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East Carolina officers arrest man for larcenies at recreation center
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, March 25, 2010

East Carolina University police arrested an African national on March 20 in connection with the investigation of several larcenies at the Student Recreation Center the past few months, assistant chief of police Dawn Tevepaugh said. Yayi Abouk Janney, 22, of Raleigh and Gambia, Africa also was charged with financial card theft and possession of stolen property, officials said. He is not an ECU student.
The police investigation included review of video surveillance at the recreation center, Tevepaugh said. Although Janney was charged for one larceny at the recreation center, detectives are investigating his possible connection with other larcenies there, Tevepaugh said.
Contributed photo

Illusionist Mike SUPER will perform at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. Wednesday at Wright Auditorium.

Super magic man
By Kelley Kirk
The Daily Reflector
Friday, March 26, 2010
If Mike Super had his pick of anyone to work with, it would be Jerry Senfield. Interesting choice for an illusionist. Super, however, doesn’t see himself just as a magician. He sees himself as a comedian who does magic tricks. Super will bring his show to East Carolina University’s Wright Auditorium Wednesday. He’ll perform two shows, at 7 and 10 p.m.
Super’s shows aren’t just magic tricks.
“It’s interactive with a lot of comedy,” he said by phone on a brief visit home in Canonsburg, Pa.
“I want them to remember me. Magic is my instrument.” He’s also been called the Dane Cook of magic because he doesn’t take himself too seriously.
Part of his shows Wednesday will reveal newspaper headlines that he predicted several weeks ago. Super’s predictions are currently under lock and key.
“It’s his idea entirely. His agent sent me a sealed Fed-ex package in February. I kept it unopened and have it sealed under glass at Best Buy. It’s not much to look at now, but if he’s right, how cool is that?,” said Michael Crane who is the Producing Artistic Director for the S. Rudolph Alexander Performing Arts Series at ECU.
Audience members also will have a chance to win a 2010 Honda VT1300CXA FURY, courtesy of Ron Ayers Motorsports.
“I’m going to try and make a motorcycle appear. If I get it to appear, everybody who is there who has a driver’s license will have a chance to win it,” Super said.
He currently has shows on both coasts, one in Pennsylvania and one in California, and despite the crazy winter weather, he’s managed to not cancel any shows. Super starred on — and won — NBC’s television show “Phenomenon,” in 2007. The program ran live for five consecutive weeks and included 10 of the country’s top illusionists competing for $250,000.
“I was already touring and really didn’t want to do it at the time, but it turned out to be a really great experience,” he said.
Because the show was produced before a live audience of about 700 — and aired to millions — with famed magicians Uri Geller and Criss Angel as judges, you’d think it would be nerve-racking. Not so for Super.
“It was more exhilarating. It was surprisingly not as nerve-racking as you’d think. It was like going into a test that you’ve really studied and prepared for,” Super said.
He added that because the show was live, the contestants were asked not to address the cameras, which he had a very hard time not doing.
“I kept thinking, ‘In the next 10 minutes I’m going to perform for millions of people,’” he said.
Super, whose real name is Supernovich, fell in love with magic and illusions on a trip to Walt Disney World when he was 6.
Growing up in Pennsylvania, he’d perform tricks for his parents, who would humor the budding magician.
“I can remember the first time I really amazed my dad. I made a little red handkerchief disappear. It baffled him and he made me do it over and over again,” Super said.
He’s constantly working on tricks but says that his shows are so interactive it takes performing them for a live audience to hone the show.
During his performances at ECU, he’ll bring audience members on stage to make them levitate, take control of someone’s body and make someone disappear.
“I’m not making someone levitate because I can,” Super said. “I want them to remember me. Magic is my instrument.”
Contact Kelley Kirk at (252) 329-9596 or kkirk@reflector.com.

Go!
What: Illusionist Mike Super
When: 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. Wednesday
Where: Wright Auditorium
Cost: $10-$15
Call: (252) 328-4788
Gifts allow UNC to hire 18 professors

**CHAPEL HILL** -- UNC-Chapel Hill has received a $5 million gift that will help make up for budget limitations that have made it difficult to hire new professors.

The gift from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust, along with a $500,000 gift from an anonymous donor, will fund the hiring of 18 new junior faculty members.

This is an area of emphasis for Chancellor Holden Thorp, who thinks a university with money to spend now can do quite well in the job market. Hiring is so limited at universities that talented recent graduates toting doctorates are struggling to find work.

"The downturn in the economy has created an extraordinary opportunity to hire the very best junior faculty in the country," Thorp told campus trustees Thursday. "These are 18 positions we would not be able to offer if not for this generosity."

The money will be used immediately and will pay for 14 new faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences, two in the Kenan-Flagler Business School, and one each in the schools of nursing and education.

In arts and sciences, faculty will likely be hired in several fields, with an emphasis on new hires with expertise in global studies and the environment - two areas of academic emphasis, said Karen Gil, dean of arts and sciences.

"There are a lot of really excellent Ph.D. students finishing and looking for jobs," Gil said. "I think we'll be able to really strengthen some things we're doing."

The $5.5 million will pay salary and benefits for the new hires for three years, after which the university has pledged to continue paying those costs.
Duke student housing in an Ivy League mold

DURHAM -- Duke University's next residence hall will begin a back-to-the-future attempt to transform the residential experience.

The university recently approved plans for a $20 million, 150-bed residence hall on its West Campus that will be cast in the Ivy League mold. It will be broken into two "houses" of 60 and 90 students each, will feature more single rooms and suites, and will include a great room, dining facilities and more meeting space to encourage academic interaction.

The housing model dates to the birth of American higher education and to English schools like Cambridge before that. It's a clear step away from the two-to-a-room institutional dorm model prevalent on college campuses for decades.

"We're a residential university," said Steve Nowicki, Duke's dean of undergraduate education. "That is different from UNC or [N.C.] State, for example, and more common to private institutions. We've made the statement that what you learn in college is more than what you learn in the classroom."

Duke freshmen are already familiar with this model. Since the 1990s, Duke has required freshmen to live on East Campus in residence halls set up in the "house" mold. Each has a faculty member living on site who acts as an academic adviser, unofficial counselor and event planner who helps spark intellectual discussions by bringing speakers in and putting together outings with an academic bent.

The problem: While Duke requires undergraduates to live on campus for three years, this residential model is only offered to freshmen and older students who choose to live together in dormitories themed to a common interest.

Searching for a place

That leaves many students to enter a housing lottery and get scattered across West Campus, often hopscotching from one hall to the next until they find one they like.

"Going to West [Campus], you definitely have a sense of being cut off from your roots," said Jennifer Midura, a Duke senior from New Jersey. "You have to create everything on your own because everyone is split apart."

Under Duke's new model, students will be encouraged to live in the same house for two or three years, like students who join a fraternity or sorority.

"A good fraternity house is a good model," Nowicki said. "The idea is that you feel an ownership of your space because this is your house. That's why the word house keeps coming out here. It's home. Students keep coming back. They may move to a different room, but in the same house."

Scholars living together
Campus planners want more students to spend their entire college careers on campus and say a new, more mature environment will be more attractive to older students. In America, the model was introduced first at Harvard, whose founders were influenced by the residential structure at English institutions where students and faculty have lived together for centuries, said Mark Ryan, a former Yale dean and author of "A Collegiate Way of Living: Residential Colleges and a Yale Education."

"The decision to have students living [together] represented a commitment to what today we might call the education of 'the whole student,'" Ryan said in an e-mail interview. "Paying heed, that is, not only to the students' academic formation, but to their formation in character, morals and citizenship."

This "house" model has expanded beyond the Ivy Leagues and has been successful at private and public universities alike, Ryan said.

At Duke, the model will be used over the next decade or so as the university adds about 1,000 beds as part of a new campus.

Enrollment isn't on the rise; rather, Duke is adding beds there in part to phase out some older residence halls on other parts of campus, Nowicki said.

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YouTube your way to college

Students' 'infomercials' are the latest way to say 'pick me out of this crowd, please!'

Meghan Daum
March 25, 2010

Isay this every year around this time, and here I go again: I'm glad it was more than two decades ago that I applied to college. There are far fewer of us Gen-Xers than there are of the cohort that's now awaiting admissions letters (or e-mails or texts or however the youngsters do it now). That means that a lot people my age got into colleges that probably wouldn't so much as accept our Facebook friend request today. Moreover, the application package (transcript, test scores, essay, references, $50 fee) was pretty much limited to whatever version of ourselves we could stuff into a 9-by-12 envelope.

Those days are over. In addition to acing their tests and maintaining their GPAs and finding a mildly original way to respond to essay topics like "What life experience has most influenced you?", college applicants are now submitting videos. And we're not talking footage of bassoon recitals or 50-yard field goals. We're talking infomercials for their very souls, little docudramas that just might go viral on YouTube.

Videos have played a role in college applications for a while now. But this year for the first time, three schools, most notably Tufts University, solicited them. They're not required (only 1,000 of Tuft's 15,000 applicants submitted one), and admissions officers are quick to emphasize that they won't judge production quality; they just want to get a sense of a candidate's personality.

One way applicants can submit their opuses is by posting on YouTube and sending Tufts the link. Along the way, some of these kids are becoming YouTube stars, which has caused a certain amount of bellyaching.
It's not just that the "American Idol" nature of the enterprise seems, to some, unbefitting the halls of academe (never mind that Yale just put out a 17-minute recruiting video that looks as if it were inspired by the kitschy and ironic musical TV series "Glee"). It's that the YouTube factor has the potential to effectively turn the whole world into an ivory tower Simon Cowell.

"As an admissions officer, I don't need another army of lobbyists one way or the other," Bruce Poch, vice president and dean of admissions at Pomona College, told me when I called him. "Students at Tufts are getting together and dissecting these videos. People are commenting all over the Internet. The videos in and of themselves aren't the problem. It's the public nature of how they're being presented."

Pomona accepts videos (no YouTube links), but it only takes seriously the ones that match a talent to an educational goal -- prospective dance majors' tapes, for instance.

The thing is, the YouTube application videos -- at least the couple dozen that I watched -- aren't about talent as much as they're about salesmanship. Some are clever (a girl who interprets mathematical concepts through dance has received upward of 100,000 views), some are funny, some are technically masterful and some are embarrassing in the predictable ways (bad songwriting, bad poetry, bad skin -- you get the idea). But what I was most struck by was the way so many of them amount to little more than montage sequences showcasing the "greatest hits" of thus far very short lives.

Over the warm guitar chords of acoustic pop songs, we're treated to visual evidence of far-flung travels, sophisticated culinary skills and staggering levels of community service -- activities that, according to many students, are now considered as crucial for elite college admission as grades themselves.

For all the bragging going on, this is really an exercise in begging. And that's because even though this generation is known for having famously elevated levels of self-esteem, its real problem is its elevated population numbers -- at least when it comes to applying to college. Last year, Tufts had an acceptance rate of 26.5%. In 1988, when videotaping your vacation was mostly a geeky dad activity, it was 34.6%. That may sound like a less than significant difference, unless you're a high school senior.

The videos are ultimately as heartbreaking as they are weirdly compelling. Advertisements for individuals, they add up to a collective plea from an entire generation: Here I am in this enormous cohort; please notice me. Please pick me out from the crowd.

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Student Loan Overhaul Approved by Congress

By DAVID M. HERSZENHORN and TAMAR LEWIN

WASHINGTON — Ending one of the fiercest lobbying fights in Washington, Congress voted Thursday to force commercial banks out of the federal student loan market, cutting off billions of dollars in profits in a sweeping restructuring of financial-aid programs and redirecting most of the money to new education initiatives.

The revamping of student-loan programs was included in — if overshadowed by — the final health care package. The vote was 56 to 43 in the Senate and 220 to 207 in the House, with Republicans unanimously opposed in both chambers.

Since the bank-based loan program began in 1965, commercial banks like Sallie Mae and Nelnet have received guaranteed federal subsidies to lend money to students, with the government assuming nearly all the risk. Democrats have long denounced the program, saying it fattened the bottom line for banks at the expense of students and taxpayers.

“Why are we paying people to lend the government’s money and then the government guarantees the loan and the government takes back the loan?” said Representative George Miller, Democrat of California and chairman of the Education and Labor Committee.

Democrats celebrated the legislation, a centerpiece of President Obama’s education agenda, as a far-reaching overhaul of federal financial aid, providing a huge infusion of money to the Pell grant program and offering new help to lower-income graduates in getting out from under crushing student debt. Still, the final bill is less ambitious than the original proposal.

Congressional allies of the student-loan industry attacked the overhaul as an overreaching government takeover. The legislation substitutes an expanded direct-lending program by the government for the bank-based program, directing $36 billion over 10 years to Pell grants, for students from low-income families.
“The Democratic majority decided, well look, while we’re at it, let’s have another Washington takeover,” said Senator Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee and a former federal education secretary. “Let’s take over the federal student loan program.”

Even as the Democrats’ decision to attach the student-loan overhaul to the health care package virtually ensured its passage, banks fought fiercely up to the last minute, prompting some lawmakers, like Senator Ben Nelson, Democrat of Nebraska, where Nelnet has its headquarters, to cast their vote against the overall bill.

Although private banks will no longer be allowed to make student loans with federal money, many will continue to earn income by servicing those loans.

The Congressional Budget Office said the direct-lending approach would save taxpayers about $61 billion over 10 years. Roughly $40 billion of the savings will be redirected to higher education. Education programs will get an additional $10 billion from the health care package.

The bill includes some landmark changes, like automatic increases, tied to inflation, in the maximum Pell grant award. But for individual students, the increase in the maximum Pell grant — to $5,900 in 2019-20 from $5,550 for the 2010-11 school year — is minuscule, compared with the steep, inexorable rise in tuition for public and private colleges alike.

And because college costs are rising so quickly, the maximum Pell grant now covers only about a third of the average cost of attending a public university, compared with three-quarters in the 1970s, when the program began. So each year, more students graduate with debt of more than $20,000.

The legislation will make it easier to pay back student loans, by reducing the share of income that a graduate must devote to loan payments and by accelerating loan forgiveness — but not right away. Those who take out new loans after July 1, 2014, will have to devote 10 percent of their income to payments, down from the current 15 percent, and those who keep up their payments will have their loans forgiven after 20 years, reduced from the current 25.

“Income-based repayment is a fantastic addition to the Senate bill that will allow over a million students to avoid being crushed by unmanageable levels of debt,” said Rich Williams, a higher-education advocate at the U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

With the new legislation, students will have to take out their loans through their college’s financial aid office, instead of using a private bank.

The original proposal stood to save $87 billion over 10 years by ending the bank-based program, known formally as the Federal Family Education Loan program. But as the Senate
delayed in taking up the legislation, colleges and universities began shifting to the direct-lending program, realizing the savings to the Treasury up front and cutting the amount of money available for future spending.

At the same time, an increase in the number of Americans enrolling in college and seeking financial aid, as a result of the recession, raised the projected costs of the enhanced Pell grant program.

In addition, to comply with the complex budget reconciliation rules, some of the savings from the education changes had to be redirected to pay for parts of the health care legislation.

In the scaled-back, final version, the administration scrapped $8 billion in proposed spending on early-childhood education. It also mostly erased a $12 billion “American Graduation Initiative,” which was announced with fanfare in the fall as an effort to bolster the work force by producing millions more community college graduates over the next decade, and building up high-quality free online courses.

Community colleges, the main provider of higher education for most low-income Americans, were slated to receive $10 billion under the administration’s original plan, but will instead get just $2 billion for job training.

“I’m disappointed,” said Eduardo J. Padrón, the president of Miami Dade College, one of the nation’s largest community colleges. “For the first time, we had a president who understood the importance of community colleges, and we were validated and recognized for our role in opening the doors of higher education.”

Untouched was the $2.55 billion to historically black and minority-serving colleges, a priority of the Congressional Black Caucus. If the new legislation had not passed, Obama administration officials say, Pell grants would have had to be cut to about $2,150, and some 500,000 students dropped from the program.

In lobbying fiercely against the overhaul, the private banks argued that it would eliminate jobs, even though the government will hire many of the same banks on a contract basis to service the loans and perform other back-office administration. Furthermore, the banks said that with the government as the only lender, students would not get the same level of service.

David M. Herszenhorn reported from Washington, and Tamar Lewin from New York.