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Two ECU grad programs ranked
By The Daily Reflector
Tuesday, March 13, 2012

Two graduate programs at East Carolina University have been ranked among the best in the nation according to an annual list from U.S. News & World Report.

The rehabilitation counseling program and the Brody School of Medicine were included in the magazine's 2013 listing of the best professional and graduate schools released today.

The rehabilitation counseling program in the College of Allied Health Sciences is ranked the 13th.

"Our graduates are in high demand in substance abuse, mental health and other rehabilitation settings," said Dr. Lloyd Goodwin, professor and interim chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Studies at ECU.

"Student interns are almost always offered jobs at the end of their internship and often before completion of their internship. It is rare for a graduate to not be offered a position within one month of graduation."

The Brody School of Medicine tied for 31st overall among primary care schools this year. ECU also sent the seventh-highest percentage of its graduates, 49.6 percent, into primary care residencies between 2009 and 2011. U.S. News defines primary care as family medicine, pediatrics and internal medicine.

"We are glad to be included among some very fine and well-established schools from across the country," said Dr. Paul Cunningham, dean of the medical school. "We will continue to pursue our mission to serve the citizens of North Carolina with passion and purpose."

The U.S. News guidebook of U.S. professional and graduate schools will be available on newsstands April 3.
NC jobless rate for January still above 10 percent

RALEIGH, N.C. — New, more-accurate estimates show North Carolina's unemployment rate stayed above 10 percent throughout 2011, falling to 10.2 percent in January in a key election battleground state, the state Commerce Department reported Tuesday.

North Carolina's jobless rate was the fourth-highest in the country in January, trailing California, Rhode Island and Nevada, which leads the nation with a 12.7 percent unemployment rate.

The report also pointed to some bright spots amid signs of slow improvement in the national economy. An additional 14,213 people were drawing paychecks in January. An extra 6,245 entered the workforce as previously discouraged or young workers started looking for jobs.

On the downside, nearly 8,000 more people were on unemployment rolls in January than in the previous month.

"These new data say the economy is improving but it's also saying the economy is worse than we first thought," said James Kleckley, director of the Bureau of Business Research at East Carolina University.

The estimates were revised in an annual re-examination of available data coupled with U.S. Census information of people reporting themselves as working or unemployed.

The result was that earlier estimates of North Carolina's unemployment rate dropping below 10 percent in December were revised upward. The new estimates are that the state's unemployment rate was 10.4 percent in November and December before falling to 10.2 percent in January. The national average was 8.3 percent in January.

"What everything's been saying is that North Carolina has been improving, but not by leaps and bounds by any means," Kleckley said. "This will make me have to rethink some of the other data. I didn't expect it. I expected the unemployment rate to be a little lower."
North Carolina lost more than 330,000 jobs by the time the national recession bottomed out in February 2010, state data showed Tuesday. Since then, the state has gained back about 80,000 jobs, or about a quarter of the jobs lost, John Connaughton, an economic forecaster at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

In January, North Carolina employers added 17,000 more payroll jobs than they cut.

"We had a big January jump," said Connaughton, who predicts the state's businesses to add about 50,000 jobs this year.

"The issue here is I think the economy has turned a corner. 2012 is going to start to feel like a recovery for most people," he said. "People are going to say, yep, things are getting better. I've got job opportunities. I've got options."

Tuesday's report comes during an election year in which the economy and job prospects are expected to be a huge issue. President Barack Obama is targeting North Carolina as key to his re-election prospects. He narrowly won the state in 2008, reversing a generation of voters picking Republican presidential candidates.

With rising stock markets, increased manufacturing and other indicators pointing to a slowly improving U.S. economy, North Carolina residents have reported increasing optimism. An Elon University poll released last week found about two-thirds of state residents think the economy will either stay the same or get better in the months ahead. More than half of the poll's respondents said the economy was the most important issue facing the state.

Small business owners across the country reported increasing optimism for the sixth straight month in February, the National Federation of Independent Business said Tuesday. The hopeful forecast is spreading among North Carolina's main-street business community, but it's far too early to celebrate, NFIB state director Gregg Thompson said.

"It looks like things are finally turning around, but, unless the pace of recovery picks up, it'll be years before we're back where we started," he said.

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ECU upgrading Tyler Hall
Wednesday, March 14, 2012

East Carolina University’s Tyler Residence Hall is being renovated this semester. Located on College Hill Drive between 10th and 14th streets, the residence hall will receive a new exterior as well as interior upgrades.

Its old, mostly white facade will be replaced with brick to match surrounding buildings.

The bathrooms on floors one through six are being modernized. The building also will be more handicap-accessible. The bathrooms on floors seven through nine were updated in an earlier phase of the project in 2010.

Built in 1969, the 10-story building houses about 500 students. No one is living in the dorm this semester.

This phase of the project, which started in January, is on schedule to be completed by July.
Middle-schoolers Cassidy Ward and DeAndre Foote consider soft drink options.

Kids Find Their Own Way to Healthy Living
February 27, 2012 by
By Taylor Sisk

When you’re a seventh-grader, the world is your oyster. Or maybe it’s your carrot stick. But more probably it’s your Twix.

Teaching kids to make their own wiser health choices at an age when everything seems possible – when the notion of charting one’s own path is just taking seed in the psyche – is the foundation of the Motivating Adolescents with Technology to Choose Health (MATCH) program.

The switch from Twix to a carrot, said the program’s founder, has got to be a kid’s own choice.

Leaders from the Kate B Reynolds Charitable Trust decided this child-focused approach to healthy living is worth pursuing further and donated $408,693 to the MATCH program in January to expand it from six eastern counties to 11.

MATCH was launched in 2006 in Martin county in rural eastern North Carolina by Tim Hardison, who now directs the program under the auspices of the Pediatric Healthy Weight Research and Treatment Center (PHWRTC)
at East Carolina University. Hardison works closely with Suzanne Lazorick, a PHWRTC pediatrician and obesity researcher.

In September 2006, Hardison – then a seventh-grade science teacher at Williamston Middle School – read a study published by Harvard University researchers that said Martin County had the shortest life expectancy of any county in North Carolina. He wanted to know why, and what he could do about it.

He learned that Martin County was 87 percent above the state average in incidence of diabetes and also above average in cardiovascular disease.

He also learned about body mass index (BMI), which measures body fat. He introduced the idea to his students, then had them test themselves. Sixty-four of 110 kids were determined to be either overweight or obese, meaning that as they grew older they would be at risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea and more.

Hardison wanted to work with his students to help them live healthier lives, but knew that for any new curriculum to be effective, it would have to be integrated into what schools already offered. “I knew that if we were going to try to address childhood obesity through the schools,” he said, “we needed to create a program that would work within the school day, within their standard course of study, so we were not adding additional responsibilities to an overburdened teacher’s daily schedule.” Thus, MATCH was born.

Lazorick likes the results: As the program has expanded, she said, it’s common that 50 to 75 percent of students who were overweight at the start of the program weigh less after they finish. More than 75 percent of students have improved cardiovascular fitness, as measured by a fitness test.

‘Up to them’

MATCH combines physical activity, nutritional education and information technology, while adhering to the seventh-grade N.C. Standard Course of Study.

“We have had fantastic results,” said April Rose, a physical education and health teacher at Pamlico County Middle School. “The teachers love it because it follows the essential standards and outlines lesson plans for the students.”

In math class, students learn how to calculate their own BMIs. They keep exercise logs and enter them into Excel spreadsheets. “The way you make
change in a household is you educate a seventh-grader, arm them with knowledge, and then you can’t shut them up.”

“You show them that [spreadsheets] can help them do their math,” Hardison said, “and they think it’s pretty neat.”

They keep journals, develop their own wellness goals and self-assess their progress.

“We don’t single kids out as being overweight or obese,” Hardison said. Everyone is given the same lessons on healthy eating and being active.

“We bring this whole wellness idea into the forefront of a kid’s mind, and everything ties together,” he said. “It’s interdisciplinary.”

Hardison said he believes a fundamental difference between MATCH and other wellness programs is that he only minimally involves parents.

“Kids are a little rebellious at this age,” Hardison said. If they think they know something their parents don’t, they’re liable to use it. “The way you make change in a household is you educate a seventh-grader, arm them with knowledge, and then you can’t shut them up.”

Lazorick agrees that seventh grade is a good time to introduce this curriculum.

“I believe that there is something special about the young-adolescent age, developmentally, what’s going on psychologically and cognitively,” she said. “They’re wanting to separate from their parents.”

“What we’re trying to do is empower these kids with the knowledge to make good choices,” Hardison said, “and then it’s up to them.”

**Encouraging results**

Choice of beverages is an area in which Hardison believes the program can have an immediate and important effect. Students do a taste testing of low-cal beverages, soft drinks and powdered drinks.

“It’s like a wine tasting, where the kids sip and rate,” Hardison said. They’re then encouraged to switch to a healthier choice that suits their palates.

Hardison said that some 80 percent have found a healthier alternative than sugar-laden soft drinks.

Hardison and Lazorick are now in the process of gathering more data. Students who participated in 2006 – the inaugural MATCH kids, now soon to graduate – have been recently re-tested. Lazorick said preliminary results are encouraging.
Funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation has allowed the program to be offered in schools in Jones, Martin, Onslow, Pamlico, Pitt and Washington counties. With the Kate B. Reynolds money, it will be expanded to Beaufort, Chowan, Edgecombe, Hyde and Tyrrell.

Lazorick would like to see it disseminated further still – a cost-effective program that’s successful in reducing obesity, taught within the schools, with resources that are already there.

“The potential,” she said, “is phenomenal.”
Grantee Helps Motivate Kids to Get Healthy

A successful program brings teachers and physicians together to combat childhood obesity by showing kids how to make good health a natural part of learning.

Feb 29, 2012

Williamston, North Carolina is a small town along the banks of the Roanoke River, built back in 1779. Like many parts of rural America, Williamston has struggled economically over the years, but it’s now known as a haven for hunting, fishing, and camping around the lush Roanoke National Wildlife Refuge. No doubt Williamston residents were surprised to find that they were also known for living in the county with the shortest average life spans in North Carolina. A 2006 study conducted at Harvard found that residents of Williamston had disproportionately high rates of diabetes and cardiovascular disease, due primarily to obesity.

“The report said people in our county [Martin] had a rate of diabetes 87 percent above the state average,” explains Tim Hardison, an exercise physiologist who was a 7th grade science teacher in Williamston at that time. “People talked about the study, but I didn’t see anyone doing anything about it, so I decided to start with my students.”

Hardison began by teaching his class a very simple lesson. He showed them how to calculate their body mass index (BMI). Once they understood the formula, Hardison recalls, each student wanted to know, “Is my number good?” “I was shocked to find that 58 percent of that class was overweight or obese, but I could not imagine telling these kids they were obese without giving them the tools to do something about it.” Rather than trying to force the kids into diet and exercise programs, Hardison decided to make healthy life lessons part of their everyday curriculum and let them use the knowledge to help themselves.

The program he created—Motivating Adolescents with Technology to Choose Health (MATCH)—now engages 1,000 students a year in a 16-week
curriculum that makes lessons about healthy eating, exercise and health risks (such as smoking, hypertension and heart disease) part of their school day. MATCH was developed and expanded with funding from the Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. Hardison now works at East Carolina University and runs MATCH full time, while working to enhance the program with Suzanne Lazorick, MD, a 2009-2012 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Physician Faculty Scholar and assistant professor of pediatrics and public health at the University.

Creating a Model to Move Forward

After the first year, Hardison saw that the BMI in many of his students had actually decreased after they participated in MATCH. To verify and improve results and collect more solid data, Hardison turned to Lazorick. “I teach prevention and population health,” Lazorick says, “but even though I focus on childhood obesity in clinic settings, I was interested in the bigger picture—working outside the clinic to help kids prevent obesity where interventions were likely to have their main impact.”

Using her RWJF Physician Faculty Scholar award to pay for her research time, Lazorick worked with Hardison on several aspects of the MATCH program. “First, we needed to refine the program so it could be taught by others and add measures for nutrition and physical activity. The first study was not controlled, so there was also a need to look more closely at the results. Our overall goal is to have an impact on childhood obesity, but this program is unique because it’s an educational model—a standard curriculum that also improves BMI. It will hopefully have a long-term impact on how the kids take care of themselves,” Lazorick says.

Motivating Kids To Get Healthy

While it is critical for MATCH directors to use sophisticated methods to collect data and present their case to funders, Hardison believes in the power of curious 12-year-olds. “I don’t really target parents, even though nearly 80 percent of MATCH participants’ parents are struggling with weight issues of their own,” Hardison says. “If you want to change a household, just give a 7th grader a little knowledge. They’re going to want to talk about it.”

Shondella Lawrence, a 12-year-old graduate of MATCH, is a perfect example. Softspoken, but proud of her accomplishments, Lawrence says, “MATCH taught me about what tobacco and cigarettes can do to your body, how to manage my weight, and how a person can get heart disease.” Lawrence says she has lost eight pounds since starting MATCH and made personal decisions about her health. “I’ve cut down on watching TV so that I
can exercise more. Now I walk, play basketball with my family and drink lots of water.”

By simply educating kids, giving them tools to change, and motivating them through modest rewards like earning brightly colored wrist bands for their walking skills, Hardison and Lazorick continue to see great results. “About 70 percent of our overweight kids have improved their weight status in that their BMI has come closer to the mean,” says Hardison.

“Using the primary outcome of BMI Z-score that assesses if overweight students’ BMI moves closer to the mean, results from the first two years were published in the October 2011 issue of Childhood Obesity. Out of 198 kids, 104 were overweight at the start. Of these, 72 percent and 66 percent respectively decreased their BMI Z-score each year,” Lazorick says. “Some kids lost from 5 to 25 pounds during the first year of MATCH and 75 percent of them were successful in maintaining improvement when measured again at the beginning of the 10th grade year. Such a sustained improvement has not been shown by other school-based interventions and encourages us to continue to figure out ways to expand.”

Teachers also benefit. “I knew I could not burden teachers with a separate health curriculum, so I made the lessons part of math class (calculating calories and BMI), language arts (writing about smoking risks, heart disease, and health), and focused on evaluating and educating kids, then motivating them to participate in healthy activities,” Hardison says.

**Next Steps**

As they move forward, Lazorick says, “the mentoring and advice I received from RWJF Physician Faculty Scholar program colleagues around the nation really helped me work with this educational model of how to impact health. We have just been funded for the next three years to expand to 12 schools, from the seven we have been in the last two years, and we are applying for other grants to conduct research to find out what behaviors the kids changed, what role the home environment plays and to understand if and how the intervention increases motivation.”

“We want to streamline the program to make it easier for teachers and figure out what lessons work best,” Hardison adds.
Editorial: University’s wrong ‘way’

At least it’s over. It matters little what the consequences are for UNC-Chapel Hill’s football team after some relatively mild penalties from the NCAA, the governing body of college athletics, for egregious violations including academic fraud, players’ improper contact with and benefits from agents, and ineligible players participating in the program. The suspense, thankfully, is no more.

No, the university’s football program won’t be able to go to a bowl game in 2012 and will have to do without a few scholarships. UNC-CH will pay a self-imposed fine of $50,000 and vacate victories in the 2008 and 2009 seasons.

Far more serious is that a football program run amok has wounded this great university’s illustrious reputation. Not for half a century had there been anything like this.

Athletics officials, including Dick Baddour, the AD who was at the center of this crisis, had talked about the “Carolina way” of running the program, as if the university were atop a mountain, a model of purity for all others.

Big-time coach

And then, in 2006, former Chancellor James Moeser and Baddour bowed to the big-money boosters and hired Butch Davis.

A former pro coach and former head coach of the University of Miami (where he was said to have cleaned up a scandalous mess), Davis was given a multimillion-dollar contract and apparently, a free hand with the football program. Davis hired six-figure assistants, and one of them, John Blake, had close ties to a sports agent. The die was cast. It would be a few years before the fall from the mountain began, but perhaps it was inevitable.

Monday, the university paid the price for rules violations under Davis, including academic fraud and players accepting things of value from agents. Baddour, who had to retire early as part of the consequences of all this, continued to speak of the “Carolina way.” Yet the university no longer can claim to be the paragon of athletics virtue, even though its long-respected basketball program was not touched by this embarrassment.
Instead, and humiliatingly, it joins “football schools” such as Ohio State, Southern California and Miami as those scarred by scandal. What company to keep.

**Fond farewell**

Chancellor Holden Thorp did eventually fire Davis as it became clear that academic standards had been breached. But when the firing came, Davis got a multimillion-dollar buyout of his contract. Alumni and friends of the university might well wonder why a coach who ran a program blighted by scandal got a buyout at all. (Davis, by the way, was not mentioned in NCAA sanctions. Blake was in effect banned from coaching for three years.)

Even after the penalties were announced, Thorp affirmed his belief that “Carolina athletics is incredibly important to the way people experience the university.” That is undoubtedly true for many. But such programs must be kept in perspective, and that perspective seemed lost here, in the quest for football glory and the revenues that go with it.

This university has managed over more than 200 years to soar to respect and recognition among its peers, enjoy the passionate affection of its alumni, inspire generations of students and to give all North Carolinians all the more reason to be proud of their state. It can overcome this crisis.

But university officials must be first among those who recognize that damage has been done. They must accept their responsibility and lead the university away from the notion that an athletics program, and in particular a football program, are essential parts of how the university’s very existence is defined. They are not.
Editorial: NCSU, service leader

Public universities exist for three overarching reasons: Teaching, research and public service. N.C. State has strengths in all those areas, making it a pillar of North Carolina’s well-being. Now comes an unmistakable sign that when it comes to public service, NCSU is definitely a leader of the pack.

Varieties of service undertaken in NCSU’s name are astounding in their breadth and reach. That was the unspoken conclusion of a federal panel that has named the university as one of five 2012 winners of a top national award, affirming something well-known to NCSU’s neighbors in Raleigh and to people around the state.

The Corporation for National and Public Service, honoring NCSU’s spirit of helpful outreach, designated the university as a recipient of its President’s Award. That puts North Carolina’s largest public university in rarified company – among the five best service institutions out of 110 that qualified for an honor roll with distinction. N.C. Central University was also among the cream of the crop, ranked as one of 14 finalists.

The annual Krispy Kreme Challenge is a popular university-associated fundraiser for the N.C. Children’s Hospital. NCSU also collaborates extensively with the group Stop Hunger Now to fight hunger worldwide. But beyond activities aimed at helping people who are suffering, the university also makes a determined effort to bring its agricultural and industrial expertise into communities. Meanwhile, its Center for Student Leadership, Ethics & Public Service focuses student efforts in 18 programs meant to help others improve their lives.

The university aims to marry instruction and service. Its new award signals that this approach is paying off – not only for students, but also for people who support the university with their taxes and who benefit from its commitment to giving back.
New research released today focuses on potential use of a cancer drug in reducing tangles in the brain and improving cognition among people with Alzheimer’s, in a glimmer of hope for dementia patients and families.

Concentrating on tangles that affect brain cells is part of a trend toward treatments that could halt memory loss and improve cognition among dementia patients, according to Triangle experts.

Dr. Murali Doraiswamy of Duke University Medical Center and Dr. Dan Kaufer of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill commented on an article published Tuesday in The Journal of Neuroscience. The results of research by Kurt Brunden and colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania, the article details promising results on older laboratory mice treated with epothilone D (EpoD), a cancer drug which progressed to a second phase of clinical trials.

The drug reduced levels of tangles, or tau protein, in mouse brains, slowing neurological damage and improving brain function. Many earlier studies in the past decade had focused on treating plaque, the sticky protein also found on the brains of people with Alzheimer’s.

“We need to start developing a repertoire of drugs aimed at the tangles,” Doraiswamy said. “We have also known that the tangles are highly collaborative with memory functions. “The odds of such a drug improving cognition are quite high.

“If you can find a drug that is already cleared for another application, it would be relatively easy to get it cleared for human trials.”

According to the nonprofit Alzheimer’s NC, the disease affects more than 140,000 people in the state, a number projected to quadruple by 2025 with the aging of the baby boomer demographic bulge. For the increasing thousands of patients and families, the disease has meant a sentence to years of gradual loss of memory and ability to function, taking a toll both on people with the Alzheimer’s and their caregivers.
Both Doraiswamy and Kaufer said the results of the University of Pennsylvania research are significant, but noted that it’s impossible to say when the former cancer drug will translate into a treatment for humans.

“If you were a genetically engineered mouse, we have half a dozen methods that can cure you, you wouldn’t have anything to worry about,” said Kaufer, director of the UNC Memory Disorders Program.

“But nothing has translated to the human condition. It’s a big jump.”

However, Kaufer said, the research is in line with most recent thinking about Alzheimer’s, which shows that the disease can develop for 10 to 15 years without showing noticeable symptoms.

“It shifts us from focusing on people who have Alzheimer’s disease to trying to identify treatments that are effective on people who are earlier on the process,” Kaufer said. “This points us in the direction that we want to go.”

The researchers at Penn gave EpoD weekly to older Alzheimer’s model mice for three months before evaluating them. They found reduced formation of tangles in the brain and improved performance in learning and memory tests. The treated mice were compared with a test group that did not receive the drug.

“These results suggest that EpoD might have therapeutic benefit in Alzheimer’s disease and related neurodegenerative diseases, such as frontotemporal lobar degeneration, where abnormal tau tangles are present,” Brunden said in a news release.

An important difference in EpoD with other treatments that have shown results in younger mice is its ability to cross the blood barrier, “the network of blood vessels that keeps potentially harmful molecules from entering the brain,” the statement said.

Inability to cross that barrier has meant the end for other promising treatments.

“This is a new framework,” Kaufer said. “It doesn’t really impact what we do clinically now, but it sets the agenda.

“One day we’re going to hit a home run.”

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