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Immigration advocates: Education is key

“People don’t understand that if it were easy for immigrants to get lawful status, they would. People say, ‘Why don’t they get in line and follow the rules?’ But for some, there is no line, and for others, it’s a 20-year wait. It’s a difficult situation.”

Lisa Chun, attorney at the North Carolina Justice Center’s Immigrant Rights Project

By Jackie Drake
Thursday, April 12, 2012

More education is needed for the public to fully understand the complex issues and human experience of immigration.

That was the consensus at a public forum Tuesday night hosted by graduate students in a sociology of immigration class at East Carolina University.

“We’ve been spending a lot of time debunking myths,” student Nathalie Baptiste said. “There are a lot of stereotypes surrounding immigration.”

A diverse panel of four experts and activists led the discussion called “Perspectives on Policy” attended by about 20 people in the Health Sciences Building.

“People don’t understand that if it were easy for immigrants to get lawful status, they would,” said Lisa Chun, an attorney at the North Carolina Justice Center’s Immigrant Rights Project. “People say, ‘Why don’t they get in line and follow the rules?’ But for some, there is no line, and for others, it’s a 20-year wait. It’s a difficult situation.”

The federal government has maintained caps and other restrictions on the number of visas and citizenships regardless of demand, according to Chun. Congress has not updated the laws, so states are taking it upon themselves to act, Chun said.

“It’s a really complex area, so I think we can start educating the public,” said Prudencio Martinez Mengel, a citizen of Puerto Rico who works as an interpreter at Vidant Medical Center and serves on the City of Greenville’s Human Relations Council. “The public plays an important role in politics, and since the politics and laws are broken regarding immigration, we can plant that seed of education so people can do something about it.”

“There’s a lot of misinformation that we don’t pay taxes and we’re here to take jobs,” said Viridiana Martinez, an advocate for the DREAM Act for education for undocumented minors. “I am undocumented; this is what we
look like. We’re human beings, just like you. ... Let’s flip the script. What would you do for your family?”

Panelist Lee Maril, a sociology professor and founding director of the Center for Diversity and Inequality Research at ECU, shared stories from his time living on the U.S.-Mexico border while researching his books.

“This forum is a small part of a wider discussion in the community that needs to continue,” Martinez Mengel said. “We’ve talked about problems; we need to keep looking for solutions.”

The event was developed and organized by students, according to sociology professor Rebecca Powers.

“This was a learning tool for them,” Powers said. “This is a chance for them to learn about public sociology, to reach out beyond academia and into the community.”

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UNC system wants to forge stronger ties with Chinese universities

By Jay Price - jprice@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL—With the Chinese interest in higher education booming—and that country’s economy rapidly maturing into one that not only makes goods but consumes them, too—University of North Carolina system officials say now is the time to develop a comprehensive strategy for forging stronger ties with universities there.

A delegation that included UNC system President Tom Ross and Board of Governors Chairwoman Hannah Gage recently visited several Chinese universities and came away impressed with the potential for more collaboration with those schools, and the business opportunities that could result for students and the state’s economy.

“I think it’s crucial for our kids to become familiar and comfortable with what’s going on over there, because there’s a huge opportunity emerging,” said Paul Fulton, a member of the Board of Governors and former dean of UNC Chapel Hill’s Kenan-Flagler Business School. “You put our kids over there and show them that opportunity, and they’re going to take advantage of it.”

In a meeting-packed eight days, the delegation visited four cities and six universities, two schools, the Chinese Education Ministry and UNC System alumni living in China.

They also visited the site of Duke University’s China campus, now under construction about 40 miles from Shanghai in the city of Kunshan. Several, including Fulton, said they were impressed by the size of the Duke project.

The delegation met Wednesday to hone its presentation on the trip before the full Board of Governors this morning. The members agreed that it was vital to foster a strong pipeline that makes studying in China easier and more attractive for students around the system.

No public money was used for the trip. Board members bought their own airline tickets and covered some expenses for meals and cultural activities. Travel within China and lodging were paid for by the Chinese Ministry of Education.
Ross and Leslie Boney, a UNC system vice president, had earlier visited Taiwan with a similar mission. That trip was paid for by the Taiwanese Higher Education Ministry.

**Education opportunities**

The system’s broad goal is to create students who are better prepared to compete in the global economy. That means steps such as working with individual UNC campuses to foster more student exchanges, faculty swaps and joint programs. But given the system’s tight budget, it also means exposing students to Chinese culture via cheaper means, such as distance learning.

The system has a long-standing partnership with Fudan University in Shanghai and other projects under way. Several universities in the 16-campus UNC system have programs involving China, though sometimes even administrators at the individual universities don’t know the details.

Board member Bill Daughtrigde said it would be smart to survey the campuses to determine what they are doing, examine existing programs to see what works and what doesn’t, and use the information to build a set of best practices to guide campuses as they create new programs.

It’s also important to make sure that UNC students learn about Chinese culture in a way that ensures it creates business opportunities, Daughtrigde said.

Members of the delegation said that meeting Chinese university officials, and seeing their interest in collaborations, convinced them of the importance of having a representative in China. But, they said, given the state of the system’s embattled budget, any arrangement will have to be done on a shoestring.

**UNC rep in China**

The system, along with Appalachian State University, has been splitting the $10,000 cost of having a recent college graduate act a representative in China. In the fall, the system expects to change the commitment and pay $10,000 toward the cost of sending a full professor there. That faculty member mainly will be working for UNC-Charlotte, which is creating a new computer-science program.

The group agreed that the system should develop a plan for its approach to China for the full board’s eventual consideration. Ross said a comprehensive plan to foster international ties should also include Taiwan, India and other countries.
With widespread public support, the commitment of key community institutions and a demonstrated need and promise of high-volume use, the construction of an intermodal transportation center in Greenville could be a valuable addition to the city. Providing a central location for the coordination of mass transit may seem even more crucial should the area’s population continue its explosive growth.

Supporters of this project have been passionate about its potential but have struggled to inspire confidence in key constituencies, including some skeptical members of the City Council, and especially the taxpayers who will be asked to pay for the center. That must be the first step — building public support by demonstrating a clear need for the facility — before moving forward with such an expensive capital investment.

It was 2003 when the city conducted a study of public transportation options that showed the feasibility of building a central facility that could serve as a hub for local, regional and distance bus services as well as taxicabs operating in Greenville. Applications for grant money were submitted and officials explored site possibilities for construction.

Public projects of this magnitude, location and cost do take considerable time, but years passed with progress measured in increments rather than strides. The delays in reaching key benchmarks allowed residents’ support to wane and for organizations like East Carolina University to express reservations about the selected location.

Last year that came to a head when Mayor Pro Tem Bryant Kittrell raised doubts about the sluggish pace of progress, concerns shared by Councilman Max Joyner, who still sits on the council. City staff returned to the drawing board at their behest and returned Monday so the council could award a contract to conduct a second site selection study.

In the presentation made by the chosen development company, it was repeatedly stated that the public would be consistently consulted as decisions are considered and made. That is important and the council will need to do its part to sell the importance of this center if it continues down this path.
However, absent a clear commitment from East Carolina and the business community downtown — another group with doubts about the first location — the public is right to harbor reservations. Yes, an intermodal center may well be an economic development tool, as has been seen in other communities, but it will only be successful with the entire city and especially all key stakeholders pulling in the same direction.
Whether a special state House committee was attempting to fix a real problem, or something that isn’t at all broken, is a question that combatants in the ongoing Wake County hospital conflict could argue about until they turned blue and had to call an ambulance.

But as to how the committee did business, this much is perfectly clear: It made a mess of the legislative process. Committee members Tuesday were asked to vote on a proposed bill that some of them, at least, hadn’t had time to study. “This is a nine-page bill that we’re seeing for the very first time right now,” complained Rep. Julia Howard, a senior Republican lawmaker from Mocksville. “I, for one, don’t know what’s in it.”

Howard asked for a postponement, but the vote was taken anyway – by voice. Somehow an 8-7 margin in favor was determined. How’s that for open and accountable governance?

Wake County’s largest hospital enterprise, privately owned WakeMed, triggered the controversy with an unsolicited offer to buy its crosstown rival, Rex Hospital, a subsidiary of publicly owned UNC Health Care. WakeMed contends that Rex, because of its UNC backing, has unfair advantages in the highly competitive health marketplace. But UNC Health is loath to part with Rex, which generates significant income that helps support UNC’s mission. WakeMed would love it if legislators overrode UNC Health’s objections and directed that a sale go forward. The special committee’s proposal doesn’t go that far. But it would shorten UNC’s leash, putting the health care organization more directly under the control of the Board of Governors for the overall university system. Those board members happen to be legislative appointees.

The committee also would address Rex’s status as a publicly owned facility that operates as if it were private, answering to an understandable WakeMed grievance.

If the proposed bill clears the House, it faces a rough ride in the Senate. The public’s interest? Cooperation by UNC and WakeMed in serving this region’s health care needs effectively, efficiently and economically.
Cosmotologist Reid Plummer prims N.C. State senior Margaret Salata's hair Wednesday, April 11, 2012, in preparation for an NCSU Fashion Week show at N.C. State's Centennial Campus.

**N.C. State hosts its first fashion week**

By Jennifer Bringle - Correspondent


The university has something in common with the world’s most fashionable cities this week by hosting its inaugural fashion week. N.C. State Fashion Week (www.ncstatefashionweek.com), which started Wednesday and goes through Friday, is three days of fashion shows, guest speakers and exhibitions.

The event developed as an extension of the curriculum of the university’s colleges of textiles and design.

“The idea originated over a year ago because we were implementing a new textile design program,” says Nancy Webster, professor in the textile design program and fashion week organizer. “We wanted to showcase our ability to drive the front end of the business with the creative. We are known for the technical and scientific side of textiles and design, and we wanted to show our capacity for the creative and business side, as well.”

The event kicked off on with the “Avant Garde” show, featuring radical designs by students from N.C. State, as well as those from partner schools: the Fashion Institute of Technology of New York, China’s Donghua.
University and Hong Kong Polytechnic University. A concluding show, with the theme “Color Fusion,” will close the event at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

Student designers submitted their looks for jury deliberation. The pressure of knowing their pieces would be judged inspired the students to flex their creative muscles and produce designs worthy of runway attention.

“The caliber of work that the students produced this semester was exceptional,” says Monica Matthai, a senior in the N.C. State fashion and textile management program. “I think having an event such as Fashion Week pushes students to design and create outside of the box. I know that I created my garments with the mindset that the innovative nature of each look would need to be spot-on. I was flattered to know that the jury respected my vision.”

Along with the fashion shows and exhibitions, a host of industry experts – such as 7 for All Mankind president Barry Miguel and Katrina Streiner, vice president and creative director at Belk – will speak during forums on innovation and creativity.

“We wanted the subject matter to be innovation, which is not only a focus here in the college (of textiles), but also at the university in general,” says Webster. “We also wanted to incorporate creativity with speakers who can comment on the design aspect. It was important to get people who are leaders in their fields to speak on those topics.”

In addition to learning from the forums, students will get the chance to network with the speakers.

“Our students will have a tremendous opportunity for exposure that could lead to internships or jobs,” says Webster. “It’s a great opportunity to showcase the creativity of our students, and we’ve really built this event to be a dialogue exchange between students and members of the fashion industry.”

This isn’t the first major fashion event for N.C. State. The university’s annual Art to Wear fashion show (April 24) draws huge crowds to see original student designs on the runway. Webster is quick to point out that NCSU Fashion Week is meant to complement, rather than compete with Art to Wear.

“Our vantage point is very different,” says Webster. “Art to Wear is more of an artist’s approach, and we’re presenting a broader perspective, from home to apparel – all facets of the textile world. We’re very supportive of Art to Wear and we have a lot of students in that show.”
For students in the colleges of design and textiles, Fashion Week provides more opportunity to bring their works to the runway and experience the level of work and dedication that goes into staging a fashion show.

“By participating in N.C. State Fashion Week, I have a greater understanding of the fast-paced, intense nature of the industry,” says Matthai. “I have also gained an immense amount of knowledge in pattern design, draping and construction. Experiences like this are essential to a career in the fashion industry.”
I was at the University of North Carolina when I heard the Swahili anecdote. It was at a luncheon organized by some faculty members who have become, like me, critics of the NCAA and the hypocrisy of college sports. Among those attending was a former Carolina football player named Deunta Williams.

About halfway through lunch, the talk turned to the education. UNC-Chapel Hill, mind you, is a place that professes to care a great deal about whether its athletes go to class – and earn a degree. And, of course, the NCAA claims – preposterously – that athletes are students above all else.

Yet several of the professors complained that whenever an athlete enrolled in their classes, they got a letter from the athletic department asking them, in effect, to go easy on the player. After all, he was holding down a full-time job: playing football for the university.

Williams, however, had his own set of complaints. Athletes, he said, could only take the classes the athletic department wanted them to take. Coursework couldn’t interfere with practice, of course. It was always better that the classes not be too difficult – otherwise, there might be eligibility problems. And one other thing:

“All the freshman football players take Swahili as their language requirement,” Williams said. Why? Because the athletic department tutors are strong in Swahili.

[Asked by The N&O for a response, a university official said the assertion that all freshmen football players take Swahili is incorrect. Of the 21 current freshmen football players, the languages they are studying are Portuguese (15 students), Spanish (5) and French (1). Of 91 football players currently on the roster, the languages are Portuguese (51), Spanish (22), Swahili (11), French (3), Arabic (1), German (1), Italian (1) and Japanese (1).]

I’ve been thinking about that Swahili story a lot these days. Over the past few months, as I’ve tackled the problems with college sports – and called for
players to be paid, instead of serving as free labor in a multibillion-dollar industry – many readers and bloggers have responded by pointing to the presumed value of the free education they’re getting. Some have argued that the right answer is for universities to de-emphasize athletics. Others have said that schools should stop accepting athletes, no matter how talented, who lack the skills to do college-level work.

Just last week, Bob Costas, the estimable NBC sportscaster, devoted two hours of airtime to the state of college sports. (I was one of the panelists.) A half-dozen times, he asked whether it was right for schools to enroll athletes who couldn’t handle the academic requirements of college.

I have come to believe that that is the wrong question. Yes, the world would be a better place if universities were not trying to manage a huge entertainment complex “on the side.” But schools with big-time football and basketball programs are not acting irrationally. In addition to the millions of dollars such programs reap, they can put a school on the map, making it more attractive to potential applicants. A good college team can bind together a campus like nothing else.

In playing for the team, the athletes are giving their schools more immediate value than anyone else in the student body. They are also doing something that requires at least as much skill as playing in a university orchestra. Even putting aside the question of pay, surely the university ought to feel a moral obligation to return the favor by giving the players the tools to succeed in life.

Instead, universities do the opposite. With their phony majors and low expectations, they send the unmistakable message to the athletes that they don’t care what happens after their eligibility expires. It’s a disgrace.

Instead, why not allow football players to major in, well, football? This is a solution put forth by John Kilbourne, a professor of movement science at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. Kilbourne, a former dance major, points out that college dancers can focus almost exclusively on the thing they are passionate about – even though the vast majority will not ultimately be professional dancers. Why is it so terrible to think of a football player doing likewise? Surely they could get more from a course in, say, “racism and football” than in most of what they are now forced to take.

There is another way to come at this. It requires tossing the “student-athlete” pretense overboard and being honest about the revenue-generating role athletes play – and the fact that many are ill equipped to do college work. Ellen Staurowsky, a professor of sports management at Drexel University in
Philadelphia, has proposed “reimagining” the college system to acknowledge that football and basketball players are employees first and students a distant second. In her model, players would get paid something—and if they chose to pursue a college education, that would be an extra benefit. If they needed remedial reading and math instead of Shakespeare, the university would provide that, even if it didn’t ultimately lead to a college degree.

“All of the problems in college sports stem from one root cause,” she told me recently. “It is all built on a lie.”

Until we acknowledge that lie, the freshmen football players will be studying Swahili.

*Joe Nocera is a columnist for The New York Times.*
In his college application, George Desdunes wrote of the sacrifices his mother made “to help me achieve something with my life.”

**When a Hazing Goes Wrong**

By MICHAEL WINERIP

IN the early-morning hours of that Friday in February 2011, at around 3 a.m., George Desdunes and another Cornell sophomore were sitting on a couch blindfolded, their wrists and ankles bound with zip ties and duct tape. They had been kidnapped and driven to a town house somewhere on campus, one of the annual hazing rights of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. This particular ritual worked in reverse of most hazing. It was the freshmen pledges who kidnapped older students.

The two S.A.E. brothers were asked trivia questions about the fraternity. If they gave a wrong answer they were supposed to drink a shot of vodka. As George Desdunes’s roommate would later tell the police, “The purpose is to tie up the brother and get him drunk.”

The young man sitting on the couch beside Mr. Desdunes recalled downing four or five shots of vodka in 20 minutes and then vomiting into a garbage pail. The two were fed Pixy Stix, chocolate powder, strawberry syrup, a bite of a sandwich, hot sauce. “Something that felt like dish soap was dripped on my face,” said the 20-year-old sophomore, whose name was redacted from the police report. He drank more shots and vomited again.
Students later provided differing opinions on how threatening it was to be kidnapped. Some said Mr. Desdunes could have been cut loose at any time just by asking. “It was meant to be fun,” Edward Williams, a freshman pledge who was one of the kidnappers, told the police. Others wanted no part of it. Before going to bed, Mr. Desdunes’s roommate at the fraternity had locked their door, to guard against being kidnapped.

Eventually, Mr. Desdunes passed out and was loaded into the back seat of a Honda Pilot belonging to one of the brothers. At the fraternity, it took several people to carry him to his room, but when they found it locked, he was brought to the library and left on a leather couch.

They tilted his head, said Mr. Williams, so “he would vomit onto the floor” and not choke. Then they walked downstairs to the kitchen, made themselves something to eat and went to bed.

The S.A.E. house was quiet a few hours later, at 6:45 a.m., when the cleaning man and his father arrived for work. The place was worse than usual. There had been a beer pong tournament that night. Plastic cups were strewn all over. Furniture was broken. The room smelled like stale Keystone Light. After finishing the toilets, the younger cleaner walked by the library and noticed a student in a brown hoodie lying still. “I could see what looked like vomit or mucous on his mouth,” he told the police. “I tried to wake him by grabbing his foot to make sure he was O.K. There was no response.” Mr. Desdunes’s right pant leg was rolled up. One of the zip ties was around his ankle; a second zip tie with duct tape lay on the floor beside the couch.

The cleaners called 911.

When the police and firefighters arrived, they found an unresponsive male. He was not breathing, had no pulse and was cold to the touch. They laid him on the floor, cut off his sweatshirt, suctioned his throat and applied CPR. He was put on a stretcher and taken to a hospital in an ambulance.

The rescue workers remarked later that there was not a single fraternity brother in sight, just the cleaners, who told the police what they knew, then went downstairs to finish the kitchen.

HAZING is common on American campuses. A 2008 University of Maine study concluded that 55 percent of students who join fraternities, sororities, sports teams or other student groups experience it. Hank Nuwer, a professor at Franklin College in Indiana who has written four books on the subject, says that as long as there have been universities, there has been hazing: in 1657, two Harvard upperclassmen were fined and suspended for hazing. Mr. Nuwer has counted 104 deaths involving hazing since 1970.
In one high-profile case, a drum major in Florida A&M’s Marching 100 was beaten to death in November during a hazing on the band bus. While no arrests were made in that case, seven band members have been arrested since then in two other hazing incidents.

At Cornell, four students have been charged with hazing in connection with the Desdunes case and are scheduled to go on trial May 21.

Samantha Paetz has built a law practice by suing fraternities involved in hazing cases. In 2010, he won a multimillion-dollar settlement for the family of Carson Starkey, a freshman at California Polytechnic State University, who had pledged the S.A.E. chapter there.

According to the police, the pledges were put in a garage, given large quantities of liquor and told to drink quickly while the brothers chanted “Puke and rally.” When Mr. Starkey passed out, fraternity members drove him to the hospital, but turned around for fear of being arrested. Mr. Starkey, 18, was placed on a mattress at the house, where he died. His blood alcohol level was about .40, five times the legal limit to drive.

As a condition of that settlement, S.A.E. officials agreed to post on their Web site every case in which a local chapter was put on probation, suspended or expelled by universities from 2007 to 2011. In five years, disciplinary action has been taken against nearly 80 of S.A.E.’s 223 chapters. A spokesman for S.A.E., Brandon Weghorst, declined to comment for this article, citing continuing litigation. (In the spirit of full disclosure: one of my sons belonged to an S.A.E. chapter for two years, and enjoyed his experience.)

Last June, Mr. Fierberg filed a $25 million lawsuit against S.A.E. on behalf of Mr. Desdunes’s mother, Marie Andre. A widow and Haitian immigrant living in Brooklyn, she worked as a nanny, hospital aide and AIDS counselor so her only child, George, could go to private schools.

In his essay for the Common Application, Mr. Desdunes wrote: “My family consists of two people. My Mom, Marie, and myself. Over the years I have come to realize the sacrifices that she has made for me in order to help me achieve something with my life.”

ALCOHOL is often the not-so-secret ingredient that turns pledging into hazing. Four of five fraternity and sorority members in this country are binge drinkers, according to a 2000 Harvard study. Mr. Nuwer estimates that 80 percent of hazing deaths have involved alcohol.
At least two national fraternities, Phi Delta Theta and Phi Kappa Sigma, have mandated that all their chapter houses be alcohol free. It makes a big difference, said James Favor, president of James R. Favor & Company, which sells insurance to 15 national fraternities. In the decade before Phi Delta Theta became alcohol free, the fraternity averaged 12.3 liability claims a year that paid out an average of $812,951 in settlements, Mr. Favor said. After the fraternity went dry in 2000, there were three claims a year at an average annual cost of $15,388.

In 2006, Mr. Favor’s firm was bought by a partnership of seven national fraternities, including S.A.E. Asked whether he recommends that fraternity houses ban alcohol, he said, “I make them aware of the effects of going from wet to dry.”

The fraternity has debated getting rid of alcohol. In a proposal submitted to the S.A.E. Eminent Supreme Recorder in 2010, Frank Ginocchio (S.A.E. Northwestern ’66) recommended that the constitution be amended to require that all chapters be alcohol free by Aug. 1, 2014. “This proposal takes into account that approximately two-thirds of our members are under the age of 21 and that most of our risk management incidents involve the abuse of alcohol,” he wrote. “Beneficial consequences of this change will be a better maintained housing facility, and a better environment for studying.”

Last July, at S.A.E.’s 155th national convention in Memphis, the 450 fraternity brothers present failed to give the measure the two-thirds majority needed for passage. “A big mistake,” said Mr. Fierberg. “These decisions ought to be made by experts in risk management, not underage drinkers.”

THREE freshmen pledges in the Cornell case — Mr. Williams, Max Haskin and Ben Mann — have been charged with misdemeanor hazing, a penalty that carries up to a year in jail.

The records of a fourth pledge, who was 18 at the time and considered a juvenile, have been sealed. In addition to hazing he has been charged with tampering with evidence. After the police arrived at the fraternity house that morning, it was that fourth pledge who called his roommate and asked him to get rid of evidence of the kidnapping, according to court papers.

The authorities subpoenaed his cellphone records and made a transcript: “I need you to do me a favor. It’s extremely urgent. Throw out all the zip ties and duct tape in the room, please. ASAP.”

Response: “All right, I’m heading back to the room. Is everything all right?”

“No, I can’t really talk right now. Please just get rid of it.”
Response: “Are they going to be searching our room? Should I take stuff out of the freezer?”

“Maybe.”

The police also recovered a receipt for six rolls of duct tape that was bought for $53 at Home Depot on the afternoon before Mr. Desdunes was kidnapped.

Raymond M. Schlather, who is representing Max Haskin, has requested that the case be dismissed. In a brief filed last June, he noted that Mr. Haskin has no criminal record, that his grade-point average was 3.779 and that he was a member of the college tennis team.

He argues that Mr. Desdunes was drinking heavily before the kidnapping, had a history of binge drinking, willingly went along with the prank and, as an older frat member who dealt with pledges, could have ended it at any time.

There is considerable evidence for this theory.

The fraternity’s scholarship chairman told the police that Mr. Desdunes was carrying a partly filled bottle of Captain Morgan rum and that from about 11:30 to midnight they had drinks together at the house. He said that Mr. Desdunes had two rum and Pepsi drinks with two to three shots in each. Witnesses saw him 15 minutes later at Dino’s, a local bar, and said he was there until closing at 1 a.m. His roommate at the fraternity told the police: “George drinks harder than other people do but he doesn’t do it frequently. You would check on him because he may be keeled over in the bar.” He said that Mr. Desdunes, who was 19 years old, carried a fake ID.

In his brief, Mr. Schlather wrote that Mr. Desdunes “voluntarily consumed at least 10 to 12 ounces and perhaps as much as 15 to 20 ounces of alcohol before going to Dino’s.” He wrote that any alcohol Mr. Desdunes consumed after he was kidnapped by the pledges “was relatively insignificant compared to what Desdunes apparently had consumed earlier.”

There is also considerable evidence that Mr. Desdunes was not intoxicated before being kidnapped. His roommate from freshman year, who was at Dino’s that night, told the police that Mr. Desdunes did not buy anything from the bar.

“I have known George for around two years and have seen him intoxicated,” he said, “and he was not at all last night.”

When the bar closed, according to the police report, the two walked to Collegetown Pizza, where at about 1:15 Mr. Desdunes met a young woman,
who would tell the police they “hooked up” at her apartment. He was not drunk, she said.

He left her about 2:15 a.m., she said, and shortly after was picked up by the pledges.

At least two factors will make it difficult to sort out what happened. Most of the fraternity brothers declined to be interviewed by investigators. Within hours of the death, according to the police, Mr. Mann “informed us that he had received a text from the Fraternity, that the Fraternity had retained a lawyer and that no one should talk to the police without counsel.”

The other obstacle to getting at the truth is all that alcohol. One fraternity brother, who did not live at the house, did talk to the police, and told them that he was there playing beer pong until 1:30 a.m. “I went home, got in the shower, threw up, drank some water and went to bed. I imagine either a sober brother or a pledge drove me home, but I don’t remember.”

Mr. Desdunes’s blood alcohol level that night was about .40.

THE S.A.E. frat house, founded in 1891, was the biggest at Cornell. Forty brothers, about half the membership, lived in the three-story Tudor known as Hillcrest, which literally sits far above Cayuga’s waters. In March 2011, the university revoked recognition of the chapter for five years and the house, which is owned by Cornell, was vacated. It has been renovated and is now used as a coed dorm.

The four defendants in the criminal case, along with six others involved, have left Cornell. Several have attempted to transfer but have been told by admissions officers at other universities that their applications will not be considered until the charges are resolved.

Susan Murphy, Cornell’s vice president of student and academic affairs, criticized S.A.E. shortly after the episode, telling reporters that “even though the members and associate members recognized the condition Mr. Desdunes was in, they failed to call for medical care.”

There is a good possibility that the lawyers representing the four pledges will seek to have the charges reduced from a first-degree to a second-degree misdemeanor. That would carry a fine of a few hundred dollars. It is equivalent to pleading guilty to disturbing the peace. The four would have no criminal record.

IN an Op-Ed piece in The New York Times last August, David J. Skorton, the president of Cornell, wrote that the Desdunes tragedy “convinced me
that it was time — long past time — to remedy practices of the fraternity system that continue to foster hazing.”

He does not intend to get rid of fraternities and sororities, which serve about a quarter of Cornell’s 14,000 undergraduates. “The Greek system is part of our university history and culture, and we should maintain it because at its best, it can foster friendship, community service and leadership.”

The most concrete change to date has been to prohibit freshmen from attending fraternity parties that serve alcohol. A committee is expected to make recommendations in the next few weeks for ways to improve the pledging process.

Long before the Desdunes case there were many troubling signs at Cornell. Though hazing has been illegal at the university since 1980 and in New York State since 1983, 60 percent of the university’s fraternities and sororities were found responsible for hazing activities over the last decade. In 2006, the S.A.E. chapter was suspended for a semester for hazing violations.

Though most hazing involves alcohol, in the fall of 2009 Cornell’s Greek oversight council approved the use of alcohol at 181 social events. In the spring of 2010, alcohol use was approved at 244 events. That hasn’t changed much. Last fall, there were 156 Greek events with alcohol.

In 2010, 13 percent of all Greek social events resulted in complaints, more than double the percentage from five years before. The number of disciplinary cases, a large portion of them involving hazing, also rose, to 108 from 88.

Many people, including the lawyers for the accused, believe that Cornell officials should have foreseen problems but looked the other way because the Greek system is so popular. “It’s a shame Cornell is scapegoating freshman pledges to cover up its own historic failure to effectively deal with alcohol use in the Greek system,” said Mr. Schlather.

MANY immigrants never move beyond their own ethnic communities. Marie Lourdes Andre came here with little, yet was able to.

She worked as a nanny for Dr. Robert Fischer, an ophthalmologist, and his wife, Mary, and though Ms. Andre left that job long ago, they remain close. She is also close to John Sheehan, an information technology consultant who once lived across the hall from her.

They helped navigate the way for the mother and son. “George had no father,” said Ms. Andre. “He needed men to look up to.”
From sixth to 12th grade, George Desdunes attended Berkeley Carroll, an elite Brooklyn private school. He was an altar boy, a counselor at an overnight camp and an excellent swimmer, and he played trumpet in the school jazz band. He began music lessons at age 5. He was not permitted to watch television on school nights. “You didn’t have to tell him to do homework,” she said. “He knew this was his responsibility.”

When it was time for him to look at colleges, Mr. Sheehan drove him to see Cornell; Dr. Fischer took him to visit Williams.

The essay for Williams asked applicants to imagine looking through a window and, in 300 words, reflect on what they saw. George wrote that he saw his mother climbing through a window to come from Haiti to the United States, but that was as far as she could go. He wrote that because of her, he was able to climb through the window and become an American.

George was accepted to Williams, but chose Cornell. He wanted to be a doctor.

“He told me he joined a fraternity so when he graduates college, they help him get a job,” Ms. Andre said.

Midday on Friday, Feb. 25, 2011, Ms. Andre was working at her job as an AIDS counselor at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn when she got a call to come to the human resources department. She worried she was going to be laid off, but was told that a police officer was waiting to see her.

“Do you have a son named George at Cornell?” he asked.

The drive from Brooklyn to the medical examiner in Binghamton is five hours. The morgue was in a hospital basement.

Ms. Andre, accompanied by several friends for support, walked down a hallway to an examining room. A nurse asked them to please wait a moment, disappeared inside, then opened the door.

The body was face up, on a gurney, covered by a sheet that reached to the shoulders. It was George, but everything that made him George was gone—the intellect, the sense of humor, the smile, the life in his eyes.

Ms. Andre let out a horrible wail.

*Michael Winerip writes the On Education column for The Times.*
Campus Task Force Criticizes Pepper Spraying of Protesters

By JENNIFER MEDINA

LOS ANGELES — Police officers at the University of California, Davis, should not have used pepper spray on protesters who had set up camp in the middle of campus as part of the Occupy movement last November, according to an investigation of the episode by a campus task force.

In a 190-page report released Wednesday, the task force concluded that “the pepper spraying incident that took place on Nov. 18, 2011, should and could have been prevented.” The report details a pattern of miscommunication and describes campus leadership as inadequate.

The episode last fall garnered worldwide attention, particularly on social media, as images showed Lt. John Pike of the campus police calmly releasing pepper spray on seemingly peaceful protesters sitting on the ground.

Campus police had sued to prevent the report’s release, saying that it amounted to an internal investigation, and subsequent court hearings delayed the release of the report by more than a month. The university agreed to remove the names of most police officers from the report.
According to the report, administrators repeatedly said they were particularly concerned that protesters who did not attend U.C. Davis would flood the campus and endanger students. The campus police chief, Annette Spicuzza, estimated that 80 percent of protesters camping in the campus quad were not students. But that was challenged by student affairs administrators, who had spent time talking with the protesters and said that the vast majority of campers were students. The investigation found that the counterargument was largely ignored and administrators reiterated their concern for students.

“We were worried especially about having very young girls and other students with older people who come from the outside without any knowledge of their record,” Chancellor Linda P. B. Katehi told investigators. “If anything happens to any student while we’re in violation of policy, it’s a very tough thing to overcome.”

The task force concluded that the concern for outsiders threatening safety was “not supported by any evidence.” The investigation also found that even if the concern for safety was valid, it “would not justify ordering the immediate dismantling of the encampment” and that alternatives should have been considered.

The report also blames Chancellor Katehi for not effectively communicating that she expected a “limited operation” in which the police demanded that the tents be taken down, with the instruction that they “use no other force.” No administrator took responsibility to understand how the police operation would be handled. While Chief Spicuzza told her officers not to wear riot gear, they did so anyway. Several police officers said past experience had led them to predict the use of batons and pepper spray.

The police were also urged to start the operation at night, but interpreted the chancellor’s comments as a demand to begin removing the tents at 3 p.m. Friday, just a few days after they were erected. The report said that the legal basis for removing the tents during the day remained unclear, since a prohibition applied only to overnight camping.

The task force was led by Cruz Reynoso, a law professor at U.C. Davis and a former California Supreme Court justice, and relied heavily on an investigation by Kroll, a private firm hired by the University of California.
Christopher Newport admission staffers hid newspapers headlined: “Suspected meth lab on East Campus”

By Jenna Johnson

As the Christopher Newport University admissions office prepared for visits from hundreds of high school students and their parents on April 4, a few staffers tidied up the Newport News campus by collecting and hiding copies of the student newspaper, which contained the headline: “Suspected meth lab on East Campus.”

This alarmed the Captain’s Log staff. Emily Cole, the weekly paper’s editor in chief, asked an admissions employee what he was doing.

“He said, ‘I was told by the administration to do it,’” said Cole, 22, a senior classical studies major from Vienna, Va. “I told him, ‘That’s not okay.’”

Cole said she confronted the school’s dean of admissions, who told her he did not know what had happened. Soon, the hundreds of papers had been returned to the most-trafficked stands on campus. On Sunday, Cole e-mailed the top officials at the public liberal arts school and asked for an explanation.

“It’s something prospective students and their parents had a right to see,” Cole told me on Wednesday in defense of the short article. The collection, she said, seemed “very methodical, very calculated.”

On Tuesday, CNU President Paul S. Trible Jr. e-mailed the entire student body to denounce the collection as “inappropriate,” and to state that the employees involved will be disciplined.

“This action was taken by young employees who love CNU and were concerned that a newspaper article would create a bad impression for visiting prospective students,” wrote Trible, a former Virginia politician. “CNU fully respects the freedom of the press.”

The response upset Cole and other newspaper staff members, who felt they were being accused of not loving their university because they published the
article. They want the name of the person who ordered the paper collection, details of the punishment and an apology.

“It is our right and duty to report on the newsworthy events of the CNU campus,” the staff wrote in an editorial published on Wednesday. “We do not report on events with fear that a high school student and his or her parents may pick up the paper. We do not report on events just because they will make the university look good.”

On Wednesday, university spokeswoman Lori Jacobs said the university doesn’t have any further comment on the issue.

Oh, and what about that suspected meth lab in that dorm room more than two weeks ago? What about that?

So far, no arrests have been made, Jacobs said, although two students have been banned from campus pending an investigation by the local police. The public university isn’t naming the students, citing a federal law protecting student discipline records.

Here’s the basic timeline of what information has been released:

On March 30, students received a text message alert from the university at 6:48 p.m. that read: “Wilson Hall evacuated due to suspected meth lab...police are on scene. Students are safe; re-entry is not allowed until area cleared.”

University and Newport News police responded and searched the dorm. In the course of their investigation, a police detective and a drug-sniffing dog searched a parked car, where they found marijuana and drug paraphernalia, according to a police news release.

About two hours later, the residence hall was cleared and students were allowed to return to their rooms.

The evidence was submitted to the Virginia Division of Forensic Science Laboratory, according to a university statement dated April 3, and the university police are now forwarding requests for information to the Newport News Commonwealth’s Attorney.

The Daily Press in Newport News has extensively covered this story since late March, and one of its columnists criticized the university for not releasing more information about the bust.

“Trible has done impressive work reimagining and rebuilding CNU, and I can understand wanting to protect your brand,” wrote Tamara Dietrich in a column published this week. “But if he’s body-blocking First Amendment
access to a crime report, or playing campus visitors for fools, this does far more damage to his brand.”

Methamphetamine — a concoction of chemicals also referred to as ice, speed or crystal meth — is far from being a drug of choice on most college campuses. It’s most abused in the Midwest and western states like Nevada, Montana and Wyoming, and least abused on the East Coast, according to the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. And while some college students do abuse meth, the overall percentage has been declining over the past decade, according to the 2011 Monitoring the Future Study, which is funded by The National Institute on Drug Abuse.

So most campus drug prevention and intervention programs focus on more prevalent drugs like marijuana, coke, ecstasy and prescription drugs.

In October 2010, Georgetown University police discovered what they thought was a meth lab in a freshman’s dorm room. Turns out the chemicals they found are used to make dimethyltryptamine, or DMT, a hallucinogen. Georgetown freshman Charles Smith and his high school classmate John Perrone, a freshman at the University of Richmond, were arrested that day and charged. Both pleaded guilty and were put on probation, avoiding jail time.

When I interviewed Cole, the editor in chief, I asked her if meth was a problem on campus. She laughed.

“I have never seen meth,” she said. “I don’t know anyone who has done it.”
UCLA accidentally sends admissions letters to students still on wait list

Students will actually hear if they made it in after May 1

By Nina Mandell / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

UCLA officials are apologizing after the university mistakenly told nearly 900 high school seniors they were going to be Bruins next year.

The students are actually still on the waiting list — despite receiving congratulations letters from the highly selective university, The Associated Press reported.

"We realize this is a particularly anxious and stressful time for students and their families as they try to make decisions about college admissions," campus spokesman Ricardo Vazquez said in a statement. "We sincerely apologize for this mistake that may have led some of them to think they were admitted when they remain on the waiting lists."

The university said that the error happened when students were sent updated notices of provisional financial aid to students on the waiting list, as well as admitted students, the Los Angeles Times reported.

The university failed to remove a line that read, "Once again congratulations on your admission to UCLA, we hope that this information will assist you in making your decision to join the Bruin Family in the fall."

The school's financial aid office sent out a message on Monday to clarify the letters — and apologize to students.

The California university isn't the first school to make this mistake.

Earlier this year, Vassar College accidentally told more than 100 applicants that they were admitted when they were sent a "test letter" before the admissions decisions had actually been made.

The University of Delaware, Penn State, UC Santa Barbara and UC San Diego are among other schools that have made a similar error in previous years.
"This is just an unacceptable mistake," one commenter wrote on the Los Angeles Times website. "I don't think the administrators realize how stressful and upsetting this time of the year is for seniors. Just ridiculous."

The students are expected to find out if they are actually admitted after May 1.

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