THE DAILY CLIPS

March 15, 2010

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
Privacy fence shields state workers' files

First of three parts

Former state Trooper Michael Steele is serving at least six years in prison for a crime that abused the public's trust.

In August 2008, Steele cruised Orange County in his patrol car, looking for Latina women who he suspected were here illegally and therefore unlikely to report his attempts to coerce them into having sex with him. Steele forced three women from their vehicles and into his patrol car before he was caught.

The public will probably never know whether there were warning signs about Steele's character during his training and time on the job, because state officials won't make that information public. They cite the same reason that has time and again barred the public from learning more than the most basic details about the employees whose salaries they pay:

"The information contained in the file is protected by state personnel laws," said state Highway Patrol spokesman Everett Clendenin.

North Carolina has one of the nation's most highly regarded public records laws. It states that unless otherwise specified by law, all records are considered public, to be produced upon request. But the state's personnel law turns that stance around.

The personnel law makes a secret of all but the most basic information about public employees. You can find out when they were hired, their current compensation, their current position, their most recent pay increase or decrease, and the most recent change in their job status.

Everything else is considered private. Those in government who attempt to make it public can be charged with a crime.

Few if any states have such a restrictive personnel law, according to public records experts and a News & Observer review of states' personnel laws. North Carolina, for example, is the only state where salary information is limited to what's current.

"It certainly limits the amount of information that we have about the job that public servants are doing for us," said Dale Harrison, assistant director of Elon University's Sunshine Center, which promotes open government. "One of the spirits behind the public records law is that we can look at what public servants are doing and hold them accountable. When the information that you can get is this limited, you can't draw much of a picture."

Employee groups and advocates for local governments say the law protects employees falsely accused of misconduct or shoddy performance. Making disciplinary actions public could prompt more false claims, and lead to more litigation as those publicly accused of misconduct file lawsuits. If a fired employee wants his job back, the process is public in an administrative court.
"I do think that employees have some expectations for privacy in their dealings with their employer, and that includes in the public sector," said Ellis Hankins, executive director for the N.C. League of Municipalities. "There are just sound personnel administration reasons for keeping some of those disciplinary actions and the reasons for the disciplinary actions confidential."

A barrier to employers

But the law has become such a barrier that even governmental agencies - and those they hire to examine personnel problems - are being shut out.

School districts cite the law in failing to share information about teachers who behave badly then quietly move to other districts, said Katie Cornetto, a lawyer with the State Board of Education. She said the result is known as "passing the trash."

An example: In 2008, Jessica Wishnask, a middle school teacher in New Hanover County, resigned after twice being suspended for inappropriate contact with a student. Wishnask's employment history wasn't shared with the Pitt County schools until Wilmington police caught her "in intimate contact" with the same 15-year-old student, The Star-News of Wilmington reported. She is now serving a prison sentence for taking indecent liberties with a minor.

The incident left Pitt County school board members embarrassed and upset. But they said they were limited in talking about the case because of the state's personnel law.

"If it was made public, certainly you wouldn't hire her," school board member Roy Peadan told The N&O.

Investigating police

The state Highway Patrol has had more than two dozen cases of trooper misconduct since 1997, many of them sex-related. Two years ago, the patrol spent nearly $100,000 for an independent consultant to evaluate the patrol's hiring, training and supervision of troopers. But the consultant, Kroll, never looked at misconduct cases, because the personnel law prohibited an examination of those files. The patrol continues to keep a tight rein on information involving misbehaving troopers.

Last month, the patrol dismissed Trooper Anthony Scott, who has acknowledged being at the home of a Pittsboro woman with whom he had an affair when her estranged husband showed up. Scott, in appealing his dismissal, said he was unfairly disciplined and is not guilty of failing to intervene when Jennifer Andrews' husband allegedly threatened and assaulted her. The patrol, citing personnel law, has never explained why Scott was fired.

In Greensboro, federal Justice Department investigators struggled to gather information into long-standing complaints of racial discrimination within the city's police department. City employees were advised not to talk for fear of violating the personnel law, city officials told the News & Record of Greensboro.

There are many other cases where employees get into trouble, and public agencies won't share details. Marcus Jackson, a Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officer, is accused of sexually assaulting six women during traffic stops while on duty, but the department will not make public his personnel file to show whether he had been disciplined in the past.
'Shocking' incident

In Greenville, East Carolina University authorities declined to identify police officers who knocked down and roughed up fans celebrating the football team's 2008 upset victory against West Virginia, despite ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard's description of the incident: "the most disappointing and shocking I've witnessed in my more than four years here."

Pitt County District Attorney Clark Everett said the investigation into the incident has ended and that he declined to press charges, citing a lack of evidence, in part because some witnesses refused to be interviewed.

It's not just cops and teachers. After an audit found that the UNC-Chapel Hill Citizen Soldier Support Program had spent $7.3 million in federal money with little to show for it, university officials redacted information that would have identified who was responsible for the program's failures. They said under the law, that wasn't public.

Much of the secrecy stems from the passage of the State Personnel Act in 1975 and amendments two years later that shut down all but the most basic information about public employees. State departments immediately began closing up about employees who had gotten into trouble. The change was so restrictive that even one of the legislative sponsors, Rep. Joseph E. Johnson, a Wake Democrat, admitted that he had gone too far.

But the fix lawmakers passed the following legislative session has done little to make government accountable. The legislation created what is known as the "integrity exemption," which gives an agency head the authority to release nonpublic personnel information when the agency's reputation is at stake. It has been used rarely, usually under extreme pressure from the news media.

Rufus Edmisten was state attorney general when the law was changed to restrict public information. He warned then that it "could inadvertently contribute to cover-ups." Today, he says that has happened. "I think the mischief that I might have mentioned back then might have come to pass," he said.

State Attorney General Roy Cooper tried to make public information about fired, demoted or suspended employees 13 years ago as Senate majority leader. Employee groups and government associations - powerful constituencies - fought it vigorously. The bill died in the House Committee on Public Employees.

"I still think serious discipline of governmental employees should be public record," Cooper said. "Taxpayers should be allowed to know if and why a public employee has been suspended, demoted or fired."

Case for more access

Roughly 35 states, including Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee, give citizens more access.

In Georgia, for example, Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporters reviewed school principals' personnel files to help uncover a cheating scandal that led to criminal charges. Officials are examining test scores at roughly 10 percent of the state's public schools to see how widespread the problem may be.

In interviews and in a survey, North Carolina lawmakers generally favored releasing more information when employees get into trouble. Some said more disclosure would result in a harsher, more distrustful
work environment. Others say opening personnel files in disciplinary matters might deter bad behavior.

But no one interviewed said the Highway Patrol should protect a former trooper who used his badge and gun to abduct women to try to have sex with them. Some suggested the purpose in withholding the records was to protect the patrol.

"It's being used not to protect the employee's privacy but to protect the public officials from scrutiny of the decisions they've made over time," said Senate Minority Leader Phil Berger, a Rockingham County Republican. "And when it's used that way, it strikes me that that's the opposite of what we ought to have."

News researcher Teresa Leonard contributed to this report.

dan.kane@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4861
ECU art students display work at exhibit

BY KELLEY KIRK
The Daily Reflector

Walk through the Wellington B. Gray Gallery and you'll see some outstanding artwork by East Carolina University undergraduate art students for its annual "School of Art and Design Undergraduate Exhibition."

The art is from all of the studio courses offered at East Carolina University and includes fine arts such as drawing, painting, photography and sculpture and fine crafts such as wood, ceramics, metal design and textiles.

Interim director of the Gray Gallery Tom Braswell said that faculty coordinators in each discipline selected the pieces in the show.

"It really began with the students bringing in their work," Braswell said.

He added that each area coordinator creates their own criteria for selecting pieces to be included.

"In some cases, it’s excellence in the piece. Sometimes they are looking for what is a typical representation in that medium," Braswell said.

Braswell has been the interim director of the gallery since September 2008.

Of the more than 100 pieces in the show many are by senior students graduating in May.

If you view the exhibition, you may notice some awards given to certain pieces.

The deputy director of the Penland School of Crafts — the oldest such school in North Carolina — served as the judge.

He said that judges have different approaches to selecting work.

"Personally, in a show like the undergraduate exhibition where works are preselected, I am looking for works that encapsulate strong

ART

Continued from A1

aesthetics, technical ability and craftsmanship," Jackson said.

He added that while he responds strongly to works that have an initial impact, he strives to review all pieces carefully to ensure "quiet" works are equally included.

Marketability does not weigh into the selection.

"I see no reason why marketability should be a deciding factor, especially in a fine arts and craft program," Jackson said.

With the economic climate not favoring a wealth of future job prospects what does that mean for someone graduating with a degree in the arts?

"I would say in terms of the market for those from graphic arts, wood, ceramics and metal design and textiles would have a slightly better opportunity," Braswell said.

He added that the crafts — wood, ceramics, metal design and textiles — tend to fair better during an economic downturn.

Jackson believes that every student has the ability to control his or her own artistic future, but agrees that the job market is tough.

"The current economic impact of the artistic community is huge. Some art sectors are facing greater challenges due to the economic downturn," he said.

He added that career options, however, are much broader, more specialized and can be very rewarding.

"I feel the key to economic and artistic success requires an open mind and flexibility to explore new career options," Jackson said.

Contact Kelley Kirk at kkirk@reflector.com or (252) 329-9596.
Jonathan Taft, left, and Thomas Taft, center, arrive at St. Paul's Episcopal Church for the funeral of their mother, Kathy Taft, on Saturday afternoon. Taft died Tuesday from injuries inflicted during an assault at the home of Raleigh attorney John M. Geil.
Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector

N.C. Gov. Beverly Perdue, her husband, Bob Eaves, right, and Dave Whichard attend a memorial service for Kathy Taft in Greenville on Saturday.
Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector
Memorial service honors slain school leader
By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector
Saturday, March 13, 2010
Saturday’s memorial service for State Board of Education member Kathy Taft gave family, friends and colleagues a chance to celebrate a woman who seized every opportunity to make the world a better place.
Taft, 62, a 15-year member of the state board and longtime advocate of public education, was discovered assaulted March 6 in a Raleigh home. She died Tuesday after being on life support. Her death is being investigated as a homicide.
Church officials said 735 people attended Saturday’s service at Greenville’s St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, filling the main sanctuary and nearby chapel.
N.C. Gov. Beverly Perdue was among a slate of local and state elected officials in attendance. Perdue declined to speak after the service.
In his homily, St. Paul’s rector the Rev. Bob Hudak talked of Taft’s desire to improve Greenville, eastern North Carolina and the state by championing education and organizations committed to being the voice of the vulnerable.
Hudak said that as he prepared to be with Taft’s family in the hours before her death that he found an invitation to the annual fundraiser for Communities in Schools of Pitt County, an organization Taft co-founded. The theme of this year’s event is the “Art of Giving.”
“If anyone can speak about this without needing to use words, it certainly was Kathy,” Hudak said.
Taft embodied the words of Sister Joan Chittister, a Benedictine nun, author and lecturer, Hudak said.
“The spirit we have, not the work we do, makes us important to those around us,” he said.
Taft’s four children spoke during the service. Her daughter, Jessica Gorall, read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, which speaks of how individuals who have all the power and gifts in the world have nothing without love.
“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude,” Gorall read. Daughter Paige Fuqua and sons, Thomas and Jonathan Taft, shared memories of their mother, lessons she taught them and the pain they are feeling.
“She would have been overwhelmed by this vast outpouring of love,” Thomas Taft said. “But underneath her smile she would have worried about inconveniencing everyone.”
Jonathan Taft said his mother’s love made it possible for him and his siblings to go forward with so much grief and sadness surrounding them.
“We were a garden of flowers, and it was her careful gardening, her labor of love that taught us to stand straight against the wind,” he said.
“I don’t understand why she was taken from us so abruptly and probably never will,” Jonathan Taft said. “I can only try to live my life in a manner that would bring a smile to her face and honors her vision of life’s work.”
Fuqua said her mother taught her and her sibling about fortitude, about enduring adversity with courage.
“It gives us strength to stand here today. It has made it possible for my sister and brother and I to endure the experience of not only losing our mother but coping with the knowledge that someone intentionally took her life,” Fuqua said. “The love and support you have shown us is a wonderful tribute to our mother’s life.”
Raleigh police released no new information Saturday on the status of the homicide investigation. Taft was discovered by her sister last Saturday morning at the home of Raleigh attorney John M. Geil. The women had spent the night at the Cartier Drive home because Taft had undergone a surgical procedure. Raleigh media outlets reported that Taft’s sister initially thought her sister was experiencing complications from the surgery when she called 911. It wasn’t until Taft was examined at WakeMed Hospital that doctors realized she had been assaulted, and the police were called.
Taft was placed on life support but died Tuesday with her children, brother and sister at her side. The State Medical Examiner’s office on Thursday would not release information about the preliminary cause of death findings, referring questions to the Raleigh Police Department. Investigators have released few details about Taft’s assault except to say they haven’t ruled out that it was a random attack. They are investigating an attempted robbery at a nearby home to see if it may have a connection to the assault.
Taft’s family is offering a $25,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of her assailant.
Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com and (252) 329-9570.
ECU notes: Cancer center dedicates Bell of Hope
By ECU News Bureau
Saturday, March 13, 2010

Joseph Purinton paused before becoming the first cancer patient to ring the new Bell of Hope at the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center.
“I love you all and everything you’ve done for me, and God bless,” he said to the gathered staff and physicians before taking the rope attached to the clapper and sending a few rings around the lobby.

The bell will allow cancer patients completing radiation treatment at East Carolina University to send a loud, clear message of hope to their fellow patients.

“Not only for me, but for all the patients that come behind me,” said Purinton, who lives in Pinetops and works at the Sara Lee bakery in Tarboro. He came to Greenville every weekday for eight weeks for radiation treatment for prostate cancer. Before becoming a patient himself, he helped arrange for Sara Lee baked goods to be served to patients at the center.

The bell, donated by the Friends of the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center, was dedicated March 5. “Ringing the bell will give patients a way to let others know they’re one step closer to overcoming cancer and regaining their health,” Dr. Ernest Larkin, interim director of the cancer center, said.

Cancer patients who undergo radiation treatment may have 40 or more treatments to slow or kill their tumors. Murrell McLeod, chair of the Friends group and a cancer survivor, said the bell gives patients a way to mark a milestone in their treatment.

Enoch Clinton of Rocky Mount, who last year underwent Gamma Knife radiosurgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy for brain cancer and lung cancer, said giving patients hope is vital.

“I know what these people go through, and I know the effort it takes to get them through it,” he said.

Other members of the Friends of the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center include longtime ECU faculty member and cancer specialist Dr. Mary Raab; Joel Butler, vice president of external affairs at University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina and an ECU trustee; and Kathryn Walker, wife of ECU cancer specialist Dr. Paul Walker.

The bell is mounted on a custom-made maple plaque built by Greenville cabinetmaker Paul Gianino.

For more information about the Friends of the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center, call McLeod at 531-3672.
Native Americans scholar to speak
A nationally recognized authority on the native peoples of the southeastern United States and on
gender in native societies will deliver the Thomas Harriot Lecture at 7 p.m. Thursday in Wright
Auditorium.
Theda Perdue, Atlanta Distinguished Term Professor of Southern Culture at the University of
North Carolina at Chapel Hill, will present "Lost and Found Indians in Eastern North Carolina."
Perdue is the author or co-author of seven books, including "Cherokee Women: Gender and
Culture Change, 1700-1835", which won the Julia Cherry Spruill Award for the best book in
Southern women's history and the James Mooney Prize for the best book in the anthropology of
the South.
Throughout her career, Perdue has held a number of fellowships, including at the John Simon
Guggenheim Foundation and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She has
served as president of the Southern Association for Women Historians and the American Society
for Ethnohistory.
Perdue is working on three projects: a book on Indians in the segregated South; the Averitt
lectures on race and the Cotton States Exposition, which will be published as "Race and the
Atlanta Cotton States Exposition"; and with co-author Michael D. Green, "A Very Short
Introduction to North American Indians."
The event is part of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Voyages of Discovery
Lecture Series. Complimentary tickets are available to ECU students, faculty and staff and are
$10 for the general public.
Tickets are available through the ECU Central Ticket Office at 328-4788, (800) ECU-ARTS, or
(voice/TTY) 328-4736.

Athletics training director wins award
An ECU faculty member has been named the most distinguished athletics trainer for 2010 by the
national association for the profession.
Dr. Katie Walsh, program director for athletics training in the Health Education and Promotion
Department, has been recognized by the National Athletic Trainers Association for her
exceptional contributions to the athletics training profession and her lifetime of dedication to
NATA and the field of athletics training. NATA is the professional membership association for
30,000 certified athletics trainers worldwide.
"This award is such an honor to me, but there is no doubt I could not have achieved it were it not
for the wonderful faculty and staff that allow me to travel and partake in athletic training events," she said.
As one of the first females to work full time in men’s professional athletics, Walsh is accustomed
to breaking barriers. She has worked as an athletics trainer at the Olympic Games, written books
and journal articles, served as an officer in the NATA and as vice president in the national
athletics training accrediting body.
She wrote the NATA position on lightning safety, served on the North Carolina High School
Safety Task Force, and assisted with safety and governmental policies for state, district, and
national organizations.
Dr. Glen Gilbert, dean of the College of Health and Human Performance, said Walsh deserves the
recognition.
"Despite being 100 percent in an academic position, she insists on being an active athletic trainer
and has been recognized twice as the North Carolina Athletic Trainer of the year," he said. "She
ensures our program meets or exceeds all accreditation standards and during our most recent
review we received no citations. She is passionate about athletic training and her devotion to the
field is always evident."
A native of California, Walsh has taught at ECU since 1995. She received her undergraduate degree from Oregon State University and her graduate degree from Illinois State University, both in physical education with an emphasis in sports medicine. She earned her doctorate in education from the University of Southern California.

**MBA student wins best paper award**

Molly Maxson recently earned top honors for her paper and presentation at the 40th annual meeting of the Southeast Decision Sciences Institute. The conference was held Feb. 17-19 in Wilmington. Maxson took first place for her paper titled “Organizational Rumors: A Functional Mathematical Model.” The paper discussed organizational rumors and how they spread inside and outside companies. She also developed a mathematical model to express factors that influence rumors so corporate managers can determine where to focus their efforts and minimize negative financial impact.

To prepare her paper for presentation, Maxson received guidance from the Business Communication Center housed in the College of Business Center for Student Success. Through coaching sessions with director Richard O’Dor, Maxson honed her presentation skills in the weeks leading up to the conference.

Frederick Niswander, dean of the College of Business, said, “We’re proud to have one of our best and brightest honored with such a prestigious award. Through our Center for Student Success, we strive to help students sharpen their ‘soft skills’ — including effective communicating. Molly is a great example of what students can achieve through hard work and practice.”

Originally from Beatrice, Neb., Maxson plans to graduate in May with an MBA as well as a certificate in Supply Chain Management. In 2009, she was selected by U.S. Sen. Richard Burr to complete a six-month fellowship focused on economic development through his Wilmington office.

Maxson holds a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Nebraska Wesleyan University and a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from Washington University in St. Louis. At ECU, she has maintained a 3.95 GPA. She is a member of Golden Key International, the national leadership honor society Omicron Delta Kappa, and Sigma Iota Epsilon, the national honorary and professional management fraternity. She recently was invited to join Beta Gamma Sigma, the highest recognition a business student can receive.
State's Race to the Top chances strong
By Jackie Drake
The Daily Reflector
Saturday, March 13, 2010

North Carolina stands a good chance of receiving funding this year from the federal “Race to the Top” grant program. Should that happen, Pitt County could see as much as $500,000 to nearly a $1 million annually, education officials say.

June Atkinson, state superintendent of public instruction, and Sheri Strickland of Pitt County, president of the North Carolina Association of Educators, agreed that the state’s application is strong and are optimistic the state will be among the recipients when the first round of grants are announced in April.

“I think we have a great chance of receiving funding; North Carolina has several areas of strength,” Atkinson said in a recent interview.

!We are optimistic about North Carolina’s chances and we think a very good job was done on the application,” Strickland said.

North Carolina is one of 15 states plus the District of Columbia named as finalists by the U.S. Department of Education earlier this month based on applications submitted in January. North Carolina requested $470 million for education reform. Gov. Beverly Perdue will travel to Washington, D.C., this week to speak with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as part of the interview process to determine the winning states.

Race to the Top, one of the largest education reform investments in history, is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) signed into law in February 2009. Race to the Top has been allotted $4.35 billion of the overall $787 billion stimulus package.

“We are anticipating, if the federal government gives the full amount requested to the state, that Pitt County could get an estimated $940,000 per year to work with. We’re pretty sure we would get $500,000 at least,” said Mary Robinson, a math teacher at South Central High School and president of the Pitt County Association of Educators.

“North Carolina has a great chance,” Pitt County Schools Superintendent Beverly Reep said.

“Our evaluation system and aligning it with student growth are one of the things we have going for us.”

If North Carolina is awarded funding, half will go to the state and half will be distributed to the local school districts based on Title I, according to Atkinson.

“The overall goal of Race to the Top is to increase student achievement and graduate all our students prepared for careers, further education or citizenship,” Atkinson said. “Once we receive funding, we will begin meeting with local districts to assist them in developing a detailed plan they will submit to the state, much like the states did to the federal level.”

While there will be some requirements, local districts will have some flexibility in how they spend the money.
“Any use of federal dollars must align with Race to the Top grant goals for education reform,” Atkinson said. “The state and districts can’t do things like build facilities or hire custodial staff with this money.”

“North Carolina is already ahead of the game,” Robinson said. “The state was already working on a lot of efforts that fit in with Race to the Top but ran into funding problems, and now hopefully they will be able to continue.”

North Carolina’s application outlined strategies for reform in four focus areas: adopting nationally benchmarked standards and assessments, developing data systems that measure success and improve instruction, supporting effective teachers and leaders, and turning around low-performance schools.

To implement its goals for standards, North Carolina will be adopting the common core standards in English, language arts and math for grades K-12 as developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association. The state also is working on the ACRE program, or Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort, to redefine the standard course of study for K-12 students. Pitt County currently has the new NC Wise system for attendance and grades.

To implement the goals for data systems, the state is working on implementing CEDARS, or Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System. This comprehensive longitudinal data system will integrate previously incompatible educational databases into a single widely accessible repository. One prominent feature is a unique student identification number to track students K-12 across the state.

To implement the goal of supporting effective teachers, North Carolina will focus on increasing professional development opportunities and providing principal academies to develop school leaders. North Carolina already has the ABC school improvement model that measures student growth and provides financial incentives for schools whose students show growth. North Carolina also already has NCEES, North Carolina Educator Evaluation System.

To implement the goal of turning around struggling schools, the state will focus on assisting schools with performance less than 50 percent and graduation less than 60 percent. The state will have a four-step process to identify struggling schools, assess their needs and weaknesses, customize strategies for change and build capacities, and monitor progress.

“Race to the Top calls for one of four change models for turning around struggling schools, and we can do any of those four,” Atkinson said.

Atkinson said there were several areas of strength in the application, but “North Carolina is strong in teacher effectiveness and we are among the few states that have a statewide system of teacher and principal evaluation, and this will help us as we increase teacher professional development.”

Atkinson said one area where the most change will take place is teacher professional development, with plans for several platforms of delivery including online and even by mobile phone. An early area of concern for state and local teachers groups like the NCAE and PCAE was basing teacher evaluations or pay on test scores, though as it turns out North Carolina’s plan for Race to the Top funding has a broader base for teacher effectiveness.

“Race to the Top has a clear definition of effective teachers and principals with several key parts,” Atkinson said. “Student growth will be one significant measure of teacher effectiveness, among others such as leadership, collaboration, parent relations, etc.”

“Any evaluation of teachers based on student outcomes should be very broad and not just based on a single test,” Strickland said. “Teachers would have input as to other measures of success like number of students in advanced courses or improving graduation rates. There are many appropriate ways to measure teacher effectiveness, and student outcomes are more than just one test score.”
“Our expectation as local districts develop their plan is for educators to be at the table to help formulate that plan, so the people who do the work can be a part of making the decisions,” Strickland said.

While serving as NCAE president, Strickland is on leave from Pitt County Schools, where she has worked since 1976. She left her position as preschool disabilities coordinator for the exceptional children department in July 2006 to serve a term as vice president before being elected president in 2008.

“Overall everything looks really promising so far,” Robinson said. “We support Race to the Top and we have a good working relationship with Dr. Reep. We will work in the best interest of students while still being fair to teachers and staff. We need money to run these programs and with all the budget cuts Race to the Top would really help. We want to do what’s right for the students but it takes money to do that.”

If North Carolina receives funding, local districts will have 90 days from April 1 to submit their plans to the state.

The ECU College of Education has not been directly involved in the Race to the Top program, but will monitor the developments, according to Ellen Dobson, communications director for the college.

The 17-campus University of North Carolina system expressed its support for North Carolina’s participation in Race to the Top in a letter of support from system President Erskine Bowles attached with many similar letters to the application.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or at (252) 329-9567.
Free dental clinic brightens smiles of the uninsured

DURHAM -- Brisco Swain hadn't seen a dentist in at least four years and had a mouthful of trouble.

So the out-of-work nursing assistant got in line at 3:15 a.m. Friday to get three teeth pulled at a free dental clinic run by the N.C. Dental Society. Today, he'll show up even earlier for two more false teeth to plug the gap in his smile.

"It's worth it to me to come here at 12 in the morning to get two teeth put in," said Swain, 49, of Raleigh. "They need to have this more often."

When Swain arrived in the wee hours Friday, at least 70 people were already in line. The clinic, which continues today at the National Guard Armory on Stadium Drive, is one of 12 planned this year by the N.C. Missions of Mercy, an affiliate of the N.C. Dental Society. It treated about 650 people Friday.

At a time when people are losing jobs and health benefits, turnout for these clinics has spiked, said Alec Parker, the dental society's executive director.

Last year, volunteers provided free dental care valued at more than $2 million to 5,300 patients, 25 percent to 30 percent more than the previous year, Parker said. This year, the project expects to serve at least 6,000 patients, including at least 1,000 this week in Durham.

The huge turnout illustrates that many people can't get decent health care, can't afford it or choose not to pay for it, said Gary Rozier, a UNC-Chapel Hill health policy and management professor.

"We just don't have enough dentists in the state," Rozier said. "It seems whenever someone sets up a clinic, they're overwhelmed. Access is difficult for a lot of people."

This week's clinic is staffed by about 80 dentists and 400 more volunteers doing basic examinations, X-rays, cleanings, restorations and extractions. It opened at 6 a.m. Friday, and within four hours, organizers were turning people away.

Dentist is among first to go

When money gets tight, dental care is often one of the first things trimmed from families' budgets, particularly if they have lost health benefits, experts say.

"It's still viewed, within the scope of medical care, as elective until it's an emergency," said Rick Mumford, a professor with the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Dentistry and director of its Dentistry in Service to Communities program. "But we have so many tools in our bag that are preventative, that work. It's hard to change that mind-set."

Geneva Cash last had a teeth cleaning when she was 16. She's now 25, the mother of two with a third on the way, and has no insurance because her husband, Jody, a self-employed plumber in Durham, can't afford it.
Geneva got her teeth cleaned at the clinic Friday, while Jody had six teeth extracted. Even when dental issues arise, the family hesitates to pay for treatment, Geneva Cash said. She broke a tooth five years ago and paid $600 to have it fixed - an experience she'd like to avoid in the future.

"It cost me so much I wish I'd took the pliers and done it myself," she said.

There are no other free clinics scheduled this year in the Triangle. The dental society focuses on the rural parts of the state - east of Interstate 95 and west of Interstate 77 - where the need is greatest, Parker said. Four of the state's counties - Gates, Camden, Hyde and Tyrrell, all in the east - have no practicing dentists, Mumford said. There hasn't been a practicing dentist in Camden, Hyde and Tyrrell county since 1989, he added.

UNC-CH, where the state's only dental school is based, turns out about 80 dentists a year. A second dental school is slated to open in 2012 at East Carolina University.

Uninsured Americans would get dental coverage along with medical insurance under reform proposals currently under consideration, said Rozier, the UNC-CH health policy expert.

On Friday, Tammy Watts, 46, drove down from Oxford to get two cavities filled, arriving at 3:45 a.m. with a cooler of food and bottled water. She hasn't been insured since losing her job more than a year ago.

But even with her previous insurance, the three fillings would have cost $600, she said.

"I've been living with pain," she said. "You deal with it until you can afford it."

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008

Published Mon, Mar 15, 2010 06:05 AM
Modified Mon, Mar 15, 2010 06:05 AM

Correction

A front-page story in Saturday's paper about a new dental school at East Carolina University listed the incorrect opening date. The school will open in 2011.
Pitt County Medical Society announces new officers

Dr. Victoria Trapanotto with Eastern Radiologists Inc. has been elected board president of the Pitt County Medical Society, a physician member organization.

Trapanotto received her undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh and her master’s degree at the University of Maryland. She attended Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, where she received her medical degree.

Trapanotto completed her internship at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, School of Osteopathic Medicine, and her residency at Maine Medical Center, in diagnostic radiology.

Trapanotto also completed a fellowship in pediatric imaging at the Children’s Hospital, Boston-Harvard Medical School.

Trapanotto is the director of radiology education and also an affiliate assistant professor of radiology, Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University.

Joining Trapanotto on the Pitt County Medical Society board of directors are:

- Dr. Raetta Fountain, president-elect, Atlantic Gastroenterology PA;
- Dr. Richard Zeri, secretary-treasurer, Brody School of Medicine, Department of Surgery/Plastic & Reconstructive;
- Dr. Ron Allison, past president, Carolina Radiation Medicine – 21st Century Oncology;
- Dr. Bryan Cooper, at-large-member, Eastern Headache & Spine;
- Dr. Lynn Johnson, at-large-member, East Carolina Anesthesia Associates PLLC;
- Dr. Crystal Manuel, at-large-member, Brody School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry;
- Dr. Myles Reedy, at-large-member, Eastern Radiologists Inc.;
- Dr. Kathleen Seibel, at-large-member, Brody School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry;
- Dr. Lisa Cowan, resident representative, Brody School of Medicine, Department of Emergency Medicine;
- Danielle Bliss, medical student representative.
Tracking the tarantula

Updated 2d 12h ago

By Dan Vergano, USA TODAY

A photo of Aphonopelma moderatum, a species from Texas that fetches a fairly steep price for adults. This spider is still relatively common throughout its range, but anecdotal observations suggest that certain areas are being hit hard by collectors. Spiders can no longer be found in some areas where they were incredibly common just 10 years ago.

By Brent Hendrixson, Millsaps College

The hairy spiders dwell from California to the Mississippi River, their habitat stretching in a line from northern California to southern Missouri. (The Mississippi River seems to be a barrier to the species spreading further east, at least without the help of collectors, he says, despite some reports of sightings to the contrary.) Hendrixson’s lab holds the “wall of tarantulas” in cages, about 50 in all, cared for by “students who just think they are cool,” he says.

The biggest U.S. species can have six-inch wide legs, while a recently-discovered Arizona species is as small as a quarter. “They are active at a different time of day than the bigger ones, probably so those guys don’t eat them,” Hendrixson says. (Another newly-discovered one sports bright orange hairs on its abdomen and a greenish-gray "head." He can’t reveal the planned name of the species before publishing a formal description of the creature, based on biology’s naming conventions, but he hopes to honor “the lead singer of a state-of-the-art speed metal band,” who has written some fast-paced peans to biodiversity.)

Hendrixson and his colleagues, such as Jason Bond of East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., are trying to document the famous, but little-

Big, hairy, bloodthirsty vermin — if you’ve seen one tarantula, you’ve seen them all, right?

"That's what Hollywood wants you to think, (that) they're all blood-seeking beasts," says biologist Brent Hendrixson of Millsaps College in Jackson, Miss. "But it's not true at all."

Hendrixson is the expert on the other end of the line for folks who pick up a strange-looking tarantula, and go looking for a little advice from the American Tarantula Society. Sometimes they send living specimens to the biologist.

"I've received hundreds of tarantulas from folks this way," he says. "The lady at the Post Office just gives me a look with every package and I say, “Yeah, you don’t want to know.”"

Some scientists look through telescopes, others use microscopes, but Hendrixson and his colleagues are old-fashioned naturalists. They go looking for species wherever they can find them, even the U.S. Mail. For a hairy ground-dwelling spider that makes a living feasting on bugs, and being eaten in turn by birds and bigger critters, tarantulas come in a surprising variety of shapes and sizes.
understood spider species one arachnid at a time.

"What's surprising is that these are such well-known spiders but we really don't understand a lot about them," Hendrixson says. "There probably are more species names than there really are (tarantula) species. Some of them have been named off one or two specimens in one place, and they might really not be any different from another not too far away. But we really don't know, we are just trying to get our hands around them all."

A recent National Science Foundation grant should help. It will be shared among institutions to help gather genetic, geographic and biological data on the species from the U.S.A., Mexico and Costa Rica.

The exotic pet trade poses threats and benefits to tarantulas, he adds. Tarantula pets can educate owners about the spiders, and he supports keeping store-reared ones as companions, but demand for rare, blue-furred ones from India and Sri Lanka has cut into the population. He sometimes only publishes vague geographic information about the habitats of rare tarantulas to prevent collectors intent on selling them from wiping out a population.

And then there is the venom. There never has been a documented case of a tarantula bite killing anyone, according to the American Tarantula Society. "But they will bite you if they are provoked," Hendrixson says. "It's a defense mechanism." In February, a case study of a 29-year-old man with eye inflammation in The Lancet journal warned tarantula owners that their pets can release their barbed hairs, called urticating hairs or "stinging hair," when they feel threatened.

Still, Hendrixson isn't worried. He usually greets new students on the first day of lectures with a tarantula on his shoulder, or on his head. "I'm sure they wonder what they are getting into on their first day of college," he says. "But it helps break the ice and gives them some of the excitement in biology."
ECC students visit East Carolina University

Contributed to the Telegram

Saturday, March 13, 2010

A group of students from Edgecombe Community College spent the day at East Carolina University on Feb. 26, learning about the university and exploring career options.

ECC students who are members of EMPAC — Empowering Males with a Purpose to Achieve and Celebrate — visited the university. EMPAC is a minority male mentoring program that has been in place at ECC since 2005.

Various ECU administrators addressed the students — including Dr. Taffye Clayton, associate provost for equity, diversity and community — and Rod Bradley, director of the Ledonia Wright Cultural Center.

Following a campus tour, students attended sessions on career exploration, mentoring and a student panel.

"This was a terrific opportunity for our students to spend the day on a university campus, to get them thinking about the possibilities in their own lives," said Jonathan Wirt, dean of students at Edgecombe Community College.

ECC EMPAC students who participated are Jamez Alston, Montrez Bell, David Chaney, Toney Hedgepeth, Taris Jones, Torrey Joyner, Samuel Morrison, Torren Stanley, Tyrus Smith, Travis Stokes, Michael Wade, Milton Wilkins, and Lloyd Whitaker.

EMPAC advisers who accompanied the students are Michael Jordan, vice president of student services, Jonathan Wirt, dean of students; and Stanley Sivels, purchasing agent.

Students from Wayne, Lenoir, and Pitt community colleges also participated.

Login or register to post comments

COMMENTS
Details scant on hospital shooting

DURHAM -- Duke University officials offered few details Sunday about a shooting involving two campus police officers in front of the entrance to Duke Hospital that left a man dead. It happened about 1 a.m. Saturday. Officials have not said what led to shots being fired.

The man killed has not been identified, though Duke officials said there was no indication he was an employee, patient or family member of a patient. The body is at the Office of the Medical Examiner in Chapel Hill, officials said.

The officers involved were identified as Larry Carter, who has been employed by Duke Police for 23 years, and Jeffrey Liberto, who has been employed for two years. They are on paid leave. It is not clear whether one or both officers fired their weapons.

The State Bureau of Investigation is reviewing the case.

Duke officials said a report on the shooting is expected to be finished this week.
Fayetteville State, ex-chancellor reach settlement

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. -- Court documents show Fayetteville State University has reached a settlement with a former chancellor, who said the North Carolina school reneged on a position it promised him.

The Fayetteville Observer reported Monday that court records show an attorney for Willis McLeod filed paperwork March 4 to dismiss the lawsuit. The two sides had met with a mediator in February, and court documents show they reached a settlement.

Attorney Calvin Craig says his client and the school have agreed in principle, but the agreement has not been completed.

School spokesman Jeffery Womble says details of the agreement, which would be a public record, will be released when the agreement is official.

McLeod says he didn't give up his position as an education professor when he stepped down as chancellor in 2002.

Woodson's way

Randy Woodson doesn't take over as chancellor at N.C. State University for a couple of weeks yet, but on one of many visits to Raleigh of late from his home in Indiana, he sounded like a fellow who wished he were already here. Woodson, 52, is winding up his tenure as Purdue University's provost and gathering information from NCSU students, faculty members and alumni to help shape his priorities once he gets to town.

In a meeting Wednesday with News & Observer reporters and editors, he laid out some of those priorities, with a promise of more to come:

Enlarging the faculty, which he says is too small in view of the growth of the student body.

Boosting the endowment to $1 billion, more befitting a school the size of N.C. State.

Encouraging the university to be bolder in identifying new programs or strengthening what it already has.

Doing more to let the world know about all the university's potential and achievements already on the books.

Woodson says he fears that the campus has become "risk averse" of late, sort of on the defensive, and he wants people not to be afraid of change or fresh ideas.

Certainly, given the events of the last year or so, it's understandable that some on campus might be subdued. The university's chancellor and provost resigned in the wake of the dubious hiring of former North Carolina first lady Mary Easley, as did a Board of Trustees chairman. It has been a distracting time.

Woodson, while not ignoring that recent past, rightly understands the university's gifts and potential are considerable. "The grand challenges of society now - water, climate, energy - have science and technology issues that have to be resolved, and N.C. State University is in a tremendous position to be among the leading institutions in the country that address those challenges," he said.

He's respectful of NCSU's alumni corps, and eager to learn all he can about its history. On the morning of his meeting at The N&O, he had breakfast with former Gov. Jim Hunt, a State alumnus.

Woodson is a firm speaker, thoughtful in his questions and answers, gracious but direct, not afraid to be sure of some things (he said emphatically that the university's troubled student newspaper, Technician, would survive) and inquisitive about others. He likes the ideas behind the public-private Centennial Campus, and supports the university's commitment to North Carolina residents while wishing that NCSU had the 18 percent out-of-state enrollment allowed under state law. Again, it's a good point, as out-of-state students do strengthen a student body and broaden the experience of North Carolinians on campus.

Woodson's positive outlook, coupled with the signal that he wants those on campus to be daring and unafraid of bringing forth new ideas, feels like exactly what N.C. State needs at this point in its history.