WILMINGTON, NC (WWAY) -- A piece of history has returned to the Battleship North Carolina.

The Battleship has housed a rare rubber relief map of Iwo Jima for more than 50 years, but sent it to East Carolina University to preserve it. After five months of work, ECU conservationists brought the map home today.

It's a topographic map that shows airstrips and landing procedures so the navy would know how exactly to get on Iwo Jima.

"For some sailors, it was the first time... they'd never even gone international before," Battleship spokeswoman Heather Loftin said. "They might be over the the states looking at this map, trying to focus and see what their strategy was going to be, moving into war when they got into Iwo Jima, so it was a way for them to see the world before they even got there."

Loftin said the map will be stored in the archives for now. It will make its grand appearance in April at the annual crew reunion and the ship's 70th birthday.
Curtis Barrett, seated, has a sample of his blood taken from Latrica Hodges as his volunteer escort Elliot William, right, watches during a health screening during Homeless Connect, a one-day event to provide a broad range of services to homeless and at-risk population at the Greenville Convention Center on Wednesday. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

Event helps homeless make connections
By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, March 3, 2011

People in recovery, people working to overcome their criminal convictions, people trying to rebound from job loss. All sought a fresh start Wednesday at an event designed to end homelessness in Pitt County.

Project Homeless Connect offered services to about 200 people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless during the six-hour event the Greenville Convention Center.

The event was part of the 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Pitt County.

“"The idea is to go to one place and talk to multiple, different people about multiple, different problems,”" Paulette White, manager of the 10-Year Project, said.

Twenty-four groups provided health screenings and dental care, offered job counseling and vocational training information, and discussed housing assistance.

“"Everyone needed services,”" White said. “"Even if they weren't literally homeless, living at the shelter, they needed help of one kind of another. “"We had over 50 people sign up for the dental van, and they could only see 11,”" she said. “"It's a service that takes time, and we're already working on ways to expand the service next year.””

Barbers also were on hand to provide free haircuts and shaves. Bobby Barrett of Farmville took the opportunity to get a trim.
“Appearance is important because you never get a second chance to make a first impression,” he said.

Barrett spent 13 years in prison after a burglary conviction. “It's hard to get back in society and find a job with a criminal background,” he said, adding that he splits his time between staying with his parents in Farmville and friends in Greenville.

Barrett has worked in various jobs including farming and masonry. “I'll do whatever as long as I can make a honest living and a decent income,” he said.

He attended Wednesday's event in hopes of getting food stamp assistance until he can find a job and permanent housing. He said he was directed to the Employment Security Commission for work placement assistance.

“This is wonderful to help because some don't know the right direction to go,” he said.

Along with the barber stations, health services was one of the busiest areas. Sixty people had undergone blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose screenings along with HIV and syphilis testing by 11 a.m., said Deborah Herring, the Pitt County Health Department's director of nursing and personal health services.

Herring's staff was assisted by 10 students from East Carolina University's College of Nursing.

People wanted to know their blood pressure because it offers a baseline about their overall health, Herring said. While the resources aren't available to provide long-term, follow-up care, getting this baseline information could assist them if they have a crisis situation later on, she said.

The health department worked with Healthy Start Baby Love Plus, a federally funded program, to provide multi-vitamins to expecting mothers.

Greenville resident Benita Williams was searching for help for her brother, who she calls B.K., a Craven County resident who couldn't attend because he didn't have transportation. She stopped by on her way to classes at Pitt Community College.

Williams' brother is a recovering addict who ran into problems when he lost his job because he was in court working out a child support issue.

“He's been clean, and I don't want him to go back to that life,” she said. “He was working, he was gaining weight, and he was doing good until he had to go to court.” Officials with the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services suggested Williams' brother apply for assistance with their agency. She got an application and plans to help him fill it out and turn it in.
The event included 190 volunteers who escorted individuals to find the services they needed.

Elliott Williams was one of those volunteers. Williams said after a 25-year battle with drug addiction, gang affiliations and nine years in six different prisons he is clean and wants to give back to the community.

Had an event like Project Homeless Connect been available during his user days, Williams said he might have been able to get help earlier. He knew agencies were out there that could help him get clean and find a job, but he had trouble trusting people because he felt they looked down on him and didn't think he was worth helping.

The volunteers with Project Homeless Connect were treating people with respect and put them at ease about asking for help, Williams said.

Pitt County’s event was modeled after similar gatherings held in Asheville and Wake and Orange counties.

“I am awed at the heart of Pitt County,” White said. “The community has just reached out and taken on this issue and it is just a wonderful thing.

“These folks really care about making sure everyone was treated with respect and those guests could reach as many services and get as many of their questions answered,” she said.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or (252) 329-9570.
Pitt County's population grew nearly 26 percent and Greenville's grew nearly 40 percent in the last decade, according to 2010 U.S. Census data released Wednesday.

North Carolina's overall population grew by nearly 1.5 million people during the last decade, reaching 9.5 million people.

The population totals and demographic characteristics will be used to redraw federal, state and local legislative districts. Redrawing the districts is necessary to account for shifts in population.

The report includes population counts for geographic areas about race, Hispanic origin, voting age and housing unit information. It reflects population on April 1, 2010.

The count shows 168,148 people lived in Pitt County at the time, 34,350 more people than in 2000. According to census data, Pitt County's population was 107,924 in 1990. Greenville's population was 84,554 on April 1, 24,078 people more than in 2000. Greenville's population was 44,972 in 1990.

“Wow,” was the one-word response Pitt County Manager Scott Elliott had to the news. “We were expecting between 160,000 to 165,000” he said. “That's fantastic. I'm glad the numbers show an increase even with the recessionary effects in the last few years.”
Elliott attributes the trend to the increase in students at East Carolina University and Pitt Community College and the growth of Pitt County Memorial Hospital and the Brody School of Medicine.

Greenville City Manager Wayne Bowers said Greenville's growth also was more than expected.

“The annual estimates had us going up throughout the decade, so we weren't totally surprised,” Bowers said. However, he expected the census figures to fall in the 82,000-83,000 range.

“Getting 84,554 was a little bit of a surprise,” he said.

Like Elliott, Bowers attributes the city's growth to the university and medical center. Annexation also has played a role in the population increase.

“The biggest growth areas have been in the southwest area of the city,” he said. “Ten years ago very little of that area was developed, and few people lived there.”

Developers sought annexation so they could access city sewer. They built houses, and those houses were bought by people working at the university, the hospital and others businesses and industries.

The development of large-scale student housing complexes also attributed to the city's growth, he said.

Greenville's growth makes it the 10th largest city in North Carolina, but Pitt County dropped in ranking to the 14th-largest county, down one spot, according to the data.

Johnston County, which ranked 21st in the state in 2000 with a population of 121,965, has a population of 168,878, 730 people more than Pitt County and making it the 13th-largest county in the state.

Data for Pitt County's nine other municipalities wasn't released Wednesday.

Information released from the 2010 Census also shows:

99,075 non-Hispanic whites live in Pitt County;
47,579 non-Hispanic whites live in Greenville;
57,257 blacks live in Pitt County;
31,272 blacks live in Greenville;
9,202 Hispanic or Latino people live in Pitt County;
3,183 Hispanic or Latino people live in Greenville;
3,388 people who are bi-racial or multi-racial live in Pitt County;
1,852 people who are bi-racial or multi-racial live in Greenville;
2,613 Asians live in Pitt County;
2,025 Asians live in Greenville;
582 American Indian or Alaska natives live in Pitt County;
303 American Indian or Alaska natives live in Greenville;
97 Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders live in Pitt County;
34 Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders live in Greenville;
5,136 individuals identifying themselves as some other race live in Pitt County;
1,489 individuals identifying themselves as some other race live in Greenville.

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Warrant seeks agent's records in UNC football case
BY KEN TYSIAC - Staff Writer

A search warrant executed Tuesday by the North Carolina Secretary of State's office alleges that sports agent Gary Wichard paid for former North Carolina football player Marvin Austin to travel to California, in apparent violation of North Carolina's Uniform Athlete Agent Act.

The warrant, filed by Sam Cabrera, a special agent with the Department of the Secretary of State of North Carolina, seeks Bank of America records for an account belonging to Wichard and his company, Pro Tect Management, LLC, which is based in Westlake Village, Calif.

Todd Amis, Austin's former assistant coach at Ballou High in Washington, D.C., paid for Austin to travel to California in March 2009 and July 2009, the warrant states.

According to the warrant, Amis said he was reimbursed by Wichard for Austin's March 2009 flight to California, where Austin trained at a facility called Pro Active Sports with former UNC teammate Kentwan Balmer.

Amis provided a canceled check from Pro Tect dated March 3, 2009 in the amount of $1,000, according to the warrant. The check was signed by Wichard.
Altour International Inc., a travel agency, also provided documentation showing that Pro Tect paid $915.40 for changes to Austin's flights to and from California in March 2009, according to the warrant.

North Carolina law prohibits agents from furnishing anything of value to a student-athlete before the student-athlete enters into an agency contract.

The warrant also states that Wichard said he and Austin had several phone conversations, beginning with contact initiated by Wichard in January 2009.

According to North Carolina law, an agent must be registered in the state to initiate contact with an athlete.

Wichard's registration in North Carolina expired on Dec. 31, 1998 and has not been renewed, according to the warrant.

In December, the NFL Players Association suspended Wichard's contract adviser status for nine months for having impermissible communications with Austin.

North Carolina dismissed Austin from the team for the 2010 season for receiving benefits that UNC athletic director Dick Baddour estimated at between $10,000 and $13,000. The warrant provides evidence that Austin received benefits before the 2009 season, when he played for the Tar Heels as a junior, that the NCAA could deem impermissible.

If the NCAA decides Austin played in 2009 while ineligible, it could cause North Carolina to vacate its wins from that season, when the Tar Heels went 8-5. Baddour said Wednesday that the warrant doesn't necessarily establish that Austin was ineligible in 2009.

Baddour mentioned former Auburn quarterback Cam Newton, who was cleared by the NCAA last fall because it was ruled he was unaware that his father had solicited money from Mississippi State for Newton's services.

"It may not change anything, because I don't know what Marvin knew," Baddour said. "And if Cam Newton didn't know ... it apparently connects Wichard with Marvin's high school coach. Marvin has reported all along that his high school coach paid for it. So I don't know what Marvin knew."
Baddour said UNC will continue to cooperate in every way possible with the Secretary of State's investigation.

UNC is awaiting word of possible penalties from the NCAA. Fourteen players were held out of at least one game, and seven missed the entire season in the NCAA's investigation of impermissible benefits and academic misconduct.

While in California, Austin stayed at a Marriott Residence Inn with Balmer, Austin said in the warrant. Balmer is a client of Wichard's and plays defensive tackle for the Seattle Seahawks.

Balmer paid for Austin's training at Pro Active Sports, according to the warrant. In the past, Wichard clients such as Carolina Panthers quarterback Jimmy Clausen, Buffalo Bills running back C.J. Spiller and Indianapolis Colts defensive lineman Dwight Freeney have trained at the Pro Active facility in Thousand Oaks, Calif., according to the Pro Active website.

A second former UNC player, defensive tackle Cam Thomas of the San Diego Chargers, told The News & Observer and Charlotte Observer in August that he also traveled to California and that Balmer paid for the trip. A violation of North Carolina's uniform athlete agent act is a Class I felony, carrying a maximum prison sentence of 15 months, according to Secretary of State spokesman George Jeter. A civil penalty of up to $25,000 can also be assessed.

"We are advancing in the investigation," Jeter said. "We are seeking these bank records, and the reasons I think are pretty much outlined in the document."

Jeter declined further comment, saying the investigation is ongoing. Wichard's lawyer, Howard Silber, declined to comment initially because he hadn't seen the search warrant. Efforts to reach him after the warrant was e-mailed to him were unsuccessful.

Amis is an officer with the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C. In an e-mail, department spokeswoman Gwendolyn Crump said the department will look into the matter.
Moses Ware, who was Austin's head coach at Ballou, said he is sure that Amis had no malicious intent and perhaps didn't understand some of the rules. Ware said Austin was probably just trying to find a way to work out and get better.

"The thing that disappoints me is what the agents are doing," said Ware, who now coaches tight ends at Bowie State University in Bowie, Md. "They take advantage of kids."

Efforts to reach Ballou principal Rahman Branch were unsuccessful.

*Staff writer Robbi Pickeral contributed to this report.*

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Public Universities Seek More Autonomy as Financing From States Shrinks

By TAMAR LEWIN

With states providing a dwindling share of money for higher education, many states and public universities are rethinking their ties.

The public universities say that with less money from state coffers, they cannot afford the complicated web of state regulations governing areas like procurement and building, and that they need more flexibility to compete with private institutions.

As a result, the fundamental model for supporting higher education is being reconsidered, with many universities winning greater autonomy — sometimes even in setting tuition.

The University of Oregon’s president is proposing a new model for state support: He wants the state to issue bonds raising money to build the university’s endowment.

In Ohio, Gov. John Kasich talks of “charter universities” that would get less state financing, but be exempt from some state mandates, like those covering construction projects.

In Louisiana, the business-backed Flagship Coalition has the governor’s support for a plan to free Louisiana State University from many state regulations.

And in Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker proposed on Tuesday to separate the main Madison campus from the rest of the state university system, and make it a public authority. Last week, Madison’s chancellor, Carolyn A. Martin, told the Wisconsin Board of Regents that she was hamstrung by state control.
“The accumulated layers of bureaucracy and the control of our mission from a distance make our institutions byzantine mazes, sometimes with no obvious exit,” she said. “It’s hard to be more responsible or more responsive if we spend all our time trying to comprehend and then follow 25 steps to get approval for one purchase.”

Many education experts say public universities deserve greater autonomy, now that the bulk of their support no longer comes from the state. But they worry that the shift could lead universities to stray from their mission of giving state residents access to affordable higher education.

“There is a real tension between serving the public needs, on one hand, and doing what they have to do to ensure that their institution can compete in the marketplace,” said Jane Wellman, executive director of the Delta Cost Project.

Ms. Wellman is particularly critical of the trend toward splitting flagships like the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which generally have the biggest research grants, the most alumni support, the best faculty and students and the most political clout, from the rest of the state’s higher education system.

“Madison seceding from the union sends the message, ‘We’re not like you, we’re better than you, we’re going to cut our own deal,’ ” she said. “They may be better and different, but they still have a responsibility to assert a leadership role rather than cut their own deal.”

Moves to give the flagship special treatment raise real tensions especially where, as in Wisconsin and Oregon, the state system is itself seeking greater flexibility.

George Pernsteiner, chancellor of the Oregon University System, said it had built support for pending legislation that would change the system’s status, and most importantly, ensure that tuition income would be used to support the university, and not raided by the state to balance the budget.

But as that legislation moves forward, the president of the University of Oregon is pursuing an unusual effort to have the state issue some $800 million in new bonds, and commit to covering the debt service for 30 years. The university would raise private money to match the bonds, for a $1.6 billion endowment.
“We’ve got a chance to present a model for the rest of the country,” said Richard Lariviere, the university president. “It would provide a reliable source of income.” And once the bonds are retired, the state would no longer need to provide the basic financing for the university.

Wisconsin’s governor, whose budget-cutting and efforts to limit collective bargaining have stirred weeks of demonstrations, has also proposed to make the Madison campus a public authority — and perhaps do the same, later, for the Milwaukee campus.

At last week’s meeting, one of the regents, Danae Davis, suggested that autonomy for Madison would not help the rest of the system. “We have been consistent and transparent in our wish to have the very same flexibility that you so eloquently describe, but for all of our campuses,” she said. “Why do you think this works to the benefit of our other institutions, or do you not care?”

Ms. Martin said in an interview this week that there was “no traction” for any systemwide proposal, and that she felt an obligation to do everything possible to sustain one of the nation’s great public research universities in the face of repeated budget cuts.

“I have to play the cards I’ve been dealt,” she said. Ms. Martin said she was confident her university would remain true to its public mission.

“Faculty, staff, alumni and students here are 100 percent committed to the Wisconsin idea, the nearly 100-year-old idea that the boundaries of the university extend to the boundaries of the state,” she said. “Support for that idea is so strong that I don’t have to worry about our fulfilling the public mission — unless we’re in a position where we don’t have the resources or flexibility. The risk to the mission is greater if we don’t have flexibility we need than if we do.”

Some education policy experts warn that states cannot solve the problems of financing higher education one institution at a time. They caution that giving special treatment to the flagship without considering the needs of the whole system and the less-prepared students who attend community colleges — is likely to backfire over the long term.
“Someone has to be thinking about the whole picture, and where limited budget resources should go,” said Aims McGuinness, of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. “Otherwise, you’re bound to get counterreactions. The legislature will say, we gave you the flexibility, but we didn’t think you’d raise tuition so much.”

If history is any guide, he said, single-institution solutions will lead to confusion, duplicative programs, internecine warfare and, often, recentralization.
U-Va. Rotunda waits in line for repairs

By Daniel de Vise
Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, March 1, 2011; 9:55 PM

CHARLOTTESVILLE - Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda, the historic heart of the University of Virginia, is among the most iconic structures in higher education. Yet a close inspection reveals that the proud Corinthian capitals above its entrance are crumbling. The elevator jams at inopportune moments. The roof leaks.

Coming up with the money to fix a building of such gravitas might seem a simple affair. Jefferson's university is a storied "public Ivy," with a $5 billion endowment. Someone could, presumably, write a check.

But the endowment is largely off-limits for capital projects. And Virginia lawmakers closed their annual session Sunday without budgeting a single dollar toward the $51 million Rotunda renovation. University leaders are prepared to raise nearly half the cost from donors - but only if the General Assembly commits to paying the other half.
To Virginia lawmakers, the Rotunda repairs were Line 1054 on a list of projects awaiting funding, one urgent need among many for a higher education system that inspires both pride and anxiety in Virginia's leaders.

"It was really a tremendous tragedy, for the Rotunda and other very essential capital projects," said Sen. R. Edward Houck (D-Spotsylvania), a U-Va. alumnus who sits on the Senate Finance Committee.

Public investment in state universities, and U-Va. in particular, has stalled as the universities' other revenue sources have grown.

State dollars now cover 7 percent of the cost of operating U-Va., down from 26 percent two decades ago. State appropriations to the university dwindled in the recent economic downturn from $167 million in fiscal 2008-09 to $136 million in 2010-11.

In the halls of government, there is no want of enthusiasm for repairing the Rotunda, which Jefferson modeled on the Pantheon in Rome. The archetypal image of the dome and the facade, its six columns topped with a triangular pediment, has become a visual trademark for U-Va. and historic Virginia.

But as the legislative session closed, the project fell victim to political stalemate. For now, the marble capitals remain draped in black mesh netting - to protect people walking below from pieces that might break off.

"The Rotunda is the part of the university - not the basketball team, not the football team, not the marching band - the Rotunda is the symbol around the world for which the university is known," said Sen. R. Creigh Deeds (D-Bath), a former gubernatorial candidate. "We have an obligation to fix it."

Jefferson envisioned the Rotunda as the centerpiece of his "academical village," a collection of Greek Revival structures housing faculty, students and classrooms, a cutting-edge concept in an era when many universities occupied single buildings.

The Rotunda faces two rows of pavilions that line either side of a broad lawn. With them, it forms three walls of Corinthian, Doric and Ionic columns. Jefferson's village, the prototype of the modern quad, defined an architectural style that would influence the design of courthouses, mansions and other college campuses across the nation.
"He created something that was really pretty new and pretty utopian," said Brian Hogg, a historic preservationist at the university.

The Rotunda faces southwest, away from town, and is on a hilltop. Its dome and columns would slowly reveal themselves on the horizon to people in carriages approaching "the Grounds." Construction was completed in 1826, shortly after Jefferson's death, at a cost of $60,000.

The Rotunda housed the university's then-modest library and large classrooms in which were conducted such malodorous studies as chemistry and physics to keep them away from professors' homes. Most other classes were taught on the ground floors of the 10 pavilions that housed the faculty.

An ungainly addition was added to the Rotunda in 1853. It burned in an 1895 fire that gutted the building and devoured the dome, leaving only the round brick walls and the stone columns.

Stanford White, a renowned American architect, remade the building's interior in an ornate Beaux Arts style. He replaced Jefferson's columns and the carved capitals that topped them. A terra cotta dome supplanted Jefferson's wooden construction.

That is how the Rotunda remained until 1973, when the university decided to return to Jefferson's original design. The Beaux Arts trappings were gutted, a simpler interior restored and a stainless steel roof installed. In 1976, the American Institute of Architects declared Jefferson's academical village the most significant achievement of American architecture in 200 years. In 1987, the Grounds were named a World Heritage site, along with Jefferson's Monticello estate, the only such designation in Virginia, Maryland or the District.

"It is the icon of the university, an emblem of education for Virginians, the nation and the world," U-Va. President Teresa Sullivan said.

But through decades of rising renown, the Rotunda has grown weary.

Perhaps the most alarming decay has beset the capitals, blocks of marble carved into swirling patterns of acanthus leaves. No one seems to know why
they are cracking and crumbling: Time? Bird droppings? Exposure to the elements? Other columns on the lawn, decades older, remain intact.

There is enough money in the endowment earmarked for historic structures to design a new dome. Actually building it - or anything else - might require state funds.

Replacing the capitals is "kind of a bigger project," said Colette Sheehy, university vice president for management and budget, and it depends on state funding. The university's next chance to request that money is in the fall, for the two-year budget cycle that begins next year.

And there is still the matter of deciding which version of the Rotunda to restore. There are at least three: Jefferson's original, White's 1895 redesign and the bicentennial reworking.

"One point of view in the conversation is that the great moment at this place was the Jefferson moment, and we should work our way back to that," Hogg said. "But White is a historic figure in his own right. And there are sound arguments on each side."

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Students Struggle for Words
Business Schools Put More Emphasis on Writing Amid Employer Complaints
By DIANA MIDDLETON

Alex Stavros, a second-year student at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, had been pitching an eco-tourism luxury resort idea to potential investors for months, but wasn't getting any bites.

He noticed that investors lost interest after the first few minutes of his presentation, and were slow to reply to emails. So Mr. Stavros enlisted the help of one of Stanford's writing coaches for six weeks to help streamline his pitch. After the instruction, his pitch was whittled down to 64 words from 113, and he dropped three unnecessary bullet points.

"During my consulting career, each slide was a quantitative data dump with numbers and graphs, which I thought proved I had done the work," he says. "Now, my presentations are simpler, but more effective."

While M.B.A. students' quantitative skills are prized by employers, their writing and presentation skills have been a perennial complaint. Employers and writing coaches say business-school graduates tend to ramble off-topic, use pretentious vocabulary or pen too-casual emails.

Meanwhile, the Graduate Management Admission Council, which administers the Graduate Management Admission Test, says average essay scores on the GMAT have fallen to 4.4 out of 6 in 2010, from 4.7 out of 6 in 2007.

Writing quality is difficult to measure and it's unclear why it may be slipping. According to a GMAC spokesman, the drop in test scores may be partly attributable to an influx of international applicants taking the exam. In the testing year ended 2010, 136,918 international students took the GMAT, up 35% from 2007, GMAC says.

Sharon Washington, executive director of the National Writing Project in Berkeley, Calif., says U.S. high schools and undergraduate programs have de-emphasized writing instruction in their curriculums, and constant digital communication may be eroding writing skills. "The good news about texting is that at least people are writing more," Ms. Washington says.

At employers' urging, many schools are taking steps to try to improve their students' writing. The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania plans to double its communication coursework to 12 classes starting in 2012. Last fall, all first-year students
competed in a mandatory writing competition, which asked students to write short pieces in response to prompts. It will become a fixture in the new curriculum.

The University of Rochester's Simon Graduate School of Business hired two writing coaches last fall after employers complained about graduates' writing skills, says dean Mark Zupan.

And Northeastern University's College of Business Administration also ramped up its focus on writing instruction last fall: Many students' papers are now double-graded by the professor and the writing coach.

Former Securities and Exchange Commission chairman Arthur Levitt, long an advocate of "plain English" in business and government, says business writing is usually incomprehensible to readers. "It lacks color and nuance, and it's not terribly interesting to read," he says.

M.B.A. students often have to unlearn bad behavior, such as using complicated words over simple ones, says Carter Daniel, director of business communication programs at Rutgers Business School. Students might use the word "edifice" instead of "building," for example.

One of the shortest writing assignments at Northeastern is one of the most frequently bungled. For the Marketing and Customer Value class students must write, in fewer than 150 words, a compelling email convincing executives to implement a marketing and pricing strategy. Students rarely get to the point, says Bruce Clark, writing coordinator for the M.B.A. program. "The first sentence should begin with, 'The single most important issue here is.' You'd be amazed how few students do that," he says.

Writing affects students after they graduate, too. According to managers at General Mills Inc., which hires roughly 50 M.B.A. graduates a year, business-school graduates are data-savvy but don't always communicate marketing research effectively.

New M.B.A. hires "tend to talk about their analytical methods to show they are good at their jobs," says Angela Rassi, marketing manager and co-leader of General Mills' recruiting team. "What we really want to talk about are the implications of the research."

M.B.A. students are often challenged when they have to adapt their writing for multiple audiences, says Keisha Smith, global head of recruiting for Morgan Stanley. Research associates are encouraged to develop their own voice when writing opinionated recommendations on stocks, but they sometimes have trouble presenting information in emails to clients. Some tend to write long emails when only a short list is needed, she says. At Morgan Stanley, managers look over new hires' emails before they're sent out to clients, she says.

Writing is also closely monitored at Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., where new hires fresh out of business school aren't permitted to work on a written proposal alone until they have
perfected the craft, says Chris Carlson, senior associate for university recruiting. And while new M.B.A. hires exchange upwards of 200 emails a day, he still spots some that read like text messages. "They're not in complete sentences," he says.

At Rochester, the writing classes are not given grades. Students are given either a passing or failing mark. "I have mixed feelings about the fact that it's pass or fail," says Rochester student Jonathan Han. "On one hand, it eases the stress of having to do perfectly on every assignment, but it reduces the incentive to take it as seriously."

Not all students view writing coaching as important. When Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management offered a choice of electives to its executive M.B.A. students, it offered a writing class, as well as an oral communication class. While students jumped at the speech class, not enough students signed up for the writing class for the school to offer it, says Douglas Stayman, associate dean for M.B.A. programs.
Why unions hurt higher education
By Naomi Schaefer Riley
Updated 14h 45m ago

Among the provisions in Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's controversial budget is one that would strip public university faculty and staff of collective bargaining rights. For Americans who don't follow the world of higher education closely, this might be the most surprising provision. After all, who knew that university faculty even had collective bargaining rights? Aren't unions more the stuff of blue-collar workers than Ph.D.s?

By Alejandro Gonzalez, USA TODAY

Over the past decade, unions have become increasingly common on campus. Data collected from 2008 to 2010 by the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions show that about 440,000 faculty and graduate students are members of collective bargaining units, a 17% increase from five years ago.

In 2008, the American Federation of Teachers launched a campaign with the American Association of University Professors to get more public university faculties to organize. "We don't have a number in mind," said Sandra Schroeder, chairman of the AFT's higher education council, adding that the number will be "as many as we possibly can." Just last week, faculty members at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus voted 249-37 in favor of collective bargaining. (The Supreme Court's 1980 decision Yeshiva v. NLRB outlaws faculty unionization at private colleges on the grounds that the faculty are the
management.) And AAUP President Cary Nelson has said that the fight in Wisconsin is "a struggle over the soul of our democracy."

A change of heart

Professors did not always take this stance. The AAUP, which was founded in the early 20th century, opposed collective bargaining for the first several decades of its existence on the commonly held belief that universities were not corporations and faculty were not employees in the same sense as factory workers or even as elementary and secondary schoolteachers. In 1919, the AAUP president, Arthur Lovejoy, told his colleagues that it would be better if faculty were "organized in an independent professional body rather than as part of a national federation of labor unions." And when at its annual meeting in 1972 the association's members finally voted to change its stance to favor unionization, controversy erupted. The following year, the group lost 10,000 members.

Even as unionization began to take off in the 1960s and '70s on college campuses, it was still anathema to faculty at most higher-level four-year institutions. As historian Gordon B. Arnold has written, it was the "prevailing view that American higher education was a meritocracy, and that unionist impulses were the result, at least in part, of professors who could not compete with their elite peers." In a study for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Ladd concluded that faculty of "low scholarly achievement give greater backing to the principles of collective bargaining." But higher education looks a lot different than it did in the 1970s. For one thing, it is much larger and less exclusive today. The growth of community colleges and four-year colleges that include a great deal of remedial vocational training has diluted the traditional academic snobbery.

There are other reasons for the new-found love between unions and the ivory tower. First, the colleges employ white-collar workers, a group increasingly targeted by unions as factory jobs disappear. And second, they are public employees. According to a 2010 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the majority of the country's union members are government workers, rather than private-sector workers, for the first time. Moreover, the anti-corporate tone on many campuses and the left-leaning political views of college professors make them naturally more receptive to the union message.

But the unions could in turn make the environment more left-leaning. As historian KC Johnson wrote in an article on the perils of academic unions, "Since few academics enter the profession to become labor activists, those who gravitate toward union service are more likely to fall on the fringes of a professoriate that already is ideologically one-sided."

The rise of adjunct labor is also an important reason that faculty have been increasingly open to organizing. With the job market in academia so competitive and positions so unstable, many professors have decided that if they can't have tenure, they'll take the security of a union instead. Of course, plenty of faculty members have both. And with that sort of belt-and-suspenders security you can expect that even the laziest, most incompetent or radical professor won't get fired.
Solidarity over education
Some observers worry that unions desire more than job protection. They want to influence how the whole system works. Peter Kirsanow, a former member of the National Labor Relations Board, has noted that unions "want to get into curricula, class schedules, grading norms, etc."

And other things, too. The United University Professions, the collective bargaining unit that represents all the faculty at State University of New York schools, recently opposed New York legislation that would have allowed different state universities to charge different tuitions. Last year, the faculty at Stony Brook University — which with the University of Buffalo are the two SUNY schools designated as research universities by the Association of American Universities — met with UUP representatives to object to the union's position on differential tuition. Stony Brook's $6,000 tuition is about $5,000 lower than that of flagship universities in nearby states, and many faculty there think it's time they charge students what a Stony Brook education is worth, not what a Fredonia State education is worth. But the union still opposed the legislation. It doesn't want to see distinctions made among better and worse campuses and, thereby, among the better and worse faculties. Those distinctions would undermine union solidarity.

Indeed, students, parents and taxpayers should think twice about how unionization affects the quality of higher education in America. As John Simpson, president of the University of Buffalo, told me, "Unionization runs contrary to what you're socialized to do if you're a researcher. The notion of belonging to a herd seems on the face of it inappropriate."

Naomi Schaefer Riley is the author of The Faculty Lounges ... And Other Reasons Why You Won't Get the Higher Education You Paid For, coming out in June.