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Researchers brace for NIH cutbacks

*Scientific advances may suffer, Duke, other schools warn*

BY TIM SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

A budget squeeze at the National Institutes of Health is threatening to stall biomedical research at U.S. universities, even though the federal agency hands out about $29 billion a year.
That message was delivered Tuesday by officials at Duke, Harvard, Vanderbilt, UCLA and other schools where hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year on thousands of NIH projects. The group held a news conference in Washington, hoping to highlight the issue in the coming congressional budget debate.
The lack of any significant budget increase since 2003 is particularly relevant in the Triangle, said Ken Tindall, a senior vice president at the N.C. Biotechnology Center.

More than $700 million in NIH grants flowed to the area’s three large research universities last year. Much of that money paid for salaries, equipment and other lab costs. Over time, discoveries in those labs could lead to spinoff companies or new approaches in private industry.

“The basic research made possible by these grants is what drives much of the economic development here,” Tindall said.

Younger researchers with no track record are most affected by the tight budgets, said Nancy Andrews, dean of Duke University’s medical school. That’s because they are competing directly with researchers who are already running a lab.

“Their chances aren’t good in that situation, and it’s discouraging when you look at the odds,” Andrews said. “Many will leave and

SEE RESEARCHERS, PAGE 3D

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**NIH MONEY**
The growth in value of NIH grants received by North Carolina researchers slowed significantly in 2003 after more than doubling in the previous five years.

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*2007 top recipients, in millions*

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*Note: 2007 figures do not include research and development grants. Source: National Institutes of Health*
RESEARCHERS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

practice medicine full time, which is fine, but others move out of the field entirely.”
Kristen Newby, an associate professor of medicine at Duke, is familiar with the challenge.

“The process of getting NIH funding can be a career in and of itself,” said Newby, whose research was supported by an NIH grant through 2003. Her work, which involves studying a patient’s risk for heart attacks, is now paid for by the pharmaceutical industry. Although universities aren’t happy about the situation, the realities of today’s federal research budget shouldn’t surprise anyone, said Kei Koizumi, a budget and policy expert at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington.

Bush stems the flow

In 1998, Congress promised to double the NIH budget to $27 billion within five years. The Bush administration inherited that promise and pushed it along, but the president made it clear that there would be no further increases once the goal was met. Spending on

the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cemented his position.

Still, the number of labs and salaried lab workers grew rapidly during the five years that budget doubled. Many universities thought Congress would keep those labs running by approving budgets that at least kept up with inflation.

“No one wanted to be left behind, and it took a few years before people realized there wasn’t going to be a soft landing,” Koizumi said. “Now their budgets are shrinking when you take inflation into account, and they are committed to projects that typically run at least four years.”

Universities turned to outside sources for money and lobbied Congress to return to historical budget increases of about 6 percent to 8 percent a year.

“That’s understandable, but their time might be better spent learning to live with what they have,” said Steve Ellis of Taxpayers for Common Sense in Washington. “Before we start talking about adding money, let’s talk about whether we are spending each dime wisely.”

NIH has made some effort to change its ways, setting aside more money for younger researchers. But those amounts aren’t enough to reverse the squeeze.

New sources of money

To underscore that point, the nonprofit Howard Hughes Medical Institute announced a program Monday that will award $300 million for projects by young scientists only.

This year, a California multimillionaire announced a smaller program with a similar goal. One of the first grants went to David Kirsch, 37, a Duke researcher who wants to build a small device that can identify microscopic residue from a single cancer cell during surgery.

NIH isn’t likely to fund those kind of projects these days, partly because reviewers become conservative when money is tight. “When you can’t fund as many projects, you want to increase the odds that those getting money will succeed,” Andrews said. “But then you tend to see more projects being funded where you already know the answer before you start.”

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Study finds student hazing is widespread

BY DAVID SHARP
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORTLAND, Maine — Most colleges ban hazing, but more than half of college students who belong to campus organizations say they have experienced it in places from the glee club to the fraternity house, according to a new study.

Academic clubs and social and cultural organizations all haze new members, students told professors Elizabeth Allan and Mary Madden from the University of Maine’s College of Education and Human Development.

"It’s far more widespread than many people would’ve assumed," Allan said.

The professors’ National Study of Student Hazing was based on responses from 11,482 students at 53 institutions. It was released Tuesday at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators meeting in Boston.

Among students who belonged to campus organizations, 31 percent of men and 23 percent of women reported participating in drinking games, and 17 percent of men and 9 percent of women reported drinking to the point of getting sick or passing out.

The professors, based in Orono, said previous research on hazing has focused on Greek organizations and athletic teams. Their research was based on an online survey of students who were chosen at random by college administrators. The team also interviewed more than 300 students.

The study found the highest rates of hazing (74 percent) among members of varsity athletic teams and fraternities and sororities (73 percent). But rates also were high for participants in club sports (64 percent) and performing arts organizations (56 percent).

Twenty-eight percent of participants in academic clubs and 20 percent of honor society members reported being hazed.

Activities the survey counted as hazing were skits or roasts where members are humiliated, singing or chanting in public, wearing embarrassing clothing, being yelled or cursed at, enduring harsh weather without proper clothing, drinking large amounts of alcohol, and watching or engaging in sex acts.
BRIEFS
FROM STAFF REPORTS.

WAKE COUNTY

NCSU police search for robbery suspects

RALEIGH – N.C. State University police are looking for as many as three men responsible for two robberies, including one late Tuesday afternoon.

NCSU police Capt. Jon Barnwell said two men were held up at the Avent Ferry Complex at Avent Ferry Road and Western Boulevard, overnight Monday. The suspect, a man described only as being 6 feet tall with a thin build, was wearing all black and had his face covered by a bandanna.

Barnwell said the suspect held the men at knife-point, took their wallets and fled in a late-model Ford Explorer.

On Tuesday, a graduate student leaving the Toxicology building at 850 Main Campus Drive was robbed by two men. One of the men, Barnwell said, had a semiautomatic gun. After taking the student’s wallet, the men fled on foot.

Anyone with information is asked to call the NCSU Police Department’s Criminal Investigations division at 515-2498.

UNC wants money tweak

The UNC system wants to tinker with its formula for doling out repair and renovation money to state agencies.

UNC officials say the current formula — devised in the early 1990s — is outdated. UNC accounted for about 46 percent of all state buildings at the time and thus has received 46 percent of the R&R fund each year.

But after its construction boom of the past seven years, the university system’s building inventory has swelled, and officials want the repair fund to follow suit. UNC campus facilities make up about 60 percent of all state buildings, university officials say.

The repair and renovation fund is used for general and unexpected maintenance: a leaky roof, an inoperative air conditioner, a broken window. This year, the UNC system received $66.7 million.

If the formula was changed and UNC received 60 percent of the pot — up from 46 percent — the change this year would be worth an extra $20 million.

By staff writers Ryan Teague Beckwith, Rob Christensen, Michael Biesecker and Eric Ferreri.
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Panel fills Carson seat

Work resumes to pick chancellor

By Eric Ferreri
Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL — The committee looking for a new chancellor at UNC-Chapel Hill somberly appointed a replacement Tuesday for Eve Carson, the student leader who was killed last week.

Carson, who served on the search committee, was found shot dead one week ago in an intersection in a residential neighborhood near campus.

Her successor on the committee is J.J. Raynor, a junior from Charlotte whom the student body elected to be its leader next year.

An emotional Nelson Schwab, a professor and chairman of the search committee, announced Raynor’s appointment at the start of the committee’s Tuesday meeting. He struggled with tears as he talked about Carson, whose killer is still at large.

“We miss our precious Eve,” Schwab said during brief comments prior to a moment of silence Tuesday. “It leaves a void in all our hearts.”

Schwab attend a memorial service for Carson over the weekend in Athens, Ga., her hometown. On Tuesday he recounted comments from three speakers at the ceremony, pausing at one point to say, “I have to pull myself together here.”

The committee is seeking a replacement for James Moeser, UNC-Chapel Hill’s chancellor since 2000. He steps down this summer.

“We gotta suck it up,” Schwab said as the committee disappeared behind closed doors to discuss candidates. “We have a lot of work to do, and we have a lot of work ahead of us.”

Schwab gave no indication how far along the committee is in its process. Bill Funk, a search consultant working with the committee, often gives brief, public updates at the start of meetings, but was delayed Tuesday by bad weather in Dallas, where his company is based.

At recent meetings, Schwab and Funk have said the search has been narrowed to about 20 people.

The committee is scheduled to meet again this morning.

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Carson’s killer unknown, police say

CHAPEL HILL — Investigators are following hundreds of leads but police still don’t know who killed UNC-Chapel Hill student Eve Carson, Police Chief Brian Curran said Tuesday.

Law enforcement officers have been looking at surveillance photos since Friday.

Police are keeping some evidence private to keep an eventual suspect off guard and to weed out false confessions, Curran said.

People with information can call Crime Stoppers at 942-7515. The UNC-Chapel Hill board of trustees has pledged $25,000 of its members’ own money for information leading to an arrest in Carson’s case.
Study: Support helps in keeping off weight

BY JEAN P. FISHER AND SARAH AVERY
STAFF WRITERS

Dieters who had regular contact with a weight-maintenance coach kept off more pounds than people who got support on the Web or simply went it alone.

That finding — from a new national weight-loss study led by Duke University researchers and published in today's issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association — provides an indication of how hard it will be to tackle America's burgeoning obesity epidemic.

About 62 percent of Americans and 63 percent of North Carolinians are too heavy, which increases risk for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and other ailments. Although much is known about how to lose weight, little is understood about the best ways to keep it off. And almost all people who successfully trim down end up regaining at least some weight — a phenomenon commonly referred to as yo-yo dieting.

In the study, which enrolled 1,032 men and women nationwide and about 260 at Duke, participants

SEE DIET, PAGE 6B

BY THE NUMBERS

$47.5 BILLION: The estimated cost of obesity in the United States, using 1998 National Health Accounts data.

$2.14 BILLION: The estimated cost of obesity in North Carolina.

24: Percentage of Americans considered obese.

25.6: Percentage of North Carolinians who are obese.

17: North Carolina's ranking in the nation for its rate of obesity.

SOURCES: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION; TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH
followed three weight-loss maintenance approaches. After they lost weight, some were randomly assigned to have short monthly meetings with a personal weight-maintenance coach, while others were advised to use an interactive Web page that provided similar information and support. A third group was told to continue doing what had helped them in the first phase, such as being more active, eating less and dining on mostly fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains.

People in all three groups regained at least some of the pounds they shed in the initial slimming phase. But people who had short, monthly sessions with a counselor, either in person or by phone, kept off an average of 3 pounds more than the others.

More than 75 percent of people assigned to the personal contact group maintained at least some weight loss for 3 years. Sixty-nine percent of participants in the Web group kept off weight, and 67 percent of those who got no help did.

"Part of the problem is we're looking for an easy fix," said Dr. Laura Svetkey, the Duke physician who led the national study, which was the largest and longest to look at ways to maintain weight loss. "This is very hard. It's going to be hard to lose the weight and hard to keep the weight off."

Robert Sanders, a retired postal worker who lives in Raleigh, said he enlisted in the study nearly three years ago, and lost about 30 pounds to a more comfortable 216.

"I was big. I was real big," Sanders said. "My doctor was telling me to lose weight."

And for good reason. Sanders said his blood pressure was elevated, his cholesterol was high, and he was having irregular heartbeats. After enrolling in the study at Duke, he said, he embarked on a lifestyle makeover that included exercise and a new approach to eating. He began cooking with healthful fats such as olive oil, lots of fruits and vegetables, and cut portion sizes. Monthly conversations with his nutritional coach, he said, gave him the incentive and knowledge to keep off the pounds for almost three years. He's also taking fewer pills for his cardiovascular issues.

"I will never go back," Sanders said, noting that previous diets resulted in weight loss but subsequent gains after a few months. "You will never see me again at 245 pounds, because I know the lifestyle change has taken over what I do."

Such an approach suggests a lifelong commitment that can be learned, but under rigorous terms, Svetkey said she is unaware of any sort of weight-loss intervention available in the community that provides what the study offered.

"And if you found something like this, it would be hard to afford," she said. "That's a whole other problem we need to solve."

Gail Orrin, director of exercise and fitness services for the Institute of Lifestyle and Weight Management in Raleigh, said her organization provides outpatient services for an average of three months, and will soon offer two- and four-week residential plans. She said she agrees that maintaining weight loss is a difficult challenge.

"It's a long process and team effort to get to the point where they can maintain self-control for a lifetime and be okay with that," Orrin said.

Like Sanders, a majority of study participants were able to maintain a weight loss significant enough to have health benefits, Svetkey said.

"The good news is that you don't have to lose a lot of weight," Svetkey said.

A person's risk of developing Type 2 diabetes falls 16 percent with every two pounds of weight loss, she notes. And losing just 1 pound is associated with a one-point drop in blood pressure.

"So if you lose 10 pounds, your blood pressure can drop 10 points," said Svetkey, who also directs the Duke Hypertension Center. "That's as much as we get with medication, oftentimes."

Overall, 70 percent of participants maintained some weight loss, no matter what maintenance group they were part of. People in the personal contact group did best, retaining an average weight loss of about 9.2 pounds. Participants in the Web group maintained a loss of 7.3 pounds on average, compared to an average loss of 6.4 pounds in the self-directed group.

"Even the control group retained weight loss," Svetkey said. "That's enough to have significant health benefits."

Jean Fisher/newsobserver.com or (919) 829-4753
NCCU seeks to aid non-tenured faculty

'Clinical' label adds job security

BY ERIC FERRERI
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — Next semester, N.C. Central University will begin reclassifying professors who work in clinical settings and have little job security beyond a standard one-year contract.

University officials say instituting a “clinical” faculty designation is a long overdue move that will improve NCCU’s ability to recruit and retain faculty members who work in health and law clinics and aren’t on the tenure track. Until now, many faculty members who either aren’t tenured or on the tenure track have been on year-to-year contracts, an unsettling situation for employer and employee both. The move will bring with it three- or five-year contracts but no pay increase, university officials said.

“If you have a really good person, he has to worry from year to year if he’s going to have a contract,” said George Wilson, NCCU’s faculty chairman. “It gives you more stability and makes sure you keep the people you want to keep.”

The move will affect about 20 faculty members at first but will allow NCCU to recruit more widely as it expands several academic areas that will, in the future, rely more heavily on clinicians. The nursing program is making the transition to a full professional school, and the communication disorders department with the School of Education will soon add a doctoral program. In both disciplines, more clinical faculty members will be needed who will work in health clinics and in other in-the-field settings, treating patients and overseeing students.

“They’re providing expertise,” Provost Beverly Washington Jones said. “They’re practitioners. They go out in the field and monitor what our students are doing.”

The change will affect some professors at NCCU’s law school as well, since some of its faculty members spend most of their time working at law clinics, Jones said.

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March 12, 2008

THE SCHOLARSHIP DIVIDE

It’s Not an Adventure, It’s a Job

By BILL PENNINGTON

A few months into her first year at Villanova, Stephanie Campbell was despondent.

As a high school senior in New Jersey, she had been thrilled to receive a $19,000 athletic scholarship to play field hockey at Villanova University, a select, private institution outside Philadelphia. But she had not counted on the 7 a.m. start of every class day, something required so she could be in the locker room by noon to prepare for a four-hour shift of afternoon practices and weight-lifting sessions. Travel to games forced her to miss exams and classes. There were also mandatory team meetings, study halls and weekend practices.

She was overwhelmed.

"Plus, her roommate had a typical college student's social life, while Stephanie was in her room on weekend nights trying to sleep because she had a game the next day," her mother, Kathleen Campbell, said last month. "She came home crying."

So Kathleen Campbell sat her daughter down, waited for a break in the sobs and said: "Villanova costs more than $40,000 a year to attend. They're paying you $19,000 to play field hockey. At your age, there is no one out there anywhere who is going to pay you that kind of money to do anything. And that's how you have to look at this: It's a job, but it's a great job."

Campbell, 22, kept at it all four years, serving as a team captain last fall while majoring in marketing. She is expected to graduate this spring.

"I'm missing the sport terribly already," she said last month. "But it was a ton of work. Receiving an athletic scholarship is a wonderful thing, but most of us only know what we're getting, not what we're getting into."

Dozens of scholarship athletes at N.C.A.A. Division I institutions said in interviews that they had underestimated how taxing and hectic their lives would be playing college sports. They also said others share a common misperception that athletes lead a privileged existence.

"You know, maybe if you're a scholarship football player at Oklahoma, everything is taken care of for you," Tim Poydenis, a scholarship baseball player at Villanova, said. "But most of us are nonrevenue-sport athletes who have to do our own fund-raising just to pay for basics like sweat pants and batting gloves. We miss all these classes, which obviously doesn't help us or make our professors happy. We give up almost all our free time. Our social life is stripped bare.

"Friday happy hour or spring break? Forget it. I haven't had a spring break since I was a sophomore in high school."
The athletes were interviewed over several weeks from a cross section of sports at two representative Division I institutions, Villanova, a charter member of the Big East Conference, and the University of Delaware, a state-run institution that is a member of the Colonial Athletic Association. None of the athletes asked for or expected sympathy. They know there are many overscheduled college students who devote extra hours to academic and extracurricular activities or part-time jobs and internships.

"We love what we do, and it is worth it," Poydenis said. "But everybody thinks every college athlete is on a pampered full ride. The truth is a lot of us are getting $4,000 and working our butts off for it."

The life of the scholarship athlete is so arduous that coaches and athletes said it was not unusual for as many as 15 percent of those receiving athletic aid to quit sports and turn down the scholarship money after a year or two.

"I came in with 10 recruited girls," Stephanie Campbell said. "There are four of us left as seniors. Not everyone was on scholarship, but maybe half who left were getting money."

Campbell said she had a teammate who wanted to be an engineer but that the classes and off-campus projects in that major clashed with field hockey practices and trips.

Katie Lee, a senior softball player at Delaware, said at least one scholarship player had quit the team in each of her seasons. Of her former teammates, she said, "I see them around campus, and they look happy."

Emily Schaknowski, a sophomore lacrosse player on athletic scholarship at Delaware, said 5 of the 12 women she entered with were no longer on the team. Most had relinquished their scholarships.

Joe Taylor, a junior soccer player at Villanova, said he was one of four left from a freshman recruiting class of 10.

"You wonder if you should try to talk them out of it," Taylor said. "But for most of those guys, it probably is the best decision to walk away."

At Villanova, Poydenis said he thought the defections resulted from the shock that set in after a youth sports culture ethos collided with the realities of college athletics.

"Kids who have worked their whole life trying to get a scholarship think the hard part is over when they get the college money," he said. "They don't know that it's a whole new monster when you get here."

His coach, Joe Godri, says he tries to warn recruits before they accept athletic aid. He tells them that being a Division I student-athlete is a full-time job. "It's not even close to being a normal college student," Godri said.

The Division I athletes interviewed indicated they devoted at least four hours a day to their sport, not counting the time it takes to play or to travel to games. Classes must be scheduled in the early morning to free the afternoon for practices and games. Practices often last from 4 to 6:30 p.m., although several athletes talked about how they had to arrive early for treatment of injuries or to have old injuries taped or harnessed. Highly competitive, demanding practices come next.

There is often a team dinner, perhaps a short meeting and a mandatory study hall in some cases. Weekday away games, which are common, can mean a bus ride that begins at 1 p.m. and a return trip that reaches campus at 10 p.m.
“You come back to your dorm room ready to crash,” Taylor said. “But you’ve got homework or maybe a test the next morning. The rest of the dorm is starting to get a little rowdy because those guys have all finished their homework. They might be getting ready to go out. A lot of them took a nap in the afternoon.”

College athletes routinely said there was one accouterment not often mentioned in recruiting trips but essential to the athlete’s equipment bag: ear plugs.

“They help you sleep on those nights when you have a game the next day,” Jamie Flynn, a junior soccer player at Delaware, said.

Many athletes tend to gather together in off-campus housing, so at least their apartment is quieter on the nights before games. Most teams have a rule prohibiting alcohol 48 hours before a game. The Villanova field hockey team, for example, pledges to not to drink alcohol for the entire season.

And the players police other teammates who might not be abiding by the rules about partying before games or practices. Jillian Loyden, a senior All-Big East goalie on Villanova’s soccer team, said it was usually first-year players who slipped up.

“They get to college and want to be normal college students on a Friday night,” said Loyden, who has raided parties to usher first-year teammates out of a building so they would head home to bed. “You have to make them understand that our team is not a social club.”

Athletes from the nonrevenue sports also customarily have to do extra work on campus to raise money to pay for equipment or apparel not normally financed by the athletic department, like warm-up jackets. Cortney Barry, a scholarship swimmer at Delaware, cut short her Thanksgiving Day break at home last year because the swim team had agreed to clean the garbage from the football stadium bleachers to pay for some expenses.

For this and other reasons, college athletes often refer to students who are nonathletes as “normals” or “regulars.” When asked why, Stephanie Campbell answered, “Because we’re not normal.”

“Look, we are fortunate to be athletes and to get tuition money to do it,” Campbell added. “I have loved my time here. I’m going to get a prestigious degree, and I know there are a lot of people who would have wanted to trade places with me. But I’d still say Division I athletics is not meant for everybody. Nobody tells you that.”

Campbell, who was an All-Big East selection in her final season, has gone back to her hometown, Gibbsboro in South Jersey, to help coach the club team she played for as a youngster.

“I worry about the kids I see now, because they’re under so much stress to get something out of field hockey,” she said. “You can never lose sight of why you play. Yes, I got a scholarship, but in the end, I put up with the sore muscles, lost sleep and everything else because I loved playing that much.”

These days, she is trying to make up for lost time on the business networking front, attending vocational seminars and fairs aimed at easing college graduates into the workplace. It is a new game for Campbell.

“Well, I’m graduating in May,” she said. “I need a job.”

Griffin Palmer contributed reporting.