Graduate student Joshua Stone, front, uses an inverted microscope to view a blood vessel cell culture as Dr. David Tulis, back left, associate professor of physiology, and postdoctoral scholar Chintamani Joshi discuss the properties of the culture in the physiology department lab at the Brody School of Medicine in Greenville on Wednesday.

Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector

Joshua Stone places a blood vessel cell culture on the light tray of an inverted microscope.
Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector

Federal funds allow ECU to intensify research

By JOSH HUMPHRIES
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, March 4, 2010
With an increase in faculty and funding for research, East Carolina University is garnering more attention as a research intensive university.
Deirdre Mageean, vice chancellor for research and graduate studies, said ECU received more funding for graduate and research work in the first half of the fiscal than ever before.
ECU received $30.5 million in external funding for research between July-December of 2009, which represents a 77 percent increase over the previous year.
“Many universities are changing to be more research intensive,” Mageean said. “Our goal is to hire the right people and giving them the encouragement and support to go after the grants they need.”

With a strong focus on allied health, bio-sciences and the Brody School of Medicine, ECU’s reputation for research is natural, officials say.
“It began as a teacher’s college, and over the years it has expanded its role and ambition to include health sciences and performing arts, and research seems to be the next logical step for East Carolina as a university,” said John Durham, university spokesman.
Mageean said the university’s reputation and focus on research funding has played a large part in the increase of grant awards. Funding from the federal stimulus only accounts for about $3 million of the funds received this year, which indicates that ECU is winning grants that likely will be recurring and not a one-time deal.

Mageean attributes a large part of the increase to the university’s commitment of seed money to start research programs, good working conditions and more faculty members conducting research.

“The present administration has put more seed funds into research in the past five years than I have seen as a faculty member in the preceding 23 years,” said Paul Gemperline, associate vice chancellor for research and graduate studies. “That investment is really beginning to pay off.”

Increased funding for research helps recruit both faculty and students, both graduate and undergraduate, Mageean said.

“I think faculty are attracted by universities that offer the resources to succeed in their career,” she said.

The same is true for students, Mageean said.

“Graduate students want to come into an active research environment where they get the latest training and are working with leading scholars in their field,” she said. “It makes their learning experience more exciting. They see enthusiasm in the instructors and it makes the learning experience much better.”

A focus on research also fulfills part of ECU’s mission to be an economic driver in eastern North Carolina. More research at a university attracts and creates companies and that means more jobs for the region, Mageean said.

“We are training the work force of tomorrow,” she said. “We are creating a skilled and educated work force and that is the right kind of human capital to attract firms. Research means jobs and economic development for eastern North Carolina.”

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Student charged with false report
By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, March 4, 2010

Follow up interviews and reviews of video tape led East Carolina University police this week to arrest a student who claimed he was mugged outside Mendenhall Student Center.

Nikolas Stephen Fredrick, 19, of Ashby Lane in Goldsboro and University Suites in Greenville was charged Tuesday with filing a false crime report, according to campus police. Fredrick told police he was mugged Feb. 24.

Fredrick confessed to investigators that all of the allegations he reported were not true, assistant chief Dawn Tevepaugh said Thursday.

“We conducted an extensive investigation, interviewed numerous people and reviewed a lot of video tape from cameras at many areas across the campus that would have been his travel path. We could not locate anything to support his claim,” Tevepaugh said.

Fredrick told police he was assaulted and robbed about 1:30 a.m. outside Mendenhall near 10th Street, the report indicated. He told them he was headed home from downtown in an intoxicated state and was assaulted as he walked by the student center, the officer said.

The original report indicated he was severely beaten and cut on his head and body by a person described as a black male, approximately 6 feet 5 inches tall, weighing about 250 pounds, the official said.

Fredrick allegedly told investigators the robber took his coat and fled the scene, the report said, after which he returned to his room and went to sleep.

He did not report the incident to the police until about 1:55 p.m. that day, according to the incident report.

Onlookers were said to be present when the assault occurred and police reported they were checking Fredrick’s claim that as many as four others might have been helping the robber.

Fredrick was held at the Pitt County Detention Center on a $500 secured bond.

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Former coach's faith at heart of new book

By Kim Grizzard
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, March 4, 2010

Bethany Bradsher knew Coach Keith LeClair the way most people knew him — from the sports pages.
Though she was more likely to cover football or basketball than baseball in her career as a sports writer, Bradsher had certainly read about the East Carolina University coach who was hit with ALS in the best season of his life.
When LeClair died in 2006, Bradsher had never met him, but she knew enough to make the coach the subject of her sports column, Faith in Play.
What she didn’t know was how, almost four years later, she would be the one to tell the story of not only the coach’s professional side but of how his profession of faith was played out in his life.
“Coaching Third: The Keith LeClair Story,” Bradsher’s first book, is being released today in conjunction with the seventh annual Keith LeClair Classic.
“His story was so compelling,” said Bradsher, a 20-year journalism veteran who has covered ECU sports for the last decade as a free-lance writer. “I just felt like it would be a great book for me because I write about sports and I write about people of faith ... I feel fortunate to have gotten to tell the story.”
The story, told in 10 chapters, chronicles the coach’s love for baseball, his Lou Gehrig’s disease battle and his life’s beliefs. So divergent is its content that at one point in the writing process, Bradsher’s publisher wanted to know whether she aimed to write a sports book or a Christian book. She told him it was both.
“While coaching baseball is glamorous and he got to go all kinds of places and win things,” Bradsher said, “in some ways, his life was richer and deeper when he couldn’t leave his house.”
In reality, “Coaching Third” is three books, due largely to the inclusion of 10 of LeClair’s personal writings. In the essays, composed with the use of a specialized computer when LeClair could no longer speak or hold a pen, the coach reflects on the pursuits of his past and the phenomenal peace he experienced in his last years.
“At the height (of his career), he’s diagnosed with this disease somewhat out of left field,” said publisher Kit Sublett of Texas-based Whitecaps Media. “All of a sudden, you just have this re-prioritizing of your life. I think that’s a story that grabs anybody’s attention.
“He could have been a banker, and it would have been interesting,” Sublett said. “When you realize these (devotional passages) are the actual words of the real guy ... it just gives it an added dimension.”
Lynn LeClair said publishing her husband’s devotional writing was what the couple had in mind the first time anyone suggested a book. There were two attempts to pursue a book prior to LeClair’s death, and a number of writers stepped forward afterward.
Bradsher was one of them. She approached SportWorks Ministry’s Chuck Young, a close friend who became a spokesperson of sorts for the LeClair family, but he told her a book was already under way. When she asked again nearly three years later, the answer was different; there was nothing in print and seemed to be no prospects. Bradsher made her pitch.

“It just kind of seemed to be the right timing,” Young said. “I think God had given her enough (insight) to be around it but to still remain somewhat unbiased as she went and gathered information.”

To collect it, Bradsher traveled to three states and conducted more than five dozen interviews. In Walpole, N.H., people who knew LeClair from the day he was born chatted about his childhood. In Shady Grove, S.C., those who were with him when he died shared the sorrow of saying goodbye when LeClair was only 40. There were times when Bradsher, a mother of four, questioned the toll her travel might be taking on her family. A visit with LeClair’s children — J.D. and Audrey, who were 8 and 11 when their father died — helped her regain perspective.

“I was in South Carolina and was interviewing J.D., who was 11,” Bradsher said. “We’d been talking about him reading books, and I said, ‘J.D. are you going to read this book I write about your dad when it comes out?’ I said it kind of in a light tone, and he got real serious and he said, ‘Every night before I go to bed.’

“I thought if there is anything I need to keep going through this project,” she said, “it’s that.”

Bradsher crossed North Carolina, gathering sports stories from Western Carolina University, where LeClair played and later coached, to ECU, where he ended his career. Her account encompasses stories from former players, fellow coaches and family friends. Former player Nick Schnabel shared memories of “LeClairisms,” somewhat peculiar sayings attributed to his former coach. Now an assistant baseball coach at ECU, Schnabel finds himself quoting LeClair even today, but he said the coach’s legacy is more than words.

“Although a lot of these guys never had a chance to meet him or interact with him, they know Coach LeClair,” he said. “His story is told, believe me.”

George Whitfield, LeClair’s former coaching assistant, said the coach’s story is one of hope and of hard work.

“His name will always be synonymous with the person who gave the Pirates the first great hope of going to the College World Series,” said Whitfield, who was interviewed extensively for Bradsher’s book. “I don’t believe that stadium (Clark-LeClair Stadium) would have ever been built had it not been for Keith’s drive and determination.”

Whitfield, a retired coach who volunteered his time at ECU, was not in the game for the prospect of a trip to Omaha. It was all the other road trips he enjoyed, trips where he and LeClair would talk about things other than baseball.

“I could relive all those moments from the day Keith told me he had ALS until I saw him the night before he died,” Whitfield said. “It turned out to be probably six of the best years of my life. It’s a story that needs to be told,” he said. “It is a beautiful story about someone overcoming adversity and then finding Christ in a more real way than maybe he did before. It inspired me.”

The discovery of the significance of his faith, brought on by ALS, is what inspired the name of the book. Lynn LeClair, who suggested the title and wrote the foreword for the book, said “Coaching Third” has two meanings.

“You would find Keith in the third base coach’s box and that defined him for much of his life,” she said. “But after his diagnosis, that changed for him. He realigned his priorities to God, family and then the game he loved.”

For the Keith LeClair who Sherrie Odom knew best, sports was, indeed, third place. Odom, a physical therapist, shared her time and technical knowledge with the LeClairs, fellow members of Oakmont Baptist Church. In her almost daily visits, Odom said her conversations with LeClair were nearly always about spiritual matters rather than sports. In her view, it was only fitting for a book on LeClair to include his Christianity alongside his coaching.
“Keith would never want a book written just about himself,” said Odom, who was interviewed for “Coaching Third.” “But if that story about him brought glory to God, that he would want. “To me that’s what his whole story was about is his faith walk,” she said. “Baseball happened to be a platform from which the world could see it.” Bradsher hopes her book will give other people a chance to see a different side of LeClair than what they might have been able to glimpse on the field. “I got to know him; I really did,” she said. “That’s a blessing because I didn’t get to before. I got to know him in ways that so many people didn’t.”

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the book
“Coaching Third: The Keith LeClair Story” will be available at this weekend’s tournament and afterward at ECU’s Dowdy Student Stores and other local retailers. Author Bethany Bradsher will sign books today at the tournament and at noon Saturday at University Book Exchange, 516 Cotanche St. Visit www.coachingthird.com.
Editorial: Community celebrates LeClair legacy on diamond
Friday, March 5, 2010

Eight years have passed since Keith LeClair stepped down as head coach of the East Carolina University baseball team. Some of this year’s Pirates were in middle school when his dreams become those of the program and when his No. 23 jersey become synonymous with determination, dedication and hard work.

This weekend, East Carolina holds the seventh annual Keith LeClair Classic, the tournament held in his memory that draws some talented college baseball teams to the stadium that bears his name. It is a fitting tribute to a man who still casts a long shadow in this community, whose dignity and inner strength continue to serve as an inspiration.

LeClair served only four years as the head coach of the Pirates, holding the position from 1998 to 2002, but his resolve to build a championship program at East Carolina was absolute. Under his direction, the team won more than 200 games, captured four conference titles and earned four bids to the post-season, advancing to the Super Regional round once. The College World Series and a national title may have been the program’s goal, but LeClair’s confidence breathed possibility into that dream.

He resigned from his post eight years ago amid fears he was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. Commonly called Lou Gehrig’s disease, the degenerative condition attacks the nervous system and aggressively affected the young coach, confining LeClair to a wheelchair during the final years of his life. Yet even as his health declined, LeClair remained resolute in his religious faith and brought the same determination to fight the disease that Pirates fans saw on the field each day.

He was present at the opening of the baseball stadium named in his honor, a gem of a facility that allowed East Carolina to host the first round of the NCAA Tournament last year. However, he succumbed to the disease in July 2006, leaving behind a cadre of family, friends, loved ones and admirers to celebrate a remarkable life.

Though four years have passed, LeClair’s memory is readily apparent in the community. Clark-LeClair Stadium commemorates his contributions to East Carolina baseball. So too does the tradition of awarding his No. 23 to a different player each year. However, this weekend is a special occasion year on the local calendar, a time for memory and reflection, for strength and determination, and above all an opportunity to dream of reaching new heights and making the impossible come true.
Pirates fired up for 7th annual Classic

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

For the first time this baseball season, the only nationally-ranked team playing in Clark-LeClair Stadium this weekend will be host East Carolina.

But that doesn’t mean the Pirates, ranked as high as No. 11 this week after swiping two of three from perennial national power South Carolina last weekend, don’t feel like they’ve got a big weekend coming.

ECU will have plenty of motivation, like always, to host the annual Keith LeClair Classic in honor of the late Pirate coach who helped to further the program’s dream of making a first-ever trip to the College World Series.

For one, the big dreams of LeClair are still the basis for the team’s goal of making a trip to Omaha, Neb., the site of college baseball’s national championship tournament. The Pirates were excused last season on the doorstep of the CWS in the Super Regional round, the third time ECU has been denied in that regard.

The CWS wasn’t the only thing the late LeClair wanted when he coached the Pirates from 1998-2002, before being permanently sidelined by ALS. LeClair worked tirelessly toward improving ECU’s national profile, and the annual arrival of three visiting teams for the Classic means a great opportunity to expand that profile.

“The LeClair Classic means a lot to us. It’s not ever hard for us to get up for that,” said junior ECU closer Seth Simmons, who last weekend earned his first save and his first victory of the new season against the Gamecocks. “They’re not Virginia, they’re not South Carolina and we know that, but we’re building a resume and we’re trying to host a regional, host a Super Regional. Everybody knows the easiest way to Omaha is playing at home.”

The Pirates will take on Illinois (1-2) out of the Big Ten to open play at 5 p.m. on Friday. On Saturday, ECU plays familiar football foe West Virginia (2-5) out of the Big East at 3 p.m. before closing the tourney with a 2 p.m. Sunday clash with Western Carolina (6-1), LeClair’s alma mater and the program which bounced ECU out of the Chapel Hill Regional in 2007.

Experiences like that and many others have made the Pirates understand every three-game series is a chance to pad their experience level.

“A Super Regional is a three-game set, so losing one isn’t going to affect this team any more than it would losing a midweek game,” Simmons said of his team’s approach. “You’ve just got to pick up and win two.”

The Pirates’ pitching rotation will likely be tweaked for the LeClair Classic to accommodate an ankle injury suffered last weekend by usual Friday starter Seth Maness. Kevin Brandt is slated to pitch Friday, with Brad Mincey going Saturday and possibly Maness on Sunday if the ankle he rolled last Friday is ready for action.

ECU is getting hits throughout its lineup at the moment, and the fact that one of the only players not hitting in the early going is junior outfielder Devin Harris doesn’t seem
KEITH LECLAIR, left, is shown during his coaching days at East Carolina.

to worry head coach Billy Godwin or hitting coach Nick Schnabel.

Despite the fact Harris was stuck at .217 with no home runs and just two RBIs heading into Wednesday night's game at High Point, his coaches know it's only a matter of time for one of last season's top bats.

"I think you wait for Devin to find his stroke," Schnabel said of Harris, who last year was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles following a breakout sophomore campaign. "That's the good thing about this game and this team is guys pick each other up. A guy may be 4-for-4 one day and 0-for-4 the next. Devin will be fine. Coming out of the gate playing teams like that, it's going to be tough sledding."

Senior designated hitter Kyle Roller and freshman John Wooten have provided the power, combining for five homers, while junior shortstop Dustin Harrington leads the team with a .393 batting average and 11 hits. Junior center fielder Trent Whitehead is second with nine hits and a .346 average.

"These teams coming in are going to be good and well-coached," Schnabel said. "Regardless of who you play, you've got to approach them all the same way. We've got three or four guys in the lineup that have been thrown into the fire playing against Virginia and South Carolina. They've done some good things."

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Editor's Note: All statistics are as of Tuesday, March 2.
One student among 50-plus people who will help find a UNC chief

CHAPEL HILL -- More than 50 people will play a role in the selection of the UNC system's next president.

Just one will be a student.

Three committees have been formed to find a successor for Erskine Bowles, who steps down as the public university system's president at the end of the year.

But in accordance with a university policy written in 1996, two of those groups, including the search committee with the ultimate decision, are composed entirely of members of the UNC system's Board of Governors.

Only the 25-member leadership statement committee, which writes the job description, has a student. He is Greg Doucette, an N.C. State University graduate and current N.C. Central University law student who heads the UNC system's student government association.

But he's not bothered by the makeup of the committees.

"I don't think it does [matter]," said Doucette, a nonvoting member of the UNC governing board by virtue of his position in the student government group. "It's a convoluted process, by policy, but I think we'll end up with the best candidates."

The UNC policy calls for a 20-member leadership statement committee and a screening committee of five to seven members. But those were expanded to 25 and 15, respectively because so many people wanted a say in the process.

Things could get cumbersome.

"The nature of having a more expansive structure is that it is harder to manage and it bumps around a bit more," said Hannah Gage, who as the governing board's chairwoman made the committee assignments. "The choreography alone is one of the greatest challenges."

Among those who will help craft the job description: Holden Thorp, chancellor of UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor; Lawrence Davenport, chairman of the N.C. State Board of Trustees, and Glenn Adams, chairman of the NCCU Board of Trustees.

That committee also includes three faculty representatives, including Judith Wegner, the former UNC-CH law school dean, and one staff member, Kelley Eaves-Boykin, a UNC Charlotte employee who leads the UNC system's staff assembly.

While the job description is being written, a selection committee will be hiring a search firm and
preparing to cull the applicant pool to a manageable size. Eventually, the 13-member search committee will evaluate semifinalists; it hopes to select the next president by fall.

Four years ago, the UNC system spent $89,524.19 on a search that ended with Bowles. Of that, $75,000 went to a search consultant. This time, the system has a budget of about $100,000 - in non-state funds - but hopes to keep costs down by eliminating much of the travel used last time to solicit comment around the state. This time, the citizenry will be invited to comment using a Web site, Gage said.

"My hope is that it won't cost any more than it did last time," she said.

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Garden at UNC honors Carson

CHAPEL HILL -- Two years ago, UNC-Chapel Hill student Katie Hukill thought nothing of walking alone through her neighborhood late into the evening.

Then Eve Carson was shot dead.

"I definitely don't walk alone at night," said Hukill, one of many students who say Carson's killing two years ago today forever changed their perception of Chapel Hill as a cloistered town free from random acts of violence. "I'm definitely more careful."

This heightened awareness is one of the many legacies Carson left to a campus still mourning her. The opening dedication of a new garden built in her name drew hundreds to a red-brick walkway off the main campus quadrangle Thursday afternoon.

There, they celebrated Carson's life again, noting all the ways her influence has lasted. Interest in public service, which Carson championed, has risen, officials say. So too has the profile of student government. In the two years since the student body president's death, scores of students have expressed interest in running for leadership posts.

"It has expanded the awareness of student government," Chancellor Holden Thorp said. "When I ask a lot of people why they're running for student body president, they say it's because of Eve."

Carson's successor, JJ Raynor, used her position to shine a spotlight on public safety, pushing student government to institute "Safe Walks," a buddy system of sorts for students who would otherwise walk home alone at night, said Jonathan Tugman, the student body secretary.

The garden, at the base of a massive oak tree, features a semicircular stone seating area facing a low, flat wall made of marble from Georgia, Carson's home state. It is inscribed with one of her favorite sayings: "Learn from every single being, experience and moment. What joy it is to search for lessons and goodness and enthusiasm in others."

Carson was shot dead in a neighborhood near campus. Two Durham men, Demario Atwater, 23, and Laurence Lovette, 19, are charged with her murder.

Atwater also faces federal kidnapping charges and is scheduled to go on trial in May. His lawyers have asked a federal judge to move the trial from North Carolina to Virginia, saying it would be too difficult to find jurors who have not been influenced by extensive media coverage of Carson's death.

Atwater and Lovette weren't mentioned at the garden dedication. Rather, the short program was filled with smiles, laughter and reflection. In the minds of many on campus, Carson is still very much alive.

"The impact she had on campus was unmistakable and unforgettable," said Stephanie Mazzucca, a 2008 UNC-CH graduate who works on campus. "She was a wonderful person."

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Trials are still months away

As friends of Eve Carson take time today on the second anniversary of her death to remember her, the two men accused of killing her still are months away from trial.

Court officials and others familiar with the North Carolina legal system say the pace of the legal case is not unusual. Murder cases can often take two years to resolve, what with lab tests and reports and the typical back-and-forth of prosecutors and defenders. If the death penalty is a possible punishment, extra defenders are assigned to the case and the court process can take even longer.

"It just simply takes time," said Orlando Hudson, the chief resident Superior Court judge in Durham County. "People look at all these TV shows, and everything's done in an hour. In real life, in this day and age, these kinds of cases take time."

On March 5, 2008, early-morning reports of gunshots brought police to the quiet, wooded Chapel Hill neighborhood where Carson's body was found. Almost a mile from the campus where Carson was admired for her charisma, top-notch grades and drive to help others, the esteemed achiever from Athens, Ga., was cloaked in anonymity. With no ID on her, much of the day passed before law enforcement officers knew for certain who the victim was.

Another week passed before police arrested the suspects, two young men who were supposed to be under the watch of the state's probation system. Demario Atwater, 23, and Laurence Alvin Lovette Jr., 19, both of Durham, face state murder charges.

Atwater, the older of the two, has been charged in federal court, too, with kidnapping and carjacking, crimes that could be punishable by death. He also faces the death penalty at the state level.

Lovette, who was 17 at the time of the fatal shooting, does not face the death penalty, because the U.S. Supreme Court deems anyone under 18 at the time of an offense too young to be executed. Lovette also faces a charge of murder in the death of Abhijit Mahato, a Duke University graduate student found shot to death in Durham several weeks before the Carson homicide.

Atwater, whom court documents has describe as the suspect who fired the fifth and final shot to Carson's head, could be the first to go to trial.

Jury selection began last month in the federal carjacking and kidnapping case and will continue later this spring. That trial is set for May.

But Atwater's defense team has asked for the trial to be moved to Virginia. With a poll to bolster their case, they say the potential jury pool has been influenced by extensive media coverage of the case.

Federal public defenders are seeking a dismissal of the federal carjacking and kidnapping charges, saying the prosecution is unconstitutional and based on racial bias.

Racial bias alleged
In one of dozens of court documents filed in the federal case, the defense team wrote: "The overriding reason that Mr. Atwater was indicted in federal court was that he was a young, black male accused of killing a young, white female."

In the 24-county federal court jurisdiction where Atwater is charged, there were 1,098 murders committed from 1998 to 2007 in which a firearm was used, according to federal court documents. Atwater's case is only the second in which death was a possible penalty brought in the district that includes Orange and Durham counties, the defense lawyers said. Death was not sought in the other case, the lawyers said.

No trial date has been set for the state murder case against Atwater or Lovette.

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California Students Protest Education Cuts

By JESSE MCKINLEY

SACRAMENTO — Angered by increases in tuition and cuts in state financing, thousands of students, parents and faculty members protested across California on Thursday at colleges, universities and even elementary schools to plead for help with the state’s education crisis.

Called a “strike and day of action to defend public education” by organizers, the demonstrations were boisterous and occasionally confrontational — campus and building entrances were blocked at several schools — but they were largely peaceful for most of the day.

Late Thursday afternoon, however, more than 150 people were arrested after they stopped traffic along an interstate in Oakland, according to the California Highway Patrol. There was also one injury. Protesters in Davis, outside Sacramento, also tried to block an interstate but were rebuffed by the authorities using pepper spray. One student protester was arrested.

Scattered tuition protests occurred in other states, too, with at least 16 people arrested at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, when protesters tried to force their way into administration offices and threw ice chunks at campus officers, according to a university spokesman.

One of the largest demonstrations in California took place here on the north steps of the Capitol, where more than 1,000 people used drums, bullhorns, and scores of young voices to try to get their message across.

“How are we going to save the future if we can’t even get into our classes?” said Reid E. Milburn, the president of the Student Senate for California Community Colleges, referring to tuition increases and reductions in the number of courses. Her comments drew a large cheer from those in the crowd, many them students avoiding classes in a show of protest.
California's public education system has been racked by spending cuts because of the state's financial problems, which include a looming $20 billion budget deficit. Layoffs and furloughs have hit many districts and school systems, along with reductions in course offerings and grants.

On Wednesday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican in his last year of office, said the layoffs and reductions in courses carried out by some schools in the state were “terrible.” The bottom line, he said, was that “they need much more money.”

Where that money might come from is unclear. Alberto Torrico, the Democratic majority leader in the State Assembly, has proposed a 12.5 percent tax on the state’s oil producers, which he says could raise $2 billion for higher education. But with any new tax in California requiring a two-thirds majority in the Legislature, its prospects are uncertain.

Educators said the 23-campus California State University system — which has more than 425,000 students and lower fees than the 10-campus University of California system — was being hit particularly hard by cutbacks.

Julie Chisholm, an assistant professor of writing at one Cal State institution, the California Maritime Academy, in Vallejo, was struggling with 1-year-old twins at the Sacramento protest. She said that her $60,000 salary had been cut 10 percent by furloughs, but that she had chosen to take her furloughs on nonteaching days to avoid inconveniencing her students.

“Our students are getting hit, too, with higher tuition,” she said.

In Santa Cruz, the surfing town south of San Francisco, protesters effectively shut down access to the University of California campus there by blocking entrances, according to a message posted on the university’s Web site. Protesters also broke at least one windshield and intimidated visitors, the message said.

Santa Cruz and several other University of California campuses were the sites of demonstrations last fall when the State Board of Regents approved a 32 percent increase in undergraduate fees, the equivalent of tuition.

Several hundred students also protested at Bruin Plaza at the University of California, Los Angeles, where people in one group had painted skulls on their faces. And at the university’s Berkeley campus, Rafael Velazquez, 23, a graduate student in the school of education, who plans to be a public high school teacher, was one of hundreds protesting.

“I plan to be a teacher, but it’s not my job prospects I’m worried about,” said Mr. Velazquez, who has a brother in fifth grade in San Lorenzo. “It’s the whole system.”
The cuts are also being felt in economically depressed areas like Richmond, near San Francisco, where unemployment is 17.6 percent and violent crime and poverty are common.

“Kids come to school hungry; some are homeless,” said Mary Flanagan, 55, a third-grade teacher from Richmond. “How can we deal with problems like that with as many as 38, 40 kids in a class?”

Protesters said they would continue to press their case with more demonstrations, including what was expected to be a well-attended protest on Thursday evening in central San Francisco. But at San Francisco State, where about 150 students, faculty members and administrators had joined to form an “informational picket line,” some were skeptical that anything — other than a sudden influx of money — would be effective in swaying state leaders.

“We’ve had tons of protests here, and it doesn’t do much,” said Maura Geiszler, 22, a senior studying music. “All they’ve got to do is turn off the news.”

Reporting was contributed by Malia Wollan from Berkeley, Calif.; Jennifer Steinhauer and Rebecca Cathe from Los Angeles; and Gerry Shih from San Francisco.