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An endowed professorship for palliative care at East Carolina University could provide guidance to the medical field and the community on dealing with end-of-life issues, supporters of creating that position said.

Dr. George Ho Jr., a former professor of rheumatology at ECU's Brody School of Medicine, started the process several years ago by contributing $63,000 toward establishing the endowed professorship.

“That was just to initiate the endowment, and we know we have to raise other funds to bring it up to $333,000,” said Ho, now employed by health plan Kaiser Permanente in Denver, Colo.

Once that goal is reached, matching funds from the Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund distributed by the University of North Carolina system can be requested. ECU would qualify for one state dollar for each two dollars raised so that the $333,000 would become $500,000. The money would be held in an endowment to support research related to the position.

Counting pledges, $100,000 has been raised, said Greg Prince, the foundation's director of development for the division of health sciences.

That total likely will get a boost with a fundraiser for the professorship organized by the nonprofit End of Life Care Coalition, based in Greenville. Tax-deductible tickets are $60
each, or $100 per couple. The event will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday at the Starlight Cafe, 104 W. Fifth St. Tickets can be purchased from the coalition in advance or at the door. For information, call 847-3599.

While palliative care is defined as the spectrum of care for serious illness, organizers see the professorship as having a focus on helping patients and their families deal with end-of-life issues.

Ho said it's an area that's not common for an endowed professorship, but it's necessary to support a field of medicine that isn't as lucrative as others. The position would involve educating students, staff and the community, and conducting research, as envisioned by Ho.

“Palliative care is about helping people understand and providing comfort when life comes to an end,” Ho said. “Death is as natural as birth so death should not be viewed as an enemy or something that needs to be conquered. Death is something that needs to be accepted and even embraced because it is part of life.”

The emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of dying should be addressed, Ho said. The terminally ill patient may be facing regrets and questioning the reasons behind the illness at life's closure.

People may need to communicate to their loved ones, expressing gratitude and love, either asking for forgiveness or offering forgiveness, Ho said.

“It's also about renewing and restoring relationships, fixing relationships that may have been broken,” he said.

Susan Redding, president of the End of Life Care Coalition, said it recently was decided that the group should help raise funds for the professorship. The all-volunteer coalition has grown since it was formed in 2001 from its initial 20 members to 172 members, said Redding, a former hospice nurse. She's now a nurse practitioner with the palliative care program at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, a program that she started with Ho in 2001.

“Our mission is really to help people understand the importance of advance care planning,” she said. “We also promote programs that provide appropriate and compassionate care at the end of life.”

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House packs UNC board with GOP
BY JANE STANCILL - staff writer

The state House elected a Republican-picked slate of nominees to the UNC system's Board of Governors on Tuesday in a tense process marked by a protest vote by Democrats.

In the past week, the Republican leadership in the legislature has put its stamp on the board that sets policy for the 17-school University of North Carolina system. The 2011 class of the UNC board is largely white, male and Republican - angering black lawmakers and others about the new members' lack of racial diversity. Among the 16 newly elected members - who will make up half the board - there are 13 white men, two white women and one man of Indian descent.

The Senate elected eight members last week. On Tuesday, it was the House's turn. The House slate was supposed to have 16 nominees vying for eight seats, but at the last minute, seven people withdrew. That prompted House Democrats to cry foul about the process, which had previously been spelled out in rules adopted earlier this year.

Rep. Joe Hackney, a Chapel Hill Democrat, said there was no point in Democrats participating in the vote. So they didn't. Democrats turned in blank ballots, and later voted "no" on a roll call vote on the Republican-approved list.

"They pressured people to withdraw so they wouldn't be on the ballot and it just made the Board of Governors election a sham ... it just wasn't fair and we wanted to make that point," Hackney said.

But Rep. Tim Moore, a Kings Mountain Republican, who led a nominating committee, said the House leaders followed normal procedures.

Nominees who bowed out of the process did so on their own, he said.

"I don't think people were told it was in their best interest to withdraw, but there was consensus among the [Republican] caucus as to who the eight
appointees should be, "he said, "and in the interest of being candid with folks, we shared it."

Moore, himself a former UNC board member, pointed out that he lost re-election after one term when the legislature was controlled by Democrats.

"I didn't cry foul and say it wasn't fair," he said. "That's just the way it was."

Rep. Alma Adams, a Greensboro Democrat, said the makeup of the board is problematic. The 32-member board, which oversees five historically black campuses, will have only four black members.

"I'm concerned about where the real commitment is to some of the issues that will come up regarding these schools," Adams said.

There was no attempt by Republicans to be inclusive, she said. Adams pointed out that, through the years, Democrats who controlled the legislature made sure Republicans were represented on the board.

Brent Barringer, a Cary lawyer who was re-elected to a third term Tuesday, said the now-Republican heavy board would not be radically different. "We're not very political once we get there," he said.

The board will be more politically balanced now, he said, though politics won't be the focus.

"The partisan label you wear is not all that important," Barringer said. "In my eight years, it's been almost inconsequential."

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**New members**
Brent Barringer, a Cary lawyer (re-elected)
Leroy Lail, a Conover businessman (re-elected)
Mary Ann Maxwell, a Goldsboro business owner
Ed McMahan, a Charlotte businessman and former state legislator
Hari Nath, a Cary information technology consultant
David Powers, of Winston-Salem, a vice president with R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.
Richard Taylor, a Lumberton insurance, real estate and auto dealer
Raiford Trask III, a Wilmington developer
Defense attorneys scrutinized the work of Greenville police officers Tuesday as what is likely to be the final round of prosecution witnesses took the stand during James Richardson's capital murder trial.

District Attorney Clark Everett is expected to rest his case today after calling 41 witnesses in eight days of testimony against Richardson, accused in the June 30, 2009, drive-by shooting deaths of Andrew Kirby and Landon Blackley outside The Other Place nightclub in downtown Greenville.

Richardson, 33, a former J.H. Rose High School athlete and professional basketball player, could face the death penalty if convicted of the crimes. The trial is set to resume at 1 p.m. today.

Among the final witnesses was a Greenville police detective cross-examined by defense attorney Jeff Cutler about photo lineups.

Sgt. Joe Friday told Cutler from the stand that he showed an array of photos to Daniel Mustian. Mustian, a friend of Kirby's, who owns Rumors nightclub across from The Other Place and was standing next to Kirby prior to the shooting.

Friday indicated in a report that Mustian could not identify the person he saw driving by in a white sedan shooting at him and Kirby. But Mustian testified more specifically last week that he had difficulty choosing between Richardson and another man who looked similar in the lineup.
That prompted Cutler to question whether Friday knew Richardson was a suspect when he administered the lineup and helped Mustian narrow the field, which state statutes prohibit.

Friday told Cutler he followed procedures and did not know Richardson's face until later. Cutler also raised questions about how Det. Shawn Moore, a high school friend of Richardson's, had failed to promptly file a written statement about a phone conversation with Richardson that took place days after the shootings.

Moore testified Monday that background noise made it difficult to hear exactly how Richardson phrased his words, and might have said the situation "is f----d up."

Friday said he got a statement from Moore after lead investigator Connie Elks circulated an email on Sept. 2, 2010. The email reminded officers to submit written statements of all conversations related to the case.

Cutler pressed Elks on whether her email and a conversation with Moore on Monday morning might have influenced his testimony about the phone conversations.

“Do you make it a habit of talking with witnesses before they testify?” Cutler asked Elks. She vehemently answered no.
Everett objected, and Judge W. Russell Duke sustained the objection.

Also on Tuesday, Kristin Hughes, a DNA expert with the SBI, testified about samples taken from a white BMW investigators say was used in the shooting.

Three of about a dozen samples tested positive for containing matches to samples taken from Richardson's cheek after his arrest, she said.
One sample had a one in 5,700 chance of being from someone other than Richardson, Hughes said. The other two had a one in one trillion chance of being from someone other than Richardson, “unless he has an identical twin,” she said.

A security supervisor also testified that he saw Richardson with group of people at a Maryland restaurant and nightclub two days after the shooting. Patrick Goodwin, a former Washington, D.C., police officer, told jurors he was on duty at The Sideline when he saw Richardson there July 2, 2009.

District Attorney Everett showed the jury a portion of a video that was made of Richardson and his friends eating at a restaurant adjacent to The Sideline. It showed Richardson in a white T-shirt, baseball cap, shorts, white socks and sandals. Richardson had been described by several witnesses at the trial as wearing the same type of clothing while at The Other Place the night of the shootings.

Greenville police Det. Alvaro Elias testified Tuesday that Richardson's mother disrupted his attempts to investigate the case.
Elias told jurors he went to Richardson's mother's home on McDowell Street at 7:45 p.m. on Oct. 22, 2010, to interview Andre Richardson. Andre is James Richardson's brother and is alleged to have been with him before the shootings.

Elias attempted to record the license plate number from the car Andre Richardson was driving at the time, but Dorothy Richardson kept stepping in front of him, he said. When Elias attempted to get in his car to follow Andre Richardson, Dorothy Richardson again distracted him from his task, he said.

Wayne Jacobs, Andrew Kirby's friend and roommate, testified Richardson purchased drinks for him and Kirby the night of the shooting.

Jacobs told the jury Richardson called him after Kirby was killed to see if Jacobs was OK.

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Student attacked on N.C. State's campus
From Staff Reports
A female North Carolina State University student was sexually assaulted late Tuesday night while walking on campus, according to campus police.

The student, who was walking near Thomas Hall at the intersection of Yarborough Drive and Derieux Place, was approached by a man and assaulted just after 11 p.m., police said.

The female student was able to fight off her attacker, who did not display a weapon, according to police.

The suspect is described as a white male with a light complexion and medium build, and about 5 feet, 10 inches tall. The man was wearing a black hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans and dark shoes.

Anyone with information is asked to call university police at 515-3000.
Timing of Va. Tech’s warnings during massacre leads to $55,000 penalty
By Nick Anderson and Ian Shapira, Tuesday, March 29, 6:43 PM
The federal government said Tuesday that it plans to issue the maximum possible fine against Virginia Tech — $55,000 — for violations of a campus safety law in connection with the 2007 shooting rampage that left more than 30 students and teachers dead.

A federal official wrote in a letter to Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger that the penalty for failing to provide timely warnings about the threat to the campus on the day of the massacre should be greater.

“Virginia Tech’s violations warrant a fine far in excess of what is currently permissible under the statute,” wrote Mary E. Gust, an official in the Education Department’s Office of Federal Student Aid.

Her conclusion represents a stinging rebuke for Virginia Tech, which for nearly four years has sought to overcome wounds inflicted by the deadliest school massacre by an individual in U.S. history. It also bolstered the view
of some victims’ relatives that the university was negligent in efforts to protect the campus community.

Virginia Tech, which denies wrongdoing, said it will appeal the action. “We believe that Virginia Tech administrators acted appropriately in their response to the tragic events of April 16, 2007, based on the best information then available to them at the time,” university spokesman Larry Hincker said in a statement.

An attorney for two families of shooting victims that are suing university officials said Virginia Tech failed to give the campus community crucial information about the first two killings on the morning of the shootings.

“Instead of telling them the truth, they sent out a plain vanilla warning and decided to tell the faculty and students as little as possible,” Robert Hall said. “What was their explanation for not telling the truth? Why not put that out? What’s the downside?”

For several months, the university has strongly contested the government’s finding that it failed to comply with timely warning requirements on the day a mentally ill student, Seung Hui Cho, shot and killed 32 people before taking his own life. The government issued a preliminary finding of fault in May and confirmed that determination in December.

At issue is what the university should have done after two students — Cho’s first victims — were discovered fatally shot in the West Ambler Johnston dormitory. Gust’s letter indicated that the first Virginia Tech police officers arrived at the scene about 7:24 a.m. and that Steger was aware of the incident by 8:11 a.m.

The university waited until 9:26 a.m. to issue a campuswide e-mail alert about the shootings. The alert, according to Gust, did not mention that there had been a killing on campus and did not direct the community to take any safety measures.

Soon afterward, Cho started killing teachers and other students in Norris Hall, an academic building.

Federal officials say that since the start of 2006, the Education Department has issued six fines in connection with violations of campus security
provisions of the Clery Act. The largest, levied against Eastern Michigan University in 2007, was for $357,500, after officials mishandled communications following a campus homicide. The size of such fines depends on the number and severity of violations.

Gust’s letter indicated two violations at Virginia Tech: failure to provide timely warning and failure to follow a timely warning policy. The fines, if upheld, would be $27,500 for each offense.

The university contends that it is being judged unfairly.

“As we noted before, neither the Department of Education nor the Clery Act defines ‘timely,’ ” Hincker said. “The university actions on April 16 were well within the standards and practices in effect at that time.”

A spokesman for Virginia Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R) said the governor was “disappointed” by the federal action.

“The university took all reasonable and appropriate steps in responding to an unprecedented tragedy,” the spokesman, Tucker Martin, said in a statement. “No one at the school was allowed to review any of the information the department utilized in reaching their decision, and no one from Virginia Tech was interviewed in preparation of this report.”

In June 2008, an $11 million settlement was approved for most of the families of victims of the massacre, including those who were wounded. It was meant to shield the state from further legal action.

But the families of Erin Peterson and Julia Pryde, two students who were slain, did not participate in the settlement. Their lawsuit, seeking damages for negligence, is pending in Montgomery County Circuit Court in Virginia. Hall, the attorney for the families, said he was gratified by the Education Department’s action.

“The fine reaffirms the position that we’ve taken is a reasonable one,” Hall said. But he expressed doubt about whether the federal findings would be admitted as evidence in the case.

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Group Seeks Labor E-Mails by Michigan Professors
By STEVEN GREENHOUSE
A conservative research group in Michigan has issued a far-reaching public records request to the labor studies departments at three public universities in the state, seeking any e-mails involving the Wisconsin labor turmoil.

The group, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, declined to explain why it was making the Freedom of Information Act request for material from professors at the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State University. But several professors who received the records request, which was first reported by Talking Points Memo on Tuesday, said it appeared to be an attempt to intimidate or embarrass professors who are sympathetic to organized labor.

This records request, which was filed Friday, comes several days after the Republican Party of Wisconsin made a records request to a prominent University of Wisconsin history professor, William Cronon, who had
severely criticized the state’s Republican governor, Scott Walker, over his push for legislation to weaken public-sector unions.

The Mackinac Center, which describes itself as a nonpartisan research and educational institution and receives money from numerous conservative foundations, asked the three universities’ labor studies faculty members for any e-mails mentioning “Scott Walker,” “Madison,” “Wisconsin” or “Rachel Maddow,” the liberal talk show host on MSNBC.

Greg Scholtz, the director of academic freedom for the American Association of University Professors, said: “We think all this will have a chilling effect on academic freedom. We’ve never seen FOIA requests used like this before.”

Roland Zullo, a labor studies professor at the University of Michigan, said he found the center’s request “puzzling.” “It seems an odd request for an institution that claims to be nonpartisan,” he said.

Michael D. Jahr, the Mackinac Center’s vice president for communications, declined to discuss the records request. Ken Braun, managing editor of the center’s political newsletter, declined to give the reason for it. He said the newsletter, Michigan Capital Confidential, had made the request and often makes such public records requests.

“As a general policy, we don’t discuss our FOIAs until we write about them,” Mr. Braun said. He said the records request could have been much broader but was limited to a handful of topics at just the labor studies departments, instead of also including history and political science departments.

Mr. Braun said the center’s request was in no way coordinated with the Wisconsin Republican Party’s FOIA request to Professor Cronon.

After one recent records request, the center reported that taxpayers were paying the salary of an elementary school teacher even though she was released from her teaching duties to work 100 percent on union issues.

Marick Masters, the director of labor studies at Wayne State, said he had nothing to hide. “This looks like an attempt to embarrass us,” he said. “I haven’t engaged in any partisan activities here. I think they’re probably
interested in seeing the extent to which labor studies centers in the state have helped orchestrate the protests in Madison.”

Professor Cronon, who describes himself as a political independent, said he was angry about what he called an attempt at harassment. He said that he had never engaged in any nonscholarly political work on university computers or time, which is prohibited, but that he was still concerned about the release of any e-mails. The Republican Party requested e-mails mentioning several politically related words, including Mr. Walker and several legislators.

“There is an academic freedom issue here,” Mr. Cronon said.

Mark Jefferson, the executive director of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, declined to explain why the records request was made. He criticized Professor Cronon for questioning the party’s motives. “I find this troubling,” he said. “Like anyone else filing a public records request, I don’t have to give a reason.”
On a recent Friday night, a UCLA student posted a video on YouTube. The young woman made the video, in which she complained about and mocked Asian students at UCLA, the day after the Japan earthquake. She took down the clip within hours of posting it. She was too late. By then it was being reposted and remixed, taking on a life of its own.

By that Sunday, it had come full circle. UCLA officials watching the situation unfold noticed considerable surges in traffic on the university's Facebook and YouTube profiles, said Phil Hampton, a UCLA spokesman. People inside and outside the campus community were urging the university to do something.

The incident this month — and the way the university responded — illustrates the challenge that universities face now that the kinds of comments once scrawled on bathroom walls or passed around in class can be blasted out online, instantaneously, for the world to see.

Larry D. Roper, vice provost for student affairs at Oregon State University, said the long reach of social media has turned issues that university officials would once have handled face to face into something broader and more difficult to manage.

"It's not something we can control," Roper said. "It's a world unto itself."

As a result, he said, "the reaction is no longer a local one. You act locally and influence globally."

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social media outlets have been embraced by higher education partly because they help create a feeling of connection across a far-flung university community. But the ability to connect so easily also indulges impulsiveness.

Since the advent of social media — and email before that — there have been numerous cases of questionable videos or inappropriate posts causing a stir at colleges, said Greg Lukianoff, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a group that advocates for freedom of expression on college campuses.

Around the same time the UCLA student's video went viral, an email that suggested
crudely explicit terms for rating women circulated among USC fraternity members, then jumped to the blogosphere.

The incidents at USC and UCLA hewed to a pattern that Lukianoff said he has seen many times: Someone says something, it spreads, and the university responds.

After the email at USC began circulating, Michael L. Jackson, the university's vice president for student affairs, sent an open letter to the campus community saying that officials were "appalled" by its language, which he said contradicted the school's values.

UCLA went a step further in responding to the anti-Asian video on its campus. Chancellor Gene Block sat down in the broadcast studio that the university recently constructed and made a statement condemning the student's video. Block's response was then posted on YouTube, the same place the controversy began.

By the time the chancellor's statement was posted, it was just one in a slew of videos on the subject. Some were light-hearted, others angry; some were politically correct, others as crude as the first. Hampton said it was crucial for UCLA's administration to inject its voice directly into the conversation.

The same dissemination occurred with the email at USC: The feminist blog Jezebel found out about it and launched a conversation driven mostly by an anonymous commenter who claimed to have a connection to the student who might have written the email.

The discourse took some unsavory or frenzied turns on the Web. Back at the schools, however, a more measured discussion bloomed in which offended students discussed opportunities for change. At UCLA, Asian student groups said the video highlighted a need for increased diversity requirements in the curriculum.

At USC, students created petitions and held meetings to discuss troubling issues raised by the email. Jackson, in an emailed statement, said the university encourages "dialogue rather than discipline" in such situations.

"Social media is teaching us, habituating us, to respond to speech with more speech," Lukianoff said.

Although there was a push for the universities to discipline or even expel the students behind the controversies, schools are often limited in what they can do. Lukianoff said that however reprehensible a student's words might be, their speech is protected by the First Amendment.

But he said that those who cause a ruckus often "suffer the consequences naturally of what they say." Alexandra Wallace, the UCLA student who made the video, has withdrawn from the university, citing threats.

Oregon State's Roper said that staying enrolled might have helped Wallace learn from the
situation. "When a student does something like this, they are making a request in an
awkward way," he said. "They are asking for the skills they need to navigate the world."

Such instances enable universities to foster important dialogue. "When ignorance gets
revealed, that shouldn't be the time we [universities] run," Roper said. "It should be the
time we run toward."

Lukianoff said that hurtful or insensitive speech often prods young people, who are
developing their worldviews, to reevaluate their convictions. And if a classmate's
ignorance or insensitivity hadn't gone viral, the conversation never would have started.

"Being offended is what happens when you have your deepest beliefs challenged," he
said. "If you go through four years of college without having your beliefs challenged, you
should ask for your money back."

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More universities rent out dorms for group meetings
By Laura Ruane, USA TODAY
03-27-2011

A growing number of nearly 2,000 college and universities across the USA will do double duty offering lodging and conference centers this summer.

Adult demand for on-campus digs has soared during the recession, says Chuck Salem, president of the Johnstown, Pa.-based marketing company Unique Venues, which oversees the website UniqueVenues.com. The company connects meeting planners with distinctive meeting and event space.

Salem says meeting planners’ requests for proposals for the schools his company represents rose 90% from 2009 to 2010. The company’s roster of colleges, which stood at 140 in 1988, grew to 354 last year.

Higher-learning institutions are thinking about adult seasonal guests when upgrading their dormitories and meeting spaces or designing new buildings, Salem said.

That trend has caught the attention of meeting planners with groups that want overnight accommodations that are cheaper than many hotels but have convenient access to conference facilities and dining, said Vicki Westcott, manager of conference services at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. Newer student-housing complexes “are not your traditional dorm rooms anymore,” Westcott said.

“Sure, you don’t have all the amenities, like blow dryers and shampoo,” Westcott said, “but most adults are fine with that.”

Dorm-room marketing doesn’t alarm Fred Hirschovits, owner of the Holiday Inn Fort Myers Airport at Town Center, 3 miles from the Florida Gulf Coast University campus in Fort Myers, Fla.

“They’re going after a different type of customer,” Hirschovits said of the colleges and universities.

“Parents usually want a different type of accommodation. They will stay in the surrounding hotels,” Hirschovits said.
Newcomers or those upping their hospitality game include:

• Wagner College on Staten Island, N.Y., which in 2010 opened Foundation Hall, with double- and single-occupancy rooms and six suites with living rooms furnished with a sofa, a table and chairs.

“It’s apartment-style living. If this were in Manhattan, it would be very expensive,” said Carole Lavinio, director of conferences. Outside guests staying at Foundation Hall pay $75 a night for single occupancy and $60 a person for two people sharing a room, Lavinio said.

The hall is open to non-student adult groups from about late May until August. It’s reserved for college seniors the rest of the year, Lavinio said.

Summer bookings “are meeting expectations. This is a new facility. A lot of people don’t know about it yet,” Lavinio said. She’s counting on the college’s listing at UniqueVenues.com and word-of-mouth referrals to grow the business.

• Florida Gulf Coast University is planning to hire a full-time conference coordinator to solicit groups, reserve dorm rooms and classrooms, coordinate catering and provide technology required for meetings, said Brian Fisher, director of university housing.

• Ave Maria University, in a rural area east of Naples, Fla., has more beds (1,000) than students (800). The university transformed Xavier Hall into the Xavier Hall Conference Center and rents rooms to invited guests of the university for $50 to $70 a night, said Ave Maria President Nicholas Healy.

“This isn’t a profit center for us, by any means,” Healy said. “In fact, we probably lose money on it. But the nearest hotel is so far away, so it has a great convenience factor for our guests.”

In mid-February, the Major League Soccer team Chicago Fire checked into Xavier Hall. Players spent two weeks on campus as part of their preseason training, according to Healy.

• Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., is undergoing a $72 million renovation of the Ambler Johnston residence hall, adding such improvements as central air conditioning and a small theater suitable for a variety of shows and presentations, according to Ken Belcher, senior associate director for housing services. The school aims to make these spaces available to outside groups in the summer of 2013, Belcher said.

• The University of Vermont in Burlington opened a new student center and a residence hall in 2007. Both emphasize environmental friendliness.

“Our motto is: This is where you meet, eat and sleep in a green environment,” said Shane Cutler, university director of conference and event services.
These facilities are available to outsiders — people taking a class or attending a conference — in the summer, Cutler said, adding that prices range from $43 a person for double occupancy to $68.25 a person for a private room with one bed.

For many schools, summer youth programs continue to fill more beds. Pepperdine University’s undergraduate Seaver College in Malibu, Calif., has played host to a week-long yearbook workshop for high schoolers for more than 25 years, said Corey Mundwiler, the workshop director and a senior sales rep at Balfour Publishing.

Mundwiler and his teaching staff stay on campus in the dorms during the summer workshop. “It’s dorm life: a single bed, spartan,” Mundwiler said.

Views of the Pacific Coast from the hillside campus and a group beach trip are pluses, but so are guard gates at university motor entrances and the university’s own public safety department that monitors the campus, according to Mundwiler.

“Parents want to make sure their children are safe and secure,” Mundwiler said.

Said Belcher at Virginia Tech, “It’s not just about adding revenues for the summer. . . . A child who comes here in the summer might become a Virginia Tech student in the future.”
Susan Braig has turned to selling drugs to pay her medical bills.

The 61-year-old Altadena cancer survivor takes old pharmaceutical pills and tablets and mounts them on costume jewelry to create colorful necklaces, pendants, earrings and tiaras that she sells.

She got the idea for her unusual artwork after being diagnosed with breast cancer and starting chemotherapy in 2004.

"I bought my first round of medicine and it cost $500 out of my own pocket," she said. "I looked at the drugstore receipt and then at the little pills and wondered if they were precious gems."

It turned out they were precious in more ways than one.

Seven years after beginning treatment, Braig is cancer-free. And she is using expensive unused cancer-fighting pills in jewelry that she sells to defray unpaid treatment costs.

"I'm deeply in debt because I was underinsured," she said. Her private health insurance did not kick in until she had paid a yearly $1,000 deductible and $2,500 in co-pays, and it did not cover the cost of outpatient care, which is what most of the lengthy treatment was.

This month, she lost her private insurance altogether. "I went from underinsured to uninsured," she said with a grim smile.

The idea for pill jewelry came in 2007 when Braig participated in a medical-themed art exhibition and performance event organized by the NewTown Pasadena Foundation. At the time, she was working as a grant writer for arts organizations and as a painter and artist specializing in satirical pieces.

She set out to create a mock Tiffany & Co. jewelry advertisement for the exhibition. She envisioned the ad depicting different medications in place of diamonds, rubies and emeralds. But Braig ended up constructing an actual princess' tiara encrusted with her leftover cancer meds, along with several other pieces.

"It was a clean tie-in between her personal life, her professional life and socio-political life, a kind of convergence that is rare," said Richard Amromin, a composer and arts
curator who is artistic director of NewTown Pasadena. Other pieces in the 2007 show included hospital-themed mosaics, artwork made of syringes and a large sculpture made of latex operating-room gloves, he said.

Show-goers' response prompted Braig to launch the line she calls Designer Drug Jewelry.

Friends began donating their own leftover and outdated pills and gel capsules to her. Braig replaces the original plastic pill bottles' labels with "Designer Drug" stickers before placing each jewelry piece inside with a cotton ball.

She sells the artwork, priced from $15 to $150, at crafts shows she attends dressed in a white medical lab coat. The jewelry pill bottles are wrapped with a ribbon of gauze and placed in tiny shopping bags made from surgical face masks.

Braig donates other pieces to nonprofit groups for fundraiser auctions and is considering distribution through hospital gift shops.

The pills and gel caps used in the 500 or so pendants, pins and other pieces she has completed are coated with a sealant and glued to the costume jewelry. That renders the meds "non-abusable," as Braig puts it.

Although the gel tablets can leak if punctured and can degrade and melt if left exposed to sunlight, pills seem to retain their color despite the sealant, Braig said, displaying one of her first pieces: a pin containing six of her old Zofran anti-nausea pills whose wheat color still glistens.

She said one of her most popular pieces is a pendant that features a Viagra pill in the middle.

"Women with a sense of humor — or with a middle-aged husband — like them," Braig said. "They are good sellers, although I've had an extremely limited supply of them to work with."

Besides helping pay off her medical debt, creating pill jewelry is fun, she said. "I needed satire and humor for therapy when I was fighting cancer."

Laughter really can be one of the best medicines.