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Dr. Paul R.G. Cunningham, the dean and the senior associate vice chancellor for medical affairs at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, has been named to Southern Bank’s local board in Greenville.

Cunningham is a graduate of the University of the West Indies, where he received a bachelor of medicine, bachelor of surgery degree. He completed his residency in surgery at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City.

Cunningham is board-certified in general surgery and holds the title of Fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

Cunningham served as professor and chairman of the Department of Surgery at the State University of New York at Upstate Medical University from April 2002 until August 2008. Other appointments include: assistant director, Department of Surgery, Joint Disease at North General Hospital in New York (1979-81); attending surgeon at Bertie County Memorial Hospital in Windsor, (1981-84); attending surgeon at Pitt County Memorial Hospital (1984-2002); professor of surgery at ECU (1993-2002). He also has held the position of chief of staff at Pitt County Memorial Hospital (1991-92).

Cunningham has held several local, regional and national leadership positions, including president of the Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma in 2000. He is serving as governor of the American College of Surgeons.

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ECU recognizes faculty, staff at Founders Day

ECU News Services

During the Founders Day celebration at East Carolina University on Thursday, faculty and staff were honored for their efforts at the university and in the community. The university’s Centennial Awards for Excellence received 65 nominations with winners in four categories: leadership, service, spirit and ambition.

This year's recipients are:
- Service: Dr. Lee West (Brody School of Medicine); Jane Manning (Business Services Office); Ruth Clifton (Dowdy Student Stores).
- Leadership: Mark Weitzel (College of Business); Carolyn Erwin (ECU Physicians); Maurice York (Joyner Library).
- Ambition: Dr. Jayne Geissler (Academic Admiring and Support Center); Members of the Emergency Communications Assessment Team: Lucia Brannon, Charles Pele and Brad Ritchie (Student Affairs); Erica Plouffe Lazure, Christine Neff and Jeannine Manning Hutson (News Services); Rita Bibro, Rob Hudson, Billy Long and Petra Rouse (Information Technology & Computing Services and Health Sciences Campus Communications); ECU Police; Mary Schiller (Administration and Finance); Paul Carson (Campus Operations).
- Spirit: Willie Warren (Administration and Finance); Jonathan Wallace (Administration and Finance).

Members of the ECU faculty, staff and student body, who embody the spirit of the university’s motto, Servire, or to serve, were also honored for their volunteer efforts.

There were 63 faculty and staff members inducted into the Servire Society – which recognizes those who have performed 100 or more hours of volunteer service. Forty-five students were inducted as well.

This year’s Servire Society faculty and staff first-year inductees are: Harry Adams, Robin Armstrong, Margaret Arnd-Caddigan, William Bogey, Christine Bouch, Elizabeth Carroll, William Clark, Kathleen Cox, Tarrick Cox, Leslie Craigle, Jessica Davenport, Tommy Ellis, Charles Gee, Sandra Hickey, Mary Jackson, Angela Lamson, Mandee Lancaster, Marylee Lannan, Charles Lesko Jr., Susan McCammon, Barbara Memory, Scott Methe, Shawn Moore, Nick Panteleidis, Roman Pawlak, Mary Pollock, Roytesa Savage, N. Yaprak Savut, Kirk St. Amant, Ashley Suggs, Rebecca Sweet, Linda Teel, Robert Thompson, Nathan Turner, Lynn Tuthill, Katherine Warsco, Beverly Wright and Robert Zinko.


Harriot's use of the telescope celebrated

Engaged in one of the world’s first international space races, Thomas Harriot, whose name adorns the ECU College of Arts and Sciences, was among the first citizens of our planet to pick up a telescope in 1609 and study the planets, stars and moons.

Now, 400 years later, Harriot’s pioneering explorations will be commemorated in a four-day conference, Wednesday-Saturday, sponsored by the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences.

The Thomas Harriot Quadcenntennial Conference is free and open to the public with conference sessions at venues from Chapel Hill to Manteo.

The conference will consist of workshops on map-making and archaeological excavations, as well as a variety of public lectures, featuring 24 researchers and historians.

For more information, visit www.ecu.edu/harriott400 or contact Tise at tisell@ecu.edu.

Film accepted to documentary festival

A film by two ECU faculty members has been accepted into the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, a premier international film event that will be held Thursday through Sunday in Durham.

"Bunny Saunders: The Mayor Who Stood Up," a 10-minute documentary produced by Erick Yates Green and Bernard Timberg, colleagues in ECU’s School of Communication, shows a rural North Carolina mayor’s fight against the Navy’s proposed Outlying Landing Field.
The idea for the film came from a public hearing about the controversial proposal to install a concrete landing strip for military planes, filmmakers said. At the hearing, filmmakers discovered an "amazing personality" in an outspoken resident who opposed the project, Estelle "Bunny" Saunders, mayor of Roper.

The filmmakers received a $6,957 ECU College of Fine Arts and Communication Research and Creative Activity grant to complete the film. Editors Hsiao Chu, an assistant professor in the School of Communication, and James Gould, ECU graduate, assisted with the project.

Green and Timberg will join a panel discussion at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. "Bunny Saunders: The Mayor Who Stood Up" will premiere at the festival April 5. The film will be screened at ECU's College of Fine Arts and Communication convocation April 28.

Lacey Siva of Gastonia, who graduated from ECU in December 2008 with bachelor's degrees in Art (graphic design concentration) and English.

In addition to Rebel, other collegiate Gold Crown magazine winners from North Carolina were Sanskrit, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, and Windhover, N.C. State University.

A panel of judges included professional journalists, experienced former advisers to student media and other professionals, they considered all aspects of value to the reader or viewer: content, design, coverage, photography as well as writing and editing.

The editor of Rebel 50 was

Future," is free and open to the public. It will be held at the Hilton Greenville at 3:30 p.m., Thursday.

Lecture to focus on creative writing

Two ECU alumni, Dwain Teague and Judd Crumpler, were so impacted by one of their former English professors that they established the Patrick Bizzaro Creative Writing Lecture Series Fund in his honor.

Now in its inaugural year, the Teague/Crumpler Lecture will be held at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in Room 1031, Bate Building. Dr. Art Young, Robert S. Campbell Chair in Technical Communication at Clemson University, will lead the free, public lecture on "Creativity Across the Curriculum."

The College of Business at ECU will host Erik R. Peterson as its sixth speaker in the Cunanai Leadership Speaker Series on Thursday.

Peterson currently serves as senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Washington, D.C.-based bipartisan and non-profit think tank on foreign policy and national security issues. He also serves as director of the Global Strategy Institute – a "think tank within a think tank" he established at CSIS in 2003 to assess long-range trends.

Peterson's presentation, "Seven Revolutions: The Promise and the Peril of the Business college to host global planning expert

PETE RSON

Bizzaro joined the faculty at Indiana University of Pennsylvania as a professor of English in 2008, after spending 25 years as a professor of English at ECU. He founded ECU's Writing Across the Curriculum Program and served as the director of the University Writing Program.

Also on Thursday, the ECU University Writing Program will host a workshop to address the issues of responding to and evaluating student writing. Young and Bizzaro will lead "Response and Evaluation" at 4 p.m. in Bate 1028. For more information, contact the University Writing Program at 328-2922.

See www.ecu.edu/ecs-ecu/calendar.cfm for times, places and information on ECU upcoming activities.

Student magazine receives gold award

Rebel 50, a student-centered magazine produced for and by ECU students, recently received a 2009 Gold Crown Award from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. The announcement was made at the CSPAAwards convocation during the Spring College Media Convention in New York City.

The Crown Award is the highest recognition given by the CSPA to a student print or online medium for overall excellence. Out of the 1,795 magazines that were eligible for the award, only 10 college magazines received this honor, according to Paul Isom, director of student media at ECU.
Association seeking to better reach Hispanic students

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, March 29, 2009

The Association of Mexicans in North Carolina and East Carolina University are working together to find better ways to educate Hispanic students in eastern North Carolina.

The association, also known as AMEXCAN, held a forum at ECU on Friday to discuss ways to boost Latino graduation rates and improve student performance in grades K-12.

"AMEXCAN works to promote education, leadership, culture and health among Latino and Mexican communities in eastern North Carolina, and to build collaboration with other entities to help our community have a better life," AMEXCAN president Juvencio Rocha Peralta said.

"We want to build corroboration with Pitt County Schools, businesses and different institutes and the community at large."

David Conde, ECU special assistant for Latino initiatives, said by 2050 the Latino community will represent more than one third of the U.S. population and at least 50 percent of the entering workforce.

That population needs to have access to the best possible education, he said.

"We cannot go into the second half of the 21st century and have a Latino community that is not producing at the kind of level that our country requires," Conde said.

"We need a workforce that is doing well and is educated. That is the ultimate goal of the people in the Latino community."

The forum included discussions on finding ways to reduce the drop out rate among Hispanics, which is about 50 percent nationally.

"It is no longer about the issues that are impacting the community only, it is really about the entire country," Conde said.

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

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, March 29, 2009

World famous poet Nikki Giovanni visited East Carolina University on Friday to read poetry and discuss everything from gay and civil rights to her mother's death.

Giovanni spoke at ECU as part of the Ledonia S. Wright Commemoration Day celebration. Wright is the namesake of the Ledonia Wright Cultural Center that works to celebrate diversity on campus.

Giovanni is a world renowned poet, activist and professor at Virginia Tech. She has written numerous poetry and children's books.

When she did have the audience completely silent while she read her powerful poetry, she had them in stitches from the jokes and stories.

She said she met Queen Elizabeth once.

"I looked good, you know, cause you have to," she said. "Somebody asked me if I was nervous. I said no I was not nervous. I know Rosa Parks."

She said she has been fascinated by the recent debate on gay marriage because in her lifetime their were laws and cultural bans on marriage between people of different religions and races.

"Now that all that is behind us, everybody says 'Who should we hate?' Let's hate the gays," she said.

"The country needs to move on to something that makes us money and gets us out of this hole."

Giovanni, who is known for speaking her mind, railed against everything from Wal-Mart to her mother's doctor.

She also read a poem called "The Rosa Parks," which is a cheer for little girls to inspire them to be like Parks.

When she got to the refrain she said "sit down," and did a dance across the stage.

Giovanni's latest book "Bicycles: Love Poems," a collection of work she recently completed, is available now.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.
Health Science Academy’s growth comes at good time

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, March 28, 2009

Enrollment for Pitt County Schools’ Health Sciences Academy continues to grow, and administrators say it couldn’t be happening at a better time.

The academy, which aims to prepare high school students for careers in health care, has about 550 students, and 224 more are scheduled to join next year.

With Greenville’s medical community rapidly expanding and the prospectus for health care jobs as strong as ever, administrator Janet Knox says parents and employers are starting to recognize the ways the academy guides students down the appropriate path.

“The thing we stress with the academy is giving the students as much exposure as we can to different health care fields while they are in high school so they can make a good decision about what to go into,” Knox said. “These kids get to try it out while they are in school so they find out.”

Dozens of juniors from the academy got a close-up look earlier this week at some of the different professions during a job shadowing event at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Lisa Lassiter, administrator of University Health Systems health careers, said students spent time with nurses, radiologists, cardiologists, surgeons and others from the trauma unit and children’s hospital. They witnessed a myriad of activity, she said, including surgeries and births.

“An event like the shadowing is great because many times it is important to know what you don’t like as much as what you do like,” Lassiter said. “If you are never exposed to it, you will never know.”

The academy has been offering the exposure students since it was launched in 2003, Knox said. It has nearly doubled in size with 100 seniors in this year’s academy compared to 51 in its first graduating class.

In all, there are more than 500 students enrolled in the academy this year.

Using a “school-within-a-school model,” Knox says the academy places an emphasis on math, science, technology, reading and critical thinking skills required for success in a health care career. It offers classes such as biomedical technology, medical sciences, allied health sciences, anatomy and physiology in addition to the students’ general courses. Members also must compile a certain amount of volunteer hours each year.

As officials had hoped to see when the academy was created, Knox said many of its former students are remaining in Pitt County to attend health care related programs at Pitt Community College and East Carolina University.

It is still too early to tell how many of those students will land jobs locally, she said, but studies of academy graduates have revealed more than 90 percent of them pursuing health-related occupations.

“We have been blessed because we have great partners and we work very well together,” Knox said. “Parents are now beginning to realize that their children would benefit from a career in health care because they realize that there is going to be a job. Once they finish, they are not going to be at a dead end like some graduates are.”

The academy has become such a success, Knox said, that Pitt County Schools officials have floated the
idea of a stand-alone school to house it as part of their long-range facility plan.

Partners for the academy include the school system, University Health Systems of Eastern North Carolina, East Carolina University’s Brody School of Medicine, Pitt Community College, Eastern Area Health Education Center and the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce.

Anyone interested in finding out more about it can visit www.healthsciencesacademypitt.org.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.
Editorial: UNC options - Perdue, Bowles spar over staffing issue

Sunday, March 29, 2009

Gov. Beverly Perdue and University of North Carolina System President Erskine Bowles may have adopted a cordial tone in their debate over funding the UNC system, but it does not diminish the seriousness of an issue sure to affect East Carolina University.

The state's budget situation calls for sacrifice, and no area of North Carolina government should be exempt from that belt-tightening. But the university system is a unique and valuable resource for this state, and officials like Perdue and Bowles must work together to spare it from lasting harm.

Like other state agencies, the UNC system is readying itself for deep cuts in spending for the remainder of this fiscal year and in the 2009-10 budget. Though targeted for a 7 percent reduction to help the North Carolina close a massive revenue shortfall, there are fears that the actually numbers could prove to be more dour.

Speaking to the UNC Board of Governors on March 19, Bowles said he expects that a $170 million reduction in state appropriations could lead to the elimination of between 400 and 500 jobs. He contends that the 16 member schools can only trim spending so much before it impacts personnel, and labeled Perdue's suggestion that the system would lose only 73 jobs as "ludicrous."

The governor responded on Friday by saying she was working with Bowles to reduce the impact of cuts, but that came even as the UNC president was working with lawmakers to authorize temporary furloughs to save money. That is a possibility that appears increasingly likely should revenue projections come true and Raleigh presses forward with the budget proposal.

The resolution of this dispute will surely impact staffing at East Carolina and could impact the quality of instruction across the UNC system. A hiring freeze, reduced travel budgets and other measures appear unable to generate sufficient saving, and officials will need to chart a course that preserves the academic environment while meeting the bottom line.

That will not be easy, nor will it come if two key state officials continue to bicker rather than working to forge a compromise and work together to see it through.

Perdue and Bowles enjoy a common goal. Now they must find common ground.

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March 28, Darts and Laurels

Saturday, March 28, 2009

Laurels — To the 17th annual Med-Law Classic, the charity basketball game that traditionally pits local lawyers against area doctors. This year, the participants joined forces against Greenville Fire-Rescue workers on Thursday, with the Litigator-Medicator side pulling out the victory. Of course, the night’s big winner was really the Pitt County Health Education Foundation, which collected thousands from the event.

Laurels — To Founders Day at East Carolina University, which marks the official anniversary of the school’s birth. Officials gathered to celebrate East Carolina’s 102 years of service to the state and to dedicate the Trustees Fountain, a new structure located at Wright Circle. Congratulations also go to Janice Hardison Faulkenb, who received the Jarvis Medal, the school’s highest honor.

Laurels — To the start of the annual Spring Clean-Up in Greenville and the motivation it provides for residents and other volunteers to show their community pride. For the 12th year, the city of Greenville and the Community Appearance Commission will spend the week soliciting and organizing people to help beautify the city through trash picks-ups, landscaping and other projects.

Darts — To statistics showing that domestic violence accounted for about a quarter of the homicides in North Carolina last year, a terribly frightening number that demands concerted action. The state said this week that 131 deaths were the result of domestic violence, prompting Attorney General Roy Cooper to urge victims to get court-ordered protection against those who mean to harm them.

Laurels — To decreases in the wholesale price of natural gas, a drop reflected in the cost to local consumers. The Greenville Utilities Commission effectively lowered the rate as of March 1, so bills issued since have seen an average decline of about 9 percent, or $10.50 to the average residential customer. Any savings is welcome, given the turbulence of the nation’s economy.

Darts — To the death of noted historian John Hope Franklin, the pioneering researcher and education who founded the field of African-American studies. A long-time resident of North Carolina, Franklin taught history at Duke University, holding the school’s most prestigious endowed scholarship. His legacy is immense, as is the body of scholarship to which he faithfully devoted his life.

Laurels — To the national ranking earned by East Carolina’s baseball team, which finds itself distinguished by the baseball polls. The Pirates are off to a strong start this year thanks to a relentless offense and talented pitching, and are ready for their annual drive for a conference title. Local fans can catch the team in action in Greenville on Tuesday against Elon University.

Compiled by Brian Colligan, editorial page editor of The Daily Reflector. Contact him at 329-9507 or via e-mail at bcolligan@coxnc.com

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Perdue says staff just looks big

As of February, it was larger and more expensive than that of ex-Gov. Mike Easley.

BY ROB CHRISTENSEN, Staff Writer

Comment on this story

RALEIGH - Gov. Beverly Perdue is asking most of state government to pull in its belt, but her own office has not gone on any such austerity diet.

Perdue's staff has remained roughly the same size as that of her predecessor, Gov. Mike Easley, according to state personnel records.

In fact, the number of people working on the governor's office staff has risen from 67 to 70, and the collective salaries have gone from $4.1million to $4.5million from September to February.

But Perdue's office said that is misleading and that the office's budget will shrink soon when three Easley holdovers who helped with the transition depart. They also said two of the new positions are funded from other sources in state government.

"Governor Perdue is trying to run a tight ship," said Chrissy Pearson, a spokeswoman for Perdue. "She has put good people in a good position to do the work of state government as efficiently and effectively as possible."

John Hood, president of the John Locke Foundation, a conservative, Raleigh-based think tank, said that while the governor's office represents a small fraction of the state's $21billion budget, it has a larger symbolic importance.

"It seems to me that the governor could set a good example by reducing her staff in a similar way that she is asking other agencies to reduce theirs," Hood said. "She is asking the university system to reduce positions and administrative costs. She could start with her own office."
The three who are leaving are press aide Seth Effron, legal adviser Ruffin Poole and John McHugh, a legislative assistant, according to Pearson. When they leave, the Perdue staff will be the same size as the Easley staff. A Perdue spokesman said it was not clear whether the three will pursue jobs in the private sector or elsewhere in state government.

Two other positions in the governor's office are not funded by the governor's office and should not be counted in the governor's budget total, Pearson said. Dempsey Benton, who is overseeing the economic stimulus money flowing into North Carolina, is being paid by federal stimulus money. Myra Best, director of the virtual public school program, is paid out of education funds.

If the salaries of those five positions are subtracted, the salaries in Perdue's office will be $55,728 less than that of Easley's staff in September.

One thing that has remained the same is the governor's salary, which is set by the legislature. The $139,590 salary is the same for Perdue as it was for Easley.

News Researcher David Raynor contributed to this report.

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Triangle hospitals tighten belts

Some are trimming benefits, but they pledge to maintain patient care.

BY ALAN M. WOLF, Staff Writer

Triangle hospitals, among this region's largest and most stable employers, are taking new steps to cut costs as the economic downturn worsens.

WakeMed notified its more than 7,600 employees across Wake County late Thursday that it is suspending an annual bonus program that paid out $9.6 million last year.

Officials also are likely to freeze wages and stop matching contributions to workers' retirement plans, among other moves.

Rex Healthcare is reducing spending by 2 percent and recently pushed back the age at which workers can begin collecting their pensions to 65 from 62. Rex also delayed an upgrade to its electronic medical-records system until next year.

At UNC Hospitals, a budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 will likely include no raises, especially for managers.

The Duke University Health System is reviewing whether it will increase wages in coming months.

The hospitals are being hurt by a spike in charity care as rising unemployment leads to more patients without health insurance. A report this week from the N.C. Institute of Medicine
showed that the number of uninsured across the state jumped to 1.8 million, the biggest increase in the country.

And with employers such as AW North Carolina in Durham, IBM in Research Triangle Park and Fowler Contracting in Raleigh continuing to eliminate jobs, the totals are expected to rise.

"The problem in the health-care industry isn't the lack of business, it's the lack of payment," said WakeMed CEO Bill Atkinson.

"Our mission is to help in good times and bad times. Every single step we're taking is designed to address the short-term challenges but also to make sure we're in a strong position when the economy turns."

Compounding the financial pressure: investment losses amid the turmoil on Wall Street. Wake Med's investment pool has lost $36 million since its fiscal year began Oct. 1.

There is one big bright spot. Unlike in harder-hit parts of the country, local hospitals aren't cutting jobs, so far. But they are carefully considering before refilling open positions and are limiting any new jobs.

"We don't have a hiring freeze in place, but it's pretty chilly," said Rex president David Strong.

Hospital officials also stress they're not doing anything that will affect patient care. "It's hard to reduce staff at the bedside when you have the same number of patients, or more," said Gary Park, president of UNC Hospitals.

Avoiding cuts in services is important as the region's population continues to grow and age -- boosting demand for medical care. But it's also crucial in a highly competitive health-care market.

WakeMed and Rex, for example, are pushing ahead with most planned expansions. A new patient tower and children's hospital under construction on WakeMed's main Raleigh campus is scheduled to open next year. WakeMed recently won approval to build a $34 million women's hospital in North Raleigh.

"We're not making widgets," Atkinson said. "As a trauma center, as the state's busiest heart center, we don't want to cut back on service. There are actual live people that need help today."

Uncompensated charity care accounted for 9.37 percent of WakeMed's total charges last year. So far this year, it's running at 10.1 percent. That amounts to more than $15 million more annually.

Atkinson has asked senior managers to review "all viable options for improving WakeMed's cash position," he wrote in a memo to employees. He plans to make recommendations to the hospital's board next month related to reducing employee benefits temporarily as well as other steps.

The hospital will look to "cut back entirely on things that aren't absolutely necessary in this economic climate," he wrote. That could include spending less on color copies, coffee, plants and seasonal landscaping, reducing outside sponsorships and cutting some advertising.

The hospital also is starting the blog CSI WakeMed -- to solicit employees' cash-saving ideas.

WakeMed opened in 1961 as a county-owned facility. It converted to a private, not-for-profit hospital system in 1997.

The bonus pool, WakeShare, started in 1995 as a way to allow employees to participate in annual cost savings. Recently, the program has been based on other factors, including patient
satisfaction surveys and financial performance.

In 2005, when the economy was healthy, the hospital paid about $12.3 million, with an average check of $2,225.

Last year, the total dropped as the economy began to slow. But it was still an extra check handed out in December, and the money bolstered many employees' holiday shopping budgets.

Those types of cost-cutting steps, while not as drastic or devastating as layoffs, "contribute to the downward spiral in the economy," said N.C. State economist Mike Walden.

"These are the reasons consumers are spending less money; their financial security is under assault," he added. "This is indicative of the severity of this recession, that it's hitting all industries."

WakeMed's steps are temporary, Atkinson said. Lost benefits will be reinstated when the economy recovers. And employees probably wouldn't have gotten any WakeShare bonuses this year anyway because the hospital is too far behind its financial goals.

"The economy did away with that, all we're doing is acknowledging that it won't be there this year," he said.

"This is a rough sea we can sail through pretty well, but we want to make sure we come out without a single person overboard."

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Bowles says UNC has begun layoffs

System could cut 500 jobs in anticipation of budget cuts this year and next

The Associated Press
Comment on this story

CHAPEL HILL - University of North Carolina President Erskine Bowles said Friday that campuses are starting layoffs now in the face of budget cuts this year and next to give workers early notice and prevent even more job eliminations.

In a letter to the State Employees Association of North Carolina, Bowles said school chancellors have initiated "reductions in force" because they have already had to absorb $175 million in cuts this fiscal year.

Gov. Beverly Perdue's budget proposal would order even higher reductions -- $192 million -- next year, and the cuts would be permanent.

Bowles warned legislators this week that the spending plan would force the system to eliminate up to 500 jobs.

"Our chancellors are making reasonable and sound management decisions now and also trying to give affected employees ... as much advance notice as possible," Bowles wrote to association executive director Dana Cope. "Waiting would only increase the number of staff who would have to be laid off in order to absorb inevitable cuts."

UNC-Greensboro Chancellor Linda Brady said this week that layoffs would begin at the school -- a move that could lead to more than 100 workers losing their jobs. UNC-Chapel Hill also has told some nonfaculty staff to expect layoffs, according to the association.

Perdue is already trying to plug a projected $2.2 billion shortfall this fiscal year, and legislators face a $3.4 billion budget gap in preparing their state government spending plan.

Cope wrote to Bowles on Thursday questioning whether layoffs were being made in anticipation of expected cuts next year, which Cope said violated state personnel rules.

"The General Assembly may, in fact, find a way to fund UNC for the next fiscal year in such a way that no reductions in force are required," Cope wrote.

But Bowles said that system leaders conferred with state personnel director Linda Coleman and that the planned reductions are complying with state policy. The system already has had to absorb large cuts and "it is wholly unrealistic" to think it will not face similar reductions next year, he added.

At UNCG, Brady said the university needs to cut employees now to pay accrued benefits before state-mandated budget cuts of as much as 7 percent take effect July 1. The campus expects to cut about $10 million because of revenue shortfalls at the state level.
The exact nature of the cuts still is uncertain.

"We won't know the size of the budget cuts, and the mix of one-time and permanent dollars required, until the General Assembly completes its work, the governor signs a budget and the UNC Board of Governors provides guidance for the campuses," Brady said. "However, we do know the cuts will be larger than anything we've previously experienced."

UNCG's losses under a 7 percent cut would include 109 positions, including 59 faculty members. The cuts also would eliminate 275 class sections and 60 percent of freshman seminar classes that would be replaced by large lecture classes.

The university said that some positions at the campus have been kept vacant for months because cuts were expected, but that layoffs still are necessary.

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Debunking dogma makes prof a star

BY YONAT SHIMRON, Staff writer

Comment on this story

The crowd at Raleigh's Quail Ridge Books was standing-room only when Bart Ehrman gave a reading Wednesday night. As store managers worked to clear the aisles of squatters, the sneaker-clad, casually dressed UNC-Chapel Hill religion professor assumed the microphone.

For 20 minutes, he read from his latest best-seller, "Jesus Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)." The crowd, made up of parents of his undergraduate students, religion buffs and groupies, reveled in the subversive nature of his enterprise: methodically chipping away at the Bible's many discrepancies and inconsistencies.

Ehrman is not a debunker of Christianity. He's fully convinced that Jesus was a historical figure, for example, but he takes on conservative Christianity's claims that the Bible is God-breathed revelation containing perfect truth. A former fundamentalist -- Ehrman attended Moody Bible Institute after graduating from high school -- he has created a cottage industry of knocking evangelical orthodoxies by applying historical methods to ancient texts.

It is an exercise he has become famous for, and profitably so. Ever since the publication of his 1997 New Testament college textbook, Ehrman has been spinning out lively, best-selling books, becoming one of a handful of superstar scholars who write for a broad audience. He's a favorite on National Public Radio's "Fresh Air," has tussled with Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert, and has appeared on many CNN and The History Channel documentaries on the historical Jesus.

At 53, Ehrman is the first to acknowledge his popular books aren't ground-breaking: His
strength is his ability to translate the consensus New Testament scholarship of the past 150 years into plain English.

It's his tone that rankles.

Asked to compare his books with those of other popularizers of the historical Jesus, Ehrman tells his Quail Ridge audience, "You should buy mine." Describing the identity of Jesus' earliest disciples, he dismisses them as "illiterate, lower-class peasants from Galilee."

Ehrman, who calls himself "a happy agnostic," is not only irreverent. That goes with the territory. He's also cocky and occasionally coarse.

Still, his mission of transmitting scholarship to the masses is one he genuinely and passionately believes in.

"I feel an obligation to people paying taxes, people attending university," he said. "They have a right to know what we do."

But his books -- the latest is No. 21 -- have also irritated a widening swath of more moderate mainline Protestant and Catholic church leaders.

Anti-Christian?

"Mainline Protestants have spent the last 150 years struggling with these contradictions and difficulties," said the Rev. Greg Jones of St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Raleigh. "Shoot, that's our whole game. But Ehrman seems to come out against Christians in general, as if fundamentalist Christians were the only kind to be considered."

When Ehrman landed a job at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1988, he did not set out to become a popular explicator of the New Testament's origins. And he never imagined he'd share his personal religious journey in the process.

A native of Lawrence, Kan., Ehrman became a born-again Christian in high school and went on to Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College in Illinois, bastions of conservative evangelical Christianity.

He mastered Greek early and from there pursued a doctorate at Princeton Theological Seminary, where his fiercely held faith crumbled under scrutiny. After exploring early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, he concluded: "[M]y former views of the Bible as the inerrant revelation of God were flat-out wrong."

At Chapel Hill, his breakthrough 1993 scholarly book, "The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture," showed how the ancient scribes "corrupted" the early manuscripts of the New Testament to promote their particular theological viewpoints on Jesus.

Ehrman's work grows out of the historical critical method, a school of thought that emerged more than 100 years ago to analyze the historical accuracy of ancient religious texts used in the creation of the New Testament. In particular, Ehrman is known for establishing not only what the early scribes had to say, but how they intentionally changed New Testament texts in response to doctrinal disputes of the day. Among his key criteria: Events are more likely to have happened if there are multiple independent accounts, and the more a witness makes claims counter to his vested interests, the more that testimony is likely to be true.

Shortly after "The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture" was published, Oxford University Press asked him to write a textbook on the New Testament for college students. The success of that book, one of the most widely used introductions to the subject, led to a string of popular books for what Ehrman dismissively calls "the Barnes & Noble crowd."

Ehrman's sharp mind and his engaging writing style helped make him indispensable to readers interested in early Christianity.
His best-seller "Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why" (HarperCollins, 2006), catapulted Ehrman into the league of popular religion writers such as Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. The book sold 300,000 copies and spent nine weeks on the New York Times best-seller list.

In it, Ehrman argued that the story of Jesus and the woman accused of adultery -- the one in which Jesus famously said, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" -- was added to the Gospels by later scribes. Three evangelical writers spun off their own books in response, but few mainstream scholars challenged his findings.

"Nobody disagrees with the factual claims I make in the book," Ehrman said. "They basically don't like the tone or the implications I draw."


"Ehrman proves the dictum that old fundamentalists never die; they just exchange fundamentals and continue in their unimaginative, closed-minded rigidity and simplicity," United Methodist Bishop William Willimon, a former dean of the Duke Chapel, wrote in The Christian Century.

But by then, Ehrman had already made a mark -- and a comfortable side business. His last three books, he said, took him two weeks each to complete. And he has ideas for half a dozen more.

Critics: Nuance eludes him

Ehrman's "Introduction to the New Testament" classes at UNC are among the most popular on campus, and registration is limited by the number of teaching assistants available to help him. This spring, 240 students were allowed to enroll.

In class, Ehrman takes a more restrained approach and covers a lot of territory: the culture of the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, the writings of the early church, the life and ministry of Jesus, the theology of Paul.

On the first day of class, Ehrman said, he asks his students whether they agree that the Bible is the inspired word of God. Typically, he said, all hands shoot up. He then asked if they've read any of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books. All hands shoot up again. Finally, he asks how many have read the entire Bible. Only a few scattered hands go up.

The point, Ehrman said, is to show that the one book people think contains God's word is also the least read.

It's a point he makes in his book, where he criticizes pastors for failing to teach their congregants the basics about how the Bible evolved.

"Unlike most of my seminarian friends," he writes, "I did not revert to a devotional approach to the Bible the day I graduated with my masters of divinity degree." (Even his friends acknowledge, however, that this is not what pastors are there to do.)

"Bart's not a theologian," said Dale Martin, professor of religious studies at Yale University and a friend of Ehrman's who continues to attend church. "For him, if a text is not historically accurate we shouldn't trust it."

Other pastors say Ehrman just doesn't get nuance. He wants a bulletproof argument where none exists.

"One way of looking at faith is that it takes the ambiguity out of life," said the Rev. Joseph
Ward, pastor of West Raleigh Presbyterian Church. "The other view of faith is that it gives us a steady place amid the ambiguity."

So while Ehrman's books glancingly acknowledge that faith is possible knowing the Bible's contradictions, he himself is not among those who believe it.

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**Ehrman's arguments**

Ehrman's book, "Jesus Interrupted" argues the following:

Of the 27 books in the New Testament, only eight -- seven by the Apostle Paul, plus the Revelation of John -- were written by the authors to whom they're attributed. In other words, Matthew did not write the Gospel of Matthew or Mark the Gospel of Mark.

Not a single book of the New Testament was written by a disciple who knew Jesus personally.

The books of the New Testament are filled with contradictory information. In Mark's Gospel, for example, Jesus dies the morning after the Passover meal was eaten. In John's Gospel, Jesus dies a day earlier, on the day the Passover meal is being prepared. The two different accounts underscore a different theological vision. For John, Jesus has to die to conform to his theological point that he is the sacrificial lamb of God.

Jesus is rarely described as "God" in the New Testament.

Many of the traditional doctrines of Christianity are found neither in the words of the historical Jesus nor in the teachings of his immediate followers.

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Many men slip at black colleges

BY JUSTIN POPE, The Associated Press
Comment on this story

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - They're no longer the only option for African-American students, but the country's historically black colleges and universities brag that they provide a supportive environment where these students are more likely to succeed.

That is not necessarily the case.

An Associated Press analysis of government data on the 83 federally designated four-year HBCUs shows just 37 percent of their black students finish a degree within six years. That's 4 percentage points lower than the national college graduation rate for black students.

One major reason: the struggles of black men. Just 29 percent of HBCU males complete a bachelor's degree within six years, the AP found.

A few HBCUs, including Howard and all-female Spelman, have much higher graduation rates, exceeding the national averages for black and white students. Others are among the nation's worst-performing colleges. At 38 HBCUs, fewer than one in four men who started in 2001 had completed a bachelor's degree by 2007, the data show. At Texas Southern, Voorhees, Edward Waters and Miles College, the figure was under 10 percent.

To be sure, women outperform men across education, and many non-HBCUs struggle with low graduation rates. The rates don't account for students who transfer or take more than six years.

Most importantly, HBCUs educate a disproportionate share of low-income students. Compared with other colleges defined by the government as "low-income serving," HBCU graduation rates are just a few points lower. Factoring in such obstacles as lower levels of academic preparation, some research suggests that HBCUs do as well with black students as do majority-white institutions.

Still, HBCUs' low completion rates, especially for men, have broad consequences, on and off campus. Women account for more than 61 percent of HBCU students, the AP found. They have unprecedented leadership opportunities but also pay a price -- in everything from one-sided classroom discussions to competition for dates.

HBCUs educate only one-quarter of black college students but produce an outsized number of future black graduate students and leaders. That group is distinctly female; the schools award twice as many degrees to women as to men.

Some HBCUs are working hard to boost graduation rates -- and succeeding. Experts say that proves failure isn't inevitable -- but also means it's fair to ask tough questions of schools that are not improving.

HBCUs receive more than half their revenue from government. There is growing frustration with the waste of money when students have nothing to show for their time in college.
Even some within the HBCU community say schools bear responsibility. They say too many HBCUs have grown content offering students a chance at college but resisting the hard work to get them through.

"I think HBCUs have gotten lazy," said Walter Kimbrough, president of Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Ark. "We still say 'nurturing, caring, the president knows you.' That's a lie on a lot of campuses."

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Slamming state workers

Comment on this story

The hits keep on coming for state employees. First, no raises over the next few years, then health care cost increases and cuts in longevity pay and, finally, possible furloughs equal to an 8 percent pay cut. Perhaps it wouldn't be so painful if it weren't business as usual. Lawmakers have long balanced the budget on state employees' backs. Since 2001, raises have rarely kept up with the cost of living. In fact, in three of those eight years, no raises were given. Government workers largely accepted that because they traded off better pay for job security and good benefits. That is no longer the case.

State employee salaries and benefits equal about $1 billion in a $21.4 billion budget. Why are lawmakers determined to cut from 5 percent of the budget rather than make substantial cuts in the other 95 percent? Legislators don't seem to care how unattractive they make state government jobs. Where is anyone going in this economy? But what happens when the economy improves and they can't find anyone to guard our prisons, fix our roads, care for the mentally ill or do any of the other crucial jobs that protect and improve the lives of our citizens?

Connie Schafer
Apex

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Budget cleansing

Comment on this story

Taxpayers should appreciate Gov. Beverly Perdue's decision to stop budgeting $150 million more for salaries than state agencies actually need (news story, March 24). Legislators and governors have too long mocked truth in budgeting with the claim that overfunded salary lines are a hedge against contingencies or emergencies. Contingency funding is best provided through an adequate central reserve managed under reasonable guidelines in full public view.

Currently, excess salary money is dispersed among hundreds of agencies and institutions with no thought to the likelihood they might need it for bona fide contingencies. Its actual use is difficult to track. Some is spent for nonsalary requirements that are altogether predictable. Some is spent for low priority projects or activities that would not survive scrutiny in normal budgeting and appropriations processes.

At worst, the current practice invites abuse. At best, it is simply sloppy budgeting. Either way, it should be stopped. Perdue has taken a needed step toward reform.

Lynn Muchmore

Clayton

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The uncovered

As wages stagnate, health insurance costs rise, and too many workers in this country go without coverage.

Comment on this story

On its face, it sounds like a simple enough decision. An employer offers health insurance, and workers buy it, of course, because they know the potential consequences in opting out of a plan. A catastrophic illness could strike unexpectedly, an accident could mean weeks or months in a hospital. Protection also is typically offered for family members, at a price.

But as the Associated Press reports, an astonishing 20 percent of American workers -- one in five -- are uncovered. In some cases, younger workers who are healthy choose to avoid the costs of premiums, which are increasing faster than wages. In other cases, it may be a case of people simply believing they can't afford coverage.

In any case, this is not something to which the country can respond, "Well, just take your chances, then." Because an uninsured person who is indeed felled by illness or injury winds up causing expensive ripples through the economy. Doctors and hospitals, usually emergency rooms, have to write off a lot of care. But they try to minimize the damage by increasing charges for those who do have insurance. That translates into more expense for employers, and that in turn is passed on at least in part to employees.

And this is in addition to the fact that the individual who is not covered might well be wiped out by his or her creditors, thereby creating another ripple of a mortgage unpaid along with other bills and ultimately bankruptcy.

The number of workers without insurance, along with the number of unemployed people without insurance and others whose insurance denies payment for this reason or that, underlines the urgency of health-care reform, a reform that ultimately will deliver affordable insurance for all. No, this is not to say that a single-payer government system is necessarily the answer, though consideration of it should be part of the debate. But it is to say that the lack of health insurance as a social and economic issue has been moved to the critical condition list.

It's especially true in North Carolina, where a study from the N.C. Institute of Medicine and researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill found that fully 1.8 million of the state's residents are uninsured.

President Obama's push for reform has gained public steam, if not the embrace of the insurance and drug industries, although there are some signs of at least potential compromise (see below). The president has made it clear, however, that he is not wedded to the notion of a national public system for all, and that he understands the costs involved.

Many Americans have simply hit the wall with regard to health care. Either they can't afford it, they lose everything they have because of it, or they can't obtain it because of
pre-existing medical conditions. The momentum for change is strong. The time has come.

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... insurers bending?

Comment on this story

In previous debates over the nation's health care system, the insurance industry has stood on hard ground, making huge political contributions to allies, fighting against changes in health care financing that might negatively impact their bottom lines. Now, however, a couple of industry groups (America's Health Insurance Plans and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association) are hailing their offer to curb "risk rating," a long-held practice that has made someone's health condition a major factor in how much insurance cost, if it could be had at all.

The industry groups say the offer is dependent upon all Americans having coverage. OK, that makes sense. If everyone is covered, and 48 million people now are not, then the expense of health care insurance can be spread around and rates lowered.

Of course, insurers would still factor in variables like age (older people would pay more), place of residence, the size of a family, etc. So it sounds as if there would be some wiggle room.

Is this a positive development? Sure it is, even if it has come after years of resistance and in the face of huge pressure for reform from the Obama administration and the public's demand for affordable, accessible health care, a key position in candidate Barack Obama's campaign for the presidency. The insurance industry doesn't want one possible change that Obama has discussed, which is a government-sponsored insurance option that would compete with private insurers.

So, while this position shift is good, reform must be comprehensive, and the public is in the mood for it. Too many people have been personally frustrated by the private industry-dominated health care system. It's good to have the insurers sitting at the table and ready to talk. But they should not chair the meeting.

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LUCINDA P. "CINDY" GURLEY

Mrs. Katherine Lucinda "Cindy" Parnell Gurley, 52, left this earthly life the morning of Friday, March 27, 2009 at her home and went to meet her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. A service to celebrate her life and home-going will be held Monday at 11:00 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church with the Rev. Dr. Ed Gunter and Rev. Hugh Cameron officiating. Burial will follow at Wayne Memorial Park in Goldsboro. Cindy was born in Durham, NC on September 23, 1956 to Malcolm C. and Grace S. Parnell. In 1978, Cindy graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing and began her nursing career at Durham County General working in labor and delivery. Cindy discovered her gift and life-mission for teaching in 1980 when she began a new career as a nursing instructor at Sampson Community College in Clinton where she had the opportunity to help shape the lives of many area nursing students. In 1987, she earned a master’s degree in nursing from East Carolina University, was named the Outstanding Nursing Graduate Student, and was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society. Cindy continued her career at Sampson Community College where she became the Division Chair of Healthcare Programs, a position she held until her early medical retirement in 2007. Her love of teaching extended outside the classroom, as she very willingly tutored students desiring further study. In addition to her nursing students Cindy was a long-time Sunday School and Bible Study teacher for high school students, young people, and adults at First United Methodist Church. She also served on the Staff-Parish committee, chaired the Vision 2000 committee, and was a founding member of the Stephen’s Ministry at First Church. She is survived by her husband of 28 years, Claude Daniel “Dan” Gurley; a son, Adam Daniel Gurley of Phoenix, AZ; her parents, Malcolm and Grace Parnell of Raleigh; a sister, Margaret Anne Parnell of Wilmington; a brother, Malcolm Currie Parnell, Jr. and wife, Kim of Alpharetta, GA; nephews, Alexander K. Vincent and James W. Vincent of Wilmington, Malcolm C. Parnell, III of Alpharetta, GA; and niece, Katherine Blair Parnell of Alpharetta, GA, Shirley Branson, close family friend and faithful companion, and Luci, her beloved peek-a-poo. The family will receive friends at Royal-Hall Funeral Home, Clinton, NC, Sunday, March 29, from 6:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. and other times at her home at 204 Fox Lake Drive, Clinton. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the First United Methodist Church, 208 Sampson St. Clinton, NC 28328 or to the Lucinda Parnell Gurley Nursing Fund c/o Sampson Community College, P.O. Box 318, Clinton, NC 28328. Condolences may be sent through www.royalhallsfuneralhome.com

Tough summer looms for students seeking internships

Preparation more important today

BY CANDICE CHOI, AP Personal Finance Writer

Comment on this story

Your teenager has some new competition for jobs this summer. Namely, the growing army of 12.5 million out-of-work Americans hungry for a paycheck.

To boost her odds, Jennifer Wagner is already scouring Web sites for her son Justin, a 19-year-old sophomore at Northeastern University in Boston. She wants him to get a job related to his graphic arts major, but wonders if that's possible anymore.

"Jobs that normally would've gone to teenagers or college students are going to be filled by people who are out of work or just graduated. They're going to be taking jobs they normally wouldn't take," said Wagner, a 51-year-old resident of New York City.

While the search might prove frustrating, there are still ways to ensure the kids stay busy and off your couch this summer. Here are three ways your son or daughter can get an edge.

1. MAKE FULL USE OF THE CAREER CENTER.

For college students, the university career center is a great place to start the hunt. The centers can help spit-shine resumes and hone interview skills. They maintain databases of job openings too, some of which are posted by alumni who might give students priority as candidates.

Students might even be able to interview for openings without leaving the center. At Cornell University, a Web cam lets students talk with faraway hiring managers.

At UCLA, the career center offers targeted workshops on how to research companies to succeed in the job interview. There are also workshops for landing jobs in specific fields, such as health care and law.

Career centers can also be a way to make contacts in the business world.

Recruiters looking to fill summer openings typically start heading to campus around early March, but companies seem to be waiting a little longer this year, said Rebecca Sparrow, director of Career Services at Cornell.

The upside is that it's not too late for college students who haven't yet found a job or internship.

2. LAUNCH A BUSINESS.

One way teenagers can bypass the barren job market is to create their own work.

Sit down with your teen and list any bankable skills, whether it's Web design, mowing lawns or baking brownies. Even if it doesn't turn into a smash hit, the experience can help develop
project management skills.

Of course, not every teen is suited to this option. Running a business, even on a basic level, takes discipline.

"You have to be a self-starter and know how to market yourself," said Jennifer Hartman, certified financial planner and principal of Greenleaf Financial Group in Los Angeles.

Hartman suggests having your son or daughter draw up a business plan to bring the business goal into focus. It doesn't have to be elaborate -- it could be a one-page document stating the objective, target market, and any costs that might be incurred. You might also want to set up a simple accounting sheet in Excel. Spread the word among friends and family. Word-of-mouth advertising is often more successful than a formal advertising campaign.

3. CREATE AN INTERNSHIP.

If you can't land an internship at a major organization, ask around at smaller, independent operations. They might not have formalized programs, but that doesn't mean they won't be open to the idea.

After securing a spot, students should move beyond the typical gofer duties and volunteer for more substantial projects. Showing initiative might quickly land them paying positions, albeit at a clerical or entry-level position.

With so many companies slashing staff and budgets, anyone who works for little or no money will be welcome around the office.

"Internships used to be a benefit for student. Now it's a benefit for the company that is getting that kid for free," said Lisa Jacobson, president of Inspirica, a tutoring company based in New York.

Even unpaid internships show colleges and employers the student has initiative and interests beyond school.

"What they do during the summers really factors in. That all adds up, even if you're not making money," Jacobsen said.

Generally, companies must offer either minimum pay or credits to interns, but smaller operations often skirt this rule and interns might be asked to work for free.

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