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ECU, PCS partner for $9M grant
By Jackie Drake
The Daily Reflector
Monday, March 8, 2010
East Carolina University, Pitt County Schools and other local educational entities have formed a partnership to improve teacher quality through an $8.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education.
The ECU College of Education, the ECU College of Arts and Sciences, Pitt County Schools and Greene County Schools have joined together for the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant.
“"The immediate focus will be on ECU teacher preparation for elementary and middle grades as well as special education, and reform initiatives in grades one through eight in Pitt and Greene County Schools," said Shirley Carraway of the ECU College of Education, the principal investigator on the grant program.
The work for the grant could eventually affect all teachers, but for the first few years the focus will be on select teachers working with ECU interns, Carraway said.
This partnership was the only one awarded in North Carolina out of 28 grants given across the nation from a pool of more than 170 applicants, according to Carraway.
This is the first time ECU has received this funding, Carraway said. It is also the first time Pitt and Greene County Schools have collaborated with ECU on a project using this specific funding source.
“"PCS has always enjoyed a healthy collaboration with ECU, especially in the College of Education,” said Pitt Superintendent Beverly Reep. “"However, this partnership is tightly structured to achieve measurable outcomes for our beginning teachers and for our students. We are very excited to work with ECU and to demonstrate that this kind of collaboration can produce direct results for students.”
The grant was awarded in September 2009 after the proposal was submitted the previous July. The total of $8.8 million will be distributed over five years.
Funding began in October 2009 and will continue through September 2014.
While the award is given to the ECU College of Education, funding is to support work done at all the partner entities.
“"We are partners in every sense of the word," said Linda Patriarca, dean of the College of Education at ECU. “"In the county schools and the university we need to be the model for teacher quality.”
Patriarca gave a presentation on the grant to the Pitt County Board of Education at its regular meeting on Monday, March 1.
The grant has four goals: to recruit highly qualified individuals including minorities and individuals from other occupations; to improve the quality of prospective and new teachers; to
hold teacher preparation programs accountable for preparing high-quality teachers; and to
improve student achievement.
To carry out those goals, activities will take place in five focus areas: teacher recruitment, clinical
practice, induction and mentoring, curriculum reform and school reform.
“This partnership is going to be very important because part of the grant focuses on preparing
high quality units-of-instruction for teachers in training that are content-sound,” Patriarca said.
Patriarca added that the grant partners are working together to strengthen the clinical experience
for teachers-in-training and evaluating the selection process and training available for established
mentor teachers.
The grant also would streamline the existing process for teachers from recruitment to induction in
the classroom as well as tracking retention.
“The alignment of training and induction methods makes this an important partnership,” Reep
said.
“The grant streamlines both the training of pre-service teachers and their induction into our
school system. Using similar development strategies (those that we know are research driven)
should ensure that students achieve the solid results with new and beginning teachers that they
achieve with a more experienced teacher.”
The grant includes a communication plan for parents of middle and high school students whose
children might be interested in a career in teaching.
“Education is a broad profession,” Reep said. “Teaching is only one part of an enormous field
that includes counseling, administrating and curriculum development.”
Grant administrators will reach out early to those students interested in teaching, focusing on
middle and high school grades. Recruiting male and African-American teachers also remains a
high priority, she added.
Patriarca said that ECU would continue existing partnerships with community colleges for those
studying teaching and keeping them in state.
“Right now 60-some percent of the teachers who train in North Carolina actually go on to work
as teachers in North Carolina,” Patriarca said, adding that was something the grant would address.
The grant will not focus so much on identifying those “born with it” or those with a certain
personality type conducive to teaching, but providing resources so all teachers can be effective.
“We want to have high expectations for our teachers, but give them the scaffolding to reach those
expectations,” Patriarca said.

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Pirate fans put trust in the top for search

As head coach at the University of Virginia, Terry Holland led two teams to the pinnacle of college basketball, bringing his 1981 and 1984 squads to the Final Four. Though he fell short of capturing the national championship, Holland showed he could build a winning program, one capable of competing at the highest level of the sport.

That experience lends confidence to Holland's new task of finding a replacement for East Carolina University men's head basketball coach Mack McCarthy, who resigned on Saturday for a new post in the athletic department. Success may be elusive in Minges Coliseum, but Holland can forge a new era with a strong hire.

Since taking the reins of Pirate sports in 2004, Athletics Director Holland has built a strong foundation for the future. He inherited an athletic department with fundamental flaws and saw to constructing a more streamlined, efficient organization that better serves the university's interests. That has come through thoughtful investment in both personnel and facilities.

In football, the hiring of Skip Holtz brought the unprecedented success of back-to-back conference titles, and his departure opened the door for alumnus Ruffin McNeill to take the helm next season. In baseball, the Pirates have enjoyed a similar trajectory, hosting the school's first NCAA Regional Tournament last year under the leadership of Billy Godwin, another Holland hire.

Considering the construction and improvements on campus — new football locker rooms, the expansion of Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, construction of a new softball field, among them — East Carolina is focused on the future. To remain competitive, a school must continually invest in facilities, and this university has done so with Holland's guidance.

In men's basketball, however, the Pirates continue to struggle. The coaching search now under way represents the third under the direction of Holland and Chancellor Steve Ballard. McCarthy's decision to resign may not have been his alone, as his career 34-56 at East Carolina may attest, but he will serve as an integral part of what the university needs. McCarthy will assist in fundraising efforts to build an on-campus basketball practice facility, a valuable addition that will draw recruits to Greenville.

However, a new gym will mean little without a charismatic, successful leader at the forefront of the program. Pirate fans should have confidence in Holland, since his experience is invaluable at this critical hour. This is his latest chance to get it right on his watch, and East Carolina can ill afford another setback.
ECU student traveling world via jump rope
By Kim Grizzard
The Daily Reflector
Monday, March 8, 2010
For one East Carolina University student, Australia, China and South Africa are just a hop, skip and a jump away.
Nineteen-year-old Chelsea Guild has traveled to all three countries, but what has taken her there might surprise people. It’s a jump rope.
“I’ve been to five continents,” said Guild, of Chapel Hill. “Jump rope has taken me all over the world ... it put me on ESPN; it took me to the Olympics.”
Guild is a member of the Bouncing Bulldogs, a 20-year-old international rope skipping demonstration team based in the Triangle area. The team’s 110 members, who range in age from 4 to 22, have won six consecutive USA Jump Rope Grand National Championships.
Guild, a sophomore communication major, was a part of those competitions; she even traveled to Beijing in 2008 to perform at the Summer Olympics. When she enrolled at ECU, Guild officially retired from competition, but she wasn’t ready to skip out on jumping rope altogether.
Guild, who began the sport at age 7, taught jump rope camps and clinics for years as a member of the Bouncing Bulldogs. When she moved to Greenville, she decided to do a good turn and see if she could find a local team to help.
Her search led her to Trinity Christian School, where physical education teacher Sharon Martin was leading a jump rope club.
“At first I just came out and talked to the girls about where jump rope had taken me,” Guild said. “But then I got to know the girls, (and) it became a weekly thing where I came out and helped them develop skills and develop tricks.”
Inspired by Jump Rope For Heart, a benefit for the American Heart Association, Martin coached a team for years at White Oak Elementary School in Carteret County. When she brought the concept to Trinity about three years ago, girls leaped at the chance to join the Jumping Tigers, which now has 16 members in grades four through seven.
Their reaction mirrors the popularity jump rope has enjoyed across the country. In 2007, the Disney movie “Jump In!” chronicled the intense competition among teens involved in jumping rope, which was once considered a children’s playground activity.
Even toddlers can learn the basics of jumping rope.
“I begin with kindergarten (in P.E. classes) trying to teach them how to jump,” Martin said. “The parents really love to see their children — especially the elementary children — doing this.”
Julie Brickhouse’s daughter, Melissa, 13, tried out her first year at Trinity.
“I didn’t know all that (competitive jump rope teams) existed,” Brickhouse said. “It’s something different.”
It turns out that jump rope is considered to be an extremely efficient exercise. Experts say it is possible to burn more calories in 10 minutes of jumping rope than spending the same time swimming or jogging.
“Jump rope is the best thing you can do for your heart,” Guild said. “There’s definitely the fitness component to it.
“Jump rope is also a great cross trainer for other sports,” she said. “The Atlanta Braves jump rope. Boxers jump rope.”
Martin said almost anyone can jump rope, which is why she encourages her students, including those not in jump rope club, to begin practicing at home.
“This is one of those lifetime skills that you can do forever,” she said. “All you need is a rope.”
Still, Martin is glad to have a college assistant to help students with acrobatic moves with names like “can-can,” “mule kick” and “worm.”
Brickhouse has seen her daughter improve as a jumper since Guild came on board.
“She gets right out there and gets involved with them,” she said. “She shows them how she does some of her tricks.”
Kindall Stewart has been on the Jumping Tigers team since it began. The 12-year-old jumper has been learning a trick called the octopus, which, like it sounds, involves jumping rope with her legs coming up over her arms.
“It’s harder than it looks,” she said. “It took a long time to get it.”
Newer jumpers, like 9-year-old Rebecca Hodges and 11-year-old Megan Campanaro, are working on more basic skills, such as crossovers. But age and size do not provide the advantage in jump rope that they do in other sports. Hannah Hedgepeth’s 10-year-old little sister, Grace, joined the Jumping Tigers before Hannah did.
“She would always come home and talk about it, saying she was doing something I couldn’t do,” Hannah, 12, said. “She motivated me.”
Brickhouse said Guild has a similar effect on the jumpers, propelling them to aim higher.
“I think that is an inspiration to the girls to keep them going,” she said, “when you see somebody who has done all this with jump rope.”
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Kendall Varnell, 11, jumps rope Wednesday afternoon during Trinity Christian School's jump rope team practice.
Jenni Farrow/The Daily Reflector

Trinity Christian School's jump rope team practices a skill called a "triangle" with three girls jumping at once.
Jenni Farrow/The Daily Reflector
Lessons From Frogs

By LISA BELKIN

Oh, the lessons to be learned from the male Peruvian poison frog, also known as Ranitomeya imitator.

Off-putting name aside, he is a loyal and nurturing chap, thought to be the only monogamous frog out there (the other 403 species are apparently gigolos). Your average frog — that cheating Ranitomeya variabilis for instance — hops away after fertilizing a cluster of eggs, but the loyal poison frog stays close, then carries the newly hatched tadpoles on his back to small pools of water and plays stay-at-pond dad; the mother shows up mostly to lay unfertilized eggs for the babes to eat.

A study to be published in next month’s issue of The American Naturalist theorizes that behaviors like monogamy and co-operative parenting are directly linked with the availability of resources. The poison frog is almost often found in teeny tiny pools — less than two tablespoons of nutrient-weak liquid — and researchers theorize that’s because larger frogs claimed the more luxurious digs first. Close quarters and scarcity of food mean offspring need the attention of both Mom and Dad to survive, turning strapped parents into more cooperative partners.

Might this tell us something about when and why our human ancestors shared domestic chores? The evolutionary ecologistas from East Carolina University who conducted the frog study suggest it might. The scramble for food and shelter, along with the fear of predators, kept early humans close together, which might make them less likely to (literally and figuratively) stray.

We’ve talked a lot about equal parenting here on Motherlode. Could the answer be be as simple as less money and less space?
Leading economic indicators demonstrate the United States is well on its way to recovering from the Great Recession, but the recovery will continue to be slow and painful, according to Rick Niswander.

“We went on a humongous binge, and our head still hurts,” Niswander, dean of East Carolina University’s College of Business, told around 100 guests and members of the Beaufort County Committee of 100 on Thursday afternoon.

“Virtually everything you look at has the seeds of the economic recovery,” he said during a speech at the Washington Civic Center.

Niswander cautioned against focusing on unemployment numbers as the main measure of the economy’s overall health.

Employment is “a lagging indicator,” and employment figures typically don’t begin to rise until recessions are over, he said, adding, “This one will be no different.”

“We shouldn’t look at the unemployment rate as an indicator of whether we’re getting better or not,” Niswander said. “It’s the last thing that’s going to happen.”

Unemployment remains high, but likely will fall a bit and hover around 8.5 percent to 9 percent through the end of the year, he forecast.

“That’s a number that’s very high historically, but it’s not going to get fixed quickly,” he said.

Still, the economy has stabilized, and “the worst is behind us,” Niswander said.

“We went for two years with negative job growth in this country,” he said. “That’s why the unemployment rate’s at 10 percent.”

Commercial loans — loans to businesses — remain in negative territory, and they have been every month nationwide since 2009, spanning a period of about a year and a quarter, according to Niswander.

Other components of the economy — from personal income to retail sales — are roughly back to normal or cycling through normal ups and downs, he said.
“Again, we’re not better, we’re getting better,” Niswander said.

The Troubled Asset Relief Program funds deployed in the waning days of George W. Bush’s administration, and extended under President Barack Obama, had an initial price tag of $700 billion, he said.

The amount needed to be large, Niswander asserted. “The reason for that is we’ve got a huge ($14 trillion) economy,” he said. “The (bailout) numbers are huge to us, but tiny overall.”

Nationally, amounts of $10 million to $30 million are “budget dust,” he said, adding, “That about doesn’t matter in relation to the U.S. economy.”

The recovery measures were “very imperfect,” he said, but they addressed the right kind of issues at the right time, and were large enough to make a difference.

Later, during the question-and-answer portion of Thursday’s event, Niswander further underscored what he spoke of as the necessity of the biggest actions Bush and Obama took to shore up the economy.

If not for TARP, “We would be talking about the Great Depression No. 2,” he said.

The end of 2008 ushered in a near collapse of the global banking and finance system, Niswander said. “It isn’t going to fix itself quickly, and it isn’t going to fix itself painlessly,” he said, “and if we think it is, we’re deluding ourselves.”

Asked about the national debt, he said the remedy probably requires higher income taxes and reductions in services.

He said that Democrats and Republicans in Washington, D.C., have made mistakes, and that neither party has a monopoly on answers.

Asked who was to blame for the financial debacle, he indicated that greed, as with blame, was abundant.

“I place the blame on every single person in this country, quite frankly,” Niswander said. “This problem was caused by greedy folks on Wall Street; it was caused by greedy folks on Main Street, too.”

Summing up his advice to those curious about how to behave during and after the recovery, he quoted Confucius: “When prosperity comes, do not use all of it.”
Auburn Montgomery names first-ever provost

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MONTGOMERY, AL - Dr. Jeffery Elwell has been chosen to become Auburn Montgomery’s first provost, Chancellor John Veres announced Monday.

Elwell, who currently serves as professor and dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication at East Carolina University, will begin work June 22, Veres said.

"I am absolutely thrilled to have someone of Dr. Elwell’s broad academic experience and high energy level in this key position," Veres said.

"In its 40-year history, Auburn Montgomery has developed a reputation for delivering a quality education, and I am confident that, under Dr. Elwell’s leadership, we shall not only continue that tradition but elevate our academic quality to new heights," he said.

As provost, Elwell will serve as the university’s chief academic officer and will replace the position previously called vice chancellor for academic affairs. He also will oversee many of the day-to-day operations of the campus. In addition, he will join the university’s faculty as a tenured professor in the Department of Communication and Dramatic Arts.

"I am delighted and humbled by the opportunity to become a member of Chancellor Veres’ leadership team and work with the faculty to bring Auburn Montgomery to even greater prominence," said Elwell. "My family and I are looking forward to moving to Montgomery and becoming involved in the community."

Elwell comes to Auburn Montgomery after six successful years in the dean’s position at East Carolina. During his tenure, the College of Fine Arts and Communication has grown from 1,622 students to 2,359 and received 12 new permanent faculty lines. He also instituted a research and creative activity grant program for faculty and created a Summer Arts Leadership Institute with funding from BB&T.

Prior to East Carolina, Elwell was professor and chair of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Nebraska. He also served as professor and chair of the Department of Theatre and director of the Edwards Performing Arts Center at Marshall University. In addition, he served as director of theatre at Mississippi State University and Gardner-Webb University, and as chair of Theatre at Aurora University.

Elwell earned his Ph.D. in speech communication and theater from Southern Illinois University. He holds a master’s in communication and theatre from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and a bachelor’s degree in English from California State University-Bakersfield.

In announcing Elwell’s selection, Veres made a point to thank the members of the Provost Search Committee for conducting one of the most open, inclusive and thorough searches ever at Auburn Montgomery. He offered his thanks all of the faculty and staff who participated in the process.

INFORMATION SOURCE: Auburn Montgomery
Campbell, NCSU join for degrees

RALEIGH -- Two local universities are teaming up to offer a two-for-one special.

Starting this fall, Campbell University's Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law and N.C. State University will join to develop a four-year program that will enable students to receive both a law degree and master of public administration degree.

Students will have to apply and be accepted to both schools but will get two degrees in four years instead of the five years it would take if done separately.

That saved year will mean less time, and less money, for students, said Jeffery Braden, dean of NCSU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The partnership was announced Monday at Campbell, a private law school. Campbell's law program moved to downtown Raleigh on Hillsborough Street this fall from Buies Creek in Harnett County.

"This is a partnership that maximizes our joint commitment to public service," said Melissa Essary, Campbell Law's dean.

Speaking at the announcement was former Gov. Jim Hunt, who said he hopes that state government will benefit, given the proximity of Campbell and NCSU to state government offices.

"We can be a whole lot better for it," he said.

Paying for the degrees will mean students write checks to both Campbell and NCSU. Students will pay Campbell prices for law classes and pay NCSU prices for public administration classes, Braden said.

Campbell's yearly cost is $58,930, including $31,800 in tuition, while NCSU's master's program costs an in-state student $22,817, just $5,993 of that for tuition.

UNC-Chapel Hill also offers a dual public administration and law degree program as well as a partnership with Duke University where students can study law at Carolina and public policy at Duke.

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Self: 'Nothing has been offered' to Dooley

By Tony Castleberry
The Daily Reflector
Monday, March 8, 2010

Kansas head men’s basketball coach Bill Self said Monday that Jayhawks assistant Joe Dooley has not been offered the head coaching job at East Carolina, where Dooley led the Pirates to a 57-52 record in four seasons from 1995-99.

Self told a source close to the situation in Lawrence, Kan., on Monday that no offers had been presented to Dooley, contrary to online reports that ECU had already tried to lure the former Pirate coach back to Greenville.

“Nothing has been offered,” Self said. “Nothing is imminent at all. (ECU) is still gauging interest.”

East Carolina Director of Athletics Terry Holland said Sunday that he’s still forming a list of candidates and that the coach who’ll take over for Mack McCarthy might not be named until after the NCAA Tournament. McCarthy, who will most likely end his ECU coaching days at this week’s Conference USA Tournament, announced his resignation after Saturday’s home loss to Southern Miss. According to a press release from East Carolina, McCarthy will take a fundraising job with the school aimed at helping ECU get an on-campus practice facility.

McCarthy, who has three years left on a five-year deal that pays him a base salary of $225,000 per year, is 34-56 in three seasons as head coach of the Pirates, who play Houston on Wednesday in the C-USA tourney.

Dooley is in his seventh season as an assistant at Kansas. After eight seasons with ECU — four as an assistant before taking the head coaching job — Dooley worked as an assistant at New Mexico and Wyoming before joining Self’s staff in 2003. His .523 winning percentage is the third-highest of any East Carolina coach with at least four seasons under their belt.

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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Ohio State University says an overnight shooting at a campus maintenance building left one of its employees dead and two others wounded.

The shooting was first reported at 3:30 a.m. Tuesday. University police say a suspect was taken into custody after heavily armed officers searched the area, which is near the school's massive football stadium.

University Police Chief Paul Denton says one of the wounded employees is in critical condition and the other is in stable condition.

No names have been released. Denton says police are trying to determine the motive.

Ohio State says no students were involved. The university, the nation's largest, says classes will be held Tuesday.

Please follow the Post's Education coverage on Facebook, Twitter or our Education and Higher Education pages. Bookmark them!
On a windy morning in downtown Washington, a hundred Georgetown Law students gathered in a hall for David Cole's lecture on democracy and coercion. The desks were cluttered with books, Thermoses and half-eaten muffins.

Another item was noticeable in its absence: laptop computers. They were packed away under chairs, tucked into backpacks, powered down and forgotten.

Cole has banned laptops from his classes, compelling students to take notes the way their parents did: on paper.

A generation ago, academia embraced the laptop as the most welcome classroom innovation since the ballpoint pen. But during the past decade, it has evolved into a powerful distraction. Wireless Internet connections tempt students away from note-typing to e-mail, blogs, YouTube videos, sports scores, even online gaming -- all the diversions of a home computer beamed into the classroom to compete with the professor for the student's attention.

"This is like putting on every student's desk, when you walk into class, five different magazines, several television shows, some shopping opportunities and a phone, and saying, 'Look, if your mind wanders, feel free to pick any of these up and go with it,'" Cole said.

Professors have banned laptops from their classrooms at George Washington University, American University, the College of William and Mary and the University of Virginia, among many others. Last month, a physics professor at the University of Oklahoma poured liquid nitrogen onto a laptop and then shattered it on the floor, a warning to the digitally distracted. A student -- of course -- managed to capture the staged theatri cs on video and drew a million hits on YouTube.

Cole was among the first professors in the Washington region to ban laptops, in the 2006-07 academic year. He found them an "attractive nuisance." It was a bold decree: Georgetown had only recently begun requiring that first-year law students own laptops, after painstakingly upgrading the campus for wireless Internet access.

Just last week, a colleague of Cole's unwittingly demonstrated how thoroughly the Internet has colonized the classroom. When Professor Peter Tague told students a canard about Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. stepping down, students promptly spread the news into the blogosphere. Later in class, Tague revealed that the tip was false, part of a lesson on credibility, according to the blog Above the Law.
The laptop computer, introduced in 1981, has become nearly obligatory on campus; some colleges require them. They are as essential to today's student as a working stereo system was to their parents.

"My laptop lives with me. I'm always on it," said Madeline Twomey, 20, a George Washington junior.

Twomey has used a computer since age 6 and had her first laptop at 15. She senses a widening generation gap. "Most professors, even at their youngest, they're in their 30s," she said. "They don't understand how much it's become a part of our lives."

The 'cone of distraction'

Professors say they do understand -- all too well.

Diane E. Sieber, an associate professor of humanities at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has debated her students on the collegiate conceit of multitasking, the notion that today's youths can fully attend to a lecture while intermittently toggling over to e-mail, ESPN and Facebook.

"It's really serialized interruption," Sieber said. "You start something, you stop it, you do something else, you stop it, which is something you're doing if you're switching back and forth between World of Warcraft and my class."

One recent semester, Siebert tracked the grades of 17 student laptop addicts. At the end of the term, their average grade was 71 percent, "almost the same as the average for the students who didn't come at all."

Sieber believes that those students, in turn, divert the attention of the students behind them, a parabolic effect she calls the "cone of distraction."

José A. Bowen, dean of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University, is removing computers from lecture halls and urging his colleagues to "teach naked" -- without machines. Bowen says class time should be used for engaging discussion, something that reliance on technology discourages.

Cole surveyed one of his Georgetown classes anonymously after six weeks of laptop-free lectures. Four-fifths said they were more engaged in class discussion. Ninety-five percent admitted that they had used their laptops for "purposes other than taking notes."

Even when used as glorified typewriters, laptops can turn students into witless stenographers, typing a lecture verbatim without listening or understanding.

"The breaking point for me was when I asked a student to comment on an issue, and he said, 'Wait a minute, I want to open my computer,' " said David Goldfrank, a Georgetown history professor. "And I told him, 'I don't want to know what's in your computer. I want to know what's in your head.' "

Some early attempts to ban laptops met resistance. In 2006, a group of law students at the University of Memphis complained to the American Bar Association, in vain. These days, the restriction is so common that most students take it in stride.

"I think that a professor's well within reason to ban laptops," said Cristina Cardenal, a 20-year-old Georgetown junior. "Professors aren't stupid. They know what's going on." She also happens to believe that the rule benefits students, who should know better than to "pay as much money as we do to sit in a
class and read a blog."

**Flipping a switch**

Perhaps no college has experienced the good and bad of laptops like Bentley University in Waltham, Mass. In 1985, Bentley was the first college in the nation to require students to own portable computers. By the late 1990s, professors complained of distracted students. In 2000, the college installed a custom-designed system to let professors switch off Internet and e-mail access in their classrooms. They've flipped the switch "thousands of times," said Bentley's Phillip G. Knutel.

Universities have stopped short of disabling Internet access entirely, which might create a raft of new complaints from professors who routinely ask students to go online in class.

Plenty of professors still allow laptops. Siva Vaidhyanathan, an associate professor of media studies and law at U-Va., generally permits them in his classes. He remembers his own college diversion: reading newspapers surreptitiously on the floor beneath his desk. He believes that, ultimately, it is a professor's job to hold the class's attention.

"If students don't want to pay attention, the laptop is the least of your problems," he said.

Vaidhyanathan, an Internet scholar, senses a losing battle. In an era of iPhones and BlackBerrys, Internet-ready cellphones have become just as prevalent in classrooms as laptops, and equally capable of distraction. If professors had hoped to hermetically seal their teaching space by banning laptops, they might be about three years too late.

"The question 'Laptop or not?' isn't as big a question as the question of a screen or not," he said. "And, sitting in front of 200 students, I can't really enforce a ban on anything."

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