THE DAILY CLIPS

March 12, 2009

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

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 Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@.ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Shaky stock market puts ECU endowments underwater

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

The national economic environment is jeopardizing scholarships, professorships and other programs at East Carolina University, a university official said.

Downturns in the stock market have endowment funds underwater, or worth less than the original gift, said Mickey Dowdy, ECU vice chancellor for university advancement. Many scholarships are paid through endowments that individuals have given to ECU over the years.

ECU's endowment has dropped from $95 million in July 2008 to just about $65 million.

North Carolina law does not allow universities to use funds from endowments that are under water, Dowdy said. ECU is asking donors for bridge gifts to pay for the scholarships normally funded by endowments while the stock market recovers.

"Our biggest concern is keeping all of our scholarships as active as we can," he said. "We are looking for unrestricted funds to bridge the gap or maybe going to the donor for a bridge gift. But we will figure out somehow to keep that contract fulfilled."

Dowdy said the university is receiving more and more calls from families seeking financial aid each week.

"The needs continue to expand at a time when it's tough to meet the needs," he said.

But compared to other universities of the same size, ECU has not taken a big hit, he said. Other universities are losing endowments funds at even faster rates.

Many of ECU's endowments are tied to the Second Century Campaign, the school's effort to raise $200 million. The public portion of the campaign has been active for a year and still is doing well despite the economy, Dowdy said.

"It's a little surprising to us because this has been a fairly rocky time," Dowdy said. "People might be supporting fewer organizations at this time but because we are in a campaign and have not had one in a long time, they are supporting us."

The number of endowments at the university has grown immensely during the last five years, but the stock market is draining the funds from them. But it will turn around, Dowdy said.

"On one hand we are continuing to do well and on the other hand the economic backdrop and what it has done to our own investments has been very painful," Dowdy said.

"We are continuing to be optimistic about things. It always recovers."

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
Putting nurses to work on health care

BY JULEE WALDROP

I recently cared for a 10-year-old boy from Halifax County who was suffering from depression and struggling in school. His mother held two part-time jobs and was separated from his father because of domestic violence. She had no health insurance and lived in a rural area with few primary care physicians.

I knew this boy would benefit not only from medication, but also from psychotherapy and frequent follow-up in a primary care setting. But for him to receive the care he needed here in the Triangle, his mother would have to drive four hours round-trip and presumably miss work. Alternatively, I could just prescribe medication and hope his mother could pay for it.

Neither was a good solution. Option 1 was unsustainable and Option 2 was not high-quality care. But they are the options many people in our state face every day.

At this moment of change, when we have a new governor in North Carolina and a new president for the United States, we need to tackle the embarrassing lack of primary care providers in many parts of our state. With our budget projections in the red, there is something specific North Carolina can do right now at no cost to provide citizens with increased access to health care. Nearly half the states are already doing it, and there is substantial data showing it works.

If you live in the Triangle like me, it may sound ridiculous to hear that our state lacks health care providers. After all, we have the UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke and WakeMed health systems all within a 20-mile radius. You can hardly turn on the television without seeing a commercial from one of them.

Yet if you look more closely here in the Triangle, you'll see underserved populations and areas. And as you begin driving into other parts of the state, physicians and other health professionals become ever harder to find.

Gov. Beverly Perdue held a Health and Human Services transition advisory group session in November to identify key issues facing the department and the state. One was that many areas of North Carolina lack adequate access to primary care services. The group recommended the state "increase access to care by eliminating laws that prevent providers from practicing within the full scope of their education and certification."

That's the solution we need - to empower advanced practice nurses such as nurse practitioners, nurse midwives and nurse anesthetists to fill the health care gap in North Carolina, especially in places where physicians are in short supply.

Twenty-three other states already allow nurse practitioners to provide care to patients without physician involvement. But in North Carolina, nurse practitioners are required to provide care under the supervision of a physician, even though more than 20 years of published research show no difference in the quality of primary care provided by nurse
practitioners and physicians.

Laws are supposed to protect the public, which is a good thing, but the laws should be based on evidence rather than on tradition or the economic self-interest of certain groups.

Providing the right care at the right time in the right way is not about each provider practicing in his or her own independent silo. It is about providing care within one's area of expertise and consulting and referring with others as necessary for the benefit of the patient. Just because a nurse practitioner may practice without required physician supervision or collaboration does not mean that he or she would not seek out consultation and advice, just as a physician would, to provide the patient with the best care possible. Based on my own experience and that of everyone I've worked with, I know patients would benefit from this approach.

Our state representatives and senators should eliminate these outdated laws. So long as children like the 10-year-old boy in Halifax County continue living in places that lack physicians, we need to make better use of nurse practitioners who could treat them with high-quality care without causing undue hardship for their families.

Julee Waldrop, a nurse practitioner and faculty member at UNC, is pursuing her doctoral degree in nursing practice at Duke University.

Comics, crosswords and coupons... only in The N&O print edition. Subscribe Now!

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company
A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company