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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
City to mull tobacco leaf motif in sign

*The Daily Reflector*

A request to include a tobacco motif in signs identifying parts of Greenville is being reconsidered by some on the City Council.

The council is scheduled to discuss the signs, part of a wayfinding system, during its 7 p.m. meeting today at City Hall, 200 W. Fifth St.

The system is designed to direct vehicles and pedestrians to and from key destinations throughout Greenville, including the historic downtown, historic neighborhoods.

*See CITY, B3*

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**CITY**

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in east and west Greenville, the medical district and East Carolina University.

In February, Councilwoman Rose Glover supported using a tobacco leaf in the signage, noting the city grew because of its once-thriving tobacco market. At that time, planner Carl Rees said "surprisingly strong opposition" had been voiced to the tobacco leaf imagery.

During Monday's meeting, Glover said she has since heard from opponents to the tobacco leaf imagery. She said one way to lessen potential controversy was to perhaps use the City Council seal on the signs.

Also on Thursday's agenda:

- A request from Alva W. Worthington to rezone nearly 57.3 acres of land located along County Home Road to high density and medium density multi-family residential zoning.
- Requests to rezone along Signature Drive. One request, from Rosewood Farms, would change zoning along Bluebill Drive to high density and medium density multi-family residential. The other request, from Lake Kristi Properties would change zoning along Bells Chapel Road to general commercial.
- A proposal to annex 23.142 acres of Grove Point located on the east side of Allen Road and south of its intersection with Briarcliff Drive.
- Proposals to repair or demolish structures at 1913 McClellan St., 1915 McClellan St. and 1910 S. Pitt St.
Former Pirate joins ECU football staff

The Daily Reflector

Former East Carolina offensive lineman and seven-year National Football League veteran Dwayne Ledford has rejoined the ECU football program as a member of the coaching staff after accepting an offensive assistant's position, according to an announcement from head coach Skip Holtz.


— ECU Media Relations
Easley pledges better public relations

He tells his staff: Work with media

MATTHEW EISLEY, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley said Wednesday that he has instructed his senior staff, his press office and other state public information officers to cooperate better with news media outlets to provide information to the public.

Easley disavowed his office's "pettiness" toward some reporters and faulted his press secretary, Renee Hoffman, for leading subordinates in various executive agencies to think that she was instructing them to delete official e-mail messages to and from the governor's office each day.

"It never should have happened," Easley said. "It just never should have happened."

Easley made his remarks during a two-hour meeting with the head of the N.C. Press Association and the top editors of The News & Observer, The Charlotte Observer and Carolina Journal. They're considering suing the governor over possible violations of the state's Public Records Law.

The controversy arose last month when Debbie Crane, a fired spokeswoman for the state Department of Health and Human Services, said that Easley's press officials had told subordinate employees to destroy e-mail messages to the Governor's Office as a way to evade the state's Public Records Law.

At first, the Governor's Office denied the charge, but the administration later produced notes from two other agency spokespeople that support Crane's assertion. Their records from a meeting with other public information officers last May, which Hoffman led, included notes to delete e-mail messages to and from the governor's office every day.

Messages were kept

"The bad news is, most of them thought they were being told to delete everything," Easley said. "The good news is, in spite of all that, they all kept their stuff like they were supposed to. They all followed the [correct] policy and said, 'I know this was the direction, but I'm not doing it.'"

Easley said Hoffman doesn't think that's what she said, has an impeccable record in 29 years of government service, and kept so many e-mail messages that she used more than her allotment of computer memory.

"So you sort of believe she's got to be telling the truth, because she keeps all of them," Easley said. "But you've got to believe the other ones can't all be confused."

Easley defended his administration's policy to let employees decide whether to delete official e-mails by judging whether the messages hold lasting "administrative value."

The Public Records Law, however, says that, with some exceptions, all government e-mail concerning public business is a public record, and must be retained and provided upon request.

Easley said he hopes a commission he appointed to examine the issue of e-mail retention will develop a clearer policy.
"People who work for the state are very honest, and they try to do the right thing," Easley said. "But they need to know what that is, and the guidelines need to be more specific. I don't think people are going to try to be dishonest with you."

'It's our fault'

Easley, a former district attorney and state attorney general, said he told his staff that the public records controversy had overshadowed his proposal to fix the state's beleaguered mental-health system.

"I told them: 'You know whose fault that is? It's our fault. We let this get to be an issue,' " he said.

Greater cooperation with the media would be good for the public and for the advancement of his policies, the governor said. He said the e-mail controversy is distracting his administration from its final year of work.

"This kind of thing is a distraction that ruins your focus, and shouldn't have happened to begin with," he said. "I shouldn't have let it happen."

John Drescher, The N&O's executive editor, told Easley that his press office has a poor reputation among journalists.

"It seems like your press office, your public information officers, view their job as to make our job as difficult as possible," Drescher said.

"We can't interview folks. Everything has to be controlled, everything has to be managed by your press office. It slows us down. I think it makes the quality of the information we get less good. Every kind of public records request we make is a fight."

Easley said he instructed his staff Tuesday to work more cooperatively with the news media.

"I do not have time for pettiness," he said, punctuating his words for emphasis.

Making it harder for reporters "for no reason other than they can is not something that I'm going to tolerate any more, and I've told them that. I think my people want to be more cooperative. The ones that don't, I've got other things they can do."

matthew.eisley@newsobserver.com or (919) 829-4538


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North Carolina remembers Virginia Tech shooting

Citizens groups in five cities across the state are hosting memorial events on April 16 to honor the one-year anniversary of the campus shooting at Virginia Tech.

The civil protest is part of a national campaign to express the sorrow over the shootings that took place at the school, which remains the deadliest shooting rampage in U.S. history.

Organizers are attempting to stimulate public discourse and draw attention to the fact that it is too easy to purchase a gun in America. Each of the groups will have a total of 32 protesters, which symbolizes one of the students or teachers murdered.

The protesters will lie on the ground for several minutes, signifying how little time it took for the shooter to buy his gun.

Protest details and locations:

Charlotte-32: noon, Tryon Street & East 6th Street, southeast corner.
Duke-32: noon, on front steps of Duke Chapel at Duke University in Durham.
UNC-Chapel Hill 32: noon, Polk Place near Gardner Hall at UNC Campus.
Winston Salem-32: 10:30 am, Clock Tower at Winston Salem State University.
UNC-Wilmington-32: noon, Clock Tower at the Center of UNCW Campus, 601 S. College Rd.

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Latest College Reading Lists: Menus With Pho and Lobster

By MICHAEL S. SANDERS

Brunswick, Me.

THE smell of a curried butternut squash soup wafts through the air as you walk into the dining room. At long tables of dark wood, beneath windows soaring 20 feet overhead, customers dine on vegetable ragout over polenta, spicy orange beef, Dijon-crusted chicken, cheese quesadillas, vegetarian pho — Vietnamese noodle soup — and spinach sautéed with garlic and olive oil.

If it weren’t for the trays, and the fact that most diners are under 25, you’d think it was a restaurant. But this is Thorne dining hall at Bowdoin College here.

As recently as 10 years ago, a typical campus dining experience was a cafeteria offering overcooked meat, canned vegetables and instant mashed potatoes.

But as palates grow more sophisticated and admissions become more competitive, many top colleges are paying attention to dining rooms as well as classrooms.

For students who are now hearing from the top-tier colleges, picking a destination can be partly a matter of taste.

“I didn’t apply to Bates, because, well, I ate there, the meal was not very good,” said Lucas Braun, a 17-year-old senior at Westtown School, outside of Philadelphia, who has been accepted at several colleges in the Northeast. “There’s something subliminal from the food you see in the dining hall and the meal they give you that influences your decision.”

Food was definitely on Jenna Gruer’s agenda last fall as she visited colleges coast to coast. Jenna, an 18-year-old vegetarian from St. Louis, Mo., was particularly impressed by Wesleyan University.

“I heard a lot about organic food co-ops and the little organic store where you can use your dining card, and those things are important to me,” she said of its offerings.

Food alone might not be a reason to apply, she said, but it might eliminate colleges with lesser dining halls.
"Those aren't going to be my top schools, considering the full package of what I'm going to be having for the next four years of my life," she said.

Colleges nationwide have been innovating. Stanford offers "spa waters," mineral water with cucumber, watermelon, mint and other flavors. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst shares guest chefs with eight colleges. Yale has an organic cafe. Brown has a farmers' market. At Wheaton College in Illinois, low-carbon meals use local and organic food; students can choose Thursday dinners illuminated only by the lights outside.

"The food is part of meeting the expectations of those enrolled and those who are going to choose you," said Steve Thomas, director of admissions at Colby College in Waterville, Me. "We budget $15,000 a year just for meal tickets for prospective visiting families and students."

"Students are quite knowledgeable about how a college's food ranks in the Princeton Review," Mr. Thomas added, referring to "The Best 366 Colleges," a guide. "We hear it all the time, and we pay attention to it because they pay attention to it."

For several years, Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., and Bowdoin have been trading the top spots in the guide's "Best Campus Food" list, derived from 120,000 student surveys.

Virginia Tech, with 26,000 students, serves 160,000 meals a week, both through regular meal plans and with à la carte selections paid for with a discount swipe card.

The West End Market dining hall, 1 of 13 (including some outside franchises), has 8 separate areas, each with its own design scheme and food. At J.P.'s Chop House at the West End, with dark wood paneling and brass fixtures, "You can order a whole Maine lobster, New York strip and rib-eye steaks cooked how you want them, grilled sesame-crusted tuna with wasabi mayo," Rick Johnson, Virginia Tech's director of housing and dining, said of some of the à la carte selections. "You can get fresh steamed asparagus and garlic mashed potatoes on the side, grilled tomatoes. But right next door, you step into a sports bar, with sports décor and two different projection screens with ESPN or a game and where kids can eat 100 percent different than J.P.'s: cheese fries, gourmet hamburgers and chicken wings."

Ashley McLain, a sophomore, said her favorite was the London broil at J.P.'s.

"Yeah, the line can be long," she said, "but you get a steak dinner cooked to order, with lots of vegetables and different kinds of potatoes or rice, and all for about five bucks."

She appreciates the efforts. "You have a lot of different choices," she said, "and everything has flavor, unlike some others schools I've visited where the food was bland."
Mr. Johnson said students expect to eat the way they do in a restaurant: “We discovered a way in the marketplace concept — kitchens brought out from behind the wall, cooking platforms with pizza ovens, broilers, fryers — so students can see you throw the dough, top it to order and put it in the wood-fired oven. And they don’t just want that product in name only, but they want it to be authentic, because they’ve eaten at Wolfgang Puck’s restaurant and they want to smell that hickory wood burning.”

Bowdoin College, with 1,800 students and a postcard-perfect northern New England campus, projects a rather sedate image. But in Thorne Hall on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday at midnight, hundreds of students socialize and eat in an airy, open space with music thumping.

This is Super Snack, a selection of fresh fruit and vegetables, grilled cheese sandwiches, and other simple foods, one innovation the college has made in response to student input.

“They love food,” said Mary Lou Kennedy, Bowdoin’s dining director. “They love the community of food. They were Slow Food 10 years before it became a movement. At dinner, they come and stay for an hour and a half.”

Justin Foster, a freshman from Memphis, was surprised at the variety and the quality he found at Bowdoin. “White spinach lasagna, eggplant parm, ratatouille, Honolulu tofu with rice and peppers, sweet potato fries,” he reeled off his favorite dishes, “and they make a really good rum cake, too. Vegans, vegetarians — the cooks make it easy for those students with that lifestyle, and I appreciate the food more, knowing they’re making a real effort to be green, to use organic food, to be environmentally friendly.”

Mrs. Kennedy said: “First, our cooks know how to cook. All of our soups are from scratch. We have Fair Trade coffee locally roasted. We have our own butcher who grinds the meat for our hamburgers, and 20 percent of our food budget is locally sourced.”

Bowdoin has two organic gardens, begun five years ago as a student project and now in the hands of a farm manager. Last year they supplied more than $20,000 of herbs and vegetables, with the surplus sold at an on-campus farmers’ market.

Of course, colleges that put a premium on food tend to have higher endowments and more costly meal plans. Bowdoin, which renovated its two dining halls for $13 million, charges $2,600 per semester, Yale $2,380.

The basic Virginia Tech meal plan is $1,155 per semester, but if a student wants the add-ons in quality or choice, he pays à la carte. A lobster at P.J.’s costs four times as much as the London broil, which may be a reflection of its real price at a college where in-state tuition runs just under $7,400, compared to...
Bowdoin's $34,000.

For Kathy Kittridge, director of dining at the University of Maine in Orono, where many students come from rural backgrounds and for whom the $1,855 meal plan is already expensive, lobster dinners just aren't part of her reality. "I went down to Boston College last year to see what they were doing," Ms. Kittridge said, "and they do have seafood, steaks, a lot of high-end items. They're a city school and those choices are in demand there, but here, we're looking at a 7, 8 percent increase in our meal plans," to keep the offerings at the same, more modest level next year.

Fancier choices, she said, are out of the question.

But for colleges that can afford the money and time to improve their dining halls, and have chosen to do so, is it worth it?

The Web site www.collegeprowler.com, which has more than 180,000 visitors a month and publishes college guides, just named Bowdoin "School of the Year."

"After the warm atmosphere and amazing faculty, students cited the food as their favorite thing about the college," the site’s co-founder, Luke Skurman, said in an interview. "After I visited, I understood why.

"The dining halls post the students’ comment cards. One read, 'Would it be possible for you to make pumpkin chocolate muffins?' Underneath, the reply was, 'Please expect to see them every Monday morning.' "

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For Class of ’08, A Scramble for Jobs

BY ANJALI ATHAVALY

As the credit crunch rolls financial markets and the U.S. economy sputters, new college graduates are plunging into the rockiest job market in recent years.

The bleaker picture is in stark contrast with last year, when colleges and employers reported robust hiring, and students in finance, accounting and other hot fields were choosing among numerous offers. Now, companies that just a few months ago were planning substantial increases in entry-level hiring have scaled back their plans as economic conditions have worsened. In turbulent areas such as financial services, some firms are slashing the number of fresh graduates they intend to employ, and students are curtailing expectations of finding their ideal position.

Ken Goldstein, a labor economist at the Conference Board, a New York business research group, says the shift in mood is going to be particularly difficult for seniors who haven’t already secured a job, “especially those graduates with C or B-minus averages.”

In the current climate, employers “tell folks, ‘Don’t call us, we’ll call you,’” Mr. Goldstein says. “That sort of has been the modus operandi when the economy gets this slow.”

The latest unemployment figures reinforce the gloom. The jobless rate rose to 5.1% in March, the highest since September 2005.
Class of '08 Scrambles for Jobs

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the Labor Department reported Friday.

To cope with the gloomer outlook, some graduating seniors are opting for jobs they think are less likely to be affected by tumult in the financial sector. James Auger, a 22-year-old human communications sciences major at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., had hoped to start a career in banking, but he recently accepted a job at HealthCare Futures LP, a consulting firm in Itasca, Ill. Part of the reason, he says, was because they weren’t really attached to the market as much as the banks were.”

There are some bright spots for the Class of 2008. Government hiring remains robust. In fields such as health care and technology, some businesses are hoping to sign on more newly minted grads than last year, while companies in other fields say they’re keeping their hiring goals steady. Meanwhile, some seniors headed for careers in finance, consulting and other hard-hit sectors locked in offers from employers last fall, when the outlook for the U.S. economy was less gloomy.

Sarah Quartermar, global head of campus recruiting at Merrill Lynch & Co., says that despite the downturn in finance, banks investment banks announce sweeping cutbacks.

Even offers made last fall aren't set in stone. At Bear Stearns Cos., whose planned acquisition by J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. is expected to result in thousands of layoffs, half of the 100 or so job offers to graduating seniors are being rescinded, mainly in areas where the two firms overlap, according to a person familiar with the matter. J.P. Morgan says all its offers to graduating seniors remain valid.

Among other financial-services firms, Citigroup Inc. says that its hiring of undergraduate students is down 10% this year. Merrill Lynch's number of college hires is flat this year after increasing last year. Deloitte LLP says it is employing 6,000 college juniors and seniors this year for full-time or intern positions— the same level as last year. In previous years, the accounting firm has seen increases of about 10%.

"It may not be as dramatic of a growth as the year prior," says Diane Borhani, head of U.S. campus recruiting at Deloitte. "We are going to be a little smart."

College seniors are feeling the pressure to secure a job earlier in the year. Trudy Steinfeld, executive director at the Wasserman Center for Career Development at New York University, says that 45% of the senior class companies in sectors that saw robust increases in recent years say their hiring is flat this year. International Business Machines Corp. says it hired 5,000 people in the U.S. last year, 36% of whom were recent university graduates—the same as in 2006. This year, "given the broader economy in the U.S., we don’t see huge growth," says Vera Chota, manager of university recruiting for IBM.

Certain skills still are in strong demand, says Ms. Chota, adding that the company can’t find enough qualified graduates with degrees in computer science and those who have knowledge of both business and IT. “In the U.S., unfortunately, there are not enough great computer science graduates,” Ms. Chota says.

On college campuses, careerservices directors say job offers have continued to flow in from employers in health care, information technology, and the nonprofit and government sectors. Demand for skilled workers in industries like computer science is boosting the average starting salary 4% this year from last, according to a NACE survey.

A breakdown by industry shows that starting salaries for accounting and finance grads rose by a mere 1.9%, while business-administration and management graduates saw increases of less than 1%. The average offer for computer-science majors, on the other hand, rose 7.9%. Engineering graduates saw an average increase of 3.7%.

The job outlook for new graduates can vary from college to college, depending on a school’s location and its rankings in certain industries.
are unlikely to cut back on hiring to the extent they did in 2000. "Everyone learned the lesson that it wasn't the smart thing to do because students that get hired from campus are a pipeline for the organization," she says. "What a lot of firms experienced in 2005 and 2006 was a shortage of talent at the VP level," typically five or six years out of school.

Still, the overall mood in the job market has taken a dramatic downturn from just a few months ago. According to a survey conducted last fall by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, a Bethlehem, Pa., nonprofit, large employers initially expected to boost hiring of new graduates 16%, on average, this year from last year's levels. After redoing the survey in February, NACE found employers planned a more modest 8% increase overall. Within financial services, hiring is now anticipated to fall 7.5% this year, as in-

The University of Texas at Austin undergraduate school of business, where approximately 70% of college seniors find jobs within the state, 75% of seniors have received job offers so far, on par with last year. With oil prices hovering near historic highs, the university is seeing strong demand from energy companies in Texas, who typically hire undergraduate business students for positions in marketing, supply-chain management or corporate finance, says Velma Arney, director of undergraduate career services at UT's McCombs School of Business.

College juniors, meanwhile, are anticipating tough times ahead. "It's probably going to be a lot more difficult" for next year's graduating seniors, says Karim Hemani, 21, a business honors student majoring in finance at the University of Texas at Austin.

Mr. Hemani, a junior, says that when he tried to find an internship in investment banking for the coming summer earlier this year, recruiters warned him that the labor market would be tighter for his class. He eventually landed an internship at Tudor, Pickering, Holt & Co. LLC, an energy investment firm in Houston. Among college juniors, "the sentiment is a lot more negative right now," he says.