THE DAILY CLIPS

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What's Making That Awful Racket? Surprisingly, It May Be Fish

By NONNY DE LA PEÑA


It was the end of January 2005, during the spawning season for a fish appropriately called the black drum. Nightly mating calls were at a crescendo. But no one living in the area seemed to realize the din was of aquatic origin.

The retirees who had come to spend their winters relaxing on the gentle estuaries and canals of the Gulf Coast in Florida blamed the municipal utility system. They were pushing the City Council to pay an engineering firm more than $47,000 to eliminate the noise reverberating through their homes.

Then James Locascio, a doctoral student in marine science at the University of South Florida, rescued the city from financial folly. After reading the newspaper article, Mr. Locascio called a Council member just hours before a vote to appropriate the money. He explained that at 100 to 500 hertz, black drum mating calls travel at a low enough frequency and long enough wavelength to carry through sea walls, into the ground and through the construction of waterfront homes like the throbbing beat in a passing car.

"Black drum have taken a liking to the canal system in Cape Coral," Mr. Locascio said. "Their nightly booming is like a water drip torture that lasts for months."

At first residents wouldn't buy it. "The most vocal and persistent complainers said that there was no way a fish could produce a sound that could be heard inside a house," he recalled.

Mr. Locascio and David Mann, a marine biologist at the University of South Florida who is a bioacoustics expert, recruited these naysayers into a study by asking them to score noise levels and times in notebooks. "We took their data and plotted them with the fish sounds we had recorded with hydrophones under the water," Mr. Locascio said. "Concordance was perfect."

A similar situation unfolded two decades ago in Sausalito, Calif., when houseboaters were inundated with toadfish calls. The Marin Independent Journal said in an editorial, "We don't believe for an instant that..."
the drone keeping Sausalito houseboaters awake at night is caused by a bunch of romantic toadfish humming their version of the Indian Love Song.”

Greg Coppa, a retired high school science teacher, was also greeted with derision when he said he heard noisy fish while boating near Block Island in Rhode Island. “Some people even asked what I drank before hearing the sounds or gave me that look reserved for a good but pathetically impaired friend,” Mr. Coppa said, laughing.

With the help of Rodney A. Rountree, a senior scientist at the research company Marine Ecology and Technical Applications and an adjunct assistant professor at University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Mr. Coppa learned that the fish he had imagined to be a massive sea creature was actually the tiny striped cusk eel, which can sound like a jackhammer.

Naturalists as far back as Aristotle have known that fish make sounds. But when Jacques Cousteau titled his 1956 documentary “The Silent World,” it seemed that he captured the public’s imagination about underwater life while leaving our ears deaf to fish barks, chatter, groans, drones and cries.

“His diving tanks masked all the sounds in the water,” Dr. Rountree said. “In fact, the oceans are a noisy place.”

Yet of the 30,000 species out there, only about 1,200 sound producers have been cataloged, and far fewer have been recorded. Even common goldfish have merited just two scientific publications. In fact, said Philip Lobel, a professor of biology at Boston University, “Most aquarium fish are sonic. Keeping fish in an aquarium is like keeping a canary in a soundproof cage.”

The most definitive tome on fish sounds was published in 1973 by the auspiciously named Marie Poland Fish and William H. Mowbray. Working at the Narragansett Marine Laboratory at Rhode Island University, they were granted access to Navy audio recordings made to detect enemy submarines. Because noisy underwater life kept interfering with the military’s objectives, the authors were asked to tease out the biologic from the manmade. The resulting work, “Sounds of Western North Atlantic Fishes: A Reference File of Underwater Biologic Sounds,” identifies the vocalizations of over 150 fish.

For most fish, the sonic mechanism is a muscle that vibrates a swim bladder not unlike our vocal cord. The bladder is a gas-filled sac used for buoyancy, but it can also be used as a sort of drum. The Gulf toadfish contracts its sonic muscle against its swim bladder thousands of times a minute to generate a loud drone. At nearly three times the average wingbeat of a hummingbird, toadfish have the fastest known muscle of any vertebrate. Cusk eel rattle bones against their bladder, but clownfish have a sonic ligament they use to “chirp.”
Other fish use stridulation, rubbing their bones together in a way that is comparable to plinking the tines on a comb or using a ratchet mechanism on their pectoral fins to make sounds. Herring release bubbles from their anus in a “fast repetitive tick.”

Still, despite careful dissection, the sonic mechanism in many species remains a mystery.

Fish sounds have been documented as a way to attract mates, to show aggression and to express fear or distress, but other subtle “speech” characteristics go undeciphered.

“They have a fairly sophisticated mechanism of sound communication, with different meanings depending on the social context of the sounds,” said Andrew H. Bass, a professor of neurobiology and behavior at Cornell University. “Sound communication probably first evolved among fishes.”

Despite the variety and sometimes voraciousness of the noise, fish can rarely be heard from shore, because the meeting point between air and water creates an actual sound barrier. Sounds generally bounce off the air-water interface.

New sophisticated, and less expensive, underwater microphones have aided research, making passive acoustics, or the act of just listening, more productive.

Dr. Rountree dropped a hydrophone into the water off Cape Cod in the first passive acoustics survey of the area. He was amazed to find the abundant chatter of cusk eel, which were not known to live in the area. The prevalence of cusk eel had eluded researchers at the nearby Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute for more than a hundred years, despite intensive exploration in the area.

Another unusual finding was made by Gerald D'Spain at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego. Dr. D'Spain reported that he had recorded fish “chorusing” along the Pacific coast, from Ensenada all the way up to Point Loma. He likens their sound to “the wave” at a sports stadium, with the chorus moving up the coast like spectators leaping from their seats and hooraying in a coordinated roll. He also said he believed that the chorus was transferred from fish to fish at nearly the speed that sound travels in water — about four and half times as fast as sound travels in air.

These microphones are also picking up “biologic unknowns” — the sounds of unidentified fish and other marine life. Dr. Mann with the University of South Florida and the Navy researcher Susan Jarvis discovered a mystery fish deep in the Bahamas that was making calls 600 meters down. “You know there is a sound source out there,” Dr. Mann said. “You know where it is, but you don’t know what it is.”

Unfortunately not everyone who listens to fish is doing research. Poachers in China have started using hydrophones to locate the nearly extinct yellow croaker, whose swim bladder can fetch up to $60,000
because of its reputed medicinal value.

Dolphins also follow fish chatter to track their prey. "The Top 10 species of fish in the diet of a dolphin make sounds," Joseph J. Luczkovich, an associate professor of biology at East Carolina, said.

With the growing recognition of the importance of mating calls for spawning fish has come another concern. The increase in ambient noise from tankers, sonar and seismic surveying for oil, which often occurs at the same sonic frequency as these calls, may be drowning out fish communication.

Pushed by researchers, the National Marine Fisheries Service has made listening to all marine life, not only whales and dolphins, a priority. Since many dinner table fish like cod, sea bass and haddock make sounds connected to propagation, simply recording sea life offers potential for fisheries management at a time when populations are in decline.

"By listening to the underwater soundscape, there are a lot of things we can determine about what's out there and what they are doing," said Brandon Southall, director of the ocean acoustics program at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The agency hopes that passive acoustics can help identify breeding grounds in need of protection and can be used as a tool to assess population numbers accurately. Such noninvasive techniques would be a big step forward, Dr. Lobel of Boston University said.

"Without passive acoustics, they have to catch endangered fish like cod and cut them open to see if they are ripe with eggs," he said. "They have been killing tons of fish just to find out where they are spawning."
Forbes Magazine ranks Greenville No. 8 among small metros for business, careers

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

The nation is facing growing economic challenges, but Greenville, some experts say, is good for business.

Forbes Magazine pegged Greenville as the eighth-best small metro for business and careers in its annual rankings, released last month. Greenville is the state’s only city ranked among the top 75 of its classification, though Raleigh was tops in the metro category for the second straight year.

“We’re always pleased when we are recognized,” Mayor Pat Dunn said. “I think it says something about Greenville. There are a lot of resources that make us an attractive place to do business.”

Forbes’ rankings analyzed 179 small metro areas with populations less than 240,000, evaluating them on nine factors such as job and income growth, living cost index, migration trends and crime rate. Each city was then assigned a numerical position for each category in relation to the other communities.

Greenville received its highest marks in the two areas weighed heavier than the others — cost of doing business and education attainment — but it had one of the worst crime rates.

Dunn said the Forbes ranking suggests Greenville is a dynamic city with a dynamic leadership.

“We are a business-friendly community,” she said. “We work together in partnerships, and that has led to the success we have had.”

Both Dunn and Susanne Sartelle, president of the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce, referred to the importance of having East Carolina University and Pitt County Memorial Hospital as part of the local economy.

ECU and PCMH are two of the largest employers in the county, with a combined workforce of more than 10,000.

“We have a couple of industries that make it a very stable economy, and we have a pretty educated workforce.”

Susan Sartelle
Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce president

Sartelle said Greenville’s growth proves it is no longer one of the “best kept secrets”.

Don Edwards, president of the University Book Exchange, said ECU makes the community less susceptible to swings in the market. With its Division 1 athletics, the university is what makes the livability and business aspects so appealing, he said.

Local businessman Britt Laughinghouse, whose family has owned Bostic Sugg Furniture since 1947, said Greenville provides the quality of life of a much larger city without all of the headaches.

“It’s the quality of life that is equally as important as the business aspect,” Laughinghouse said. “We’ve become the hub of eastern North Carolina.”

Still, Dunn and Sartelle pointed out areas the city is working to improve.

Dunn said transportation is always an issue, and Sartelle said the chamber is working to embrace diversity and promote inclusiveness in the business community.

“The work never ends,” Sartelle said. “It just motivates you to work harder.”

Tom Marine can be contacted at tmarine@coxnc.com and 329-9567.

RANKING
Continued from A1

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Jeannette G. Cox

Mrs. Jeannette Gilley Cox, 66, of Greenville passed away Sunday, April 6, 2008. The funeral service will be conducted today at 2 p.m. in St. James United Methodist Church. Burial will follow in Pinewood Memorial Park.

Jeannette, a native of Jacksonville, came to Greenville in 1960 to attend East Carolina University as an Education Major. While attending ECU, she married Charles N. Cox of Charlotte in 1963. She joined the Louis Clark Agency in 1971. With his encouragement, she then opened her own real estate company, Jeannette Cox Agency, in 1971. She was a pioneer for female real estate agents in Greenville and facilitated the expansion of Greenville's industry in the early 1970's. She became an integral part of the Greenville community through her devotion to the Greenville Chamber of Commerce of which she was awarded a lifetime membership. Her achievements were many, first woman elected as president of the Greenville-Pitt County Association of Realtors, Realtor of the Year in 1976, Charter President of the Kiwanis Club Greater Greenville in 1968-69. She had many projects close to her heart such as the Boys and Girls Club, Greenville Recreation and Parks Department, and The East Carolina Vocational Center. Her steadfast support to ECU could be echoed by her participation as a former member of the Chancellor's Society and as a lifetime member of the ECU Pirate Club.

Jeannette's love was undying for her late husband, Charles, her parents, her daughters, Greenville, especially ECU and St. James United Methodist Church.

She was preceded in death by her father, Coy Gilley; and husband, Charles N. Cox.

She is survived by her mother, Ruby Gilley, of Jacksonville; two daughters, Camilla Louise Cox of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., and Scharles Jeannette Cox, of Raleigh.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to St. James United Methodist Scholarship Fund, 2000 E. 6th St., Greenville, NC 27835.
Young writers' winning imaginations make the stage

By Kim Grizzard
The Daily Reflector

Some playwrights might find it daunting to collaborate with unseasoned authors on a project, but for East Carolina University Storybook Theatre Director Patch Clark, it's child's play.

Clark, who last year adapted Chester Freeman's "The Runaway Bear" into a play for her students to perform, is working with four new authors this year. These writers are not only previously unpublished, they're prepubescent.

All are winners in the "All Aboard America!" Writing Contest for students in grades six and younger in Pitt, Craven and Beaufort counties. Clark incorporated winning stories into the stories of heroes and legends featured in her play, "All Aboard America!"

"I thought how wonderful it would be to include children's stories because they have such great imaginations," said Clark, an associate professor in ECU's school of theater and dance. "They're more imaginative than we are."

"All Aboard America," which features music by Linda High of the ECU school of music, features a number of American tales, including "Jack and the Northwest Wind," from High's "Once Upon a Mountain Tale." The play also features characters like Paul Bunyan, Peter Bill and Bluefoot Sita.

In "All Aboard America," tales are relayed by Professor Punctilios and his young friends as they travel the land in search of America's treasures. Clark, whose maiden name is Atchison (as in Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway), cherishes the history of trains in America.

If you go

- Advance tickets to Friday's 7 p.m. performance in Wright Auditorium are $9 for adults and $6 for students. All tickets at the door are $9. Call 328-4736.

- Additional performances will be held at 2 and 7 p.m. Saturday in Turnage Theatre, 150 W. Main St., Washington, N.C. Tickets are $10 for adults and $8 for students. Call 975-1151 or visit www.turnagetheater.com.
PLAY
Continued from D1

"I love trains, the idea of traveling and the sound of the train," Clark said. "There's a certain romance about a train. ... The train calls to us to travel, so this is a journey through the stories."

With the addition of student writing, the journey became a little longer. "All Aboard America!" now includes stories of New Bern's most famous inventor, Pepsin creator Caleb Bradham, and North Carolina's most infamous pirate, Blackbeard. Those characters were the subjects of winning stories by students Morgan Brown, Hope Jarvis, Jonathan Stead and Matt David (see related story).

"The theme was tall tales and so all the children wrote about and used wonderful, creative ideas for creating their own tall tales," Clark said. "Some were based on history of the area. Some were simply imaginative tales. All of the entries were exciting. ... It was very difficult to select the top stories because they were all good."

The writing contest, which drew more than five dozen entries in its first year, also had a dozen honorable mention winners. Clark plans to incorporate ideas from honorees' stories into area school performances by ECU's Storybook Theatre.

"Some of the other stories we're using as we travel in our smaller touring company of Storybook Theatre," Clark said, "so, hopefully, eventually all the stories will be done."

The four student winners will be recognized on stage during "All Aboard America!" performances on Friday in ECU's Wright Auditorium. A student performance is scheduled for 10 a.m., followed by a public performance at 7 p.m.

"I'm really excited that the children were able to take part in our show this year through their writing," Clark said. "They have wonderful insights. Their collective stories can become America's treasure."

WINNERS
Continued from D1

Elementary
"Blackbeard the Feared Pirate," by Jaiissa Harrell, Eastern Elementary
"The Tall Tale of Bobby Deskins" and "Mrs. Repton," Trent Park Elementary fifth-graders
"Listen My Children," by Carey Smith, Fred Anderson Elementary, Stonewell
"Recky," by Bryce McKeel, Stokes Elementary

"Dragon After Dark," by Emily Lauer, H.J. MacDonald Middle School, New Bern
"Lauren Low — On Her Way to History," by Alyssa Feed, Chocowinity Middle School
"Pleasance ... Why Can't You Tell Me?" by Julia Klaus, Roger Bell Elementary, Havelock
"The Assassination of General Bryan Grimes," by Carlye Chappell, Chocowinity Elementary School
Demand reform

I am outraged at the murders of Eve Carson and Abhijit Mahato. I am almost more outraged at what we have learned about how the N.C. Division of Community Corrections mishandled the cases of the two alleged perpetrators. Your newspaper has been full of disturbing stories of ineptitude, carelessness, negligence and what, to my mind, is almost criminal misconduct. These are the people who are supposed to be keeping us, the citizens, safe from people who have been found to be dangerous.

I have learned that outrage in cases like this is not enough. It is particularly not enough when the powers-that-be seem to be in no hurry to fix blame or hold anyone accountable. (Oh, I'm wrong. Two people have been transferred.) What is far more productive is an incensed public that calls for reform. We need root and branch changes in our justice system.

Here it is election season, and several hundred people in North Carolina are running for public office. I haven't heard a one of them call for an overhaul of the Division of Community Corrections.

Well, I'm calling for such an overhaul. Let's not let this drop. Let's have at least something positive come out of this tragedy.

James R. Leutze
Chancellor Emeritus, University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Wilmington
Matriculation madness

BY TED MITCHELL AND JONATHAN SCHORR

Odds are, your bracket for the NCAA men’s final didn’t match up Butler and Western Kentucky.

But that’s the way it would go in an alternate universe where graduation rates, rather than baskets scored, decided the ganie. Only one of the schools in this year’s Final Four, North Carolina, manages to graduate a majority of its players — or more than a third of its black players.

In addition to all the fast-paced excitement it brings, March Madness shines a light on one of the most troubling aspects of college sports: graduation rates of African-American students, who make up most of the Division I athletic teams. But while the players’ high dropout rate gets much of the attention, non-athletes fare even worse.

A study of NCAA schools released last month by the University of Central Florida’s Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport found that 53 percent of African-American basketball players finish college — compared with a dismal 37 percent for black students overall at those schools.

(Of the athletes, few are disappearing to play pro ball; despite the dreams that might have lured them to the court, barely 1 percent of male players are drafted by the NBA.)

Once a year these numbers get some attention. In what has become an annual ritual, tucked between rounds of our office pools, we heap criticism on college athletic departments each March for paying too little attention to the “student” part of their student-athletes. No doubt it’s a worthy issue on which to push universities, and they’ve made some progress in this area. But focusing on the student-athletes leaves us missing the big picture.

The larger truth is that graduation is the last stop for an academic train whose passengers mostly disembark at earlier stations.

According to statistics released last week by America’s Promise Alliance, only 53 percent of African-American students complete high school. Of those, federal data show, just over half enroll in college — and most of those in two-year colleges.

In other words, by the time college begins, nearly three-quarters of African-American students already have been left behind. And even for those who enroll at four-year colleges, African-Americans make it through at two-thirds the rate of their white peers.

Rather than placing blame solely on university athletic departments, it’s time we looked more deeply into why so many low-income African-American students (and Latinos, whose dropout rates are slightly greater) don’t complete college.

Clearly, the answers have to do with failures of academic preparation, affordability barriers and a lack of support in colleges. But colleges shouldn’t have to do this work alone.

Entrepreneurial, creative organizations such as College Track, College Summit and Poise are working in cooperation with colleges to change these numbers. At the NewSchools Venture Fund, we’re delighted to work closely with schools and organizations that are trying new things to change the numbers: providing intensive connections with alumni; setting up college-level support groups; creating coaching and mentorship teams; and forming partnerships among schools, colleges and data clearinghouses.

It’s important work. But we need to see much more effort in this area.

Meanwhile, it’s instructive to look at which colleges are evening the odds for graduation. In one intriguing analysis, Education Sector created a final matchup using the whole team’s graduation rate as the deciding factor. In that competition, the last two teams standing would be Davidson and Stanford. Education Sector also calculated a matchup using the smallest gap between a team’s historic graduation rate and the school’s overall graduation rate. There, the teams to keep your eye on would be George Mason and Oklahoma.

Ted Mitchell, president of the California Board of Education, is chief executive of NewSchools Venture Fund. Jonathan Schorr is a partner at NewSchools Venture Fund.
Medical gift is Duke's biggest

Pediatrics gets part of $50 million

By Eric Ferrer
Staff Writer

DURHAM—There are 153 inpatient beds at Duke University's children's health center. Duke officials say that isn't enough.

"We are too frequently turning patients away," said Joseph St. Geme, chairman of Duke's pediatrics department.

A $50 million gift from the Duke Endowment should help. The gift, announced Monday, is the largest ever to the Duke University Medical Center, and $15 million of it will help build a new inpatient facility for Duke's McGovern-Davison Children's Health Center. The remaining $35 million will help build an education center for the medical school.

The endowment is a private charitable foundation created in 1924 by Duke University's founder, tobacco baron James B. Duke.

Duke officials called the pediatrics piece of the gift a "renewed dedication" to children's medicine. The announcement was made in the lobby of the McGovern-Davison building, a large pediatric outpatient clinic. The need is more acute next door, on the fifth floor of Duke's main hospital. That's where the sickest children — those who stay for days or weeks — are cared for. Often, the parents of those children have only a folding chair on which to sit or sleep, St. Geme said. Thus, one thrust of the new pediatrics facility will be more space for family members forced to spend long hours with their sick children.

"Think about being a young child in the hospital without a parent or family member," he said. "It's critical that we provide space for them."

Duke officials hope eventually to have 200 to 250 inpatient beds for children.

In Chapel Hill, the N.C. Children's Hospital has 136 pediatric inpatient

SEE GIFT, PAGE 5B
From left, Victor Dzau, Duke health affairs chancellor; endowment Chairman Russell M. Robinson and Duke President Richard Brodhead take part in announcing the $50 million gift. STAFF PHOTO BY CHUCK LIDBY

GIFT
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beds, a UNC spokeswoman said.
Hospitals must get a certificate of need from the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services before adding space or equipment.
The added space would allow Duke to expand some programs, add equipment and hire more pediatric doctors, St. Gene said. In some specialty areas, medical advancement has led to a need for more equipment and space. One example: Pediatric specialists and new technology have helped more pre-term infants survive troublesome births. Duke's children's facility thus needs more room and specialty equipment to care for babies that, years ago, may not have lived, St. Gene said.

Education center

The $35 million will help build a new medicine education center, which Duke officials say will help the medical school change its teaching philosophy. It will include simulation labs and other space for students to work in small teams, a departure from the memorization-based learning philosophy of old, officials said Monday. "Medical education in my era consisted largely of sitting in a classroom hearing a lecture," said R. Sanders "Sandy" Williams, the medical center's senior vice chancellor for academic affairs. "Medical science has expanded exponentially, and we've found it preferable to teach in a different way."

A simulation lab allows teams of students to work through real-life exercises. Duke has one such lab now — in an old operating room. The new plan calls for more simulation labs and other space for team-based exercises.

"We can't memorize everything; we have to go and find answers," said Victor Dzau, Duke's vice chancellor for medical affairs. "We're teaching people to be creative and innovative. This is very much a needed shift."

The total cost of each project was not known Monday, nor were their specific locations. The children's facility will be connected in some way to the current children's medical center, and the medical education center will be on one of three sites on the medical campus and most likely connected to the Davison building, where the medical school's administrative offices are located, officials said.

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Web site at issue in lacrosse case

It details proceedings in players' suit

BY ANNE BLYTHE
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM – Members of the 2006 Duke University lacrosse team are objecting to the city’s request to shut down a Web site that chronicles the legal proceedings in the players’ federal lawsuit.

The 38 members of the 2006 team filed documents in federal court Monday raising objections that were similar to ones they made when Duke accused the lawyer representing the players of violating the same professional rule of conduct that fallen prosecutor Mike Nifong did.

Lawyers for Duke and the Duke University Health System filed a motion in federal court in late February complaining about the Web site www.dukelawsuit.com, a news conference and other communications by Chuck Cooper, the Washington lawyer representing the players.

The players filed suit in February against Duke, the city of Durham and a list of administrators and police officials who were involved in the Duke lacrosse case.

Although none of the 38 lacrosse players was charged criminally in the case, they claim that their reputations were damaged by their being linked to an escort service dancer’s phony gang-rape allegations.

The suit contends that the players suffered emotional distress and other injuries when Duke University remained silent about evidence that soon contradicted the allegations of Crystal Gail Mangum, a dancer hired to perform at the team’s now-infamous March 2006 party.

Duke, which posts its responses to the case on a university Web site, has asked a judge to declare the dukelawsuit.com Web site, the players’ news conference and other statements in violation of an N.C. State Bar rule.

Durham joined Duke several weeks later in lodging a similar complaint.

Lawyers for Duke and the city claim the statements could prejudice a jury.

In its ethical rules, the State Bar orders lawyers to refrain from statements outside the courtroom that they know might have “a substantial likelihood of materially prejudicing” legal proceedings. But once one side talks, ethics rules say, the other side can make statements “reasonable lawyer” would think are required to protect a client from bad publicity.

The players’ attorneys have described the complaints about the Web site and news conference as attempts to quell free speech.

The players, in their most recent response, described the city’s attempt to quiet them as giving “new meaning to the concept of gall. The tsunami of negative national media publicity and commentary that engulfed the lacrosse players for months in 2006 was fueled in large measure by negative public comments and information from the City of Durham and its agents.”

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Credit woes may hinder college-bound

Some loans, such as those linked to homes, harder to get

By Sandra Block
USA TODAY

The credit crunch will make it harder for many families to pay for college this fall, particularly if their children plan to attend high-cost private or out-of-state schools.

Federal student loans remain available, but the caps on how much students can borrow have lagged far behind college costs. Freshmen, for instance, can't borrow more than $3,500 in federal loans. And other sources of funding are drying up:

- **Private loans.** In a recent survey, 43% of private colleges said one or more lenders on their "preferred lender" list have stopped offering private student loans, according to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, which represents private colleges.

Lenders that are still offering private loans have tightened their lending standards, says Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid. To get a private loan, most students will need a co-signer with excellent credit, he says.

- **Home equity.** During the housing boom, "Many families viewed their home as an ATM machine to pay for college," says Kalman Chany, author of Paying for College Without Going Broke. A 2007 survey by Next Step, a magazine for college-bound high school students, found that nearly a quarter of parents planned to use home equity loans to pay for college.

But as home values have plummeted in many parts of the country, "The home equity spigot has been turned off," says James Boyle, president of College Parents of America. Millions of families now owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth. Some lenders no longer offer second mortgages. Others have frozen access to borrowers' existing lines of credit.

- **PLUS loans.** The Parent Loan for Undergraduates, or PLUS loan, lets parents borrow up to the cost of college, minus any financial aid their child receives. The federally guaranteed loan carries a fixed rate of 8.5% and parents don't need a high credit score to qualify. But parents won't be able to get a PLUS loan if they have a foreclosure on their credit record, Kantrowitz says. As foreclosures rise, he says, "The number of denials of PLUS loans is going to significantly increase."

Last week, Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., introduced legislation that would raise loan limits for federal student loans. Similar legislation was introduced in the House. But the limits are unlikely to be increased by the time students start college this fall.

Families that are worrying about paying the cost of college their child wants to attend should talk to the financial aid office as soon as possible, says Day, president of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. Financial aid administrators may be able to help families find other sources of funding.

"If there are going to be some gaps," he says, "we want to know what those gaps will be."
Despite soaring tuition, colleges shun cost-cutting

Our view:
Spending on recruiting, amenities drives up prices at ‘Jacuzzi U’.

Viewers who followed Davidson College’s run to the Elite Eight in the NCAA men’s basketball tournament might have picked up this bit of trivia: Students at the North Carolina school get free laundry service.

Drop off a bag of dirty clothes and two days later you pick up shirts and pants, pressed and on hangers, with the rest folded and tucked into a brown paper bundle.

Little in life is truly free, of course, including Davidson’s laundry service. It’s included in the mandatory student fees. Next year, the required charges for freshmen will total $42,950.

Davidson’s laundry service is just one small example of perks being offered by scores of other colleges, everything from climbing walls to surround-sound movie theaters. One college president dubts this competition the “sauna wars” and says schools have little choice but to compete.

That mentality helps explain why some college presidents seem convinced they can’t cut costs — either for luxury items or for the vastly higher costs of personnel. In fact, three-quarters of administrators surveyed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities pronounced themselves to be “very” or “extremely” satisfied with cost containment at their school.

That sanguine attitude is unwarranted, especially with prices at some private colleges soaring over $50,000, and public college tuitions taking up ever-larger portions of a family’s budget. Since 1982, consumer prices overall are up 95%, housing is up 124%, medical care is up 223% — and college costs are up 375%, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

College presidents accurately say they are caught in a bind. If they don’t have fancy gyms and near-gourmet food in the cafeterias, choosy students will enroll elsewhere. Plus, cutting back on per-pupil expenditures can hurt a college in some rankings.

They are wrong, however, to shun cost-cutting. Options include:

► Emphasizing teaching over research. Colleges should value their professors for actually teaching classes. Even research universities can boost teaching loads to limit faculty size. University of Maryland Chancellor William Kirwan once responded to a budget crisis by increasing the faculty workload, an action considered both startling and brave. It should be normal.

► Controlling wages. Average salaries for college administrators, a large group, rose by 4% in 2007-08, beating inflation for the 11th straight year. Administrative costs can be cut.

► Scaling back marketing. Colleges spend hundreds of millions of dollars recruiting top students, with everything from slick brochures to financial aid to students from wealthy families. That drains scholarships for poorer students and does nothing to boost learning. Meanwhile, public and private colleges alike are building pricey fitness centers as part of a “Jacuzzi U” arms race.

Just as in the business world, some of those measures could have an undesirable impact, but a status quo that makes college unaffordable is not an acceptable alternative.

Davidson deserves kudos for fielding a scrappy basketball team. But there’s no such thing as “free” laundry.
Colleges restrain spending

Opposing view: Blame rests with state lawmakers who squeeze education funding.

By Daniel J. Hurley

It's that time of year when newspaper headlines across the USA announce the latest tuition increases at the local public college or university for this coming fall semester — increases that could well be in the high single digits and, in some cases, double digits.

The steady stream of tuition increases raises the question: Can't colleges rein in their spending?

Rising prices have propelled a myth that public colleges and universities are not demonstrating sufficient fiscal stewardship of student tuition and public tax dollars. In reality, overall institutional spending has increased, but when factoring in enrollment growth, the per-student increase has been negligible.

The primary drivers behind increasing tuition costs are insufficient growth in state operating support for public colleges and, in many cases, decreasing financial support combined with growth in student enrollments. Public higher education has largely served as the go-to line item when state lawmakers have to make up for budget shortfalls, and in the process they have gradually transferred the burden of paying for a college education to students and their families.

A report just released by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and SunGard Higher Education affirms that colleges are capitalizing on cost-saving opportunities campuswide in an effort to contain costs, mitigate tuition increases, and reinvest in learning-related activities.

Millions of dollars are being saved through energy management solutions. Business processes have been re-engineered. Auxiliary services — campus bookstores, dining and residence hall operations — are being streamlined or outsourced. Colleges are harnessing the power of group purchasing to buy insurance, computers and other commodities. Administrative staffing levels are being cut. Academic programs are being merged or, if underenrolled, discontinued.

The quest for colleges and universities to restrain spending is never ending. The track record shows that identifying and implementing cost containment solutions have been, and will continue to be, as inherent to campus life as the fall Saturday tailgate.

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Sensing spring

BASKING IN THE SUNSHINE: "The only safe tan is probably in a bottle," says Dr. Charles Phillips, a dermatologist at the Brody School of Medicine. Nevertheless, local co-eds take their blankets to the lawns and soak up those warm rays at the first hint of spring. For those who either can't avoid or choose to be outside as days grow longer, Phillips recommends staying shady between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., applying sunscreen thoroughly and often and wearing wide-brimmed hats — as most skin cancers occur on the head and neck. Remember: the fairer your skin, the higher the risk.

Compiled by Kathryn Kennedy/The Daily Reflector