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Local education officials are looking to reassure residents following Monday’s fatal school shooting in Ohio.

Three students had died as of Tuesday afternoon after a 17-year-old male shot and wounded five students in the cafeteria of a high school Monday morning in Chardon, just east of Cleveland.

“Certainly, any time something tragic like this happens, we use it as another opportunity to review procedures regarding school safety,” Heather Mayo, Pitt County Schools public information officer, said. “But it is important for our community to know that we don’t wait for a tragedy to strike in order to begin reviewing them. These procedures are reviewed on an annual basis in our district.”

While it is difficult to understand why students would want to threaten the lives of others, prevention, preparation and communication are key in responding to such situations, Mayo said.

“Two of the most important lessons we have learned since Columbine are the need to be prepared and collaborate with other agencies,” Mayo said, referring to the mass shootings in 1999 at the Colorado high school.

All schools have crisis response plans that detail steps for evacuation, lockdown procedures, notification of emergency responders, how to initiate the crisis response team, and communicate with the parents and the community. For the last several years, the district has required at least two lockdown drills at each school during the year, one announced and one unannounced.

“These plans are shared with local law enforcement agencies and emergency responders to ensure strong communication and rapid response in the event of an emergency,” Mayo said. “In many instances, law enforcement and/or emergency responders participate in our lockdown drills.”

At the end of each drill, school officials and any participating responders debrief to discuss ways to improve the process.

The use of the Campus CrimeStoppers phone tipline also is encouraged among students.
“More often than not, students know what their friends and classmates are doing,” Mayo said. “It is extremely important that our students know that they can report this type of information and that officials will take quick and appropriate action, all while maintaining the confidentiality of the student’s identity.”

The majority of shootings in school settings are perpetrated by students who attend that school, according to Mark Stebnicki, rehabilitation counseling professor at East Carolina University. Early reports indicate that Monday’s shooter attended a nearby alternative high school but knew some of the students he shot.

While Ohio officials have not released an official motive or cause, Stebnicki said “the vast majority of shooters have multiple mental health issues that are longstanding and have been either ignored or not recognized by parents, the schools and others in the community.”

In Pitt County, “administrators, teachers, counselors and school resource officers are constantly communicating with students to keep a pulse on student issues that could pose a potential problem at school,” Mayo said.

This week, Superintendent Beverly Emory will ask school staff to rededicate themselves to being responsive to student issues.

“Schools are extensions of families, neighborhoods and communities,” Mayo said. “It is our job to educate these children in a safe environment, and we take that responsibility very seriously. Parents are also encouraged to talk with their children about school safety, the danger of weapons in school, and the importance of sharing any information they may have with adults.”

If a shooting were to happen, counseling for students, staff and families can help healing, Stebnicki said.

“There have been significant advances in therapeutic strategies to help schools and communities cope with critical incidents such as school shootings,” he said. “Communities pulling together through grieving the loss, making some meaning of the critical incident, spiritual support, and using multiple resources to heal have been important for long term successful healing.”

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Taylor Branch

DeCock: NCAA critics speak up at UNC discussion

BY LUKE DECOCK - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL–In the middle of a panel discussion at the University of North Carolina on Tuesday about the state of college athletics, civil-rights historian Taylor Branch offered a little personal insight into just how out of whack things have gotten.

"I've been told within the last 48 hours here that athletes who want to come talk to me about the equities of college sports here in Chapel Hill cannot come see me even privately, because their coaches won't let them," said Branch, a visiting professor at North Carolina who has recently become an outspoken critic of the NCAA.

"This is not a place of free enquiry, which is what it should be, if you have that kind of control vested in people who are not even on the faculty of this university."

Branch made that point early in a panel discussion with former North Carolina president Bill Friday and Duke professor Charles Clotfelter before a standing-room only crowd at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center Theater. Both Branch and Clotfelter have recently published books about the state of college athletics, while Friday has spent decades pushing NCAA reform.

All three offered specific, and disparate, priorities for change, but the Q&A session that followed suggested the university might want to worry about fixing itself before it moves on to the NCAA.

First, English professor Jane Thrailkill revealed that the university's development staff identifies donors in its database who refuse to give to the university until chancellor Holden Thorp is dismissed because he "messed
with the football team" by firing former coach Butch Davis amid nine major NCAA violations. "Shameful," Thrailkill called it.

Public policy professor Hodding Carter, who served on the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics with Friday, took the opportunity to criticize the North Carolina faculty for its lack of outrage over the hiring of "a big-time coach with a big-time salary," like Davis, long before he ever steered the football program into trouble.

"As far as I can see, on one campus after another, the silence of the faculty is very much the silence of the lambs," Carter said, "allowing the slaughter of the integrity of the institutions they serve to go forward."

Former offensive coordinator John Shoop, a member of that same "big-time" staff, then stood to ask what was essentially a rhetorical question about the university putting its image and reputation ahead of the rights of students in its response to the NCAA investigation, specifically mentioning Devon Ramsay, who sued the NCAA and lost.

"The university comes first. I've heard that a million times," Shoop said. "From where I sit, the men and women who make up the university are the university. If we're not going to advocate for them, I'm confused."

When North Carolina athletic director Bubba Cunningham took the microphone to respond to Shoop, an audience member who identified himself as a North Carolina graduate stood up from his seat to challenge Cunningham to allow his athletes to speak with Branch in a bit of guerilla activism.

Cunningham acquiesced, but not before an academic forum had become yet another public airing of football grievances, underlining just how raw and deep the wounds remain six months after Thorp fired Davis, with the NCAA's long-delayed final judgment still yet to arrive.

As the questioners from the audience pounded away at issues related to the football scandal, the panelists looked a bit perplexed at how what began as a reasonable and thoughtful discussion of NCAA reform had been hijacked by a family squabble - proving, once again, that all politics is local.

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The University of North Carolina Wilmington plans to spin off its Entrepreneurship Center so the center can expand and help support economic development in the area, Chancellor Gary L. Miller said Tuesday.

At a time of tight education budgets, the move allows the center to broaden its reach in identifying and nurturing start-up businesses to also include ideas and innovations from faculty and staff across the university. Currently the center is part of the school's Cameron School of Business.

The center, which was created in 2010, helps connect start-up companies and small businesses to sources of expertise and funding.

The UNCW Entrepreneurship Center LLC – which will operate under the auspices of the UNCW Research Foundation and remain controlled by the university – would receive private funding.

Its reorganization as an LLC, however, restricts the amount of money it can receive from the university, Miller said following a news conference at UNCW's Burney Center.

Center director Jonathan Rowe has been charged with developing an expanded business plan for the center, which was previously operated with university and membership funds, Miller said.

"With the help of donors, he hopes to make the center self-sustaining within the next few years," he said.

Rowe, who will become managing director of the spin-off company said after the news conference that, "Even though the center is a separate LLC, (the reorganization) will enable the center to work with all the faculty on campus."

He said the center "probably would set up a committee of entrepreneurs and investors to vet some of the ideas (from faculty or students) to see whether they have commercial application."

Miller said that the center will assist UNCW "in its innovation and commercialization efforts, such as MARBIONC."
MARBIONC stands for Marine Biotechnology in North Carolina and is a marine science program with a focus on creating a marine biotechnology business economy.

UNCW is building a new $30 million facility to house the MARBIONC program at the school's Center for Marine Science off Masonboro Loop Road.

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Colleges Misassign Many to Remedial Classes, Studies Find

By TAMAR LEWIN

Two new studies from the Community College Research Center at Columbia University’s Teachers College have found that community colleges unnecessarily place tens of thousands of entering students in remedial classes — and that their placement decisions would be just as good if they relied on high school grade-point averages instead of standardized placement tests.

The studies address one of the most intractable problems of higher education: the dead end of remedial education. At most community colleges, a majority of entering students who recently graduated from high school are placed in remedial classes, where they pay tuition but earn no college credit. Over all, less than a quarter of those who start in remedial classes go on to earn two-year degrees or transfer to four-year colleges.

The studies, one of a large urban community college system and the other of a statewide system, found that more than a quarter of the students assigned to remedial classes based on their test scores could have passed college-level courses with a grade of B or higher.

“We hear a lot about the high rates of failure in college-level classes at community colleges,” said Judith Scott-Clayton, the author of the urban study and a Teachers College professor of economics and education and senior research associate. “Those are very visible. What’s harder to see are the students who could have done well at college level but never got the chance because of these placement tests.”

The colleges’ use of the leading placement tests — the College Board’s Accuplacer and ACT’s Compass — lead to mistakes in both directions, the studies find, but students going into college-level classes they cannot handle is not as serious as unnecessary remedial placement, which often derails college careers.

Although the placement tests have been widely used since the late 1980s, students rarely understand how much is at stake. Typically, students are told that they need not worry about the tests because they are for placement — and very few colleges encourage them to prepare as they would for a college-entrance exam like the SAT.
The studies found that using high school grade-point averages as the basis for placement would be as good as or better than using the placement tests, but the authors stopped short of recommending that community colleges simply drop the tests and use high school transcripts when available.

“It’s probably a mistake to rely on any single measure for high-stakes decisions,” said Clive Belfield, who is an economics professor at Queens College, a researcher at Teachers College and one of the authors of the study on the statewide system. “Where you have both a test and a high school transcript, the best thing is to use both together.”

Remedial education practices vary widely. At some colleges, even if remedial courses are recommended, students can choose to register for college-level courses; at others, the courses are mandatory for those below the cut-off scores. With the Obama administration pushing to improve the nation’s dismal community college graduation rates, many states and community college systems are rethinking their approaches to remedial education.

“I haven’t seen the studies, but what I do know is that when I talk with leaders of community colleges, a lot of them have issues with the diagnostic tests and sense that far too many students are being put in developmental, remedial education, especially in math,” said Walter G. Bumphus, president of the American Association of Community Colleges. “Almost every one of them has some plan to change that.”

In Virginia, for example, Northern Virginia Community College recently modularized its math requirements so that students can study just the areas in which they are weak, and not be stuck in semester-long math classes.

In addition, the math requirements differ depending on a student’s academic program. The English faculty, too, is re-examining its remedial program.

At Lake Area Technical Institute in South Dakota, each of the 27 majors has different admissions standards, so that, for example, precision-machining students need higher math scores than those studying cosmetology.

“We get some students with rusty math skills who do poorly on the test, and we send them to a Web site where they can brush up their skills and take the test again, and most of them do fine,” said Deb Shephard, Lake Area’s president. “It’s less than 5 percent of our entering students who need remediation, and they do it on their lunch hour, side by side with the other courses they’re taking.”
Toothache? The ER doctor will see you now.

**Dental Visits To ERs Are On The Rise**

by Shefali S. Kulkarni

Americans who turn up in the emergency room to get dental care aren't lost, they're probably just running out of options.

According to a new report from the Pew Center on the States, more than 800,000 visits to the ER in 2009 were for toothaches and other avoidable dental ailments.

"People showing up at emergency rooms for dental is really your sign that your system is breaking down," Shelly Gehshan, director for the Pew Center's Children's Dental Campaign says. "It's just not serving enough people. This is your symptom of a system in crisis."

In hard times, states often cut Medicaid's dental benefits, pushing low-income patients from the dentist's office to the emergency room.

But the shift from Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals is still costly to states. Dental groups have long since said that ERs only provide temporary relief for dental emergencies and lead to reoccurring hospital visits, which
burden taxpayers. "We're spending in the worst possible way," Gehshan says.

For example the report shows that in 2002 Maryland had a 12 percent increase in the rate of ER dental visits once the state stopped Medicaid reimbursements for private practice dentists treating adult emergencies. Florida reported more than 115,000 dental-related ER visits in 2010, and in Oregon a 31 percent hike of ER cases among Medicaid enrollees over a three-year period.

Access to dental care is also creating the surge in ER visits. Safety-net facilities like community health centers are losing federal funding and are unable to provide comprehensive dental care.

The report suggests several steps to alleviate this problem. "States committed to serving more low-income people should ensure their Medicaid reimbursement rates are high enough to cover the cost of care," the report notes. Gehshan says that 90 percent of dental care in the U.S. is done by private practitioners and the majority of them don't accept Medicaid.

Another strategy includes implementing 'dental therapists' or providers that are similar to nurse practitioners in the medical field. According to the report, dental therapists would be supervised by dentists and "could perform some services offered by dentists, including both preventive and restorative (e.g., filling cavities) care." Minnesota and some Native American Alaskan tribes are already using these professionals.

But the American Dental Association, which released a statement on Tuesday agreeing with much of Pew's report, opposes the idea of expanding dental therapists in the U.S. The dental association challenges Pew's projections of a decreasing supply of trained dentists and notes that relegating patients to "so-called 'midlevel dental providers' is wrongheaded."

The ADA cites the Journal of Dental Education's 2009 report that "both the ratio of dentists to population and the net number of dentists will increase, not decrease, contrary to what the Pew report states."
She had grown up in a middle-class family, earned Latin American studies and culinary degrees and gotten a job working with at-risk youth at a non-profit.

Then, after Martinez-Moreno left her job to study food science at Oregon State University in Corvallis, her boyfriend unexpectedly lost his job. She realized they needed help.

She found part of the answer to their problem at Oregon State's food pantry, though she was hesitant at first to use it.

"It's a really humbling experience," Martinez-Moreno says, but once she was in the door, the pantry became "a relief" and "a nice added bonus" to help her along. It was a positive experience that she now aims to help share as the pantry's paid outreach coordinator.

"The more comfortable you are, the more you will feel it's a viable resource for you," Martinez-Moreno says.

Oregon State is one of a growing number of colleges and universities nationwide that have a food pantry on campus for students and others struggling to get enough food and supplies.

The pantries offer food and supplies, from cereal to meats to produce to toiletries, as well as a feeling of camaraderie and dignity, according to pantry staff members and volunteers.

Tennessee State and Austin Peay State universities in Tennessee, the University of Arkansas, the University of Georgia and Utah Valley University are among the schools to establish food pantries in the past year.

Angela Oxford, director of the University of Arkansas' Center for Community Engagement, says she estimates there currently are about 25 universities and colleges that have campus food pantries.

"We've been contacted by at least 10 different campuses in the last year" about how to start a food pantry, Oxford says.
Daniel Farcas, a doctoral student at West Virginia University, says he visits the university's pantry about once a week, most often for diapers and occasionally for food. Farcas says he didn't know about the pantry before he became a parent.

"After I got married and had kids, I started looking for help," says Farcas, whose wife is a graduate student.

Farcas says that he is grateful to the organizers and volunteers and that they understand the challenges faced by students such as himself.

The Oregon State pantry, opened in 2009, sees several hundred students, plus community members, each month, according to Martinez-Moreno. Some of these students are supporting families or can't get help from their parents, she says, but the list doesn't end there.

"There is no typical student who accesses the food pantry," she says.

Feeding America, a hunger-relief organization and national network of food banks, has seen an increase of people across many demographic categories who lack consistent access to an adequate amount of healthy food, according to Ross Fraser, the organization's director of media relations.

"It's not a surprise," says Feeding America President and CEO Vicki Escarra, that college students are among those facing insecurity over food and who put other critical expenses over food.

Furthermore, full-time students are usually not eligible to receive food stamps under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, according to Brady Koch, director of SNAP outreach at Feeding America.

According to the most recent data, Feeding America served 37 million people in 2009, up from 25 million in 2005, through its emergency food centers, which include soup kitchens, food pantries and shelters, says Fraser, citing the organization's "Hunger in America" studies.

Some campus pantries, such as those at West Virginia University and Michigan State University, have purchased items from food banks that are Feeding America members, according to pantry staff members.

Julia Lyon, a student volunteer and chairwoman of the University of Arkansas' pantry, says that while the number of students struggling with hunger is "something that's kind of under the radar," it's clearly a problem on campus. Since it opened in February 2011, the pantry has met more than 800 requests for food and supplies from students and staff members, Lyon says.
At Michigan State, the food pantry has seen the effects of the tough economic times, says Nate Smith-Tyge, a doctoral student and the pantry's director.

The pantry, established in 1993, saw a spike in users in the 2005-06 academic year, and the number remains relatively high, he says, with about 200 to 300 people served every other Wednesday.

Both on- and off-campus donations help fill the shelves in addition to items purchased or otherwise collected, according to pantry volunteers and staff members.

Sarah Howard, a student volunteer at WVU's pantry, open since the fall of 2010, says non-perishable donations come from a variety of sources, from fraternities and sororities to community members.

Many of the pantries emphasize discretion and aim to make what could be an embarrassing and difficult experience as comfortable as possible. Having students serving other students, Lyon says, helps make the pantry less intimidating.

"We're overcoming the element of embarrassment more than logistics," Lyon says.