Partnership funds new fire engine
By Kristin Zachary
Friday, March 30, 2012

A new fire engine designed for high-rise rescues and purchased with help from the hospital and university was dedicated Thursday during a traditional “push-in” celebration in Greenville.

A crowd of city officials and citizens gathered at the Fire-Rescue headquarters on Greene Street to push the new Tower 1 into its bay in the first such ceremony the department has hosted in at least 10 years.

The afternoon event was a nod to tradition dating back to the 1800s, when fire wagons were horse-drawn and required manpower for reverse.

“The members of our community and our employees work together, and we literally push the truck into the station,” Terry said.

Vidant Medical Center and East Carolina University partnered with the city to purchase the $1 million engine.

“It’s a 100-foot aerial platform truck with extraordinary fire-fighting capabilities,” Fire-Rescue Chief Bill Ale said.

A bucket platform at the end of the ladder holds four firefighters who can quickly and safely ascend up to eight stories to rescue fire victims who may be trapped in a dormitory, an office building or even an apartment building, he said.

Ale said he anticipates the truck will serve the city to the year 2030 and beyond.
“This event is possible because of the generosity and also the forthrightness of each organization recognized,” Interim City Manager Thom Moton said. “Working together and leveraging our funds and resources, we can do more to serve our community.”

Terry said Vidant Medical Center and ECU each provided $250,000 for the engine.

The event Thursday also served as a fundraiser for the Pitt County chapter of the American Red Cross and allowed Greenville youth to participate in the ceremony.

Children washed the wheels of the fire engine before it was pushed into the station.

“Back when the wheels were wooden, before they were placed back into the station, they had to be washed really well to protect from rot and decay,” Terry said. “Now we ceremoniously wash the wheels before it goes into the station for the first time.”

Children also were allowed onto the platform to take photos in exchange for a donation to the Red Cross.

“When someone dials 911 and they have a house fire or some type of emergency, they expect to see us coming, and that’s what we do,” Deputy Chief Eric Griffin said. “We try to get there and solve their issues as quickly as possible.

“We do it in the middle of the night, we do it first thing in the morning and we do it in the heat of the day,” he said.

At some point, the efforts of the department come to a close, he said.

“But it’s not a close for the people that have been affected,” Griffin said. “A lot of times, people lose everything they have. The way we close the incident is by somewhat of a silent partner that we know is there.”

The Red Cross provides assistance for victims.

“They magically appear like they are angels,” Griffin said.

The city benefits from partnerships and collaborations between the Red Cross and Fire-Rescue, as well as the department and Vidant Medical Center and ECU, officials said.

“On behalf of the Vidant Health family, I just want to say what a privilege it is to be part of this great day that is a great example of a community coming
together that benefits everyone,” said Steve Lawler, president of Vidant Medical Center.

Philip Rogers, chief of staff for ECU’s Chancellor’s Office, said the university was more than willing to make an investment in the safety of its students and the community.

“Over the last year, we’ve had the opportunity to conduct a market research study for ECU, and one of the primary findings of that study was that the city and the university are inextricably linked together,” he said. “This is a perfect, positive example of how we’ve been able to have great outcomes to show that partnership.”

Contact Kristin Zachary at kzachary@reflector.com and 252-329-9566 and follow her on Twitter @kzacharygdr.
Shaving heads to fund cancer research

By K.j. Williams
Friday, March 30, 2012

East Carolina University student Sarah Swaim, 22, is a year behind in her studies due to complications from cancer treatment. She plans to be back in the classroom this summer.

Her recent visit to Greenville is not for academic reasons, however. Swaim hopes to shave a few heads while she is here.

As an ambassador for the St. Baldrick’s Foundation, Swaim will assist at Saturday’s St. Baldrick’s Day fundraiser for pediatric cancer research. The event, hosted by the Brody School of Medicine Class of 2014, will start at 2 p.m. at the medical school building.

St. Baldrick’s Foundation relies on volunteers to raise money for its research mission.

Instead of running a 5K or other typical fundraising events, volunteers collect money by pledging to shave their heads if they reach their goal. Their donated hair finds its way to the Wigs for Kids foundation.

At Brody, about $5,000 has been raised and nine people have pledged to have their heads shaved, according to the St. Baldrick’s website.

The foundation’s work has helped state residents. St. Baldrick’s recently gave a $50,000 grant to Duke University Medical Center.

Swaim credits research funding from St. Baldrick’s with helping to save her life. She took part in a clinical chemotherapy trial at the medical center.
before her stem cell transplant. The transplant was necessary after her cancer returned following several years of remission.

The Virginia Beach, Va., native was diagnosed with biphenotypic leukemia when she was 14.

At the time Swaim had a head full of long, curly hair. Her first concern was the loss of her hair, she said.

“When you’re 14 years old, your hair is like your life,” she said.

Swaim said her family supported her when she had to undergo chemotherapy for 20 months by having their hair shaved off at foundation fundraisers.

If you look at the big picture, hair is a small thing, Swaim said.

“You kind of realize it’s unimportant once you see how beautiful they are (without it),” Swaim said of her family. “That makes you feel beautiful.”

Her mother was the first to go under the clippers. Her father was next, followed by her older sister.

Swaim has sheared off her hair twice: one during her junior year of high school and then again three months before her relapse in 2010. The relapse led to her stem cell transplant.

“Now, I’m doing really well,” she said. “I’ve been going to physical therapy twice a week, and I’ve just been getting stronger every day.”

Swaim is eager to return to ECU, where she’s majoring in early childhood development, and to her Alpha Omicron Pi sorority.

“I’m interested in early childhood intervention with autism,” she said.

Keeping active at fundraisers is a priority for her. She’s a “knight of the bald-table,” honored in 2010 for her years of volunteer service.

“More than 20 of my friends have passed away and no family should have to go though that,” she said. “I have a lot of friends that have made it, too. And it’s encouraging to see that.

“I enjoy meeting new cancer patients and helping them through probably the hardest thing they’ll ever live through. It gives me joy.”

At Saturday’s event, Swaim will have her clippers at the ready. “I will be more than happy to shave heads,” she said.

Women reluctant to shave their heads can have their hair cut and donated for cancer patients’ wigs through Pantene Beautiful Lengths, a campaign with
the American Cancer Society. Hair has to be a minimum of 8 inches long and its natural color.

For more information on St. Baldrick’s Foundation, go to www.stbaldricks.org.

Contact K.J. Williams at kwilliams@reflector.com or 252-329-9588.
"Secret Garden" distributes seedlings
By Kim Grizzard
Friday, March 30, 2012

The animated film “The Lorax” may speak for the trees, but a local stage production has found a more tangible way to get an environmental message to take root.

Young audiences for “The Secret Garden,” being performed today at East Carolina University, will take home green souvenirs. The North Carolina Forest Service has donated nearly 2,500 pine seedlings to be given away when the curtain closes.

“This is a first,” said Patch Clark, associate professor in the ECU School of Theatre and Dance and director of Storybook Theatre, which is performing the play.

“It’s all in keeping with the theme of ‘The Secret Garden,’ which is hope and renewal.”

Clark initially had hoped to provide a gardening project to go along with the play, which is based on the classic novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

At one point, she considered engaging the audience in planting a tree on campus, since the play takes the stage just two weeks after Arbor Day.

“You can’t really take that many children out at one time and plant a tree,” she said, laughing. “That would be difficult.”
When Stage Manager Timothy Ames read about an effort to restore the longleaf pine across the South, he contacted the state Forest Service to see if some seedlings could be donated.

Education is a part of the job for Alton Perry, outreach coordinator for the N.C. Forest Service. But he had never considered how a play might help set the stage for a lesson on natural resources.

“It’s kind of a neat way to get our message across about ecology, forestry, the environment,” he said. “It’s kind of cool, so we ran with it.”

The 8- to 12-inch longleaf and loblolly pine seedlings have been growing in Goldsboro for a year.

Perry hopes that if the seedlings can survive the children’s bus trip home, they will put down roots a little farther east.

On Saturday, Storybook Theatre will take its show on the road to the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, in Havelock.

“Not only do we get to perform for them, tell them the message, but we get to give them a practical way to implement it,” Ames said. “They get to actually put those lessons into action.”

If audiences act quickly and get the seedlings in the ground within a day, Perry said, they have a pretty good chance of survival.

School groups also will go home with some educational material about the pines that children can share with their families, he said.

“I think a lot of times people forget,” Perry said. “They see the trees. They see the forest, but they really don’t appreciate the benefits of how they improve our quality of life.

“We’re always trying to teach our kids things,” he said, “but our kids can teach us a lot as well, if we only listen.”

“The Secret Garden” will be performed at 7 p.m. today in Wright Auditorium on the ECU campus. See the Go! section in today’s newspaper for ticket prices and more information.

Contact Kim Grizzard at kgrizzar@reflector.com or 252-329-9578.
Hampton fighting the odds
By Nathan Summers
Friday, March 30, 2012

A former East Carolina University and D.H. Conley High School football player will need the combined fighting spirit of a Viking and a Pirate to win his battle.

Spencer Hampton, a former walk-on with the Pirates who made a memorable interception inside Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium in 2008, is fighting much tougher odds now than anything he ever faced on the gridiron. Recently diagnosed with Stage 4 melanoma, Hampton isn’t fighting his fight alone, not by a long shot.

Hampton’s hometown is rallying behind him, and will stage a benefit on his behalf Sunday at Tiebreakers Sports Bar and Grill. The aim is to help Hampton finance a fight against what is the toughest form of cancer to combat.

Sunday’s event, to be held from 4 to 9 p.m., is loaded with sports memorabilia and perks from local business to be auctioned. The former Conley football and state champion baseball player joined the Pirate football program as a walk-on in the fall of 2006 under former head coach Skip Holtz. Although his time on the field was brief as a defensive back, it
exemplified his willingness to battle the odds, and Hampton even sports a tattoo that says, “Against All Odds.”

He played in four games as a reserve in 2007 as a redshirt freshman. In ’08, he made just a pair of game appearances, but the football found Hampton’s hands for an interception late in the Pirates’ win over UTEP, a win that propelled ECU to its first-ever Conference USA title game.

Hampton, who graduated from the university in 2011, completed spring drills with the Pirates in 2009, but left the team shortly after that.

Items to be auctioned on Saturday include an autographed Alge Crumpler Atlanta Falcons jersey from the 2005 NFL Pro Bowl; ECU football tickets, jerseys and memorabilia; a Holtz-signed print from an ECU-Virginia game; autographed baseballs by Texas Rangers Josh Hamilton, Nelson Cruz and Mike Napoli; an autographed Charles Barkley basketball; a Carolina Panthers pullover; guitars autographed by Lady Antebellum and country music singer Craig Morgan; and gift certificates and packages from Cubbies, Abrams, Frank’s Pizza, Finelli’s, Bostic Sugg, Tan-N-Bed, Champions Health and Fitness Center, Care Master Cleaning, Cutter Creek Golf Club, Ironwood Golf Club, Shoe Crate, Edible Arrangements and more.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or 252-329-9595.
William Bloss, chairman of the ECU Department of Criminal Justice, presents the results of a crime study to the Greenville City Council on March 8, 2012. (Aileen Devlin/The Daily Reflector)

Editorial: Crime survey difficult for Council

“The absolute audacity of the protestors during that era was something our brave men will never get over, nor their families.”
Friday, March 30, 2012

If Greenville hopes to adequately address concerns harbored by residents about public safety, it stands to reason that a comprehensive survey of residents would help illuminate areas of particular need. That was the approach taken by the City Council when, one year ago, it commissioned East Carolina University’s Department of Criminal Justice to determine attitudes about crime.

The results of that survey, presented to the council earlier this month, are now under scrutiny as the overwhelmingly positive response elicited skepticism from city leadership. While calls for the department to refund the cost of the survey go too far, it is true that the city needs a more confident reflection of community opinion in order to focus its efforts to improve public safety.

William Bloss rose to his position as chair of the criminal justice department at East Carolina by exceeding the challenging and meticulous expectations of the academic environment. It was he who presented to the council on March 8 the Community Fear of Crime report, and he who has endured the questions that have emerged since that meeting.

Many of the inquiries are respectful and worthy of discourse. The study began with a sample size of 6,000 residents, culled from the four patrol sectors designated by the police department. Researchers conducted phone interviews but were unable to secure more than 386 respondents. When
broken down into demographic subcategories, those who answered were disproportionately white, female, retired homeowners who completed a college degree.

Most citizens would agree those demographics are not an accurate reflection of the city’s population. It therefore calls into question the report’s principle conclusion, namely that some 92 percent of this community have little or no fear of crime. That seems incongruent with views expressed for years here and those certainly evident in advance of the 2011 municipal election.

Members of the City Council were clearly skeptical of the findings, and justifiably so. Those calling for Bloss to return the money go a step too far, though their frustration is understandable.

The city needs a confident, statistically significant report about crime and this simply does not match up with what general observation and conversation find in this community. It falls to city leadership to chart its next step and determine how best to produce a detailed picture of citizen opinion that can guide the council’s future action on crime.
It's a weekend for kids
Friday, March 30, 2012

It’s no April Fool when we say that there are a bunch of events to keep the children occupied this weekend.

Celebrating 25 years, the Smiles and Frowns Playhouse will present “The Jungle Book” today and Saturday, while East Carolina University’s Storybook Theatre will present “The Secret Garden” today as part of its Family Fare Series.

Martin-Pitt Partnership for Children holds its annual Kids Fest at the Greenville Convention Center on Saturday and the Youth Arts Festival, held annually by ECU, will be on the school’s “mall” at the center of campus on Saturday.

‘Secret Garden’

East Carolina University’s Storybook Theatre will present “The Secret Garden” at 7 p.m. today in Wright Auditorium as part of ECU’s Family Fare series.

The play, based on the classic children’s book by France Hodgson Burnett, tells the story of orphan Mary Lennox’s struggles in her new life in England. Mary overcomes adversity through perseverance and dedication so she can restore harmony into the life of her afflicted cousin Colin. Together they discover the magic of the robin, the strength of belief and the hope of renewal.
ECU’s Patch Clark directs the local production and the choreography is by Janet Swain Cox, owner of Le Moulin de Danse in Washington, N.C. ECU faculty member Catherine Garner will provide musical direction and piano accompaniment along with Christine Gustafson on flute and Christopher Nunnally on cello.

The show is for ages 6 and up.

Tickets are $9 for adults and $6 for youth. All tickets at the door are $9.

Call 328-4788 or visit www.ecuarts.com.

‘Jungle Book’

Smiles and Frowns Playhouse will perform “The Jungle Book” at 7 p.m. today and 2 p.m. Saturday at the Ayden Recreation Center, 4354 Lee St., Ayden.

“The Jungle Book,” by Joseph Robinette, was inspired by Rudyard Kipling’s animal adventures in his classic stories and poems. The cast will guide you into the jungle to enjoy the thrilling story of Mowgli, his animal friends and all their adventures.

Tickets are $4 in advance and available at Edwards Pharmacy, 131 Third St., Ayden; RoundTable Toys, 4052 Old Tar Road, Winterville; Twice as Nice, 107 E. Arlington Blvd.; and Artisans, 150 Plaza Drive. All tickets at the door are $5. Visit www.smilesandfrowns.net.

Art festival

East Carolina University will hold its eighth annual Youth Arts Festival from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday at the center of the school’s campus.

The festival will include more than 100 visual and performing artists who will share their creative talents with children. A variety of musical, dance and theatrical groups will give performances at the festival.

Local and regional artists, including ECU faculty, will provide children the chance to visit with them as they demonstrate activities such as wheel-thrown pottery, traditional watercolor painting, weaving, blacksmithing, paper-making, printmaking and portraiture.

Children also will have the opportunity to create their own artwork with the help of professional artists and art students. In case of rain, the festival will be held in the Leo W. Jenkins Fine Arts Building on Fifth Street. Free.
**Kids’ festival**

The 11th annual Pitt County KidsFest will be held from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday at the Greenville Convention Center, 303 S.W. Greenville Blvd.

The event, sponsored by the Martin-Pitt Partnership for Children, includes 25 interactive exhibits for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Exhibits include various science activities, a gymnastics circuit, an infant play area, a puppet show, a live animal display and sensory bins.

Children will get to look for shark’s teeth in a fossil dig area, meet live marine invertebrates at the North Carolina Aquarium display and discover balance, botany and bugs with A Time for Science.

In addition to the exhibits, KidsFest will include a vendor area featuring products, demonstrations, services and items for sale. Admission is $1 per person. Call 752-3749.
We already have very few protections, and they want to take away the few protections we have," says geography professor Altha Cravey, who addressed the crowd from the steps of South Building during the Thursday, March 29, rally.

**Bill affecting UNC system workers in dispute**

By Mark Schultz - mschultz@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL About 30 people rallied Thursday against legislation they say would strip an estimated 22,000 University of North Carolina system workers of state job protections.

Senate Bill 575 would remove the UNC workers from the State Personnel Act, giving the power to manage those positions to the UNC Board of Governors. If passed, the measure would affect wages, disability benefits, grievance and other policies, the group said in a letter hand delivered to UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp’s office. He was not there, and efforts to reach him for comment Thursday were unsuccessful.

“By removing university workers across the state from legal protections for redress they now have ... SB 575 will perpetuate a work environment where employees fear retaliation if they speak out against poor working conditions, effectively silencing worker voices,” the letter says.

A spokeswoman for the UNC system said that’s not true.
“I do not believe this letter accurately portrays the potential impact of the university’s decision to seek a single unified personnel system under the authority of the Board of Governors,” said Joni Worthington, the UNC system’s vice president for communications.

System officials have sought feedback from staff affected from the system’s 16 universities she said. If the new plan is approved, “staff and faculty will have significant participation in the development of the new personnel system.”

In a March 9 memo to the UNC-CH community, Brenda Richardson Malone, vice chancellor for human resources at UNC-CH, said having one personnel system would ultimately make things better for campus workers.

“There are substantial benefits to all employees, in that it will allow the Board of Governors to develop policies and practices that would be better aligned with the higher education environment, while maintaining existing employee protections as stated in the guiding principles,” Malone wrote.

But opponents say even if the initial rules are fair, a future board could change them. “When that board turns over there’s no guarantee that benevolence will continue,” said Harry Phillips of Triangle Jobs with Justice.

A handful of UNC-CH housekeepers attended Thursday’s rally.

“I have been working here almost 17 years, and I’m ready to retire in three years,” said Deborah Seymore of Siler City. “I want people who come after me to have rights. This is not fair; it’s another way to keep us down.”

About 130 people and organizations signed the letter, which asks Thorp to explain his position on the bill and attend another rally against SB 575 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. April 4 outside South Building, the campus administration building.

Schultz: 919-932-2003
A banner year for admissions at U-Va.

By Daniel de Vise

Another banner admissions year — and a new Early Action program — seems to be elevating the University of Virginia to a higher tier of selectivity, with numbers increasingly resembling those of the Ivy League.

U-Va. returned to early admissions this year after a brief hiatus, allowing students to apply early and get a decision early on the condition that they not apply early to any other school.

The early cycle yielded 11,753 applications, of whom 3,187 were offered admission. Their average SAT score was 1,413 of a possible 1,600 points, up significantly from the 1,380 average of last year’s class.

Until 2006, the university had offered a binding Early Decision program, which is similar to Early Action but requires the student to attend if admitted. Early Decision is ethically ambiguous, because it forces students into a decision. ...well, early, before they know their other options.
Early Action is deemed more fair. Or at least, it’s good enough for Harvard and Princeton, who joined U-Va. in adopting Early Action this year.

The gaudy numbers pushed the overall U-Va. applicant pool to 28,274, an 18-percent increase over last year and a 50-percent increase in five years. The overall admitted class has an average SAT score of 1,396, and 96 percent come from the top 10 percent of their graduating classes. Those numbers are up 16 points and two percentage points, respectively, from last year.

The university extended 7,759 offers of admission, with a goal of 3,360 students in the freshman class, a yield of about 42 percent. That puts the overall admission rate at 27.5 percent, with early applicants gaining no significant advantage.

Most of the nation’s top colleges have some form of early admission. Penn and Cornell still employ Early Decision, but their peers now mostly favor Early Action, including Stanford and Yale.

Many of these colleges retreated from early admissions in the past decade, from concern that the program put students under too much pressure and was unfair to low-income applicants, who don’t always know their admission options.

Most of them have now tiptoed back to Early Action, the more defensible option, with the understanding that they will all maintain their commitment to low-income students.

All this, of course, is partly motivated by competitive concerns. Harvard, U-Va. and Princeton were losing talented applicants to other schools with Early Action programs, potentially weakening their pool.

With Harvard, Princeton and U-Va. all adding Early Action programs this year, you can expect every other school in their category to take a hit.

At Penn, for example, this year’s applicant pool dropped by 1.4 percent to 31,216, although the admit rate held steady at about 12 percent and SAT scores rose slightly. Expect similar news from other schools soon.
Students at Santa Monica College held a rally last week to protest a proposed two-tiered tuition system that will offer some courses at a higher price.

2-Year College, Squeezed, Sets 2-Tier Tuition

By JENNIFER MEDINA

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — For years now, administrators at the community college here have been inundated with woeful tales from students unable to register for the courses they need. Classes they want for essential job training or to fulfill requirements to transfer to four-year universities fill up within hours. Hundreds of students resort to crying and begging to enroll in a class, lining up at the doors of instructors and academic counselors.

Now, though, Santa Monica College is about to try something novel. This summer it will offer some courses for a higher price, so that students who are eager to get into a particular class can do so if they pay more.

The plan may be the first of its kind in the country, college officials and other higher education experts say, and if the college succeeds in implementing it, many other community colleges are likely to follow. Since 2009, enrollment in California community colleges has fallen by 300,000...
students, to 2.6 million, and many believe the difficulty of registering for classes is the most important deterrent.

For generations, community colleges have been seen as a social equalizer, providing a relatively inexpensive education for poor students, immigrants and others without the skills, grades or money to attend a four-year institution.

So the two-tiered tuition structure being proposed here is raising eyebrows, and fundamental questions, about the role and obligations of community colleges. Will the policy essentially block some of the people it is designed to benefit? Many students believe the new policy — if the state does not block its implementation, which it could yet do — will unfairly exclude the poorest students and create a kind of upper and lower class of students.

A financial squeeze since the recession led first to a reduction of federal and then state financing for colleges and universities. Since 2008, California’s community college system has lost $809 million in state aid, including $564 million in the most recent budget, even as more students than ever before try to enroll.

Many colleges have reduced class offerings. Santa Monica College has cut more than 1,100 classes from its fall term.

David Baime, the senior vice president for government relations and research at the American Association of Community Colleges, called the Santa Monica plan “extremely rare if not completely unprecedented.”

But the impetus behind it, he said, is clear. “In many cases, and California most prominently, amid the recession there was a huge spike in enrollment concurrent with budget cuts,” Mr. Baime said. “The colleges have just maxed out in terms of how many students they can serve.”

Community colleges are hardly the only places suffering budget cuts. Last week, administrators of the California State University system approved a plan to significantly limit the number of students it accepts next year because budget cuts have made it impossible to pay for any enrollment increase.

“Every year we look around and think about how we can serve more students, but what we have now is not working,” said Chui L. Tsang, the president of Santa Monica College. “Literally thousands of students are missing out on opportunities we want to give them and have the ability to give them if we just had the money.”
Officials in the California Community Colleges chancellor’s office said that they could move to block Santa Monica’s proposed tuition increase. They said that it was not clear such a change was legal and that the program could limit access for students, particularly those who did not have enough money to pay for the more expensive courses.

Currently, each community college class costs $36 per credit hour. Under Santa Monica’s plan, the more expensive courses would cost $180 per credit hour — just enough to cover the college’s costs, Dr. Tsang said.

While the college is still ironing out the details, it expects to offer about 200 courses at the higher tuition price, in addition to hundreds of regularly priced courses. College officials say that nearly every class is filled to capacity and that they are asking departments to choose which courses have the highest demand so they can offer more of those — typically basic courses in English, writing, math and science.

For now, the college does not plan to offer the higher-priced courses in the fall and spring semesters, but will charge $180 per credit for all classes in the shorter winter term. Nearly every other community college in the state has eliminated the winter term because of budget cuts.

“There is a real concern about equity here, because if there are higher fees that will only gain access for certain students, does that really address the problem,” said Paul Feist, the vice chancellor for communications of the California Community Colleges. “The reality is that there are hundreds of thousands of students who are not getting access to community college — and access has always been what we are famous for.”

Santa Monica College, which has 34,000 students, is widely considered one of the most successful community colleges in the country, with one of the highest transfer rates to four-year colleges. Many students from Los Angeles choose to attend the school for their first two years as a way to save money.

California community colleges have some of the lowest tuition fees in the country. And for decades, the community college system has operated under the presumption that lower fees translated into greater access, said John Aubrey Douglass, a senior researcher at the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley. But as budget cuts have forced campuses to dramatically scale back what they can offer, that paradigm has begun to shift.

“There’s a sense that if the colleges can generate the adequate income themselves, they may no longer be struggling with the lack of resources,
because there is certainly a tremendous level of demand,” Dr. Douglass said. “It’s a much-needed conversation that we need to have — is it possible our tuition is too low? This is a very important move to push the envelope.”

One donor has agreed to give $250,000 in scholarships for students who want to take the more expensive classes but cannot afford them. Dr. Tsang hopes that will make the program more attractive.

Also, since Santa Monica is prosperous enough to have built a community college relatively rich in facilities, it tends to draw students from across the Los Angeles region. Some say such students may be more willing to pay higher tuition rates.

Janet Harclerode, an English instructor and president of the college’s Academic Senate, said that many professors viewed the new plan as having a “real ick factor,” but that few saw any real alternative. Many instructors have already accepted extra students in their classrooms, even allowing a few to sit on the floor when seats were scarce.

“We hope that this is just a stopgap measure, before taxpayers step up and the state really starts to reinvest in the colleges,” she said.