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ECU to host higher education safety symposium
By JOSH HUMPHRIES
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, April 7, 2010

East Carolina University will host a higher education safety symposium Friday for universities and colleges in North Carolina, focusing on threat assessment, gangs, engaging students and other safety concerns.

Officials say that a collaborative approach to safety across North Carolina is the best way to make the state’s schools safe.

“Sharing information obviously means we are engaging in best practices,” Peter Romary, director of Student Legal Services at ECU, said.

“We have the attorney general and UNC system reports from 2007 that say we need to be sharing best practices through a safety symposium.”

The live portion of the symposium will be presented in the Global Classroom in the Science and Technology Building on campus. Presentations also will be broadcast online.

Nearly every university in the UNC system will participate in some form. Presenters from other universities will be in attendance, and various departments and classes from other universities will watch the presentations online.

Private and community colleges throughout the state also will participate.

Dawn Gibbs, paralegal in the ECU Student Legal Services department, said the format for the symposium was changed from a live event to a Webinar due to state budget concerns. Travel restrictions have limited the number of attendees for the event, now in its fourth year.

Gibbs said any institution that participates will have access to video recordings of the sessions for several months to engage groups or students with the presentations.

Chris Kempf of Fayetteville State University, along with Romary and Gene Deisinger, assistant police chief of the Virginia Tech Police Department, will lead a discussion on gangs.

Romary, who serves as the chairman of the North Carolina Higher Education Safety Symposium Steering Committee, said ECU plays an important role in safety for the UNC system by hosting the symposium each year.

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A UNC report, which questioned the long-term demand for traditional pharmacists, missed the point. UNCG's pharmacy school would train pharmacists for careers that are just being developed.

This isn't settled. UNCG Chancellor Linda Brady will get 10 minutes Thursday to respond to Bowles' recommendation before a Board of Governors committee. She said she'll stress the pharmacy school's role in fulfilling UNC Tomorrow strategies for translating university strengths into economic development opportunities — few more important than in the Triad, which has experienced crushing losses of traditional industries. She'll also note that UNCG only submitted a "request to plan," not a "request to establish" a pharmacy school, and that a planning phase would address the questions raised about the school's costs and other feasibility issues. Why deny an opportunity for further planning?

The proposal has supporters on the board. One is Greensboro attorney Steve Bowden, who said Tuesday he'll encourage colleagues to back the UNC plan, or at least spend more time evaluating Bowles' recommendation rather than make a final decision Friday.

"I can work with them," he said. "I think I have a chance."

The UNC General Administration's report was disappointing for its obvious favoritism to Chapel Hill. Even in allowing that the UNCG bid could be re-evaluated in a couple of years, it suggested that UNC-CH and UNCG could explore collaborative programs on both campuses. That sounds like making Greensboro a satellite of Chapel Hill's pharmacy school, another bitter pill. UNCG, with its partners, deserves a fair chance to move forward with its Triad pharmacy plan.
Devils' rally broke fast-forgotten rule

BY ERIC FERRERI
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — In 2006, Duke officials decreed that campus rallies celebrating national championships be held in the early evening so students wouldn't have to skip class to attend.

But Duke didn't win anything for the next four years, and the policy was forgotten this week when the title-winning basketball team was feted by about 9,000 fans Tuesday afternoon at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

Oops.

"It was a complete and total oversight," said Provost Peter Lange, one of three Duke administrators who crafted the 2006 policy. "Unfortunately, we haven't had any events to celebrate since it was written."

Lange didn't attend the planning meetings this year.

Other key players, athletics director Kevin White and human resources chief Kyle Cavanaugh, didn't work at Duke four years ago and didn't know the rule, which would have pushed Tuesday's pep rally to 5:30 p.m.

The event, attended by faculty, staff, alumni and several thousand students, advertised a 1 p.m. start. The team was late leaving Indianapolis to fly home, so it didn't really start until 2:15 p.m. and went until about 3 p.m. Many students happily skipped class to be there.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

More: For complete coverage of the Blue Devils' run to the title, go to newsobserver.com/sports/.

The policy was put into place at the prodding of math professor Richard Hain, who long taught classes on Tuesday afternoons. When Duke wins a men's basketball title, as it also did in 1991, 1992 and 2001, attendance in his classes tended to shrink from 30 to about four students.

"It's extremely disruptive," Hain said. "It wipes out a lot of afternoon classes, and for some of us this is a serious problem."

Chris Seward - cseward@newsobserver.com

Duke fans celebrate the team's NCAA title at Cameron Indoor Stadium. Officials forgot a 2006 rule against conflicts with daytime classes.

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10 Things Your Airline Won't Tell You


1. "Welcome to our crowded plane."

Just because you show up at the airport with a ticket reservation doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll end up on your intended flight. Most airlines overbook flights to compensate for last-minute cancellations, but they don’t always get the numbers right. And with so few seats open on later flights, fewer folks are volunteering to get bumped. As a result, the number of involuntary bumped passengers is up, having grown 45% between 2005 and 2009, according to the Department of Transportation. "Instead of fixing the problem," says Tony Politto, an associate professor in the college of business at East Carolina University who has published academic articles about airline industry issues, "they are institutionalizing it."

What’s worse, travelers who get involuntarily bumped aren’t necessarily entitled to "denied-boarding compensation." If the airline arranges substitute transportation that gets you to your destination within one hour of your original scheduled arrival time, there is no compensation. If you arrive an hour or more later, the airline is required to pay you, up to a maximum of $800, depending on the price of the ticket and length of delay, according to the DOT’s rules.

David Castelveter, spokesperson for the Air Transport Association, says filling an airplane and keeping passengers happy is a balancing act. The carriers are in business to maximize their revenues, he says — not to bump passengers and pay boarding compensation, and not to depart with empty seats. To achieve those goals, the airlines analyze historical booking information and other data to figure out how many seats to sell or overbook. "By overbooking flights, carriers make available seats — for passengers who want and need those seats — left open because someone no-shows, for whatever reason," he says.

2. "Your hard-won air miles are probably worth less."

Air miles are easy to accrue. You can earn them using your credit card, getting a mortgage, "for anything short of breathing," says Tim Winship, editor at large of SmarterTravel.com. American Airlines, for example, has thousands of participating companies in its frequent-flier program, making it an important revenue center. And United Airlines' Mileage Plus plan brought in $700 million for the company in 2008, the most recent year for which data is available, up from $500 million in 2006.

But as miles flood the market, they’re getting harder to use. Some airlines have reduced the shelf life of air miles, while others have increased the amount required for an upgrade. Winship says customers can keep their account current by using a credit card affiliated with the program, which will build miles as they make purchases. You can also redeem a small amount of miles, to keep your account active, on things like magazine subscriptions.

3. "We’ll give you a good deal — if we can get something out of it."

Airlines prefer that you book directly with them, so they often feature promotional codes and special deals exclusively on their own web sites. The goal is to get more consumers to book airfare there as opposed to on the discount web sites that list pricing from most airlines. Why? Airlines pay these online booking sites a commission for the tickets they sell — something they prefer not to do.

While consumers can find helpful deals on the airlines' sites, they should compare pricing there with what the other sites are offering. Also, travelers might find the lowest fare by booking two separate airlines for each leg of their trip, but they’re unlikely to be informed of that when they book a ticket on an airline’s site.
Some airlines, like Southwest, only permit travelers to buy tickets online from their own web sites. However, Southwest's computer application Dine will scan for the best fares and update you on deals. What does the carrier get in return? Loyalty and repeat fliers. In 2007, American launched a similar application called Dealfinder, which offers big discounts on flights.

4. "We love adding fees."

A big chunk of the price you pay for a ticket covers additional fees that are often added at the end of the booking process, when buyers are less likely to change their mind. That way, the listed ticket price looks lower than it actually is.

The most common fee these days is for checked bags. For example, United now charges $23 to $25 for the first bag a traveler checks in at the airport, and $32 to $35 for the second. Other examples of fees: Passengers who reserve a seat on Spirit Airlines pay $15 extra for an exit row seat. And Allegiant, a low-cost airline that provides service from cities like Missoula, Mont., charges $79 just to book a ticket online. Some airlines have fuel surcharges, which vary in price depending on many factors, including the length of the trip.

Even frequent-flyer programs, which are supposed to let you book "free flights," have added fees for things like booking too close to your travel date. "I keep seeing more and more of these hidden fees," says George Hobica, creator of Airfarewatchdog.com. "I get complaints from people all the time." A spokeswoman for American Airlines says the company does charge fees for flights booked with less than 21 days advance notice for people using frequent flyer miles. Passengers booking a flight just seven to 20 days before takeoff can incur a fee of $50 or more, and those who book between two hours and six days before departure can incur a fee of 100 minimum. In addition, she says, there's a $10 security service fee that's collected on roundtrip airfare for passengers boarding in the U.S., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

5. "Customer service isn't always our top priority . . ."

After being stuck in a plane on the tarmac for nine hours in 2006, Kate Hanni decided to fight back against poor customer service. She formed the group Flyrights.org, which in December was successful in getting the DOT to issue a rule on "enhancing airline passenger protections" that includes requiring the airlines to allow passengers to disembark after three hours on the tarmac and requiring airlines to provide adequate food and water to passengers within two hours of them being stuck in a plane. A DOT spokeswoman says the rule will take effect on April 29, after the department reviews requests from certain carriers that have asked for temporary exemptions.

According to Claes Fornell, a professor at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business, customer satisfaction is up about 3% in 2009 compared with 2008, in part because fewer people are traveling. However, he is unimpressed with the carriers' attitudes toward customers. "They all offer about the same lousy service," he says.

Castleveter of the Air Transport Association, which represents the airlines, says travelers are upset by delays that are often out of the airlines' control. "This is a customer-service-driven business, and when we fail our customers, we lose them," Castleveter says. "Good customer service is our goal."

6. "... but it might be if you have a lot of miles."

They may be making a lot of customers miserable these days, but if airlines could be said to cater to anyone's needs. It would be those of the people in the top tier of their frequent-flyer programs — heavy travelers, many of whom fly for business and therefore buy the most expensive tickets. "These people get white-glove service," says Henry Harteveldt, a travel analyst with Forrester Research. "Airlines really want to cultivate that relationship."

These favored fliers typically get the first crack at upgrades. In many cases, the reservation center answers their call on the first ring. They often get special bonus-mile offers and free upgrades. And while some airlines are increasing fees associated with frequent-flyer programs, members still have perks like first-class check-in (for shorter lines through security) and early boarding.

7. "Our planes can make travel uncomfortable – and costlier."

Older aircraft are maintained to high safety standards. But they can cause more delays due to last-minute mechanical problems, and they guzzle fuel, a cost that filters down to customers, says CreditSights analyst Roger King. What's more, with older planes, the airlines feel little pressure to upgrade, says Richard Aboulafia, an aviation analyst with the Teal Group. Seating room is minimal, in-flight entertainment is mediocre or nonexistent and meal service is unlikely, he says.

The industry has a different point of view. "Aircraft of 30 years ago might have guzzled more fuel, but the ones that began operating in the last decade are quite fuel efficient," says Castleveter, pointing out that some airlines have adjusted aerodynamics on older aircraft so they burn less fuel. The notion that older planes are smaller inside than their newer counterparts is also wrong, he says—and meal service has nothing to do with the age of a plane. "Meals, in some cases, have been eliminated, even in the newer model aircraft," he says.

8. "Even we don't understand our pricing."

Most domestic flights operate with two cabins — coach and first or business class while international flights are divided into first class, business and economy. But when it comes to pricing, there are often around a dozen or more different price points for seats on each plane. "Ticket pricing is a mix of science, game theory and art — a three dimensional
matrix,” says Harteveldt of Forrester Research. The biggest factor, beyond basic costs like fuel and labor, is the competition. Airlines track one another’s fares, then try to determine how many business travelers, who generally pay a premium for flexible tickets, are likely to book a flight. On routes with lots of business travelers, seat prices can stay high because airlines know they’ll book seats at the last minute. As each seat sells, the prices of others fluctuate: Domestic fares can change up to three times a day during the week and once on weekends, says Hobica.

But prices don’t only go up. A number of factors can cause prices to fluctuate months or even hours before a flight takes off. One example is if demand from business travelers is lagging, prices may fall as the flight time gets closer. If that happens and the fare drops by the time your flight leaves, you can get a voucher from a number of airlines for the difference between what you paid for the airfare and the lowest price it dropped to. Customers can get this refund if they bought published airline either directly from the airline or from most price-comparison sites. Some airlines will assess a fee with this refund, but customers should still ask for the full amount. JetBlue, for example, doesn’t deduct a fee; instead it puts the difference into a credit, which a customer can use toward airfare within 12 months, says a spokesperson.

9. “We’re at the mercy of old technology.”

Air traffic decreased in 2009, when the number of flights fell by 6.6% compared with 2008, and the number of passengers traveling fell 5.3%, according to the DOT. But even with less-crowded skies, air-traffic control’s radar-based system, which tracks planes, remains inefficient. Planes are routed across the country in a zig zag fashion on a series of highways in the sky, spacing them at least five miles apart for safety. And that’s the problem: Because radar pinpoints planes about every 12 seconds, their precise location is not known, says Castelvetor.

The airlines would like to see this system replaced by one based on digital-satellite technology, he says. That would allow planes to fly much closer, which would be safer, help reduce congestion and allow more flights. Some airlines have been working toward this goal for a while. In the mid-1990s, Alaska Airlines began using Required Navigation Performance (RNP), a global positioning system that helps airplanes fly more-direct routes with more accuracy and save fuel. And according to a recent Wall Street Journal article, Southwest Airlines is planning to change the cockpit software in two-thirds of its fleet to RNP.

10. “You’ll wait because the system’s broken.”

Airline delays aren’t as widespread as they were a few years ago, but they’re still a problem. In 2009, 16.9% of flights arrived late and 16.8% of flights departed late, down from 24% and 21% respectively in 2007, according to the DOT.

But if bad weather rolls in, delays increase and spread across the country. When JFK and Newark airports experienced serious delays in 2007, the Federal Aviation Administration stepped in the following year and capped scheduled flights going in and out of JFK at 83 for peak hours, down from 100 or more. The agency also limited scheduled flights at Newark to 81 flights per hour. Since then, delays have decreased at the three major New York-area airports assisted by scheduling limits, improvements in air traffic control, and reductions in flying, says an FAA spokesperson.

Even the airlines say these were necessary steps. But the carriers would like more action from the government, including pushing through upgrades of the air-traffic-control system, which would increase capacity at airports. Castelvetor of the ATA says there is plenty of blame to spread for delay, from the need for a modernized air-traffic control system to the volume of corporate jets. “It’s an incredibly complex problem,” says Shannon Anderson, associate professor of management at Rice University, one involving aging technology, competing airlines and private and commercial carriers. “Just capping the number of flights is not going to solve it.”
Students make career matches

Speed mentoring helps them make job connections and prepare for life in the real world

By Greg Latshaw
USA TODAY

With breath mints laid out on the tables, light jazz playing in the background and an antique school bell keeping the time, the University of Texas-El Paso looked ready to host a speed-dating session.

But this February night wasn't about making romantic connections. It was a speed-mentoring event staged by the school so that 30 students planning a career in medicine could get 4 minutes of face time with doctors from a wide range of specialties.

Paloma Sanchez, a 20-year-old studying microbiology at the school, said the event's timed conversations and musical chairs approach got her results. She met a cardiologist who has agreed to let her do a shadowing program at a hospital this summer.

"I was completely excited. I couldn't wipe the smile off my face," Sanchez said.

A growing number of colleges and universities are throwing a speed-dating twist into their job fair and networking events. The practice is a good way for students to meet a number of professionals and to test out their interviewing skills, said Mary Wells, director of the UTEP Medical Professions Institute, which sponsored the school's speed-mentoring event.

"It's face time without commitment," Wells said.

In New York City, Barnard College and the city's Commission on Women's Issues held their "Mentor it Forward" event at the college on March 4. On this day, female students from different colleges in the city were given 8 minutes to get career advice from executive-level professional women.

The students, in return, have been asked to give back: Some of them will serve as mentors in a speed-mentoring event with high school students this month.

"Anybody can be a mentor. Not just someone who has been super successful in their profession," said Joanne Kwong, a spokeswoman for Barnard College.

Emory University in Atlanta has scheduled a speed-mentoring event for the school's nursing students later this month, said Betsy Oliver, the associate director of development for the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing.

She said her first impression of the event, which was requested by the students, was that it seemed "crazy." Then Oliver said she saw the value of offering the mentoring for a field, which contrary to students studying business, doesn't preach networking every day.

"It's a good way to practice your elevator pitch," Oliver said.

Larry Wright, the president and CEO of the National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) in Alexandria, Va., said true mentoring can't happen in a matter of minutes. However, he said, people can hit it off in that span, and by following up, form a lasting relationship.

"Whatever the form, my definition of mentoring is helping a young kid reach his potential, and that's what it's all about," Wright said.

Fast-paced mentoring events are also popular with individuals looking to get ahead in local government, said Rob Carty, a spokesman for the International City/County Management Association in Washington.

Women, in particular, benefit from speed-mentoring events because they have lots of demands on their time and sometimes work in male-dominated fields, said Mitzi Schumacher, chairwoman of the former President's Commission on Women at the University of Kentucky.

"They want to know who have been there and done that," she said.

There is plenty of room in the field of higher education for speed mentoring, said Linda Coy, president of the International Mentoring Association in Kalamazoo, Mich.

"The concept is almost like a quick and dirty way of getting information about a career or career path," Coy said.

Lucy Walsh, 58, a corporate occupational nurse with 3M in St. Paul, has served as a mentor four times at speed-mentoring events at the University of Minnesota.

"I try to open up their eyes that there's other possibilities beyond hospital nursing," Walsh said.

Latshaw reports for The (Salisbury, Md.) Daily Times
April 2, 2010

The Unpaid Intern, Legal or Not

By STEVEN GREENHOUSE

With job openings scarce for young people, the number of unpaid internships has climbed in recent years, leading federal and state regulators to worry that more employers are illegally using such internships for free labor.

Convinced that many unpaid internships violate minimum wage laws, officials in Oregon, California and other states have begun investigations and fined employers. Last year, M. Patricia Smith, then New York’s labor commissioner, ordered investigations into several firms’ internships. Now, as the federal Labor Department’s top law enforcement official, she and the wage and hour division are stepping up enforcement nationwide.

Many regulators say that violations are widespread, but that it is unusually hard to mount a major enforcement effort because interns are often afraid to file complaints. Many fear they will become known as troublemakers in their chosen field, endangering their chances with a potential future employer.

The Labor Department says it is cracking down on firms that fail to pay interns properly and expanding efforts to educate companies, colleges and students on the law regarding internships.

“If you’re a for-profit employer or you want to pursue an internship with a for-profit employer, there aren’t going to be many circumstances where you can have an internship and not be paid and still be in compliance with the law,” said Nancy J. Leppink, the acting director of the department’s wage and hour division.

Ms. Leppink said many employers failed to pay even though their internships did not comply with the six federal legal criteria that must be satisfied for internships to be unpaid. Among those criteria are that the internship should be similar to the training given in a vocational school or academic institution, that the intern does not displace regular paid workers and that
the employer “derives no immediate advantage” from the intern’s activities — in other words, it’s largely a benevolent contribution to the intern.

No one keeps official count of how many paid and unpaid internships there are, but Lance Choy, director of the Career Development Center at Stanford University, sees definitive evidence that the number of unpaid internships is mushrooming — fueled by employers’ desire to hold down costs and students’ eagerness to gain experience for their résumés. Employers posted 643 unpaid internships on Stanford’s job board this academic year, more than triple the 174 posted two years ago.

In 2008, the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that 83 percent of graduating students had held internships, up from 9 percent in 1992. This means hundreds of thousands of students hold internships each year; some experts estimate that one-fourth to one-half are unpaid.

In California, officials have issued guidance letters advising employers whether they are breaking the law, while Oregon regulators have unearthed numerous abuses.

“We’ve had cases where unpaid interns really were displacing workers and where they weren’t being supervised in an educational capacity,” said Bob Estabrook, spokesman for Oregon’s labor department. His department recently handled complaints involving two individuals at a solar panel company who received $3,350 in back pay after claiming that they were wrongly treated as unpaid interns.

Many students said they had held internships that involved noneducational menial work. To be sure, many internships involve some unskilled work, but when the jobs are mostly drudgery, regulators say, it is clearly illegal not to pay interns.

One Ivy League student said she spent an unpaid three-month internship at a magazine packaging and shipping 20 or 40 apparel samples a day back to fashion houses that had provided them for photo shoots.

At Little Airplane, a Manhattan children’s film company, an N.Y.U. student who hoped to work in animation during her unpaid internship said she was instead assigned to the facilities department and ordered to wipe the door handles each day to minimize the spread of swine flu.

Tone Thyne, a senior producer at Little Airplane, said its internships were usually highly educational and often led to good jobs.

Concerned about the effect on their future job prospects, some unpaid interns declined to give
their names or to name their employers when they described their experiences in interviews.

While many colleges are accepting more moderate- and low-income students to increase economic mobility, many students and administrators complain that the growth in unpaid internships undercuts that effort by favoring well-to-do and well-connected students, speeding their climb up the career ladder.

Many less affluent students say they cannot afford to spend their summers at unpaid internships, and in any case, they often do not have an uncle or family golf buddy who can connect them to a prestigious internship.

Brittany Berckes, an Amherst senior who interned at a cable news station that she declined to identify, said her parents were not delighted that she worked a summer unpaid.

“Some of my friends can’t take these internships and spend a summer without making any money because they have to help pay for their own tuition or help their families with finances,” she said. “That makes them less competitive candidates for jobs after graduation.”

Of course, many internships — paid or unpaid — serve as valuable steppingstones that help young people land future jobs. “Internships have become the gateway into the white-collar work force,” said Ross Perlin, a Stanford graduate and onetime unpaid intern who is writing a book on the subject. “Employers increasingly want experience for entry-level jobs, and many students see the only way to get that is through unpaid internships.”

Trudy Steinfeld, director of N.Y.U.’s Office of Career Services, said she increasingly had to ride herd on employers to make sure their unpaid internships were educational. She recently confronted a midsize law firm that promised one student an educational $10-an-hour internship. The student complained that the firm was not paying him and was requiring him to make coffee and sweep out bathrooms.

Ms. Steinfeld said some industries, most notably film, were known for unpaid internships, but she said other industries were embracing the practice, seeing its advantages.

“A few famous banks have called and said, ‘We’d like to do this,’ ” Ms. Steinfeld said. “I said, "No way. You will not list on this campus.’”

Dana John, an N.Y.U. senior, spent an unpaid summer at a company that books musical talent, spending much of her days photocopying, filing and responding to routine e-mail messages for her boss.

“It would have been nice to be paid, but at this point, it’s so expected of me to do this for free,”
she said. “If you want to be in the music industry that’s the way it works. If you want to get your foot in the door somehow, this is the easiest way to do it. You suck it up.”

The rules for unpaid interns are less strict for non-profit groups like charities because people are allowed to do volunteer work for non-profits.

California and some other states require that interns receive college credit as a condition of being unpaid. But federal regulators say that receiving college credit does not necessarily free companies from paying interns, especially when the internship involves little training and mainly benefits the employer.

Many employers say the Labor Department’s six criteria need updating because they are based on a Supreme Court decision from 1947, when many apprenticeships were for blue-collar production work.

Camille A. Olson, a lawyer based in Chicago who represents many employers, said: “One criterion that is hard to meet and needs updating is that the intern not perform any work to the immediate advantage of the employer. In my experience, many employers agreed to hire interns because there is very strong mutual advantage to both the worker and the employer. There should be a mutual benefit test.”

Kathyrn Edwards, a researcher at the Economic Policy Institute and co-author of a new study on internships, told of a female intern who brought a sexual harassment complaint that was dismissed because the intern was not an employee.

“A serious problem surrounding unpaid interns is they are often not considered employees and therefore are not protected by employment discrimination laws,” she said.