Upset about his recent expulsion and incensed about being teased for his poor English, a 43-year-old Korean national allegedly opened fire inside Oikos University in Oakland, Calif., on Monday, shooting 10 students and killing at least seven. The story received due attention on national newscasts that night, but by week’s end will likely be little more than a memory to much of the country.

Not so for officials at East Carolina University, on whom rests the responsibility for the security and protection of nearly 25,000 students as well as hundreds of faculty, staff and administrators. The attack in California serves as the latest reminder of the threat that faces open campuses like that in Greenville and the value of safety seminars like one at East Carolina last week.

Reuben Young, the state’s secretary of crime control and public safety, urged constant vigilance when he delivered the keynote address on March 28 at the sixth annual North Carolina Higher Education Safety Symposium. The event brought together the state’s colleges and universities — and, via digital satellite, schools from around the world — to discuss strategies and ideas for providing campus safety.

It is an unfortunately necessary topic for education officials. The 1999 mass shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado motivated many secondary schools to bolster security measures, but it was not until the horrific slaughter of 32 students and instructors at Virginia Tech five years ago that colleges and universities received a similar wake-up call.

Since then, schools like East Carolina have sought to learn from that 2007 incident, improving communication outlets to the university community, drafting emergency response plans and conducting drills to test responses. Those preparations received an unexpected test in November when Greenville police reported a gunman spotted near campus, triggering a three-hour lockdown. There was no threat — the gun was actually an umbrella — but East Carolina officials saw flaws in their approach through what became an invaluable exercise.
There is no way to keep a university population completely safe, not when the very nature of higher education hinges on cultivating an open, accessible environment free from fear. No amount of preparation can assure that what happened at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois or on Monday in Oakland will not happen here. Yet, there is a measure of comfort to be found in the emergency planning drafted and refined at East Carolina, and with it some hope that such tragedy never visits this community.
UNC system president defends proposed personnel change

By Mark Schultz - mschultz@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL—UNC system President Tom Ross is defending a proposal to remove university workers from the State Personnel Act.

In an interview, the president of the 17-campus university system, said having one personnel system for workers both exempt from and currently subject to the State Personnel Act would benefit everyone.

“We’re not interested in taking away the rights of our SPA employees,” he said. “Unfortunately some outside groups have attempted to create that fear. What we want to do is create flexibility to do more for our employees.”

Senate Bill 575 – the Higher Education Efficiency and Flexibility Act sponsored by Republican Sens. Richard Stevens of Wake County and Jerry Tillman of Randolph County – would put an estimated 22,000 workers under the direct authority of the UNC Board of Governors.

Among other provisions, the board would adopt policies on compensation, health and disability benefits, and “any other human resource policy the Board deems appropriate to promote the recruitment and retention of capable, diligent, and effective employees.”

Although the bill failed to meet a crossover deadline for consideration this legislative session, supporters and opponents say the personnel provision could be inserted into a final budget bill.

Rally today
Last week, a group sent a letter signed by 130 individuals and organizations to UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp, asking him to publicly state where he stands and to speak at a rally at 4:30 p.m. today outside South Building on the UNC-CH campus.

“If SB 575 is passed .... there would be no higher authority, no external, objective system of checks and balances to catch possible or actual abuses of power,” the letter says.

Critics fear the bill would end policies that protect them against unfair treatment and for reporting workplace problems. They worry about putting personnel rules in the hands of an appointed board.

Dana Cope, executive director of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, said the legislation would let the university system divert resources from SPA workers to faculty and non-faculty exempt workers.

“The university, in our opinion, is historically bad for rank and file employees,” he said. Housekeepers have relied on the state grievance process to protect their workplace rights and working conditions, he said. One of the signers of last week’s letter was former campus police officer Keith Edwards, a black woman who won a settlement from the university after fighting a years-long grievance battle when she was passed over for promotion.

The new personnel system is not even written yet. Cope added. “Basically what they’re trying to do is say, ‘Trust us.’”

Ross that’s unfair.

“I really believe no one has more interest in happy, successful employees than the institution that employs them,” he said.

**Education efforts**

Just over half of all workers on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus are SPA employees, 12,578 or 52 percent, according to a report Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Brenda Richardson Malone gave trustees last month. Another 7,280 or 30 percent are non-faculty EPA workers, and 4,301 or 18 percent are faculty.

Malone said the campus has tried to educate workers about the proposed changes, sending out information last year and providing an email drop box for questions and concerns for six weeks.

“We saw a little bit of everything,” she said.
Like Ross, she said some of the criticism has been inaccurate. For example, “this doesn’t impact benefits,” she said. “And it’s been a source of confusion. This would not impact those at all.”

The UNC-CH Employee Forum passed a resolution last June against the personnel provisions in SB 575. In an email, forum chair Jackie Overton said for now she has nothing else to say about it.

The resolution did say the forum would support an alternative human resources process that kept the same protections now protected by state law and if the process was developed in a collaborative way with staff, faculty and administrators.

**Losing people**

Ross said he’s disappointed in SEANC’s and some others’ response to SB 575.

“Some employees don’t trust the university,” he said. “I don’t know why that is.”

Any new system would have a grievance process and protection for campus whistleblowers, he said, and there is no move to make SPA workers “at-will” employees able to be terminated at any time for any reason.

A new personnel system could ultimately benefit SEANC members and all workers, he said. The university could give high performing workers merit pay, something it can’t do now. It could find efficiencies that could help retain workers who have not had raises in four years, he said.

“Frankly we’re losing a lot of people,” he said. “It starts with IT people; it’s happening on our campuses now.”

Putting more authority in the hands of people closer to the university system is a good thing, he said. “The closer the responsible group, the more accountable to the employees they’re going to be and the more respectful they’re going to be to the employees.”

Schultz: 919-932-2003

**Guiding principles**

UNC system leaders have drafted a set of guiding principles to help develop a possible new personnel system.

- The University will develop the new unified system in accordance with best practices in public higher education.
- University employees will have substantive input in the development of the new unified system through their peer-elected representatives in the UNC Staff and Faculty Assemblies.

- The University will adopt policies and procedures that maintain and strengthen the existing practice for the fair evaluation and treatment of employees in all areas of employment, including employee development and performance.

- The unified system will not eliminate any existing property rights that employees have, including ensuring “just cause” protections for career status employees.

- Adverse employment actions will be subject to due process and reviewable through structured procedures that provide for fair notice and the opportunity for the employee to be heard.

- UNC will use compensation policies and procedures that recognize the contribution, experience, and service of UNC employees.

- UNC employees will continue to have access to State of North Carolina benefits (retirement, health insurance, and the like) as authorized by the General Assembly.

- UNC will continue to refine policies, procedures, and practices in ways that will enhance its ability to be an employer of choice.
The Wilmington Star News

Published: Tuesday, April 3, 2012 at 5:05 p.m.

Gingrich to speak at UNCW event

Wilmington | Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich will be bringing his campaign to the University of North Carolina Wilmington on Wednesday, according to a release from the university.

Gingrich will speak at the Lumina Theatre on campus at 3:30 p.m. The event is sponsored by UNCW's College Republicans. State policy requires that any political campaign event must be sponsored by a student organization, according to the release.

– Pressley Baird
The Wilmington Star News
Published: Tuesday, April 3, 2012 at 11:17 p.m.

UNCW's Josh Abshire dives back to first base under the tag of East Carolinas John Wooten at Brooks Field Tuesday night. Photo by Mike Spencer

East Carolina blanks Seahawks
By Chuck Carree
Chuck.Carree@StarNewsOnline.com

The UNCW baseball team was shut out for the first time in its past 20 games in suffering a 5-0 defeat to East Carolina Tuesday at Brooks Field.

In winning 12 of the previous 15 games, the Seahawks had delivered in the clutch. However, they stranded 10 base runners against the Pirates.

"We just couldn't deliver those two-out hits," UNCW coach Mark Scalf said. "We had been doing a pretty good job of that recently, but tonight I didn't think we were as aggressive as we had been early in the count."

The Seahawks were 2 for 19 with two outs with runners on.

"We took too many fastballs early and then we had to fight to get out of bad counts," Scalf said. "We had some pretty good at-bats fighting some pitches off. Unfortunately, though, we ended those innings with strikeouts."

It was not a pretty game. The squads left a combined 22 runners stranded, including 12 by the Pirates. The clubs also left 16 runners in scoring position.
The teams combined for 18 hits. Hunter Ridge and Drew Farber led UNCW (15-13) with two hits each.

Former Brunswick Community College standout Jay Cannon drove in three runs for the Pirates, including an RBI on a bases-loaded hit by pitch in the ninth inning.

Seahawks starting pitcher Travis Bradley (0-1) struggled, surrendering three runs in the third before being relieved following Cannon's two-run, bases-loaded single.

In contrast, Pirates' starter Jeff Hoffman (1-0) scattered six hits over six innings before leaving with one out in the seventh. Tanner Merritt earned his fifth save for the Pirates (20-8).

Seahawks reliever Ricky Holden pitched 4 1/3 scoreless innings, giving up only three hits. He has now pitched 15 consecutive shutout innings.

Scalf went to the bullpen often as the Seahawks used six pitchers.

"I thought we pitched pretty well out of the bullpen, but in the ninth there we have to be able to turn double plays on ground balls with the infield in," Scalf said.

"Ricky did a tremendous job, and during that time we put runners out there on base when Ricky was on the mound."

The Seahawks begin a three-game series Thursday at TCU before returning home next Tuesday to face rival Coastal Carolina.

"The biggest thing I want to see out of our guys going down to TCU is play the game the way we are capable," Scalf said. "You can't let the atmosphere or name on the front of the other jersey dictate a change in your approach.

"You don't have to do anything extra, and I felt like tonight guys took it as a bigger game and felt like they had to do more. You tend to lock up when you do that. We have to be able to relax and play aggressively when we get down to TCU."
Oakland college gunman sought to settle score, police say

One L. Goh, a South Korean national who was teased for his broken English, was expelled from Oikos University for anger problems, police say. He returned Monday, they say, and killed seven people.

By Maria L. La Ganga and Victoria Kim, Los Angeles Times

OAKLAND — The police dispatcher's voice is calm and measured. The reporting party, she says, "is advising shots are coming from inside the building. People are running out screaming.... There's a female, bleeding, she's down on the ground, face-down on the concrete and bleeding."

When it was over, six students and a secretary at a small Christian college were shot to death, allegedly at the hands of a 43-year-old South Korean national who had once been a nursing student there.

On Tuesday, a portrait began to emerge of a troubled man who apparently returned to Oikos University to settle a score.

One L. Goh had been expelled from Oikos this year "for behavioral problems, anger management," Oakland Police Chief Howard Jordan told reporters Tuesday. Goh had been teased for his broken English, and he felt bullied and angry, Jordan said.

He arrived at the campus in an industrial section of east Oakland on Monday morning looking for a certain administrator, officials said, but when he couldn't find her, he grabbed a secretary and headed to a classroom.

He allegedly ordered the students inside to line up against the wall. When some refused, he opened fire, officials said. He had time during the rampage, authorities believe, to reload and continue shooting.

Six women and one man were killed. They ranged in age from 21 to 53 and were from South Korea, Nigeria, Nepal and the Philippines, largely immigrant students learning English, nursing, theology and Asian medicine. The secretary, Jordan said, was Goh's first victim.

"We don't believe that any of the victims were the ones that teased him," Jordan said. "We believed he stopped [shooting] because people were able to use the phone. He could have heard people calling 911."
Goh had yet to be charged Tuesday. He was scheduled to appear in court Wednesday.

In response to the shooting spree, the neighborhood around the school was sealed off for five hours. Goh has told police, more or less, where he threw the handgun used in the attack, and officers were on the shore of the Oakland Estuary with two police boats and a robotic sonar device looking for the weapon Tuesday, said Officer Johnna Watson, the Oakland police spokeswoman.

"The suspect has been cooperative in certain areas," Watson said. But, she added, "he has not shown any signs of remorse for his actions yesterday, shooting 10 people, seven deceased."

H.Y. Kim said she was in her English class on campus Monday morning, along with nearly 20 other students, when they heard a woman's scream, then rapid gunfire. Her instructor yelled for the students to run, and they scattered, terrified, heading for the rear parking lot.

Kim got in her car, hit the gas and did not look back.

Bhutia Tshering, 38, a Buddhist who worked nights as a janitor at San Francisco International Airport, was apparently Goh's last victim. The nursing student, who came from the Indian state of Sikkim near the Himalaya Mountains and lived in San Francisco, was killed when the gunman stole his car to make a getaway, according to the Contra Costa Times.

Tshering was one of six victims identified Tuesday by the Alameda County Sheriff's Office Coroner's Bureau. Identification of the seventh has been withheld pending identification of next of kin. The other victims are Judith O. Seymore, 53, of San Jose; Lydia H. Sim, 21, of Hayward; Sonam Choedon, 33, of El Cerrito; Kim G. Eunhea, 23, of Union City; and Doris Chibuko, 40, of San Leandro.

Police say Goh purchased the handgun legally in California this year. After leaving the carnage behind, authorities believe, he headed to Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline near Oakland International Airport and tossed the gun into the water.

His next stop, authorities say, was a Safeway at the Alameda South Shore Center, a mall about five miles from Oikos University. Goh went to the grocery store sometime in late morning or early afternoon, sources at the mall said.
"He tripped and fell coming out the door," said one source, who requested that her name not be used because police were investigating. "A security officer came over to make sure he was OK, and the guy turned emotional and broke down and asked the security guy to call the Police Department."

Alameda police officers detained Goh until Oakland officers could retrieve him.

Goh's family immigrated to the United States from South Korea sometime in the late 1980s and ran a liquor store in Virginia, according to a colleague who worked with Goh's father at a Korean market across the bay in Daly City.

Young Ko, Goh's father, who is in his 70s, lives in an Oakland apartment building for seniors and commutes by BART train six days a week to his job stocking merchandise, said the colleague, who declined to give his name.

Early last year, that routine was interrupted when his youngest son, who was in the Army, was killed in an accident. Ko missed a few days' work to set his affairs in order, then returned, mourning silently and privately.

On Monday, his day was interrupted when his phone rang with news concerning another of his sons, the second of three, this one a different kind of tragedy. He hurriedly ran out of the market, telling a worried colleague only that he had a pressing matter to attend to.

A few years after Ko began working at the market, he asked the owner to give his son a job. Goh got the job, but he appeared dissatisfied and had difficulty adjusting. After butting heads with colleagues, he left the job after less than a year.

He worked briefly for a San Mateo company, delivering sacks of rice. That job didn't last long either. His father began worrying about what Goh would do once he is no longer around, Ko's colleague recalled.

Ko was the one who saw the ad for the Oikos nursing program. He was the one who urged his son to enroll. And he was the one who paid the tuition.

maria.laganga@latimes.com
victoria.kim@latimes.com
Los Angeles Times staff writers Ashley Powers, Lee Romney and Matt Stevens contributed to this report.
Giving Women the Access Code

By KATIE HAFNER

CLAREMONT, Calif. — When Maria Klawe became president of Harvey Mudd College in 2006, she was dismayed — but not surprised — at how few women were majoring in computer science.

A mathematician and computer scientist herself, she arrived at Harvey Mudd (the smallest of the five so-called Claremont Colleges) in the midst of a nationwide downturn for women in computer science. As recently as 1985, 37 percent of graduates in the field were women; by 2005 it was down to 22 percent, and sinking.

And the situation at Mudd was even grimmer. Of the college’s 750 students, about a third were women (the figure is now closer to half), but for years the percentage of computer science graduates had been hovering around the single digits.

How Dr. Klawe (pronounced KLAH-vay) and her faculty turned things around — this year, nearly 40 percent of Harvey Mudd’s computer science degrees will go to women — sheds light on a gender gap that elsewhere remains stubbornly resistant to changing times.
Thanks in part to companies like Facebook, Yelp and Zynga and in part to cultural sensations like the movie “The Social Network,” coders are hip and computer science is hot. Departments across the nation are brimming with students.

But those students are overwhelmingly male. In 2010, just 18.2 percent of undergraduates in the field were women, according to the National Center for Education Statistics — in spite of gains in chemistry, biomechanical engineering and other so-called STEM fields (the acronym stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

“It must be the unique area of science and technology where women have made negative progress,” said Nicholas Pippenger, a mathematics professor at Harvey Mudd, who is married to Dr. Klawe.

Dr. Klawe and others say the underrepresentation of women in the field is detrimental in a larger sense. Computer science, they say, is as vital to propelling society forward in the digital era as mechanical engineering was in the industrial age.

“If we’re not getting more women to be part of that, it’s just nuts,” Dr. Klawe said. At Mudd, she continued, “we’re graduating 20 female computer science majors a year, and every one of them is a gem.” In 2005, the year before Dr. Klawe arrived, a group of faculty members embarked on a full makeover of the introductory computer science course, a requirement at Mudd.

Known as CS 5, the course focused on hard-core programming, appealing to a particular kind of student — young men, already seasoned programmers, who dominated the class. This only reinforced the women’s sense that computer science was for geeky know-it-alls.

“Most of the female students were unwilling to go on in computer science because of the stereotypes they had grown up with,” said Zachary Dodds, a computer scientist at Mudd. “We realized we were helping perpetuate that by teaching such a standard course.”

To reduce the intimidation factor, the course was divided into two sections — “gold,” for those with no prior experience, and “black” for everyone else. Java, a notoriously opaque programming language, was replaced by a more accessible language called Python. And the focus of the course changed to computational approaches to solving problems across science.
“We realized that we needed to show students computer science is not all about programming,” said Ran Libeskind-Hadas, chairman of the department. “It has intellectual depth and connections to other disciplines.”

Dr. Klawe supported the cause wholeheartedly, and provided money from the college for every female freshman to travel to the annual Grace Hopper conference, named after a pioneering programmer. The conference, where freshmen are surrounded by female role models, has inspired many a first-year “Mudder” to explore computer science more seriously.

Firsthand Experience

The topic of women in computing was a preoccupation for Dr. Klawe well before she took over at Harvey Mudd, in part because when she chose her profession, women in male-dominated fields were especially rare.

“She was consistently told by teachers in adolescence, then later by colleagues, that the things she was interested in were things women didn’t do, and that there were no good female mathematicians,” Dr. Pippenger said.

Dr. Klawe persevered. A native Canadian, she received her Ph.D. in mathematics in 1977 from the University of Alberta. She started a second Ph.D., in computer science, at the University of Toronto, but was offered a faculty position there before completing the degree.

In 1980, she married Dr. Pippenger, a highly regarded theoretical computer scientist, and for the first decade of their marriage Dr. Klawe was the professional afterthought. In the 1980s, they both worked at the I.B.M. Almaden Research Center in San Jose, Calif. “They only hired me so they wouldn’t lose Nick,” Dr. Klawe said.

They moved to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in 1988, and Dr. Klawe’s talents as an administrator began to blossom. In 2002, she was recruited to Princeton University as dean of engineering and applied sciences.

“By the time we went to Princeton,” Dr. Pippenger said, “it was clear they were hiring me because they really wanted to get Maria.” Dr. Klawe, a slight and sprightly woman, had not been at Princeton long before she began receiving recruiting inquiries. “If you’re a female administrator at a place like Princeton, you’ll get a request to be president or provost twice a week,” she said. “A lot of times it’s not that they care about you, but they need a credible female candidate.”
She seldom read beyond the first few lines. “I had this automatic message saying I was honored to be nominated, but had no intention of leaving Princeton in the near future,” she said.

Then one day in 2005, an announcement about the search for a president at Harvey Mudd floated into her in-box. She knew about the college and couldn’t resist opening the attachment.

“I read it and thought, ‘Oh, my God, the person they’re talking about for this job is exactly me,’ ” she said.

Soon after arriving at Mudd, she gathered the school’s extended community to help formulate a long-term strategic vision. “She shut down the school for four days,” said Robert Cave, vice president for academic affairs. “She said, ‘I want the entire community to be involved in charting the course of Harvey Mudd for the next 10 years.’ ”

In her third year on the job, Dr. Klawe landed the largest single contribution in the college’s 57-year history — $25 million from R. Michael Shanahan, a financier and the former chairman of Mudd’s board, who has since given an additional $6 million.

Now 60, Dr. Klawe is most often seen on campus in jeans — even, sometimes, on a skateboard, a skill she taught herself in just the last few years. (“We would all really worry if she didn’t wear her protective gear,” Dr. Cave said.)

Her leadership style is equally informal, and it has taken some of the faculty by surprise. Professor Libeskind-Hadas recalled that at one of the first full faculty meetings, she spoke while sitting on a table in front of the room.

In a nod to Mudd’s very personal character, Dr. Klawe said, every summer she uses a flash card program to memorize the names of the nearly 200 incoming freshmen. On campus, she greets each student she passes by name. When the occasional prankster tries to stump her by presenting her with a non-Mudder, “usually I can figure it out,” she said, “but not always.”

She is an inveterate booster and recruiter for Harvey Mudd. On planes and ski lifts, at conferences and in far-flung restaurants, she often wears a T-shirt reading, “The Most Amazing School You’ve Never Heard Of.” (The answer is on the back. Harvey Mudd, by the way, was a mining magnate in the first half of the 20th century.)

**Finding Success**
Efforts like these are bearing fruit. More high school seniors than ever are applying to Harvey Mudd. The college now accepts just 17 percent of applicants, and routinely snatches high school seniors who might otherwise choose better-known institutions like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Carnegie Mellon.

Dr. Klawe sometimes does the recruiting herself, sending personal messages to fence-sitters. “You tell her about a kid you really want and within four seconds, she’s sent an e-mail,” said Thyra Briggs, Mudd’s vice president for admission and financial aid.

Dr. Klawe and others speak of “converting” female students to computer science. The idea, they say, is to make the introductory course enjoyable and interesting enough that women who were thinking of other majors choose computer science instead.

Bridgette Eichelberger, a sophomore, is one such convert. She entered Mudd interested in engineering, only to switch computer science after taking CS 5.

“I’m in my required engineering course now, and it’s fun,” she said. “But it’s nothing like the happiness I’ve been getting from C.S. courses.” She has a job lined up for the summer, working for Microsoft.

“If she had missed computer science, it would have been a missed opportunity for both sides,” Professor Dodds said.

Whether Mudd’s success can be replicated on a broad scale is unclear. Only a handful of colleges make computer science a requirement, which creates built-in exposure to the subject. And with fewer than 100 female freshmen, Mudd can afford to send all of them to the Hopper conference.

Still, signs of progress dot the higher education landscape.

At Carnegie Mellon, the percentage of incoming women enrolled in the computer science program has been rising since 2008, and is at 32 percent. M.I.T.’s figure is 30 percent. “Close to 50 percent of our undergraduates are women,” said Barbara Liskov, a computer scientist there. “So having 30 percent is nice, and better than it used to be, but not as good as you might hope for.”

The University of California, Berkeley, and a few other universities have also redesigned their computer science courses to be less intimidating. The Berkeley course aimed at nonmajors is called “The Beauty and Joy of Computing.” Brian Harvey, a computer scientist there, said half the students who finish the course go on to take the course for majors. “We are 150
students per semester and climbing,” he said, adding that half the students are women and women do as well as the men.

Bucknell University, in Lewisburg, Pa., recently adopted the “gold” version of Mudd’s CS 5 course in its entirety.

Stanford is also working to make computer science more attractive to women. “What Harvey Mudd has done is super,” said Stephen Cooper, a computer scientist there. “What other schools need to do is take a serious look at what works for their own environment.”

Despite the success at her own campus, Dr. Klawe continues her crusade to lift the numbers. She visits other universities and corporations to give advice on recruiting women to STEM careers — and retaining them. Often she reminds her audience that for much of her career she felt like an impostor.

Jennifer Tour Chayes, a friend of Dr. Klawe’s who is managing director of Microsoft Research New England, in Cambridge, Mass., says that is an important lesson.

“Women are often questioned, and then they take the impostor syndrome as their inner voice, as proof they shouldn’t go on,” she said. “What they need to know is that women like Maria also had that inner voice, and luckily they went on, and look how they’re doing.”

In spite of unequivocal evidence to the contrary, Dr. Klawe still has moments when she is convinced she is an impostor.

“If you’re constantly pushing yourself, and putting yourself in new environments, you’ll feel it over and over again,” she said. “So the only really important thing is not to let it stop you.”
Some 2012 college admissions rates hit new lows

Ivy League schools along with some other highly selective colleges and universities have been proudly announcing historically low admissions rates for freshmen entering next fall — as if the figures actually have real importance and meaning.

Thanks to the rise of the college rankings, led by the powerful U.S. News & World Report rankings, colleges and universities have been bending over backwards to find ways to make their “selectivity rates” — that is, the percentage of students they accept vs. the number of applications they get — look as low as possible. It is one of the criteria that helps push schools up in the rankings.

Harvard University just announced an all-time low rate of 5.9 percent and, it seems important for people to know, is the seventh consecutive year that Harvard’s admission rate has fallen! It so happens that the applicant pool of 34,302 was down 1.9 percent from 2011, but yet, a total of 2,032 offers were made to freshmen, 100 fewer than last year.

At Yale University, the admissions rate of 6.8 percent was announced for the Class of 2016, along with the news that the season had been the most competitive in university history, with a record 28,974 applicants.

Some other Ivy schools also proudly announced the smallest admissions rates ever — Princeton (7.86 percent), Dartmouth(9.4 percent) — as did schools such as Northwestern University (15 percent), Georgetown University (16.5 percent) and Barnard College (21 percent).

Oh joy. More kids than ever got rejected.

It’s important to remember a few things about these admissions rates.

For one thing, at most schools in America, most kids who apply get in, and many of these schools are terrific.
For another, the selectivity rates have been driven down by the rising number of applications to individual institutions, partly a result of the use of the Common Application, which makes it easier to apply to more schools than in the days when each school had entirely different applications.

More kids who don’t have a prayer of getting into some of these schools apply anyway, but schools still get to brag that they have a record number of applications. As a result, some admissions counselors note that the percentage of kids who have a real shot at getting into some of these schools doesn’t go up much — if at all — from year to year.

Related to this is what may be a growing number of applications, many of them international, and many of those from China, that have elements that ring false. This story done jointly by The New York Times and the Chronicle of Higher Education says that a growing number of applications from China are at least partly fraudulent. In fact, one consulting company that advises American schools about China did a study and concluded that 90 percent of Chinese applicants send phony recommendations in with their applications, and that 70 percent send in essays written by others; and half have phony school transcripts.

Then there is the issue of how schools use wait lists. Some under-invite in the regular admissions season so they can fill out later from the wait list — after they have announced just how selective they are. Others may not do it deliberately, but wind up taking a lot of kids from the wait list anyway.

Vanderbilt University’s Undergraduate Admissions blog makes it clear that lots of students get off the wait list. In this post, it says that in 2010, several thousand students were offered spots on the wait list though only 35 percent chose to keep their names on it. Of those, 19 percent earned admissions, and, ultimately 10 percent of the next freshman class came off the wait list.

So when you look at really low admissions rates, remember they may not be all that they seem.
A New Twist in B-School Recruiting
Posted by: Alison Damast on April 03, 2012

Companies that want to foster deeper relationships with business schools typically send recruiters to campus, bring executives to speak in classes, and hire students for internships and full-time jobs. This year, Nielsen Holdings (NLSN), a global information and measurement company, took that relationship one step further, moving into an office in Miami University’s Farmer School of Business campus in Oxford, Ohio, and holding office hours several times a week.

The company’s physical presence on campus is part of Nielsen’s effort to work more closely with six schools with which it has strategic partnerships, including New York University, Northwestern, and Rutgers, says Susan Hunsberger, senior vice president of human resources at Nielsen. The company works closely with these institutions, sponsoring classes and case competitions and dispatching Nielsen executives to work with students. The Farmer School is the only one that provides a physical space on campus at which students and faculty can talk to company representatives about how to most effectively use Nielsen data for class projects, she says.

“It really is about developing a partnership that helps the students recognize we’ve got a vested interested in them,” she says.

The alliance between the school and Nielsen grew as a result of the company’s work with it over the last few years, says Farmer School Dean Roger Jenkins. About 75 alumni from Miami University currently work at Nielsen and frequently visit the school as guest lecturers, judges in business competitions, and sponsors of classes in which students act as consultants to solve real-world problems that face companies. Says Jenkins: “We wanted to take the relationship to the next level.”

Universities setting aside office space for companies on campus could be the next step in B-school corporate relationships, says Jenkins, who expects other universities to follow suit. His goal? To establish similar relationships with five to seven additional companies in the next five years.
“Companies are trying to raise the game a bit in how much brand coverage they get on campus, which is a good thing,” he says.

Students and faculty are taking advantage of Nielsen’s presence on campus by making use of the company’s wealth of consumer data in some of the school’s more experiential, data-driven classes. For example, seniors in the marketing department’s High Wire Brand Studio class are using Nielsen data this spring to help one of Nielsen’s clients with brand positioning, category sales, and strategies to differentiate itself from the competition, says Gillian Oakenfull, an associate professor of marketing and director of experiential learning.

Erica Kahler, 21, a senior at the Farmer School taking the High Wire Brand Studio class, says she frequently stops by the Nielsen office to speak about how to collect and analyze consumer data for a project her team is working on for Pantene, a Procter & Gamble (PG) product.

“Being able to actually go every week and talk with an analyst at Nielsen about the best way to go about conducting a focus group or survey helps us better execute our work,” Kahler says. “You also start to build relationships with them, which can turn into internships and jobs opportunities.”

Nielsen’s constant presence on campus seems to be paying dividends for both the company and students. Nielsen has increased its hiring of Farmer students by 40 percent over the last five years, having hired 22 students from the B-school last year, Hunsberger says. Five or six students from the school will serve as interns this summer, she says.

“We’ve seen a significant increase in interest in our company over the last couple of years, and we attribute it to this relationship we have with the school,” says Hunsberger. “This is just a natural way to create visibility and to create a buzz around your company.”