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ECU notes: ECU faculty members honored for excellence

ECU News Services

Saturday, March 21, 2009

Three faculty members from East Carolina University received Achievement for Excellence in Research and Creative Activity awards in February.

Linda Darty, professor of metalworking and enameling in ECU’s School of Art and Design, received the Lifetime Achievement Award for accomplishments made across the span of her professional career.

Dr. Qun Lu, associate professor in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, and Dr. R. Martin Roop, professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, both part of the Brody School of Medicine, received Five-Year Achievement Awards.

Darty earned a bachelor’s degree in Ceramics and Art Education from The University of Florida in 1973 and began the enameling program at ECU on a graduate teaching fellowship while earning her MFA in 1989.

Her artwork has been featured in numerous books and in more than 160 exhibits around the world. She has contributed to permanent art collections on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City, and the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock.

Dr. Qun Lu has a doctorate in cell biology and neuroscience from Emory University School of Medicine and has been on the ECU faculty since 2000.

His area of research is cancer, and he has published 25 papers since joining ECU. He has been a primary co-investigator on grants totaling $2.9 million.

He has spoken at national and international conferences and helped establish the Harriet and John Wooten Laboratory for Alzheimer’s Disease and Neurodegenerative Research at ECU.

Dr. R. Martin Roop has bachelor’s and doctoral degrees from Virginia Polytechnic Institute. He came to ECU in 2001. Roop’s research focus is the bacteria Brucella, which causes gastrointestinal illness and is a potential bioweapon.

He has spoken on numerous panels, received several research awards and has been lead or co-author on more than 25 scholarly articles.

Roop has been primary or co-investigator on grants totaling more than $6.5 million.

Awardees were selected for the originality and excellence of their research and creative activities as demonstrated in sustained, high-quality work at ECU. Each recipient will receive a cash award and conduct a public seminar to showcase his or her research during Research and Creative Achievement Week, March 30 to April 3.

Home-builders leader to speak

Joe Robson, chairman of the board for the National Association of Home Builders, will be the keynote speaker at ECU’s Construction Management Leadership Lecture Series on Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in Hendrix Theatre in the Mendenhall Student Center.

Robson will speak on qualities in leadership.

Mark Tipton, a current member of the ECU Board of Trustees and former National Association of Home
Builders president, will moderate the event, which is part of a celebration week commemorating the Department of Construction Management's 25 years at ECU.

The department partners with the National Housing Endowment to host these lectures annually with the goal of teaching students the importance of leadership in business and industry. This is the second installment of the lecture series. ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard spoke at the inaugural event in March 2008.

"We have enjoyed the on-going working relationship between East Carolina University and the National Association of Home Builders," said Ron Sessoms, ECU Department of Construction Management faculty member. "To have someone the caliber of Joe Robson coming to campus to share his experiences with leadership to our faculty, staff and students is a real treat."

The event is free and open to the public. A reception will follow in the High Bay Laboratory of the Science and Technology Building on ECU's campus.

Dietetic association honors ECU faculty, students

The North Carolina Dietetic Association (NCDA) honored several faculty members and students in the ECU Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at an annual meeting held March 9.

Sylvia Escott-Stump, director of ECU's dietetic program, was named Member of the Year, the highest honor bestowed upon NCDA members. The award recognizes her contributions to the field of dietetics and the professional association. Escott-Stump has written extensively on teaching professionalism and ethics to students, and she is co-author of Krause's "Food and Nutrition Therapy," a standard text for many university nutrition programs.

Also recognized were the following ECU faculty members and students: Melani Duffrin, assistant professor of Child Development and Family Relations, as Outstanding Dietetics Educator; Virginia Carraway-Stage as eastern region Recognized Young Dietitian of the Year; Sara McLeod as Outstanding Student in the Didactic Program in Dietetics; and Sara Overholt as Outstanding Student in the Dietetic Internship.

Sara McLeod won the NCDA undergraduate research competition, and ECU graduate student Alexis Briley was awarded a $1,000 NCDA scholarship, one of only three such scholarships given annually by the association.

Lecture planned on lung transplantation

A nationally known surgeon will talk about the latest trends in lung transplant surgery during the eighth annual Will Camp Sealy lecture at ECU.

Dr. Alec Patterson, Evarts A. Graham Professor of Surgery and chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, will be the speaker. Patterson is the director of lung transplantation at Washington University and president-elect of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery.

Patterson will also address recent changes in cardiothoracic surgery training.

The lecture will be April 1 at 8 a.m. in the education center of the East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU. The institute is at 115 Heart Drive on the campus of the Brody School of Medicine.

Sealy was a pioneering cardiothoracic surgeon who taught for many years at Duke University and was on the faculty at ECU when he died in 2001. The Sealy Lecture is co-sponsored by ECHI, the ECU Department of Cardiovascular Sciences and the ECU Department of Surgery.

Cochlear implant program receives $15,000 fellowship

ECU's Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders has received one of nine $15,000 fellowships in the country awarded by the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Funding from Cochlear Americas Corporation and Gift of Hearing Foundation will provide mentored work experience to a selected fellow in the areas of cochlear implant candidate evaluation, device fitting, auditory rehabilitation and counseling.

Cochlear implants are small, complex electronic devices that can help provide hearing to a person who has severe to profound hearing loss. The implants consist of an external portion that sits behind the ear and an internal portion surgeons place under the skin along with an electrode array that curls around the cochlea.

The Cochlear Implant Program of Eastern Carolina began in 1999. More than 80 people have received
implants since that time from the program’s team of specialists: the ECU Speech-Language and Hearing Clinic, Dr. Bradley Brechtelsbauer with Eastern Carolina ENT-Head & Neck Surgery, and speech and audiology professionals at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

**ECU hosted TD Ameritrade chairman**

U.S. economic and marketing perspectives were the focus of a presentation by TD Ameritrade chairman Joseph H. Moglia on Feb. 19 at ECU. Moglia’s appearance was hosted by ECU’s Entrepreneurial Initiative and sponsored by Clinical Trials Management Group.

Moglia was also the guest speaker at the monthly meeting of the Eastern Carolina Investor's Network, a group of regional angel investors facilitated by Marty Hackney, director of the Entrepreneurial Initiative.

ECU’s Entrepreneurial Initiative is a constituent unit of the Office of Engagement, Innovation and Economic Development. For more information, visit [http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/tds/ei/](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/tds/ei/).

**Upcoming events:**

- **Tuesday** — Speaker, teacher, writer and activist Robyn Ochs will present throughout the day at this event sponsored by ECU GLBTSU and SGA Diversity Week. (See calendar item for times and locations.)

- **Thursday** — Founder’s Day. Events scheduled throughout the day. Visit [www.ecu.edu/centennial](http://www.ecu.edu/centennial).

- **Friday** — World-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist and educator Nikki Giovanni will speak at 7 p.m. in Wright Auditorium. Event is part of the campus’ Ledonia Wright Cultural Center Day celebration. For tickets, call 328-4788

See [www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm) for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.

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Darts and Laurels; March 21

Saturday, March 21, 2009

Laurels — To those motivated citizens who attended this week’s public forum about the Greenville Town Common. Officials scheduled the session to solicit input about what the public wants from the land that abuts the Tar River with an eye toward making it a more valuable resource. The Town Common is the city’s front yard, and its evolution is crucial to the heart of the community.

Laurels — To the NCAA basketball tournament and a heaping helping of March madness. The first weekend offers a barrage of games for basketball fans, which delights a place like North Carolina with its rich tradition with the game. The state has several teams competing in the big dance, with several hoping to make a long run toward a national championship.

Laurels — To the dedication of the Community Peace Garden near Sheppard Memorial Library, a tranquil location in the works since 2004. The brick pathway attractive landscaping emerged thanks to the Medication Center of Eastern Carolina and library staff, and should serve as a useful community resource for many years to come.

Darts — To the possibility of large budget cuts at East Carolina University and the potential threat they pose to the school’s mission. While hardship must be shared throughout the state, East Carolina officials are lamenting the likelihood of sharply reduced funding in the coming months. State officials should remember that education remains the best investment in an economic downturn.

Laurels — To North Carolina’s high marks on a survey examining how well states provide public records for online access. The Old North State ranked third for how well state government places reports, certificates and other documents for easy review on the Web, but called out North Carolina for infrequent updates and some hard-to-navigate Web pages. The state should heed those suggestions.

Laurels — To parents, students and staff who are participating in Pitt County Schools’ survey about the dress code used in public schools. The uniforms required for the first time last year drew ire from many corners of the county, and school officials hope to learn about the public’s perception as the school year slowly draws to a close. The results should help the Board of Education make informed decisions about the future of that policy.

Laurels — To this community’s improved preparation in the case of a hurricane, changes made in the wake of Hurricane Floyd. When that storm raked across eastern North Carolina in 1999, the resulting flood devastated places like Pitt County, and encouraged officials to made thoughtful decisions reflecting the need to protect citizens. The community will be better positions should such a storm strike again.

Compiled by Brian Colligan, editorial page editor of The Daily Reflector. Contact him at 329-9507 or via e-mail at bcolligan@coxnc.com
Pitt County Schools stresses athlete safety education

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, March 21, 2009

Six months have passed since the concussion-related death of J.H. Rose High School football player JaQuan Waller. Since that time, Pitt County Schools has ramped up its efforts to educate coaches, athletes and parents about the importance of athlete safety.

But tighter state and local budgets could prevent the school system from realizing its goal of putting certified athletic trainers on the athletics staff at every school, Superintendent Beverly Reep said.

The Sept. 20 passing of Waller, 16, brought to light an ongoing debate about whether schools should be required to have certified trainers present during athletic practices and competitions.

In the weeks following Waller’s death, the school system accepted responsibility for the events leading up to it and dismissed Bill Grimm, the first responder who examined Waller, from his position in the Rose athletic department.

Reep pledged at the time to pursue “creative and cost-effective efforts” to employ licensed athletic trainers at each of the county’s six high schools. She said the district would do so regardless of whether the North Carolina High School Athletic Association or state legislature mandated it.

But the school system during the past four months has been forced to send back nearly $1 million of its state funding to cover budget shortfalls and Pitt County officials said last week they need around $334,000 back from the schools to cover a revenue shortfall.

School systems also have been told to prepare for as much as a 7 percent reduction in state funding for next fiscal year. Preliminary discussions with the county have provided a similarly bleak outlook.

“I am not as optimistic as I once was,” Reep said of adding certified licensed trainers.

The school system currently employs certified trainers at D.H. Conley and J.H. Rose high schools. They are teachers in the district who receive a supplement for their training work.

Reep said she initially thought the school system might be able to partner with East Carolina University to hire graduate students who are certified trainers, but that has proven to be more costly than a typical supplemental position. She added that there also have been problems with getting those students certified for teaching positions.

Reep said the district will continue to look for candidates who are licensed trainers as they seek to fill teaching positions.

“I think that is going to be in the short term a more realistic way to get those licensed athletic trainers into our schools in a way that we can afford them,” Reep said.

School officials in the meantime have been working to update districtwide protocol and better educate those involved in athletics about injuries, dehydration and diseases such as asthma.

More than 300 coaches attended training sessions held last month and last week which focused on those three areas and new safety guidelines for the district.

Pitt County Schools Director of Athletics Ron Butler said all coaches now must be trained in first aid,
cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and know how to properly use an automated external defibrillator.

“We are trying to make Pitt County as safe of a place as there is to participate in athletics,” Butler said.

Plans for the training were in the works prior to the death of Waller, Reep said, and it was supposed to focus on asthma, but the tragedy prompted school officials to make the training mandatory for coaches and they tacked on a session focusing on head injuries.

During the training, coaches were provided with a clipboard with symptoms and an action plan for head injuries and asthma on each side, a tool that local pediatrician Ed Davis believes is the first of its kind nationally. Davis was joined by Lisa Johnson, Pitt County Memorial Hospital coordinator of pediatric asthma services, as a presenter during the coaches’ training.

Football coaches next year will also be required to weigh their players before and after practices to test for dehydration. Players who are not within 3 percent of their weight will not be allowed to participate.

Davis said honesty will also be a big factor in keeping athletes safe. "That is honesty on the part of the athletes and honesty on the part of people who are observing the athletes," Davis said.

School board member Michael Dixon recently noted that the culture of coaches may also need to be changed. He said athletes sometimes mask injuries because of the pressure applied by the coaching staff.

“The culture of the coaching staff has to change so the concern is for the athlete, not wins and losses,” Dixon said.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.

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Med school matches most students with primary care residencies

ECU News Services

Friday, March 20, 2009

More than half of the medical students graduating from East Carolina University this spring will go into primary care residencies.

Those are the results of the annual Match Day, celebrated Thursday, March 19, amid whoops and hugs at the East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU.

Of the 62 students participating in the match, 13, or 21 percent, are entering family medicine residencies. Eight are entering some type of internal medicine residency. Six students are entering pediatric residency programs, and seven are entering obstetrics and gynecology.

"I can't even tell you how excited I am," said Pui-Nn Ho, who will be staying in Greenville to pursue a surgery residency at ECU and Pitt County Memorial Hospital. "I'm thrilled that I'm going here."

Before they can provide direct patient care, U.S. medical school graduates are required to complete a three- to seven-year residency program accredited in a recognized medical specialty. Medical students at the nation's 125 medical schools learned their destinations today.

The class of 2009 was accepted into institutions in 19 states in 20 specialties. The Brody School of Medicine at ECU and Pitt County Memorial Hospital will be home to 12 class members. Thirty graduates will stay in North Carolina.

Jeremy Kilburn of Charlotte leapt in the air after learning he would be doing a radiation oncology residency at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, his top choice.

"I look forward to being in a fantastic program with faculty that I have a lot in common with and the opportunity to be close to family," Kilburn said. He will be centrally located to family in Mooresville and Hickory. Kilburn was joined by his wife, Katie, their infant daughter Jillian, and his mother, father, identical twin brother, older sister and nephew.

Fellow medical student Lindsay Roofe of Laurinburg is going to Vanderbilt Medical Center for pediatrics. "It was my first choice," Roofe said. "I'm looking forward to getting to take care of patients finally and to learn more," she said. Her aunt, Sandra Harris of Hamlet, and her mother, Cathy Roofe of Pinehurst, were delighted.

"We're so proud of her," Harris said. They are also excited that she is going to Vanderbilt in Nashville, Tenn., rather than San Francisco, her next choice, which would have been a lot farther from home.

Officials at Brody, which emphasizes primary care, were pleased with the match results.

"This class is a superb class, both in terms of cohesiveness and friendship," said Dr. Paul R.G. Cunningham, who was overseeing his first Match Day as dean of the Brody School of Medicine. "This is an unusual year where so many students matched at their highest ranked schools, so it's a special year for celebrating."

The National Residency Match Program, a private, not-for-profit organization, provides a method for matching applicants for residency positions in the United States with residency programs at various teaching hospitals. Applicants and hospitals rank each other in order of preference, and a computer matches them based upon those rankings.
According to the NRMP, the number of available residency positions this year was the highest in match history. This year, 29,890 applicants vied for one of the 22,427 first-year residency positions available. Of those, 15,638 of these applicants were U.S. medical school seniors. Other applicants included previous graduates of U.S. medical schools, U.S. citizen and non-U.S. citizen international medical graduates, and osteopathic doctors.

Cutlines

Photo by Cliff Hollis/ ECU News Services

Toni Oxendine, left, holds her daughter, Elora, after learning she will be staying in Greenville for a residency in internal medicine-pediatrics at ECU-Pitt County Memorial Hospital. On the right is Adrian Jacobs, who is going to St. Joseph’s Hospital in Phoenix for a residency in pediatrics.

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N.C. HISTORY

Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse
Lawrence E. Babits & Joshua B. Howard
UNC Press, 300 pages

'German Jaeger,' by Don Troiani invokes the army of Brits and Germans who defeated General Nathanael Greene's command.

Image courtesy of www.historicalimagebank.com
Carolina revolution

A new history of a decisive local battle for independence

BY CYNTHIA A. KIERNER, Correspondent

Comment on this story

On March 15, 1781, at Guilford Courthouse near present-day Greensboro, Lord Charles Cornwallis's army of British regulars and German mercenaries defeated an American force of Continentals and militia commanded by General Nathanael Greene -- for whom the modern city is named. The victory proved costly for the British. After Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis marched his depleted army north to its ultimate defeat at Yorktown, Virginia, in October 1781.

"Long, Obstinate, and Bloody" is the first book-length account of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Based on extensive research in military records, official and private correspondence, memoirs, pension applications, and other sources, Lawrence E. Babits and Joshua B. Howard situate the battle in the larger context of the Southern Campaign, the final phase of the War of Independence.

The war that began so famously with skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, Mass., in April 1775 was fought to a stalemate in the North. By late 1778, British commanders had decided to invade the South, where they hoped for support from discontented slaves and white loyalists. Early victories at Savannah, Ga., and Charleston and Camden, S.C., seemed to vindicate that strategy -- until the British suffered losses at Kings Mountain and Cowpens in early 1781.

Babits and Howard's story covers the eight weeks or so from Cowpens through Guilford Courthouse, the war's next major battle. For nearly two months, Cornwallis pursued Greene north to the Dan River in Virginia and then back into North Carolina. This trek across woods, waterways, and pastures left the British force of about 2,000 troops just 12 miles away from Greene’s army of more than 4,000. Cornwallis began his advance at night on March 14, 1781. Babits and Howard devote four chapters to the ensuing battle, which began about noon the next day and lasted about 2 hours.

Greene deployed his men in three lines across the Great Salisbury Road. The first line of North Carolina militia did significant damage to the advancing enemy before collapsing. The second line of Virginia militia fought for more than an hour, inflicting still heavier losses before retreating. The third line, manned by more seasoned Continentals, featured the heaviest fighting, including bayonet warfare. Viewed from the perspective of soldiers on the ground, these brutal encounters are the most powerful part of the authors' battlefield narrative.

When the battle was over, Cornwallis' army held its ground but suffered heavy casualties. The authors make two general points. The first, that Greene's strategy of "keeping his army alive and moving had worked," despite his frequent battle losses, is common among military historians. The second, that Greene's army deserved "no lesser laurels" than Washington's victorious forces at Yorktown, is probably an overstatement.

Like Babits' earlier "A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens," this one is an extraordinarily detailed narrative. It also fills a gap in literature on the war by showcasing a
Consequential but comparatively understudied Carolina battle.

Military history buffs and re-enactors will enjoy the extremely detailed account of troop positioning and movements and the long enumerations of the officers and regiments who participated in the battle. Others may not. Readers of all sorts will appreciate Mark A. Moore's excellent maps, which show troop movements on both sides in the battle's sectors. (In this instance, a picture really is worth a thousand words.)

Detail is both a strength and a weakness of the book, depending on one's perspective. On the one hand, the authors' account of the battle is well-informed, complete and probably definitive. On the other, readers who are tempted to skim over so many long descriptions will miss some juicy tidbits. Who knew, for instance, that "Hessian muskets may have been almost as old as the men carrying them" or that one of Cornwallis's senior subordinates, Brig. Gen. Charles O'Hara, was the son of writer Horace Walpole's "Portuguese woman Donna Anna"?

Babits and Howard's approach to topics beyond the battlefield is generally cautious and narrow. The chapter titled "Greene's Army" focuses mainly on officers, and in the case of both officers and common soldiers, the authors mostly limit their discussion of the men's background to their prior military experience. Elsewhere, they raise potentially intriguing or important points only in passing, without much elaboration. Their assertion that as many as 110 free African-Americans were among the Virginia militia at Guilford Courthouse raises many questions. Were these soldiers armed or did they do mainly menial work? Did their presence cause dissension among the ranks or conflict with local civilians? Babits and Howard also acknowledge that large numbers of women, children, and other noncombatants typically accompanied 18th-century armies. Yet these people, who performed essential services for the troops, play no role in their account.

The authors' narrow focus becomes a greater liability in their final chapters. They begin their assessment of the battle's aftermath by surveying the armies' most pressing needs: finding and treating the wounded, burying the dead, securing or exchanging prisoners, and acquiring food and other supplies. Unfortunately, they quickly dispense with these topics -- which are central to a more capacious approach to military history -- to continue their chronicle of Greene's and Cornwallis's battlefield exploits.

"Long, Bloody, and Obstinate" is a conscientious and capable history of a narrowly defined topic. The authors have done well what they chose to do. But a better, more engaging and consequential book would have done much more.

Cynthia A. Kierner is a professor of history at George Mason University and author or editor of six books, including "Scandal at Bizarre: Rumor and Reputation in Jefferson's America."

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**Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse**

Lawrence E. Babits & Joshua B. Howard

UNC Press, 300 pages

**Meet the author**

Joshua B. Howard will speak at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Quail Ridge Books & Music in Raleigh.
UNC-Asheville receives $1.5 million anonymous gift

The Associated Press
Comment on this story

ASHEVILLE, N.C. - An anonymous donor has given $1.5 million to a North Carolina university struggling with significant budget cuts.

The Asheville Citizen-Times reported that the gift to the University of North Carolina at Asheville is one of the largest in school history. Spokeswoman Merianne Epstein said that at the donor's request, $1 million of the gift will go toward scholarships and $500,000 will be used for operating support.

The university will use $250,000 to purchase equipment needed for the new Zeis Science & Multimedia Building to be dedicated this fall. The remaining $250,000 will be set aside to help a new endowed faculty chair.

Epstein said those funds will be matched by private funds and by the Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund established by the General Assembly in 1985.


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Slump squeezes private colleges

Juggling act: Cut costs, keep appeal

BY ERIC FERRERI AND JANE STANCILL, Staff writers

Public universities will soon face the state budget knife, but private colleges already feel a sharp sense of urgency about their financial future.

They need to cut spending but can't let frugality reduce their appeal to tuition-paying students.

"For small colleges, the most important financial variable is related to enrollment; they are very tuition-dependent," said Tony Pals, a spokesman for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. "So if a small, private college has a drop in enrollment of just a few percentage points, it can be a very serious problem."

Exhibit A is Meredith College in Raleigh, a liberal arts women's college that aimed to enroll 450 students last fall but came up 50 short. With tuition, room and board costing more than $30,000 this year, the revenue loss exceeded $1.5 million.

For high school seniors choosing between Meredith and public universities such as N.C. State, UNC-Chapel Hill, East Carolina or a local community college, that big tuition tab looms large, said Bill Wade, Meredith's vice president for business and finance.

"We're more expensive than the public institutions, and North Carolina has some very good and really inexpensive public institutions," Wade said. "[Students] are choosing to go to a very good and much less expensive place."

At Elon University, a similar story. Applications have been healthy, Provost Gerry Francis said, but fewer students are expected to choose Elon this year because they're looking for lower tuition at public campuses.

"We'll go to our wait list quicker," he said.

One strategy to attract students: Ease up on the tuition increases -- which might seem counterintuitive given how reliant these institutions are on that revenue. But Meredith expects to raise its rates 4 percent or less next year, Wade said, less than the usual increase of about 6 percent. Likewise, Peace leaders approved its second-smallest tuition increase in 15 years.

Across the country, private colleges are eschewing across-the-board cuts, hitting some areas heavily while protecting others. In an attempt to stay competitive, some are even cutting programs or class sections to put money into financial aid and other forms of tuition assistance.

According to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, at least 10 private colleges nationwide have frozen tuition, and at least five have replaced all loans with grants. A handful -- including Agnes Scott College in Atlanta -- are matching tuition rates or
scholarships offered by local public universities.

Complicating matters for these small institutions, the value of university endowments has dropped sharply over the last year or so, the residue of Wall Street's collapse.

Endowments shrink

While local private institutions don't rely as much on endowment revenue as major research institutions such as Duke -- which is cutting $125 million from next year's budget largely because of investment losses -- they are still feeling the sting.

Consider Peace College, another private women's college in Raleigh. There, the Wall Street collapse has brought staggering losses. Of the 90 professorships, scholarships and academic programs funded through private donations since 1998, all but three are now worth less than when they were created. By law, institutions cannot draw revenue from endowments worth less than their original value.

That's not how investing is supposed to work. The damage at Peace, which made the transition from two-year junior college to a four-year institution just 14 years ago, is severe.

"We now have a much larger place with more needs," said Laura Bingham, Peace's president, "but with an endowment worth what it was in 1995." The value is down 35 percent since a peak of $52.8 million in June 2007.

So these colleges are getting creative with their budgeting and trying to make cuts that don't do too much damage to the classroom experience.

Meredith College is freezing vacant positions and halting travel and equipment purchases. Peace College eliminated 15 administrative posts but just one half-time teaching job. Peace is also considering consolidating programs and shifting more teaching load to adjunct faculty.

"If we have stand-alone majors in history and political science, should it be a major that just includes history and political science?" asked Bingham, the Peace College president.

Stop construction?

Bingham also considered shutting down a $3.8 million expansion to the library part way through, but opted to keep funding it.

At St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, a "soft" hiring freeze prevents filling positions for all but essential jobs, said Leon Scott, vice president for business and fiscal affairs. The college is also looking to cut telecommunications and energy costs. Programmed thermostats keep dorm students from turning up the heat or air-conditioning.

So far, the college has cut through normal attrition. For next year, Scott said, all options are on the table, including hiring and wage freezes. A track and field facility is under construction, but a completion date is unknown.

"It's difficult raising funds for it," Scott said. "We're looking at it. We'll have to make a decision."

Dianne Boardley Suber, St. Aug's president, wrote to parents and students this month, advising them to take advantage of federal stimulus grants and tax credits.

"Like prescribed treatment for a patient, a successful recovery is not solely based on the medicine," she wrote. "[but] is also contingent upon the steps taken by the patient."

Look to the feds

She urged students to keep their grades up so they'll be eligible for scholarship
money.

At Elon University, officials are watching admissions carefully to make sure enrollment -- and tuition revenue -- don't drop. Elon has not laid off workers, but it has reallocated 2 percent of its budget to high-priority items such as financial aid and faculty hiring, while trimming elsewhere.

Elon entered the recession on relatively strong footing because it does not rely heavily on income from its $86 million endowment. Francis, the provost, said nearly 96 percent of the operating budget comes from tuition, fees, room and board.

"This is one of those instances when a smaller endowment is a positive for us," he said, "because we're not getting hit as hard."

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At Louisburg, a 'perfect storm'

Louisburg College, a two-year private institution in Franklin County, has been in danger of losing its accreditation because of financial issues. In recent years, the college had gotten into the habit of borrowing money for operating expenses, amassing a debt of about $5 million. Last year, the college slashed its budget and cut jobs and has stopped taking on debt through a line of credit.

But Louisburg remains on probation this year and must continue to show financial stability in order to keep its accreditation, which is the key to survival. New president Mark La Branche is optimistic, but he also knows the current environment couldn't be tougher for Louisburg to be able to prove its viability to accreditors this fall. He calls it "a perfect storm."

"There's no greater demonstration of financial stability than being able to ride out this economy," he said in a recent interview.

Private colleges contain costs

Small, private institutions in North Carolina are cutting all sorts of services from their budgets in an attempt to survive the continuing economic crisis.

A sampling:

Peace College eliminated 15 administrative jobs, half of which were vacant, and may consolidate some majors.

Elon University will replace computers on a four-year cycle, not three.

St. Augustine's College has new thermostats that students can't regulate beyond certain temperatures, an attempt to control energy costs.

Meredith College is freezing travel and equipment purchases and is not filling vacant positions.

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ABCs testing surprisingly well-designed

BY CHARLES L. THOMPSON

GREENVILLE - North Carolina's test-based educational accountability system is like the aerodynamically unfeasible bumblebee that nevertheless manages to fly.

Perhaps apocryphally, it's said that physicists have proved that the bumblebee cannot possibly fly. Its body is just too big, heavy and awkward, and its wings, too small. Yet fly it does.

Similarly, many say that design flaws make the ABCs accountability system unworkable. Yet work it has, so well that during the 1990s, North Carolina made more progress in education than any other state in the nation. By the end of the decade, in mathematics our fourth-graders were scoring in the top five states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The momentum of the ’90s spilled over into the new century. But in recent years, progress has slowed. In response, the State Board of Education has ordered changes in reading, mathematics and other tests and in the scores required for students to be considered "proficient" in these subjects. Unfortunately, some of these changes have occasioned major glitches in the system. Last year’s reading scores were delivered late, and earlier there were difficulties in setting appropriate standards for the mathematics tests.

Critics have also noted that a couple of years ago, about 80 percent of our schools made or exceeded "expected growth," thus earning bonuses for their teachers. If so many schools meet the standards, they argued, the standards are not meaningful. With the present economic crisis and shortfall in state revenues come calls to cut or eliminate the whole system of bonuses.

Yet it would be easy to forget how much of our extraordinary progress we owe to the system and to underestimate the difficulties of designing and operating such a huge, technically complex and far-flung program. It has brought us a long way. Nor is it surprising that the bumblebee sometimes smacks into a window and lies stunned momentarily before getting airborne again. What is truly surprising is that Department of Public Instruction officials have been able to design, continuously revise and operate the program for so long.

Neither are criticisms of the system's specific features unquestionably correct. Consider the charge that teachers should not receive bonuses for producing a year's worth of learning for a year's worth of teaching --because that's just their job. Yet many private firms pay employees bonuses for making productivity quotas. If bonuses are legitimate spurs to productivity in private firms, why not pay teachers bonuses for making their learning quotas?

Or consider the arguments against paying all the teachers in a given school for how much its students learn in tested subjects. After all, only a minority of the teachers in a school teach subjects with EOC or EOG exams. Aren't teachers of such subjects as art, physical education or music just "free riders" on the bus powered by teachers of tested subjects?
The argument for paying teachers of nontested courses is that school faculties operate as teams. Many people play a role in keeping kids in school, setting expectations for behavior and schoolwork, dealing with kids' varied health and psychological problems, and giving them a chance to find things that they can do well even if they are struggling with academics. By performing these functions, teachers of untested subjects can enable teachers of tested subjects to succeed.

Finally, consider the charge that high rates of ABCs success render bonuses "meaningless." When the system was instituted, only half of our schools made expected growth, and 80 percent success seemed unattainable. Yet our teachers and students attained it. Recent changes have dropped the success rate back to about 50 percent. Once again, 80 percent would be a basis for celebration rather than for reproach.

None of this is to say that the ABCs system cannot be improved. Indeed, the State Board and DPI have been working steadily to improve it, and recently a Blue Ribbon Commission on Standards and Accountability has prompted a major refocusing of the curriculum and assessments.

There is room for debate over particular features of the system, but research from the Carolina Institute for Public Policy (publicpolicy.unc.edu) suggests that the ABCs have yoked school spending to student learning -- spending $1,000 more per high school student on instruction buys a gain of 1 point on average EOC scores.

This may not sound dramatic, but the difference between the lowest and highest-scoring quarters of North Carolina high schools is only 5 points. Before accountability systems were instituted, nowhere across the nation had research discerned any clear link between school spending and student learning. It now appears that the ABCs have made the link. Without the ABCs, we might well spend more with little return on the investment.

Charles L. Thompson is L.W. King professor in education at East Carolina University. He says he owes the bumblebee metaphor to the late Matthew B. Miles.

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Surgeons repair flaw in fetus' heart

Duke medical team performs rare operation on Catawba woman and son-to-be in womb

BY SARAH AVERY, Staff writer

Comment on this story

Twenty years ago, Nathan Brindle would have died a short time after being born.

Even 10 years ago, his chances would have been dim.

But this is 2009, and doctors are now equipped and willing to bear the enormous risk of intervening early, before a baby is even born, to preserve a life that was once doomed.

For Nathan, that meant doctors at Duke University Medical Center needed to perform a tricky intervention on his heart, which was critically malformed and lacked proper channels for
blood flow.

Guided by sophisticated imaging machines, the doctors would thread a needle through his mother's abdomen into the womb, into his chest, and finally into his heart, the size of a small strawberry, to open a hole between the upper left and upper right chambers.

Such fetal surgeries, which have been gaining sophistication and weathering controversy since they were first tried in the 1980s, can save lives.

But the risks remain massive. By tampering with the womb, the interventions necessarily put the fetus' survival and the mother's well-being in peril. As a result, surgery is a last resort, usually when the fetus would otherwise die at birth. And that makes it hard to gather the kind of scientific proof necessary to establish that fetal intervention is justified.

"There are less than a handful of indications for surgery," said Dr. François I. Luks, professor of surgery, pediatrics and obstetrics/gynecology at Brown University and member of the North American Fetal Therapy Network.

Among them, Luks said, are cases such as Nathan Brindle's.

But given the rarity of the disease and the risks of surgery, doctors at only a couple of medical centers in the country had experience with the procedure.

No one at Duke had ever tried it.

Success was iffy from the start.

Just a generation ago, hypoplastic left heart syndrome was universally lethal. Somehow during the first eight weeks of development -- the cause remains a mystery -- the left side of the heart fails to grow properly. This deformation, which strikes up to 4 in 10,000 babies, has dire consequences, because the left chamber is responsible for pumping oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body.

In the womb, a fetus with the disorder is nourished with oxygen from the mother and may seem perfectly robust -- only to grow ashen and die hours after birth.

Medical advances, including ultrasound scans that provide an image of a fetus' heart, have improved diagnoses. In addition, a series of three open heart surgeries have saved lives. Basically, doctors reroute blood flow around the severely deformed left side of the heart, giving double duty to the right side. Tiny patients get their first surgery within days of their birth, then have a subsequent operation before 6 months, and a final procedure by age 4.

Most children who survive -- now about 80 percent -- still require extensive care, but can live fairly normally.

Nathan Brindle had no such hope.

Nathan's problem was 10 times as rare as typical cases of hypoplastic left heart syndrome - and much more lethal. Usually, fetuses with the condition have at least some blood flow between the left and right side. Nathan had none.

Blocked as if by a dam, blood gorged his left atrium and raised pressure further upstream in the vessels in his developing lungs. His doctors think high blood pressure in the lungs would severely hamper the lungs' development.

They needed to go in and a hole between the left and right atria to relieve the pressure and give the lungs a chance to thrive during those crucial weeks in the womb.

Fetal intervention

Without a fetal intervention, baby Nathan had only about a 40 percent chance for survival,
said Dr. Piers Barker, one of the key physicians on the team treating Nathan and his mother. The fetal surgery would double his chances, Barker said, while taking what doctors believed was an acceptable risk on his mother.

"We had lots of lengthy discussions with Maegan and her family," Barker said. "We told her, we think we can do this as well as anyone else, but it is very risky to the baby. She wanted everything done here, and we went ahead."

Nathan was Maegan Hagler’s first baby. At 19, she and Nathan’s father, Michael Brindle, 20, knew they would have their share of struggles raising a newborn. Twenty-four weeks into Hagler’s pregnancy, the level of difficulty spiked when a routine ultrasound picked up a problem.

The young couple live in Claremont, near Hagler’s family, and after heading first to Winston-Salem, they were referred to Duke.

Duke’s maternal-fetal team had gained expertise in other areas, but no one had done the heart surgery that Nathan needed. They offered to refer the young couple to Boston Children’s Hospital, where doctors had performed more than 25 such surgeries -- the most in the country.

"We said, no, I think we can do it here," Michael Brindle said. The last thing they wanted was to trek even farther from their home and families during a frightening time.

From that moment on, the Duke teams met to plan their strategy.

"We obsessed and obsessed and obsessed about this baby," said Dr. Leo Brancazio, who led the maternal-fetal team at Duke treating Nathan.

Risks for the mother

One of the biggest concerns, in all cases involving fetal interventions, is the mother, who is otherwise healthy.

"Anytime you put a needle in the belly," Brancazio said, "it could end up where you don’t want it."

Even when no mistakes are made, simply disrupting the uterus is dangerous, increasing the chances of triggering labor and creating scars that could hamper future pregnancies. Such complications have kept most fetal interventions at the outer edge of accepted medical treatments, although the ledger of successes is growing.

By using lasers, doctors now routinely intervene to save developing twins stricken with a potentially fatal circulation disorder. Another procedure guides a thin needle through the mother’s abdomen into the fetus’ bladder to relieve a potentially deadly blockage. And laparoscopic tools are used to fix hernias in the fetus’ diaphragm.

"The work has moved to minimally invasive technology," said Dr. Ken Moise, who is now at Baylor College of Medicine in Texas and serves as an officer in the International Fetal Medicine and Surgery Society. "That’s going to be the future of fetal-maternal surgery."

Moise led the maternal-fetal program at UNC-CH nine years ago when the university began offering a radical surgery that involved opening the mother’s uterus in a Caesarean section to operate on the fetus. That procedure has all but stopped except for a national trial at three medical centers to test the intervention’s benefit for spina bifida patients.

"That area of fetal therapy is still out there," Moise said, but has fallen out favor because of the risks it imposed on the mothers.

Complications
The surgery was set just before Thanksgiving.

If all went well, it would last little more than an hour, but the situation got complicated early on.

As Hagler was sedated, the doctors used ultrasound to get a sense of how the fetus was positioned.

Brancazio had one chance to puncture the heart, because the needle would invariably leave a bleeding hole.

Getting the right angle on the fetus was crucial, and the tiny fellow was not cooperating, making it difficult to find the right angle to pierce the heart.

If the hole were too large, or in the wrong place, the heart could gush blood, killing the fetus. The doctors had already decided they would not do an emergency C-section to save the baby, who was too tiny to survive outside the womb.

An hour turned into two hours. Two hours turned into three. At one point, the fetus' heart stopped beating, and doctors quickly gave him a jolt of adrenaline.

Finally, the angle seemed right. As Brancazio guided the needle in place, through Hagler's abdomen and uterus into the fetus' chest, he deployed a balloon catheter across the wall between the two atria, and then inflated the balloon to open a hole between the chambers.

More than four hours had passed, but the procedure had worked. Blood was filling both sides of the heart.

Imaging scans indicated the blood flow seemed strong between the chambers of Nathan's heart, giving his lungs the developmental boost they needed to grow.

Painstaking placement

But somehow during the next several weeks, the hole began to close. By Jan. 5, when Nathan was scheduled to be born by C-section, there appeared to be complete blockage again. As a result, his birth would require a complicated choreography of obstetricians, neonatologists, pediatric cardiologists, anesthesiologists and others.

Hagler remembers being at the center of a mob of 20 masked people as the surgical delivery began.

"They scared me and said he wouldn't be able to cry," she said. "But then I heard him cry, and I thought, he wouldn't die now."

In a matter of seconds after Nathan was born, Brancazio showed Hagler her son, and then handed the infant off to more doctors, who whisked him to another operating room. There, within minutes of his birth, a team of pediatric cardiologists performed the second surgery of his life -- another procedure to punch another hole between his left and right atria.

Immediately, oxygen levels in his tiny body rose to normal ranges. Days later, he was strong enough to undergo the first of three surgeries that will rebuild his heart to accommodate his weak left chambers. On Feb. 25, he went home.

"In no way did we plan this as an experiment," Barker said. "We knew this was the only thing we could offer that would help him. But this does help advance the care we can offer the next child, and helps us to better understand all the things we can do to help save a child like Nathan."
Shaw's hurting more than many colleges

BY JANE STANCILL, staff writer

RALEIGH - Shaw University has taken more drastic measures than many area campuses as it copes with the financial pressures of the recession and heavy debt.

The historically black university in downtown Raleigh laid off an undisclosed number of staffers late last year, instituted staff pay cuts and recently announced it would suspend the match on employees' retirement benefits, a spokeswoman said. Campus leaders are considering furloughs as the university moves to more online instruction during the summer session.

Administrators have declined several requests for interviews, and Shaw's president, Clarence Newsome, did not return phone calls. A spokeswoman, Terry Spicer, said Shaw leaders were doing what they could to "right size" the university.

"We've weathered many storms, and we're still standing," she said of the private school founded in 1865.

But, she added, "Like most institutions across the land at this point in time, it's affecting the morale of our students."

That low morale was on display in December, when 100 students marched to the president's office to draw attention to what they described as poor living conditions on campus, including moldy bathrooms, nonworking toilets and overcrowded dorm rooms infested with rodents and insects. At the protest, Newsome promised to work on students' concerns.

But the university may not have the resources to make big improvements. The university is facing debt that has climbed above $20 million, Spicer said, though she would not disclose more specific figures. The campus newspaper, The Bear Facts, reported that Shaw's debt had reached $27 million.

Enrollment has dipped at Shaw, where annual tuition, fees, room and board add up to about $18,900 this year, according to Shaw's Web site.

Faculty members expect more bad news. "We're all nervous," said Shaw instructor Russell Robinson.

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Duke hosts session on 1968 race report

From Staff Reports

Comment on this story

In a chapel at Duke University this weekend, academics are tackling a heady topic: Now that an African-American leads the United States, is the nation still divided along racial lines?

A group of academics and journalists from around the world will meet today to discuss health care, prejudice and national policies against a backdrop of race.

The election of Barack Obama as president and the anniversary of a key report on race in the United States prompted this weekend's session.

More than 40 years ago, a commission of national leaders declared in the Kerner Report that America was a "nation moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal." The commission made its findings in the wake of race riots breaking out in the streets of Detroit in 1967 after law enforcement tried to break up a black-owned speakeasy.

The unrest went on for five days; rioters torched 2,000 buildings. Forty-three people, mostly black, died. Another 467 were injured.

The Kerner Report, commissioned by President Lyndon B. Johnson, identified several underlying tensions leading to the riots. White people and many jobs had fled the city of Detroit. Unemployment was high among blacks. They had fewer educational opportunities and less compensation.

This weekend's conference aims to examine some of those same factors and determine how they are affecting the state of race in America today.

All events are hosted at Goodson Chapel in Duke's Divinity School.

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