THE DAILY CLIPS

March 7, 2012

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by East Carolina University News Services:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

East Carolina University News Services
Web site at http://www.ecu.edu/news
252-328-6481
Pitt County’s high school juniors joined their peers across the state in taking the ACT on Tuesday.

Completing the national college admissions test was required of all 11th-grade public and charter school students in North Carolina for the first time as part of a new state accountability model beginning this year. The four-hour test was administered at all six Pitt County high schools Tuesday morning. About 100,000 students took the test statewide.

“Everything went really well,” David Jenkins, testing and accountability director for Pitt County Schools, said Tuesday afternoon. “Staff had it down to a precise organization. Students had been informed of the test coming. We feel like we were pretty well prepared.”

Previously, the state has not required students to take a college entrance exam.

The majority of students heading to college opt to take the SAT, but the ACT is rising in popularity.

The SAT is the most widely used national college entrance exam, administered by the College Board.
The ACT, administered by the American College Testing program, is an achievement test, according to Jenkins. It measures what students have learned in school in four subjects: math, science, reading and English, plus a writing portion. The SAT is an aptitude test measuring reasoning in math and reading, with a writing portion as well.

“Results from the ACT assessment will be one of the most important indicators we will use to gauge how well schools are preparing students for higher education, job training and future careers,” State Superintendent June Atkinson said in a news release.

“Since the ACT is a national test, we also will be able to use the results to see how North Carolina students are performing compared to their peers across the country.”

Providing the ACT at no cost to students will cost the state about $4.6 million.

Those funds came from the elimination of the 10th-grade writing test, which the federal government allowed since the ACT includes a writing portion. The ACT normally costs $34 or $49.50 with the writing portion.

“We’re excited about it,” Jenkins said. “This is an opportunity for students to have a free college admissions test. It will save them some money.”

North Carolina students have performed well on the ACT, according to recent data from the Department of Public Instruction.

In 2011, students registered a 21.9 average score on the ACT’s 36-point scale.

East Carolina University accepts both the ACT and the SAT as part of student applications, according to Director of Admissions Anthony Britt.

“To my knowledge every college in North Carolina will accept either,” Britt said.

The majority of students applying to ECU send SAT scores, but Britt has seen an uptick in ACT scores even before the new requirement.

“Historically the SAT has been dominant on the East and West coasts, with the ACT more popular in the Midwest,” Britt said. “But there has been an increase in ACT scores, mainly from the private sector.”

Some concerns have been raised about requiring the test for students who are not headed to college.
“We’re hoping kids will take this test and see that post-secondary education is a possibility for them,” Jenkins said.

Administering the ACT in high school could lead to more college applications using the ACT instead of the SAT.

“Certainly that’s to be expected,” Britt said. “We won’t know until next year.”

Jenkins and Britt said students are encouraged to take both tests more than once, if possible.

“Colleges will accept whichever one puts the student in their best light,” Britt said.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567 or follow her on Twitter @jackiedrakegdr.
Greenville and Pitt County’s economic growth pangs coincide neatly with development plans for Pitt-Greenville Airport, according to the engineering firm that helped guide the new terminal to completion last year.

On Wednesday, the Pitt-Greenville Airport Authority brought in representatives from airport engineering firm Talbert & Bright to talk about its help in developing a master plan — the first since 1988 — for short-, medium- and long-term development goals to meet the area’s expected aviation needs.

Ninety-five percent of the plan, expected to take a year to complete, will be funded by a Federal Aviation Administration grant, TBI representatives said.

Airport Authority Executive Director Jerry Vickers hosted the presentation by engineer and project manager Amy McLane and TBI executive Jay Bright.

“This is probably the most important and exciting project this board will undertake,” Vickers said. “To get where you want to go, you’ve got to have a plan, a road map that reflects the vision of the board about how we’re going to support the community and where we’re going to take the airport.”

McLane first talked about the essential need to acquire land and the critical effect that peripheral development has on an airport’s ability to grow or even continue safe service. She applauded the recent purchase of some
undeveloped land parcels adjacent to the airport’s major runway, which the FAA has committed to fully reimburse.

Many of the zoned uses of the land could otherwise be potentially incompatible with airport development, she said. Growth likely will require more peripheral land purchases, McLane said. If acquisitions of occupied land are necessary, federal law requires they be purchased at fair market value and provide owners or occupants with relocation and moving expense compensation, she said.

The main runway at the airport is about 6,500 feet and needs to grow to support the kind of traffic the city will work to attract, Vickers said.

“We probably need about 7,000 feet of usable runway to serve from now to as far as we can see,” Vickers said. “Our future in commercial air service is mostly in the smaller 50- to 90-seat aircraft, as opposed to something like a narrow-bodied (Boeing) 737 that seats about 130 people and is used here for charter flights.”

Expanded cargo service is not out of the question, but not likely soon, he said.

Factors to be considered while drafting the new master plan include current and projected Pitt County and Greenville population changes; employment base shifts from agriculture to primarily East Carolina University and Vidant Medical Center; local floodplain and other environmental considerations; and 17 changes in the FAA airport design manual since 1988, McLane told the board.

Efforts to attract and serve corporate users from the university, medical center and the expanding industry base should be a priority for the board and planners, she said.

“(A corporate aircraft) doesn’t need schools, water or sewer service, but a single Gulf Stream-5 aircraft worth $50 million dollars sitting in a hangar pays the same property taxes as five $100,000 homes,” McLane said.

The next generation of the airport will be a critical piece of the transportation infrastructure that will support the area’s larger economic development goals, McLane and Talbert said.

“In a global economy, the ability to efficiently get people in and out of a community by this airport is really important,” McLane said. “Jay always says a company CEO doesn’t come to town on a bus.”
FAA-mandated elements of the airport master plan must include public involvement from development experts, stakeholders and community residents, the consultant said. Mayor Allen Thomas and City Council liaison Max Joyner Jr. listened with Pitt County Manager Scott Elliott and County Commission chairwoman Beth Ward to Wednesday’s presentation.

“The only issue I foresee would be the fact that some people live close to the airport,” Joyner said. “Jerry is very responsive, though, and already has met with (district 1 council member) Kandie Smith and some of the residents. Money will be the issue there, like it always is, but we’ve got to have an airport that goes places other than Charlotte.”

Thomas agreed that the airport’s ability to add routes is one of several reasons the airport’s growth is extremely important to the area’s economic development.

“Also, a big part of our economic development push is to have development zones, including north of the river,” he said. “Just from a consumer standpoint, more people that can travel in and out of the city means more money spent in the city is good for Greenville and keeps us the anchor of the east.”

The master plan development process has begun on some fronts, Vickers said, and will take about a year to complete, including the outreach and public involvement.

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@reflector.com or 252-329-9571.
Gardner-Webb students robbed at gunpoint in dorm

By April Bethea

Authorities are searching for men accused of robbing two college students at gunpoint in their dorm room on Tuesday.

The robbery occurred around 8:05 p.m. at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs.

According to the university police, the students were in their room when two men stormed in and robbed them. Police said the suspects were armed with a small semi-automatic handgun and took laptops and a PS3 game system.

The suspects were described as two black males in their late teens or early twenties, who were around 6-feet-2-inches tall and were wearing dark jeans and puffy black jackets, according to a university news release. One of the suspects also reportedly had a small goatee, the university said.

Campus officials said the suspects were last seen heading from Lutz Hall toward the university's football field.

Officials say they do not know yet if the men were students or how they got into the dorm building. Students must have a pass card in order to access dorm buildings, and the facilities also have other security systems in place.

The university said it notified students and others on campus about the robbery using the school's alert system. The university said it had extra patrols on campus last night.

Anyone with information about the case is asked to call Gardner-Webb University police at 704-406-4444.

NewsChannel 36 contributed
Grad-rate ranking reveals elite list of small, wealthy schools

By Daniel de Vise

The colleges with the very highest four-year graduation rates tend to have fairly small undergraduate enrollments and to spend a lot of money on their students. Catholic institutions are notable overachievers.

That’s the message from a sophisticated new Web site on graduation rates, unveiled Monday by the Chronicle of Higher Education.

We’re told on the home page of the new site that Washington and Lee University in Virginia has the nation’s highest four-year graduation rate, 91.7 percent. W&L has just under 2,000 students and spends $184,489 per “completion.”

Williams College is second, with a 91 percent graduation rate, 2,048 undergraduates and $244,104 spent per degree. College of the Holy Cross, less well known nationally, is third, with a 90.3 percent graduation rate, 2,899 undergraduates and $151,707 spent per degree.
It’s a similar story for the rest of the Top 10:

3. Princeton, 90.1% graduation rate, 5,142 undergraduates, $374,620 per degree.
4. Notre Dame, 90% graduation rate, 8,442 undergrads, $161,780 per degree.
5. Bucknell University, 89.7% grad rate, 3,508 undergrads, $153,693 per degree.
6. Vassar College, 89.6% grad rate, 2,446 students, $232,749 per degree.
7. Wesleyan University, 89.1% grad rate, 2,854 students, $170,136 per degree.
8. Yale University, 88.9% grad rate, 5,310 students, $502,748 (!) per degree.
9. Georgetown University, 88.9% grad rate, 7,579 students, $135,275 per degree.
10. University of Pennsylvania, 88.6% grad rate, 11,940 students, $264,802 per degree.

Along with the new trove of completion data - - and no one does a searchable database better - - the Chronicle has published some attendant pieces that remind the reader how limited these federal statistics really are. The federal government began requiring and collecting grad rates in the past two decades. And the way it defines a graduate (a student who starts and finishes the same school within 100, 150 or 200 percent of the allotted time) works for some, but not nearly all, students.

Why, President Obama himself would not be counted as a graduate, under his government’s formula, because he started at one college and finished at another.

The formula favors four-year residential colleges like Washington and Lee.

One thing that always surprises me when I see graduation tables is how poorly many of the top public universities do in getting students out in four years.

Two local institutions, the U.S. Naval Academy and the University of Virginia, have the highest four-year graduation rates among public universities, according to the database, at 88.1 percent and 84.5 percent respectively. The College of William and Mary ranks fourth, at 82.2 percent.

But look farther down the list, and you might be surprised to see the lengthy list of flagship-quality public universities with four-year grad rates below 60
percent: the University of Florida (59%), UC San Diego (57%), the University of New Hampshire (56%), SUNY Albany (55%), the University of Washington (54%), Rutgers (53%), the University of Texas (53%), U-Mass Amherst (52%), the University of Georgia (52%), UC Davis (51%), the University of Wisconsin (50%), Clemson (50%), Indiana University (50%), the University of Minnesota (46%), the University of South Carolina (46%), Ohio University (46%), the University of Iowa (44%) and the University of Oregon (44%).

I’ll stop at 44 percent to avoid some truly embarrassing numbers.

Big public universities fare much, much better when one considers the six-year graduation rate. Why? Students at public universities tend to pay much less to attend, and flagship university campuses are often lovely places. It’s hard to leave. In addition, students at even top flagships such as Berkeley have an increasingly hard time getting the classes they need to graduate, because of budget cuts. Many hold significant on- or off-campus jobs.

At some schools, the distance between the four- and six-year graduation rate is stunning. At Cal State Long Beach, one of the most selective Cal State campuses, the completion rate jumps from 12 percent to 54 percent in that span.

UT Austin very recently launched a campus-wide initiative to raise its four-year graduation to 70 percent, by attacking many of these root causes.

Of the 10 colleges with the largest undergraduate enrollments, only two have four-year graduation rates over 50 percent. One is often-maligned Penn State, the massive Pennsylvania flagship, which boasts one of the highest four-year grad rates in its sector, 62 percent. (That’s 10 points higher than the rate at UT Austin.)

Colleges that spend the least per degree also fare poorly, although it would be interesting to see what Wilkes University in Pennsylvania is doing to yield a 52-percent four-year graduation at a rate of $38,444 per degree.
Identity Theft

Background Check for the Digital Age: Employers, Colleges Insist on Full Facebook Access

By Kayla Webley | @kaylawebley |

For years we’ve been told to keep drunken Facebook photos and racy wall posts private to avoid the judging eye of a potential employer, but now, according to MSNBC’s Red Tape blog, even that might not be enough.

As Bob Sullivan reports, some employers and colleges are taking the unusual step of either asking applicants to show them the private side of their Facebook profile in an interview or add them as a friend to gain access to friends-only posts. In Maryland, the Department of Corrections has taken to asking interviewees to log in to their account and show the interviewer wall posts, whom they are friends with and photos. That practice, while eyebrow raising, actually makes a bit of sense, because the applicants are being screened for jobs in prisons — but another example MSNBC cites is more curious.

According to Sullivan, student athletes at several colleges nationwide are required to friend a coach or compliance officer on Facebook. MSNBC cites this requirement from the University of North Carolina’s student-athlete handbook as an example typical of many colleges: “Each team must identify at least one coach or administrator who is responsible for having access to and regularly monitoring the content of team members’ social-networking sites and postings.” It also says, “The athletics department also reserves the right to have other staff members monitor athletes post,” leaving the door open for the university to use outside social-media-monitoring companies.

This story comes the same day as a San Francisco Chronicle story on scholarship providers cruising Facebook and other social-media sites to help vet applicants. Now presumably the scholarship providers do not have
access to “friends only” posts, so it’s not any different from employers who probe the public activities of applicants online, but the story brings to light yet another way one’s online activities could affect future endeavors. According to the Chronicle, about 75% of scholarship providers surveyed by FastWeb and the National Scholarship Providers Association said they are looking for behavior that could reflect badly on the provider, including underage drinking, racy photos, drug use and racial slurs.

The practice of forcing and asking job applicants to showcase their profiles has the American Civil Liberties Union and others up in arms over invasion of privacy and free-speech concerns. The Illinois state legislature has even introduced a bill to ban employers from asking applicants for social-media passwords. But if the students want to play sports and the applicants want to get hired, they might have little choice but to submit. While at first this seems like an egregious infringement into private (online) lives, it should serve as a reminder to never post things on Facebook that you wouldn’t want people to see — it’s still the Internet, where nothing is ever truly private.

Kayla Webley is a Staff Writer at TIME. Find her on Twitter at @kaylawebley, on Facebook or on Google+. 
Freshmen at Léman Manhattan Preparatory School, a for-profit institution, reviewing sample college applications. Nonprofit schools are more likely to delay the college process to junior year.

College Hunt Starts Earlier at New Breed of Schools

By JENNY ANDERSON

At Avenues, a for-profit school scheduled to open this fall in Chelsea, college counseling will begin with students in ninth grade. Similarly, Léman Manhattan, a for-profit school downtown, starts the formal college search process with its freshmen; in addition, seventh- and eighth-grade students can visit campuses on a three-day trip in the spring.

But at the Trinity School and Ethical Culture Fieldston School, two elite private schools, the college planning process does not get under way until 11th grade, a tradition administrators actively work to preserve. To begin any earlier, they say, would put undue pressure on students.

Established nonprofit private schools and new for-profit ones are taking divergent approaches to a question that vexes almost every parent and student headed into the college admissions thicket: Is it better to get a jump on the process but risk turning high school into a staging ground for college admission? Or is it preferable to start later, when students are more
developmentally prepared but perhaps missing opportunities to plan hobbies, choose classes and secure summer internships?

That question has special importance for current juniors, as they begin to narrow their list of top choices and plan for college admissions testing.

Gardner P. Dunnan, head of the upper school at Avenues and the former head of the Dalton School and the School at Columbia University, is a proponent of beginning early. “I believe the process should start in the ninth grade in terms of really thoughtful planning of the high school career,” he said. An early start, he said, allows students to focus on an area of mastery — a critical tenet of the Avenues curriculum — and showcase that for colleges.

“In addition to being good education, it’s the best way to capture the interest of colleges,” he said.

Larry Momo, head of college counseling at Trinity, said his school took a different approach. “We don’t want to turn high school into a staging ground for the college admission process,” he said. High school should not be about résumé building, he said, but rather “allowing kids to develop their natural talents and inclinations and support those inclinations.”

Laura Clark, director of college counseling at the Fieldston School, is in the same camp. “If you start talking to freshmen or sophomores about college, they are not ready to leave home yet, and so will concentrate on the selectivity of the process and issues of competition rather than on actually going to college,” she said.

Competition for seats at elite institutions has never been higher. Nearly 35,000 students applied to Harvard in 2011, for example, up 15 percent from 2010, and only 6.2 percent were accepted.

The pressure students feel when confronted with such statistics, and the college prep industry that has sprung up around the process, has resulted in a toxic cocktail — teenagers, frequent deadlines and multiple sets of high expectations. Many families turn to independent college counselors to act as a go-between and ease the tension.

Some use them because they feel the schools wait too long. One Fieldston parent hired an independent counselor when her daughter was in ninth grade. “I don’t want to find out she should have taken a certain class after it’s too late,” she said, asking that her name be withheld lest her daughter get less attention from the college counselors.
Mark Speyer, head of college counseling at Columbia Grammar and Prep, said he got some good advice from his predecessor when he started in the college counseling business 25 years ago. “People go crazy with the process from the middle of junior year to the middle of senior year,” the mentor told him. “You will be under pressure to lengthen the process and increase the torment by starting earlier. Resist it.”

For the most part, Mr. Speyer has stuck to the advice. But about seven years ago, Columbia Grammar initiated a meeting in April with parents of 10th graders to talk about testing. Then the process formally begins in the spring of junior year, when all of the students — 120 this year — board a bus for a two-day visit to several college campuses.

Last year, Brooklyn Friends School also moved the process back to 10th grade, but with meetings with students and parents that include the head of college counseling, the head of the upper school and the head of school, Larry Weiss.

Mr. Weiss said the meeting was a midpoint assessment to look at a student’s academics and extracurricular activities. But they also talk about the school’s timeline for the college process.

The impetus, he said, came from colleges’ increasing focus on summer activities. “If you wait until junior year, the chance is past,” Mr. Weiss said. He also noticed that in 10th grade, students and their parents still tended to be on good terms; less so by junior year.

If some of the city’s traditional schools are reluctant to move the starting line back significantly, the new schools popping up throughout Manhattan — almost all for-profit ventures — embrace the opportunity to start early.

Léman Manhattan, for example, is owned by Meritas, a group of for-profit kindergarten-to-12th-grade schools. The Meritas approach, said Drew Alexander, head of Léman, is to start as early as sixth grade.
Florida Higher Education May Face Big Budget Cuts

By LIZETTE ALVAREZ

MIAMI — With three days remaining until the end of the legislative session, Florida lawmakers are moving forward with a $70 billion budget that would create the state’s 12th university and cut hefty amounts of money from higher education.

The House and the Senate are expected to vote this week on the budget, which also includes a $1 billion increase for prekindergarten through high school, a priority of Gov. Rick Scott, a Republican. Mr. Scott’s position on the overall budget bill, with its plan for a new university, is unclear.

For weeks the budget has been tangled in a disagreement between State Senator JD Alexander, the Republican chairman of the budget committee, and the University of South Florida.

Mr. Alexander, who must leave the Legislature this year because of term limits, had lobbied vigorously to turn the University of South Florida’s Lakeland campus, in his district, into an independent state polytechnic school. But the University of South Florida opposed the move, and then found itself fighting off a 58 percent reduction in its budget. Many saw the move as punitive.

Students organized protests, and a flood of e-mails poured into the Legislature asking the House and the Senate to save the campus and pare back the cuts.

After a frantic series of meetings, a compromise was struck this week. Mr. Alexander would get his Florida Polytechnic University, and the University of South Florida would face a less severe drop in financing.

Over all, the Legislature agreed to $300 million in cuts to the state’s universities and colleges, an amount that would be shared among them, depending on their reserves and other considerations. The Legislature expects universities to use their reserves to make up much of the shortfall.

“One of the greatest concerns of the Florida Board of Governors — and rightly so — centered on the proportionality of any reductions among the state’s universities,” said Frank T. Brogan, chancellor of the State University System of Florida. “I believe for the most part that test was met in the end.”
A 5 percent tuition increase would be allowed at the state’s 28 colleges — once called community colleges. But the 11 universities, soon to be 12, would have to get approval for an increase from the State Board of Governors, which oversees the system.

A separate bill, if passed, would allow Florida’s top two universities, the University of Florida and Florida State University, to charge competitive tuition rates.

The budget bill would also allow students at the University of South Florida Polytechnic campus in Lakeland to finish their degrees there. Professors would be transferred to other campuses during the transition period.

“It is very important to me that the University of South Florida care for the students there,” said Judy Genshaft, the university’s president. Ms. Genshaft said she hoped the request that the universities use their reserves to fill budget gaps would be one-time only.

Children in grade school and high school fared better. After pushing for steep cuts in public school financing last year, Mr. Scott reversed course this year and advocated a $1 billion increase. That would not quite make up the difference, but it was seen by educators and parents as a step in the right direction.

The budget also includes layoffs of some state employees and no pay raises. Some state prisons would close, and there would be budget cuts for hospitals and nursing homes.

The bill would curtail the number of times Medicaid patients can visit an emergency room. Senate leaders also agreed to raise the health insurance premiums of state senators, bringing them in line with rank-and-file state workers.
A demonstrator rallies for the Dream Act in San Jose, Calif., last June.

**Tech Titans Fund Undocumented Students**

Updated March 6, 2012, 10:00 a.m. ET
By MIRIAM JORDAN

A group of Silicon Valley technology leaders, impatient with attempts to rewrite immigration laws, is funding efforts to help undocumented youths attend college, find jobs and stay in the country despite their illegal status.

The group includes Jeff Hawkins, inventor of the Palm Pilot; and the family foundations of Andrew Grove, co-founder of Intel Corp.; and Mark Leslie, founder of the former Veritas Software Corp. Laurene Powell Jobs, widow of Apple Inc. co-founder Steve Jobs, has for years supported undocumented students through her organizations that help low-income high-school students.

The Silicon Valley money is part of a broader response by individuals and states to Congress, which hasn't passed the Dream Act. That federal legislation would offer a path to legalization for illegal immigrants who graduate from a U.S. high school and attend college or join the military.

"We think Congress's inaction…is devastating for these students and tragic for the country," said Ms. Powell Jobs, who was one of the first in the tech community to champion the Dream Act by lobbying her congresswoman and writing an op-ed piece supporting the legislation.

The focus of the Silicon Valley philanthropists is Educators for Fair Consideration, or E4FC, a nonprofit that gives scholarships, career advice and legal services to students brought to the U.S. illegally as children.
Companies that knowingly hire illegal immigrants can face civil and criminal penalties. Among other ideas, the Silicon Valley donors are studying the possibility of using unpaid internships as a way for students to come to the attention of employers who might later sponsor them for a legal work visa.

After helping a few dozen students through college with small donations, the San Francisco-based organization expanded with money from the tech leaders. It now has enlisted immigration attorneys to offer legal advice to hundreds of undocumented students.

"We used to think, 'Let's just get them through college!'" with scholarships, said Katharine Gin, a teacher who founded E4FC along with a college counselor. "We thought the federal Dream Act would pass and we would be helping these students in the interim period only."

Several of the Silicon Valley supporters became aware of the issue close up: Mr. Hawkins got to know an undocumented student at his daughters' high school. Liz Simons, daughter of the founder of hedge fund Renaissance Technologies, mentored an undocumented honor student in high school who was struggling to raise funds for college because of his illegal status. Seth Leslie, son of Veritas's founder, had encountered undocumented students in his work as a schoolteacher and principal.

The money involved is relatively small: The tech philanthropists and others gave hundreds of thousands of dollars in the last year to the group, whose 2012 operating budget is $600,000.

"I have chosen to make this one of my philanthropic areas," said Mr. Hawkins, who disclosed his giving for the first time in an interview but declined to state the amount. "It's still at an embryonic stage; I'm willing to crank it up as we find solutions."

California, Illinois and New York in recent months passed bills that enable undocumented students to receive financial aid for college. Thirteen states allow illegal immigrants who reside in their borders to pay in-state fees at public universities.

Despite bipartisan support in the past, the Dream Act never passed Congress after it became caught up in the broader debate over reshaping the nation's immigration system, including what to do with the estimated 11 million people in the country illegally. The latest version of the Dream Act was passed by the House in December 2010 but failed in the Senate, after it was tacked onto a defense-spending bill.
To opponents, the bill is tantamount to an amnesty program for children whose parents broke U.S. immigration laws; they argue it would entice more people to sneak into the country. President Barack Obama supports the Dream Act; Republican Mitt Romney has said he would veto the measure if elected president.

On hearing of the efforts by the group, Ira Mehlman, a spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a national group that lobbies against legalization, said: "You'd think they would help people in the country legally who face difficult times getting a start."

About 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools each year, according to experts who follow the issue. The Supreme Court has ruled it unconstitutional to deny a K-12 public education to children who are in the country illegally.

But after that, their future is uncertain because they can't qualify for federal grants, work-study programs or bank loans to finance college nor can they obtain work legally.

U.S. tech companies have long backed raising the number of visas the government issues for skilled immigrants such as software engineers, and argue the country is losing its competitive edge as other economies attract skilled labor forces.

At a recent gathering in Los Altos, Calif., an undocumented 23-year-old with a degree in civil engineering, which he obtained on a scholarship, told funders of E4FC that he had five job offers in the last two months, only to have them revoked because of his immigration status. He said he has been willing to work for no pay to accrue experience required for a professional engineering license. Even that has proved challenging.

The U.S. has "put a lot of money into [undocumented students] already," said Eva Grove, wife of Intel's co-founder, whose family foundation gave $1 million to immigration-related groups last year. "It makes no sense to dead-end them after they are educated."

Write to Miriam Jordan at miriam.jordan@wsj.com
Teachers embrace social media in class
By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY
March 5, 2012

As social media become nearly inescapable on college campuses, a pair of recently published studies supports what many professors already have concluded: Students using Facebook or text messaging during a lecture tend to do worse when quizzed later.

Most teachers report using at least one social media site in their class, but 53% said Facebook and 46% said Twitter add "negative" value, a new study says.

But wait: Faculty who build Twitter into classwork may be helping students learn better, a 2010 study suggests. And a survey of nearly 2,000 faculty last spring by education publisher Pearson found that many consider YouTube a "very valuable" classroom aid.

"The more research we do, the more we understand that it's about nuances in how the technologies are used, not whether or not they're used, that matters in the classroom," says Lock Haven (Pa.) University professor Reynol Junco, one of a handful of researchers to study the topic and publish studies on the topic in journals such as Computers & Education and Journal of Computer-Assisted Learning. "You'd be shocked at how many people don't get that."

Faculty among them. Nearly two-thirds reported using at least one social media site in their class, but 53% said Facebook and 46% said Twitter add "negative" value, the Pearson study says. A survey last fall by Faculty Focus, a website about teaching, found that about 83% of professors allowed laptops in their classrooms; 58% said they found students using Facebook when they weren't supposed to.

Some students acknowledge the distracting nature of their digital devices.

When Harrisburg University of Science and Technology in Pennsylvania blocked access to several popular social media sites for a week last semester as a consciousness-raising exercise, 25% of participating students reported
having "better concentration in the classroom." But many students also
poured into an off-campus hotel lobby during breaks to plug in.

Lesson learned? "Social media is here and we as educators have to
acknowledge that," Harrisburg University Provost Eric Darr says. For now,
faculty are taking advantage of the phenomenon.

University of Missouri journalism professor Jen Lee Reeves urges students
to tweet about the topic of discussion during her classes — then checks her
phone occasionally to make sure entries are appropriate. "It turns into kind
of a live, flowing notebook of what we've discussed in class," she says.
Govt. agencies, colleges demand applicants' Facebook passwords
March 6, 2012
By Bob Sullivan

If you think privacy settings on your Facebook and Twitter accounts guarantee future employers or schools can't see your private posts, guess again.

Employers and colleges find the treasure-trove of personal information hiding behind password-protected accounts and privacy walls just too tempting, and some are demanding full access from job applicants and student athletes.

In Maryland, job seekers applying to the state's Department of Corrections have been asked during interviews to log into their accounts and let an interviewer watch while the potential employee clicks through wall posts, friends, photos and anything else that might be found behind the privacy wall.

Previously, applicants were asked to surrender their user name and password, but a complaint from the ACLU stopped that practice last year. While submitting to a Facebook review is voluntary, virtually all applicants agree to it out of a desire to score well in the interview, according Maryland ACLU legislative director Melissa Coretz Goemann.

Student-athletes in colleges around the country also are finding out they can no longer maintain privacy in Facebook communications because schools are requiring them to "friend" a coach or compliance officer, giving that person access to their “friends-only” posts. Schools are also turning to social media monitoring companies with names like UDilligence and Varsity Monitor for software packages that automate the task. The programs offer a "reputation scoreboard" to coaches and send "threat level" warnings about individual athletes to compliance officers.

A recent revision in the handbook at the University of North Carolina is typical:

"Each team must identify at least one coach or administrator who is responsible for having access to and regularly monitoring the content of team members’ social networking sites and postings,” it reads. "The athletics
department also reserves the right to have other staff members monitor athletes’ posts."

All this scrutiny is too much for Bradley Shear, a Washington D.C.-lawyer who says both schools and employers are violating the First Amendment with demands for access to otherwise private social media content.

"I can't believe some people think it's OK to do this," he said. "Maybe it's OK if you live in a totalitarian regime, but we still have a Constitution to protect us. It's not a far leap from reading people's Facebook posts to reading their email. ... As a society, where are we going to draw the line?"

Aside from the free speech concerns, Shear also thinks colleges take on unnecessary liability when they aggressively monitor student posts.

"What if the University of Virginia had been monitoring accounts in the Yeardley Love case and missed signals that something was going to happen?" he said, referring to a notorious campus murder. "What about the liability the school might have?"

Shear has gotten the attention of Maryland state legislators, who have proposed two separate bills aimed at banning social media access by schools and potential employers. The ACLU is aggressively supporting the bills.

"This is an invasion of privacy. People have so much personal information on their pages now. A person can treat it almost like a diary," said Goemann, the Maryland ACLU legislative director. "And (interviewers and schools) are also invading other people's privacy. They get access to that individual’s posts and all their friends. There is a lot of private information there."

Maryland's Department of Corrections policy first came to light last year, when corrections officer Robert Collins complained to the ACLU that he was forced to surrender his Facebook user name and password during an interview. The state agency suspended the policy for 45 days, and eventually settled on the “shoulder-surfing” substitute.

"My fellow officers and I should not have to allow the government to view our personal Facebook posts and those of our friends just to keep our jobs," Collins said to the ACLU at the time.

Agency spokesman Rick Binetti confirmed the new policy, but wouldn't comment on it or the proposed law which may ban it.

It's easy to see why an agency that hires prison guards would want to sneak a peek at potential employees’ private online lives. Goemann said that prisons are trying to avoid hiring guards with potential gang ties -- the agency told
the ACLU it had reviewed 2,689 applicants via social media, and denied employment to seven because of items found on their pages.

"All seven of these individuals' social media applications contained pictures of them showing verified gang signs (signs commonly known to law enforcement which are utilized by gangs)," the Department of Corrections told the ACLU in response to questions it asked about the program. It stressed the voluntary nature of social media inspection, noting that five of the 80 employees hired in the last three hiring cycles didn't provide access.

For student athletes, though, the access isn't voluntary. No access, no sports. "They're saying to students if you want to play, you have to friend a coach. That's very troubling," said Shear, the D.C. lawyer. "A good analogy for this, in the offline world, would it be acceptable for schools to require athletes to bug their off-campus apartments? Does a school have a right to know who all your friends are?"

There have been many high-profile embarrassing moments born of the toxic combination of student-athletes and Twitter. North Carolina defensive lineman Marvin Austin tweeted about expensive purchases on his account two years ago, then became subject of an NCAA investigation about improper conduct with a player agent. The incident led, in part, to the school's aforementioned aggressive social media policy.

So it's not surprising that many schools want to keep a careful eye on what students are posting online.

But avoiding an uncomfortable moment is not a good enough reason to squash free speech, Spear says. Plenty of settled case law in the U.S. sides with students' rights to express themselves publicly, he said, including numerous cases involving student newspapers. Public displays of protest are also protected: A landmark 1969 Supreme Court decisions known as Tinker vs. the Des Moines School District said school officials couldn't prevent students from wearing armbands protesting the Vietnam War as long as they weren't inciting violence.

Colleges have legitimate concerns about the things students post on social media accounts, but they should "deal with that issue the way they deal with everything else. They should educate," Shear said.

"Schools are in the business of educating, not spying," he added. "We don't hire private investigators to follow students wherever they go. If students say stupid things online, they should educate them ... not engage in prior restraint."
Goemann also noted that the rush to social media monitoring raises an often overlooked legal concern: It's against Facebook's Terms of Service.

"You will not share your password ... let anyone else access your account or do anything else that might jeopardize the security of your account," the site says in its policies.

Frederic Wolens, a Facebook spokesman, wouldn't comment on the Maryland legislative proposals, but he said many of these school and employer policies appear to violate the site's terms.

"Under our terms, only the holder of the email address and password is considered the Facebook account owner. We also prohibit anyone from soliciting the login information or accessing an account belonging to someone else," he said in a statement to msnbc.com. Wolens said Facebook has yet to take a position on collegiate social media monitoring.

Social media monitoring on colleges, while spreading quickly among athletic departments, seems to be limited to athletes at the moment. There's nothing stopping schools from applying the same policies to other students, however. And Shear says he's heard from college applicants that interviewers have requested Facebook or Twitter login information during in-person screenings.

The practice seems less common among employers, but scattered incidents are gaining attention from state lawmakers. The blog Tecca.com last year showed what it said was an image of an application for a clerical job with a North Carolina police department that included the following question:

"Do you have any web page accounts such as Facebook, Myspace, etc.? If so, list your username and password."

And the state of Illinois has followed Maryland's lead and is considering similar legislation to ban social media password demands by employers.

But Shear says a patchwork of state laws isn't good enough when the stakes are this high.

"We need a federal law dealing with this," he said. "After 9/11, we have a culture where some people think it's OK for the government to be this involved in our lives, that it's OK to turn everything over to the government. But it's not. We still have privacy rights in this country, and we still have a Constitution."