."

For the majority of men, nursing is a second, third or even fourth career.

"Men stayed away from the profession because the pay and benefits and ability to move up was not enough to provide for their families as the traditional (head of household) role needed," said Tom Renkes, executive director of the Illinois Nurses Association.

Salary isn't as much of an issue today because the shortage of nurses pushed up salaries and more women began working, sharing the load of supporting their families.

Freeman worked as a fireman and underwater welder before pursuing a long-time goal of becoming a nurse. Mike Kemp considered nursing after losing his job at the Chicago Board of Trade.
"I didn't want to start over in sales and I didn't want to start over in business," Kemp said. "I didn't want an MBA. I'm 38. I don't want to go through all of that."

Hernandez said he always had an interest in helping people, even during his 14 years as a medic in the U.S. Army and six years teaching in the Chicago Public School district. Two years ago, he decided to take the plunge and get a nursing degree with the goal of working in an emergency room.

"It's high octane," he said.

Lorene Yue writes for the Chicago Tribune.
Nursing taps men to ease shortage

Recruiters battle stereotypes, misconceptions in effort to lure more to profession

04:58 PM CST on Sunday, February 19, 2006

By LORENE YUE / Chicago Tribune

Quick, name a male nurse on TV or in the movies who was neither ridiculed nor portrayed wearing a white dress and cap.

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Growing problem

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Despite the less-than-flattering role models, there are men going into nursing, albeit few in number.

Roughly 6 percent of all nurses are men, and there were nearly 2,600 more seeking a bachelor's degree in nursing in 2005 than in 2004, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Some men are lured by the job security: More than 90 percent of 2005 nursing graduates found jobs. And there's the pay, which can start at $40,000. Nursing specialists can earn $100,000. Others are looking to switch to a career that combines medicine, counseling and care giving.

Johnson & Johnson has made a concerted effort to feature men in its print and broadcast materials on the nursing profession.

"We want people to look at the material and say, 'I can see myself in that profession,' " said Andrea Higham, director of Johnson & Johnson's nursing campaign.

Still, the stigma lingers, and it can be tough to persuade high school males to consider nursing.

"You've got to be pretty strong in high school to say you are going into nursing," said Don Houchins, director of nursing education and maternal-child services at Saint Mary of Nazareth Hospital Center in Chicago.

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**Career change**

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UNCC called a model in tech achievement

U.S. official hails its impact on health care, cites state’s innovation

By April Bethea
abethea@charlotteobserver.com

UNC Charlotte is leading the nation in creating new technology to improve quality of life and make the health care system more efficient, said Jon Dudas, the Undersecretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property on Friday.

Dudas’ visit to UNCC aimed to draw attention to President Bush’s desire to increase America’s competitiveness and innovation in health care technology. Speaking before university and local researchers and leaders, Dudas called the university a “model” in promoting that effort.

He cited a 2001 report that ranked the school first in the nation in the number of patent applications and start-up companies, second in innovations, and third in the number of patents issued per $10 million in research expenses. The report was by the Association of University Technology Managers.

That shows the university makes good use of its federal research dollars, said Dudas, who also is director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Dudas said the technology formed by UNCC start-ups also could help lower health care costs because scientists and physicians would be more efficient in their work — a major Bush goal. He singled out groups like HepatoSys, which develops technology for liver preservation and transportation.

The type of innovation at the university also extends to the rest of the state, Dudas said. N.C. residents applied for 4,479 patent applications last year. The state also has more than 10,000 graduate students in science and engineering fields, and nearly 8,500 new firms have started in Charlotte during the last decade.

“In some places, we talk about, ‘Boy, you really need to innovate more, you need to have a more proactive way to show how you plan to innovate,’” Dudas said. “That’s not the case here.”

U.S. Rep. Robin Hayes, a Concord Republican, also attended Friday’s event. He said the work under way in the Charlotte region and the forthcoming biotech hub in Kannapolis could help make the area one of the premier technology centers in the world.

April Bethea; (704) 358-6013.
ECU moves would aid Washington

There is a historical relationship between East Carolina University and Washington. Seven ECU trustees have come from Washington, including one chairman, and the city made a strong bid to host the school in 1907 but fell short.

Today, a thriving alumni community exists in Washington, and the bond is still tight. We were glad to hear ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard talk about deepening that connection during his swing through the city last week.

Appearing at the Turnage Theater and N.C. Estuarium — as well as in a sit-down interview with the Daily News — Ballard discussed current and forthcoming ties between ECU and the area. The best-known may be a sought-after partnership with the Turnage Theaters Foundation. The cooperation of the university’s visual and performing arts programs has been central to the foundation’s fundraising efforts over the years. Now that we stand to see the theater restored and opened within the next 12 months or so, that partnership will, we hope, come to fruition.

Our legislators can help make that happen, just as they’ve aided the Turnage in the past. One of ECU’s legislative priorities for the 2006 session is the creation of a summer theater program that would be housed at the historic venue. We enthusiastically encourage the General Assembly to fund such a program, with the expectation that it would eventually support itself.

A summer theater would be a boon on multiple levels — it would draw ECU expertise into downtown Washington while giving local young actors new outlets to explore and expand their passion. It would also provide cultural opportunities to Beaufort County residents, complementing the festival and Music in the Streets seasons.

Another of Ballard’s major initiatives, while not targeted at Washington specifically, would reap local benefits, as well. When the ECU Board of Trustees meets next Friday, it will likely pass a resolution favoring the creation of a new dentistry school at ECU. The trustees’ OK would forward the matter to the UNC Board of Governors. Ballard astutely indicated that navigating that political minefield will require assurances that the new school wouldn’t compete with the state’s existing dentistry program at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

If considered on its merits, we imagine the ECU proposal will short-circuit concerns about competition with UNC-CH. An ECU dentistry program, Ballard said, would focus on primary care, leaving specialized teaching and research to its nationally recognized sister. The ECU school would also be smaller than Chapel Hill’s, admitting 50 to 60 students. UNC-CH takes in 81 students a year.

The centerpiece of Ballard’s rationale is that an ECU dentistry school would focus on training dentists for rural N.C. areas, specifically those in the east. And there’s no question that dental care is lacking in this part of the state. Three counties east of Interstate 95 don’t have practicing dentists, and another four have only one.

It’s hard to say how often UNC-CH dental school graduates end up down east, but we can easily tell how many dental students come from the region. According to the UNC-CH dentistry school’s Web page, 13 of 69 in-state students in the class of 2009 came from counties east of Interstate 95.

We don’t have a complete picture of UNC-CH dentistry’s eastern output, or of how many dentists trained elsewhere settle in the area. But we know there’s a need for dentists in this part of the state, and we believe a dentistry school at the east’s university would provide them.

If ECU could pull off a dentistry school that manages to turn eastern N.C. students into eastern N.C. doctors, it would perform a much-needed public service. We see the value in such a program and encourage the UNC Board of Governors to weigh carefully an ECU dentistry proposal, should it face one.
Bryan gives $1 million to UNCG

The foundation earmarks its gift for the business school named for Joseph Bryan.

By Marta Hummel
Staff Writer

GREENSBORO — The Joseph M. Bryan Foundation will give an additional $1 million to UNCG's Bryan School of Business and Economics, foundation President Jim Melvin said.

The money will be used for a scholarship program for undergraduate and graduate students. It will be paid out in $200,000 installments over five years starting in 2007.

"The foundation's contribution will significantly enhance our recruitment abilities, which is especially important for our two new doctoral programs," James Weeks, dean of the Bryan School, said in a statement Monday.

Melvin said that Bryan, who served as senior vice president of Jefferson Standard Broadcasting Co., did not finish high school. But "if you look at his record in life, he was hugely interested in education."

Bryan gave millions to Duke University and to local universities, Melvin said. UNCG received the largest gift in his will.

Counting gifts from either Bryan, his estate or the foundation, he has given UNCG's business school $8 million.

The funds were used to create an endowment and to fund scholarships and an endowed professorship.

In 1987, the UNCG board of trustees voted to name the School of Business and Economics after him.

"We see the business school at UNCG as being an asset to the business community and, really, to the community as a whole," Melvin said.

Bryan hoped that by recruiting students to the school, they would stay in the area and contribute to the community after graduation, Melvin said.

The gift follows a $1 million pledge by the foundation in December to N.C. A&T.

That pledge will be paid out over five years, as well, Melvin said.

Bryan created the foundation in 1984 with the goal of improving the cultural, recreational and economic well-being of people in Greater Greensboro. He died at 99 in 1995.

Contact Marta Hummel at 373-7070 or mhummel @news-record.com

See UNCG, Page B3