THE DAILY CLIPS

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Welcome, Obama

Visit should be mutually beneficial

More than 200 years passed between visits to Greenville by sitting presidents George Washington and George W. Bush, but the city is receiving some unexpected courting prior to May's primary election. A Saturday visit by former President Bill Clinton will be followed today by U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, who will speak at East Carolina University.

Voters, facing difficult decisions in May and November, should enjoy the attention bestowed by the Clinton and Obama camps before the meaningful primary election. But candidates, too, should find value in visiting a region with key concerns — poverty, joblessness, access to health care — that demand action by the next White House occupant.

A visit by the president or a presidential campaign can be like hosting the circus for a day. Consider the 2001 speech by President Bush to an electric Minges Coliseum, which came shortly after his contested election victory over former Vice President Al Gore, and the week of hype that preceded his hour-long address.

The intense media scrutiny that follows these men and women gives them the aura of celebrity, even as they seek to connect with common Americans wherever possible. Clinton, for instance, came to South Central High School on Saturday morning as a surrogate for his wife, but many area residents seemed transfixed on the former president's larger-than-life persona.

Obama's visit to East Carolina today appears poised to bring the energy surrounding his candidacy as well as the spectacle of a major presidential campaign. It promises to be an experience for those able to attend. Certainly any event that could bolster civic responsibility and a connection to government should be considered beneficial to the electorate.

However, one can also expect that a presidential candidate would similarly find value in a visit to eastern North Carolina. Greenville's growing economy represents a fortunate and rare experience in a region that struggles with high rates of poverty and unemployment. Its residents largely lack access to health care, strong public education and economic opportunity, but cling tightly to values — family, faith and love of country — that represent the nation's backbone.

The next Oval Office occupant needs to know these people and this region, as they are indicative of other communities with similar and profound problems. The next president needs to bring to Washington their experiences and conversations — in Greenville, in Flint, Mich., in Columbus, Ohio, and elsewhere — because they will make governance a more affecting, tangible and beneficial endeavor.

Greenville should welcome Obama warmly, as it did presidents Clinton and Bush, as it would Sens. Clinton and McCain. It should be a notable occasion, and residents should hope the experience proves as memorable for him.
Visit inspires ECU student group

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University Students echoed the national sentiment of excited young voters supporting Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

About 30 members of ECU Students for Barack Obama gathered Wednesday afternoon at Minges Coliseum to make signs for Obama's appearance today.

"He's created a campaign that appeals to young people," said Nathan Lean, director of the ECU Students for Barack Obama. "We are really excited about the enthusiasm of the students on campus."

Lean said the fact that the oldest staffer at Obama's Greenville office on Evans Street is only 25 years old is a clue to the kind of campaign Obama has.

He said the establishment of Obama's office here sparked interest in the student group, then composed of about 30 people. There are now more than 350 students in ECU Students for Barack Obama.

"When it became apparent that North Carolina was going to be a factor in the primary, our numbers jumped," Lean said.

ECU Student Government Association Secretary Brittany D. Adams, a sophomore nursing major, has long been an Obama supporter. She is excited to have him visit Greenville.

"I feel like he is connecting with us — he is coming to our level," she said.

"For him to take the time to come here says a lot about his platform. He cares about everyone, not just the elite."

Adams said Obama is different from most politicians, and he is getting young voters excited about politics.

She said she hears people talking about the presidential campaign on campus all the time.

"Obama has a certain energy about him that gets young people interested in voting," Adams said.

"I love how he has managed to inspire people to care about our country, not just complain about the future. Obama has motivated people to do positive things and make positive changes."

VISIT
Continued from A1

See VISIT, A7
Plenty of parking available for event

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University officials say there will be plenty of parking available today when Sen. Barack Obama visits the campus.

Obama will be speaking at Minges Coliseum as part of a rally for his Democratic presidential campaign. Doors open at 4 p.m.

Wood Davis, interim director of ECU transit, said the university will open lots near Minges Coli-

See PARKING, A7

PARKING
Continued from A1

seum and Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium to the public and provide shuttle transportation from an overflow lot at Curry Court near the Belk Building at the intersection of Charles and Greenville boulevards.

"We anticipate that should be enough parking," Davis said. "With all of the parking near Minges and Ficklen and all of the parking at Curry Court, it should be enough. It is also during the evening hours, so that will help, because a lot of the students will be gone from the lots."

The lots near the coliseum and football stadium are usually reserved for students, Davis said. Parking and transportation officials said there will be no tickets issued during the hours of Thursday’s event.

Shuttles are to begin running from Curry Court at 3:30 p.m. Davis said the buses can accommodate up to 80 people.

While the rally is coming on short notice, Davis said the university was prepared to handle the request.

"We didn't have a lot of notice, but we do this so much for different events that we are basically using the same model we would for a big football or basketball game," Davis said.

Campaign officials are yet to release what time they expect Obama to speak. He is expected to focus on the economy and his commitment to investing in middle-class families.

The trip to the state, Obama’s third this year, builds on last week’s release of Obama’s economic plan for North Carolina.

Brock Letchworth can be reached at 329-5574 and bletchworth@coxnc.com.
Event calls for peace in local community

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

The 25 or so people at Wednesday's community peace rally at the Lucille Gorham Intergenerational Center in west Greenville were a modest turnout compared to recent marches and rallies there.

However, they believed their presence represented a strong message of support for the center and the residents it serves under sometimes difficult circumstances, including gunfire and violence.

In a neighborhood where residents are continually urged to get out and get involved, the day was reserved for others to express support for those who come and do the work every day, several government officials said.

City leaders gave encouragement to the growing number of people who use the center to learn a skill, seek financial assistance, build families and homes and make the streets crime-free.

Mayor Pat Dunn remarked on a sign that read, “Partnership plus people equals results.”

“No truer words were spoken,” she said. “We all have to work together and that’s what the city is committed to.”

She spoke of the coalition of public and private agencies and organizations that provide economic and social services to the residents of west Greenville through the Gorham Center's several facets.

The neighborhood rally, a response to the gunfire that occurred in the neighborhood last week, was scheduled only one day earlier.

It gave city leaders an opportunity to make a statement that the important work done on the small campus will not be disrupted by acts of violence, East Carolina University outreach leader Deborah Moody said.

Several leaders showed up despite the short notice, speaking in turns about the city's commitment to the center and its goal to uplift the neighborhood.

“The message is that we're here and we're not going anywhere... take the violence somewhere else,” City Councilwoman Rose Glover (District 2) told the people lined up to march through the neighborhood again.

“This center is something the community has asked for, and we have invested too much. The city council is committed, the police department is committed and both East Carolina University and Pitt Community College are committed,” Glover said.

The negativity of some people who decide to act outside the law will not

See RALLY, B3

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RALLY

Continued from B1

shut the center down, Glover told the group.

William Anderson, the Greenville police chief whose neighborhood policing policy has set roots with a new substation of West Fifth Street, pledged the department's commitment as well.

“This center is very important to this community. We're very excited about the positive impact the new substation is going to have here, and we're going to have a big celebration for that. All of the individual efforts by the city are so important to the revitalization of the neighborhood. We're not going to let anything stop us,” Anderson said.

The group of city officials joined clergy leaders and residents in a march through the neighborhood intended to be a regular feature of the revitalization efforts, retired police Capt. Cecil Hardy said.

Expect to see changes, though, in how the community rebuilds itself, he said.

“It's a work in progress. I can guarantee that some things you see this year won't be here next year — and that's the beauty of it. It's ever-changing, and no one program will work,” Hardy said.

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Researchers pinpoint how flu sweeps the globe

By Lauran Neergaard
The Associated Press

Washington

Asia is the world's cradle for new flu strains. South America is where each year's epidemic goes to die.

In between, the virus catches a ride to North America and Europe almost simultaneously, report international researchers who have finally pinpointed exactly how the most common type of influenza sweeps the globe each year.

It's work that promises to help health authorities better prepare each winter's flu vaccine — and already monitoring is being beefed up in parts of East and Southeast Asia in hopes of more accurately predicting which strains will jump continents in coming years.

The good news: Outside of Asia, flu strains don't seem to get stronger as they migrate from continent to continent.

"Once the viruses leave that region, they're really on a pathway to an evolutionary graveyard," said Derek Smith of Britain's University of Cambridge, who helped lead the team that analyzed 13,000 flu samples collected around the world over the last five years.

The World Health Organization blames flu for 250,000 to a half-million deaths worldwide each year. The virus evolves so quickly that slightly different strains circulate each winter, and specialists have long suspected that China was the world's main incubator.

The new work, being published in Friday's edition of the journal Science, shows flu's annual evolution is far trickier.

Every year, the WHO's Global Influenza Surveillance Network painstakingly collects nose or throat swabs of flu patients in more than 80 countries, to identify what strains are circulating. The researchers culled samples of the most common flu subtype, a version of harsh Type A Influenza called H3N2, collected since 2002. They tracked small changes in a protein on that virus' coat that are enough to let the flu evade the immune system and sicken people — in other words, new H3N2 strains.

The first surprise: Flu may be a winter problem in most of the world, but H3N2 virus is constantly circulating in some part of East and Southeast Asia. In tropical countries, it prefers the rainy season; in more temperate zones, it thrives in chillier weather.

But there was enough overlap in these densely populated, closely neighboring countries that "we actually see ... viruses passing from epidemic to epidemic like relay runners passing a baton," said study lead author Colin Russell of the University of Cambridge.

Like following a trail of footprints, the researchers then used a tool called "antigenic cartography" to map

See FLU, C2
"The geography's important in the context of vaccination."

Edward Holmes
Pennsylvania State University

It's too soon to know. But already, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the WHO are working to increase monitoring throughout the region. Most countries have some flu tracking, but Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos in particular need more, said CDC's Dr. Michael Shaw.

"We have been increasing surveillance in that area as fast as we can," Shaw said. Now, "at least we know the part of the world to look in and the probable time of the year to look."

The work dovetails with a major study of influenza's genes published Wednesday in the journal Nature, which examined how the virus ebbs and flows in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. That research also pointed to single, tropical world source of new flu strains that spreads to temperate regions in the winter before dying out by summer.

"The geography's important in the context of vaccination," stressed Edward Holmes of Pennsylvania State University, who led the Nature study. "Our work and there's new treatment for treating infections has addressed Asia."
Bells toll as Virginia Tech marks anniversary of slayings

BY SUE LINDSEY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BLACKSBURG, Va. — A sea of people clad in maroon and orange, some with heads tearfully bowed, others with arms interlocked, paid tribute Wednesday to the victims who died a year ago in the nation's worst mass shooting.

IN CITY & STATE

Protesters in the Triangle object to what they consider lax gun laws.

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine told the crowd:

People held back tears as a moment of silence was observed for those killed by Seung-Hui Cho.

The accomplishments of each of the 32 people echoed across the Virginia Tech drill field, a litany of what they had done and planned to do before a student gunman killed them in classrooms and a dormitory.

Austin Cloyd had an iron will. Caitlin Hammaren loved playing the violin. Emily Hilscher was a skilled horsewoman. Ryan Clark was a collector of friends. Daniel Alejandro Perez Cueva dreamed of bringing people together and making the world peaceful.

"The world was cheated — cheated out of the accomplishments that were sure to come from these extraordinary lives."

After the ceremony, bells in the nearby administration building tolled 32 times as mourners approached the semicircle of memorial stones, each engraved with the name of a victim.
‘Bitter’ hasn’t bitten Obama so far in N.C.

BY ROB CHRISTENSEN
STAFF WRITER

ROCKY MOUNT — Sen. Barack Obama makes his first foray into Eastern North Carolina today, hoping to shore up support among rural and small-town voters.

But controversy over remarks he made last week could distract those very people.

Speaking about people who have seen companies and jobs leave their towns, he said, “It’s not surprising then that they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren’t like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.”

The campaign of his opponent, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who also will be in North Carolina this week, has portrayed Obama’s remarks as elitist and condescending.

But polling and interviews at a party rally Tuesday night in Rocky Mount showed little apparent damage to Obama so far in North Carolina’s May 6 Democratic presidential primary campaign.

“To me, what he said had a lot of truth,” said Raymond Robinson, a 74-year-old re-

SEE OBAMA, PAGE 8A
OBAMA
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

tired business executive from Rocky Mount who recently changed his registration from Republican to Democrat. "I think it has been blown completely out of proportion."

"How can anyone say that a black man who pulled himself up by his bootstraps is an elitist?" said Robinson, who is undecided in the race.

Obama will hold a town meeting at the State Fairgrounds in Raleigh today before heading to East Carolina University. It is his first stop in the state since his remarks at a fundraiser in San Francisco.

Although Obama was talking about Pennsylvania workers, his remarks could resonate in North Carolina, a culturally conservative state dominated by small towns and rural areas.

Surveys find no damage

Surveys in the past several days in North Carolina and Pennsylvania by Public Policy Polling of Raleigh show the "bitter" comment has not hurt Obama. The survey has Obama with a 20-point lead in North Carolina and in a dead heat in Pennsylvania.

WHAT HE SAID

Following is an excerpt of Sen. Barack Obama's remarks at a fundraiser in San Francisco. They were published by Mayhill Fowler on the Huffington Post, which broke the story on its Web site.

OBAMA: "In a lot of these communities in big industrial states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, people have been beaten down so long, and they feel so betrayed by government, and when they hear a pitch that is premised on not being cynical about government, then a part of them just doesn't buy it. And when it's delivered by a 46-year-old black man named Barack Obama, it's true that when it's delivered by a 46-year-old black man named Barack Obama, then that adds another layer of skepticism.

"But -- so the questions you're most likely to get about me, 'Well, what is this guy going to do for me? What's the concrete thing? What they want hear is -- so, we'll give you talking points about what we're proposing -- close tax loopholes, roll back, you know, the tax cuts for the top 1 percent. Obama's gonna give tax breaks to middle-class folks and we're gonna provide health care for every American. So we'll go down a series of talking points. But the truth is, is that our challenge is to get people persuaded that we can make progress when there's not evidence of that in their daily lives. You go into some of these small towns in Pennsylvania, and like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing's replaced them. And they fell through the Clinton administration, and the Bush administration, and each successive administration has said that somehow these communities are gonna regenerate, and they have not. So it's not surprising then that they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or anti-pathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.

"It doesn't appear the Clinton campaign has been able to gain any momentum with this issue," said Dean Debnam, the president of the polling company.

That was also the view among some of the 200 Democrats Tuesday night at Nash County Community College at a spring rally/candidate forum.

"I think the negative attacks will backfire on her," said Nancy Jones, a 68-year-old retired Rocky Mount schoolteacher. "People want to vote for someone and not against somebody."

Jones said Obama could have avoided the controversy by saying that rural whites are "frustrated" rather than saying they are bitter.

She had supported former North Carolina Sen. John Ed-
wards but is now backing Obama and planned to host an Obama volunteer from South Carolina in her home.

"I'm one of those old white ladies who should be supporting Hillary," Jones said, "but I'm not." Jesse Frazier, a 60-year-old retired educator, said Obama was speaking the truth.

"I use the term," Frazier said. "I'm very bitter about health care and the war in Iraq."

"He is not an elitist," Frazier added. "He is the poorest of the candidates. If he had not written the books, he would still be in debt."

Earl Lamm, a 68-year-old retired United Food and Commercial Workers union official from Bailey, said the comments fed his doubts about Obama, whom Lamm characterizes as a Muslim who won't salute the American flag. (Obama is a Christian. He was photographed last year in Iowa failing to put his hand over his heart during the playing of the national anthem — a photograph widely distributed on the Internet. His campaign says that Obama sometimes puts his hand over his heart and sometimes doesn't.)

"I think he will destroy the Democratic Party," Lamm said. "What he said against religion — that just showed his ignorance."

The Clinton campaign has sought to capitalize on Obama's remarks, portraying them as patronizing toward a large swath of Tar Heel voters.

Introducing former President Bill Clinton in Winterville on Saturday, former state Democratic Chairman Tom Hendrickson said North Carolina rural Democrats should not be pitted.

"My message to Senator Obama is we are not frustrated," Hendrickson said. "We are not bitter. We turn to our faith because we believe — Amen. We hunt and fish because it is part of our culture and we enjoy it."

Supporters handed out stickers saying "I'm Not Bitter" at several events.

Clinton herself speaks Friday at Wait Chapel at Wake Forest University.

GOP pounces, too

The Republican Party also has jumped on Obama's remarks.

GOP Rep. Walter Jones said Obama "is clearly out of touch with the values of middle-class America" while Republican Rep. Rob G. Hayes called his comments "an indictment of the values which many Americans, especially those from rural areas and small towns, hold dear."

Carl Dietrich, the 3rd District Democratic chairman and a 35-year-old Rocky Mount teacher, said that there is likely to be little short-term negative fallout for Obama, but that he is concerned about how the GOP will use the remarks if Obama is the nominee.

"I think it's more of a problem in the fall than in the primary coming up," Dietrich said.
Let's be blunt. North Carolina high schools are not serving our poor and minority students well. Only about half of black, Hispanic, Native American and poor students are able to perform at grade level in English, mathematics, science, history and social studies.

In 2006, Gov. Mike Easley commissioned a High School Resource Allocation Study by education specialists Gary Henry of UNC-Chapel Hill and Charles Thompson of East Carolina University, asking them whether North Carolina could improve student achievement in its low-performing high schools by spending education dollars more efficiently.

Ever since the state Supreme Court issued its Leandro decision in 2004, state officials have known that the schools they are responsible for are in violation of Articles I and IX of the state constitution. These articles mandate that the state provide every student with a sound, basic public school education.

For four years this legal requirement has been explicit, while thousands of children of every race have lost hope, been suspended, expelled and pushed out. Each one had good reason to hire a lawyer and head to court. The Henry-Thompson Report, based on a study of North Carolina's 337 high schools and presented recently to the State Board of Education, provides some ways for our state leaders to stop breaking the law.

The report isolates two ways to improve learning and raise test scores.

First, the only allocation that is systematically associated with better academic performance is money spent on regular classroom instruction. Line items that fall under regular classroom instruction include compensation for teachers, teacher assistants, tutors and substitutes, as well as instructional supplies, textbooks and library and media services.

Henry and Thompson calculate that if per pupil spending increased by $1,000 per student in low-performing high schools, and the increase were spent to support regular classroom instruction, the average test score gap between high-and low-performing high schools would close by 20 percent.

Second, segregation hurts achievement and should therefore be avoided. Schools with high concentrations of minority students, low-income students and low-performing students are, by definition, schools whose students are segregated from opportunities to learn.

The report found that school districts could reap immediate gains in student learning by significantly reducing concentrations of low-skilled and low-income students. The very same student who attends a segregated, low-income school, on average, will not achieve what she would achieve in a school that enrolled a diverse population with more affluent, white and higher-performing students.

The Wake County school board's wise policy of ceilings on the number of poor and low-performing students in individual schools is a national model for this basic educational principle.

To be clear, the report does not say an African-American student can succeed only if he is educated with white kids.

The report says no student, regardless of her race or class, does very well when her school lacks the best teachers. Nor is any student better off if the majority of his schoolmates lack access to caring adults, good health care, adequate housing and safe neighborhoods. Racial and economic segregation piles up layers of harm for any student who experiences it.

The UNC Center for Civil Rights recently looked at poverty concentrations in high schools in North Carolina's six largest districts. Poor and minority students in the districts' high-poverty schools had the least access to licensed teachers, much less to nationally board-certified teachers.

A well-planned conspiracy could hardly wreak more havoc on the academic achievement of poor and minority youth.

It is time to face the truth. Disadvantaged youth need more dollars in classroom instruction. They need highly qualified teachers. They need racial and economic diversity in their public schools — while we all work to diversify housing and neighborhoods.

New policies should penalize districts that engage in a sinister choice to isolate minority, low-income and struggling students from their more advantaged peers.

Forty years ago, on his last night with us, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us that when fighting for justice nothing would be more tragic than to turn back now. The Leandro ruling is one example that this is true. Its creation of a fundamental right to an effective education bears out another of Dr. King's prophesies, that the moral arc of the universe bends inexorably toward justice.

For the past two years, the N.C. NAACP's almost 20,000 members from 100 local branches have organized, marched and lobbied all over North Carolina for well-funded, high-quality, diverse schools for all children. The Henry-Thompson findings, while not surprising, provide hard evidence for our position.

Leandro is a matter of justice. The NAACP, joined by many other good people, will agitate, litigate and legislate to bring justice to our children, every one of them precious.

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II is president of the state chapter of the NAACP.
A living memorial

Gun deaths of local college students also are remembered in Virginia Tech tribute.

At Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill, dozens of protesters stretched out under Wednesday's midday sun to bring attention to what they think are lax gun laws.

It was the first anniversary of the Virginia Tech shootings, in which 32 students and professors were killed by a mentally ill gunman whose suicide ended the carnage. About 80 such protests were held in 33 states across the nation.

About 40 protesters lay still at the bottom of the steps of Duke Chapel. At UNC-CH, the 60 or so participants reclined on the grass on Polk Place.

Participants lay prone for three minutes, which is about how long it takes for a licensed gun dealer to run a computerized background check on someone buying a gun.

The "lie-ins" were intended to involve 32 participants—one for each Virginia Tech victim. At Duke, organizer Marcia Owen said Wednesday her intent was to actually have 33 participants, an acknowledgement that the shooter, Seung-Hui Cho, a mentally unstable Virginia Tech student, killed himself as well.

"We often forget the hidden tragedy of suicide," Owen said.

In Chapel Hill, organizer Rachel Smith also acknowledged the recent violent deaths of students at three Triangle campuses. She read aloud the names of those killed at Virginia Tech as well as local gunshot victims Denita Smith, a student at N.C. Central University; Abhijit Mahato, a graduate student at Duke University; and Eve Carson, UNC-CH student body president.

"We have our own very poignant and very real sense of grief and sorrow and anger as a result of the murder of one of our own," UNC-CH Chancellor James Moeser said. Moeser spoke at the event but did not lie down.

— Eric Ferreri and Ted Richardson
Way clear for Pressler suit

Ruling favors ex-Duke coach

BY ANNE BLYTHE
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM - Judge Howard Manning ruled Wednesday that Mike Pressler, the former Duke University lacrosse coach, does not have to go through arbitration with his former employer and can pursue claims of slander and libel in the courtroom.

In a hearing in Durham County Superior Court that dripped with homespun colloquialisms and colorful courtroom arguments, Manning ruled only on the arbitration issue, not the merits of Pressler's defamation claim.

John M. Simpson, a Duke attorney, tried to convince Manning that before Pressler's claims could be considered by the courts, the former coach had to go through a university arbitration process.

Pressler, who built a national powerhouse lacrosse team during his 16 years at Duke, was forced out in April 2006 shortly after an escort service dancer accused players of gang-raping her — allegations that turned out to be phony.

Last spring, Pressler and Duke reached a confidential settlement agreement.

Lawyer Donald Strickland, who is representing Pressler with colleague Jay Trehy, read several paragraphs from that agreement to show that Pressler was no longer bound by policies of previous contracts with Duke.

Pressler has alleged that John Burness, Duke's senior vice president of public affairs and government relations, made slanderous, libelous and defamatory remarks about him to the news media after the settlement agreement was reached.

Initially, Pressler argued that Duke had reneged on its agreement, which had a clause prohibiting disparaging remarks. But in a legal maneuver designed to sidestep arbitration, Pressler dropped that claim and slimmed down his complaint to focus solely on the comments made by Burness.

"We're left with nothing but a naked, soaking-wet bather of a lawsuit involving slander and libel," Manning observed.

In the suit, Pressler complains about an April 9, 2006, article in the New York newspaper Newsday quoting Burness as saying the difference between Pressler and current lacrosse coach John Danowski was "night and day."

In that article, the suit contends, Burness described Danowski as a "mensch," a Yiddish word for a person of great integrity and honor that Strickland and Trehy defined in their brief.

"I never heard the word 'mensch,'" Manning deadpanned. "Down here, you know, we just live in tents and eat clay."

Since losing his Duke job, Pressler has written and promoted a book about the lacrosse case. He now coaches at Bryant University in Rhode Island.

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OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

Topics in University Security: Lockdown 101

By JAMES ALAN FOX

Boston

IN February, a man carrying a fake assault weapon burst into an American foreign policy class at Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina. The seven unsuspecting students, along with a stunned professor who later remarked that he was “prepared to die at that moment,” were held hostage for 10 minutes. During that time, the gunman said he would kill at least one of them.

The class survived because the gunman was a volunteer, part of an exercise intended to test the university’s system for responding to a possible campus attack. The university had alerted its students and faculty with e-mail and text messages, but not everyone read them. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the simulation — at least physically.

In the year since the shooting at Virginia Tech last April 16, American colleges have been under pressure, from worried parents as well as from the news media, to beef up campus security. Like Elizabeth City State, many schools have overreacted by instituting safety measures of questionable effectiveness. Safety officials are quick to shut down classes, as happened recently at California State University, Dominguez Hills, when an R.O.T.C. student with a drill rifle was mistaken for an assailant toting an automatic weapon. Instead of making campuses safer, we are fostering an unwarranted and unhealthy level of fear.

An article in Newsweek’s “College Guide” last fall advised families on how to tell whether a university is safe, and earlier this year Readers’ Digest graded 135 colleges nationwide on their safety precautions — notification systems, campus lockdown plans, armed security and the like. A bill in Congress, too, pushes the security agenda by proposing that universities be required to issue campus alerts within 30 minutes of a reported emergency.

The vast majority of institutions in the Readers’ Digest survey have in place security measures that not long ago would have been considered unnecessary, if not absurd. All but six of the schools surveyed have installed mass notification systems; more than half have lockdown plans; and more than 40 percent have authorized their campus police officers to carry firearms.
Although a popular response, campus-wide notification systems, ranging from low-tech sirens to text-message alerts on cellphones, are not necessarily a reliable way to protect students. An emergency siren could signal anything from a fire to gunfire. Text alerts would fail to reach a packed lecture hall if the instructor requires students to turn off their cellphones.

Anxious parents have been particularly keen on lockdowns, plans to seal off buildings manually or electronically to prevent a gunman from moving from place to place. The lockdown may do little to prevent casualties, however: Almost all college shootings have taken place in one location — in just one building, if not just one classroom. And a lockdown introduces dangers of its own. The same locks that bar a gunman from entering classrooms and dorms can also prevent potential victims from escaping into a locked building if they are being chased by a gunman.

Perhaps the most important change inspired by Virginia Tech is a renewed emphasis on mental health services. And given that there are many times more suicides on campus than homicides, this could benefit countless students, the vast majority of whom pose no danger to others. Over the past year, one-third of campus counseling centers have added staff members, including psychiatrists, and 15 percent of campus counseling centers have received larger budgets.

But this approach, too, may fail to identify and stop a violent student. Thousands of college students are depressed or even suicidal, but there is no consistent profile of a person who turns from disappointment and frustration to violent rage.

Colleges are not helpless in preventing and responding to campus shootings. Certain measures clearly make sense. Every university should have a well-trained and sufficiently large security force. Faculty and staff members should be trained to handle volatile students and situations. And it pays to conduct emergency preparedness drills, but not ones that involve students nor ones that are staged when classes are in session.

By overreacting to Virginia Tech, not only are college administrators instituting security measures that may well prove ineffective, but they are also undermining the carefree atmosphere of campus life. They chance making students feel like walking targets.

I especially worry that the anniversary of the Virginia Tech shootings will mean endless replaying of video images of that campus under siege. With last year’s shooting there, and the Valentine’s Day massacre at Northern Illinois University, the violence on campuses feels like a conflagration. There is no need to stoke the flames.

James Alan Fox, a professor of criminal justice and law, policy and society at Northeastern University, is a co-author of “The Will to Kill” and “Extreme Killing.”
PASS AROUND THE CAP

If you think getting accepted was hard, try paying tuition in this credit crunch

By Kim Clark

The tides of chance will splash everybody with a little bad luck from time to time. But a tsunami of economic troubles and unfortunate demographics is deluging the nation's 3.3 million high school seniors. The class of '08 may well be the unluckiest group of high school grads in modern history. They are certainly the largest senior class ever, which means they face far worse chances of getting into a selective college than their older—or younger—brothers and sisters. Indeed, they are opening a record number of thin college rejection letters right now.

And the joy of thick acceptance letters is increasingly soured by record-high tuition prices, while unprecedented collapses in real estate values and credit markets have diminished the funds that many families expected would cover their costs.

"Honestly, I've been through a few peaks and valleys, but it has never been tougher" for seniors, says Bill Mc Clintick, president-elect of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors and director of college counseling at Mercersburg Academy in Mercersburg, Pa.

The teens and parents suffering through this spring of heartbreak have much stronger words: "I think we're screwed," says Beatriz Rodriguez-Wade, whose daughter Monica Wade has a 4.0 grade-point average, plays on the varsity tennis team, and interns at a
Paying for College

Monica was rejected by many of her top choices, including Harvard, UCLA, and the University of California-Davis. Most of the other schools that admitted her gave her so little financial aid that her parents can't sleep at night because of worries about how much her education will cost the family. "She did everything right. She worked really hard and got really good grades. And now we have to say: Sorry, we can't pay for your school? Your heart breaks."

That misery has plenty of company. After bottoming out at about 2.5 million in the early 1990s, the number of high school seniors has been climbing and peaked this year at 3,340,235. It should start dropping next year and continue to decline through the class of 2014.

Those numbers have made this college application season the most brutal on record. In 1986, Ohio State accepted any Ohio high school graduate. This year, it probably will reject half of its 21,657 aspiring freshmen. Meanwhile, Harvard accepted an all-time-low 7.1 percent of its 27,462 hopefuls.

Tuition increases. And when today's seniors do get into a selective college, they have to confront unexpected financial worries. True, several of the nation's most elite schools have announced increases in financial aid to lure the best students. And the government will increase the maximum federal Pell Grant (aimed at families earning $50,000 or less) by a healthy $421 this fall. But aid hasn't kept up with tuition increases. At the same time, dropping home values have eliminated equity that many parents had planned to tap. And lenders have pulled back from private educational loans (story, Page 64). So the majority of '08ers face higher tuition bills with fewer funding options. "There is no easy answer anymore," says Linda Taylor, a private financial aid consultant in Camarillo, Calif.

So what can they do? Pinch pennies. Work hard. And compromise. That's how Suzanne and David French of Losesport, Pa., will manage in September when three of their four children will be in college. David will keep working for a landscaper during the week and at Sam's Club at night and on weekends. Suzanne may supplement her job as support staff for a local school with a second job as well. They may also take out another PLUS loan.

But the Frenches are careful not to sacrifice too much. They won't touch their retirement savings. And they make sure their children don't mortgage their futures with debt. "I don't have a problem with them paying their part. I have a problem with kids graduating with $40,000 in debt," Suzanne says. Her kids take summer and campus jobs to cover their own books, clothing, and personal expenses—about $4,000 a year. They also take the maximum in Stafford loans, contributing an additional $3,500 to $5,500 a year to tuition.

Any school with a price tag that would require more sacrifices is out of the question. "I don't understand why parents feel guilty about having children going to a cheaper school," Suzanne says.

In fact, some studies have found that smart kids do well no matter what college they attend. The college Class of '12 may have worse luck than previous classes. But many are embarking on a better, if more painful, education. Many will graduate with the equivalent of two diplomas. One will be from the school of hard knocks.
Limited funds hinder child porn fight

Even though law enforcement has better leads, high-tech tools

By Wendy Koch
USA TODAY

More than 624,000 computers in the USA have traded child pornography, much of it showing the sexual abuse of very young children, in the past 2½ years, a leading police authority planned to tell Congress at a hearing today.

Yet federal authorities with limited resources pursue fewer than 1% of the leads, according to a USA TODAY analysis of government data.

Mike Waters, chief of the Wyoming Internet Crimes Against Children task force, has been tracking child porn to specific computers, by serial number, since October 2005. He says that last year, he identified nearly half the computers, 267,120, on just one online network.

U.S. attorneys prosecuted 1,705 cases last year and won 1,409 convictions, according to court records obtained by Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University. The Justice Department says the numbers are higher -- 2,118 prosecutions and 1,715 convictions -- but it includes other online crimes against children. The cases result from all kinds of tips, not just those from Waters.

As child pornography becomes increasingly pervasive, spreading from the Internet to cellphones and iPods, police have new tools, such as the software Waters developed, to identify traffickers. A Senate Judiciary Committee hearing today will probe whether law enforcement, given those tools, is doing enough.

The Justice Department, particularly under former attorney general Alberto Gonzales, has called enforcement a top priority. Prosecutions more than doubled in the past five years, the department says, and the number of federal-state Internet Crimes Against Children task forces increased from 46 to 59 last year. In 2006, the department launched a program, Project Safe Childhood, to coordinate federal efforts.

"We're trying to use every available resource," says Drew Oosterbeek, chief of the department's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. He says the "unparalleled" federal-state cooperation, "We're supremely more effective than we were."

A boom in funding, though, hasn't happened. "Everyone says great things, but ... it hasn't happened," says Arnold Bell, chief of the FBI's Innocent Images Unit, a program to fight child pornography. He says his program's funds have barely budged. It got $3.31 million in 2006, $3.48 million in 2007.

The number of child porn cases hasn't changed much. Innocent Images opened 2,483 cases last year, compared with 2,430 in 2003 and 2,370 in 2004.

"This problem is growing leaps and bounds," says Joseph Biden, D-Del. He says the Justice Department has committed enough resources to fight it and that a Senate leadership on the issue is "nonexistent." He is sponsoring legislation, passed by the House Representatives in November, to spend $1.05 billion over eight years on fighting child porn. That would more than triple funding for the task forces, he says.

"You could easily apply another 1,000 agents" to fight online child exploitation, says Shawn Bray of the Cyber Crimes Center at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which investigates child sex tourism, trafficking and porn.

"We're not even scratching the surface," says Waters, who has helped train 1,800 investigators to use his software. "We have to tell folks we're hurting
Colleges put out safety nets

Schools work to identify troubled students in hopes of averting another tragedy

By Marilyn Elias
USA TODAY

In the year since Seung Hui Cho killed 32 students and faculty at Virginia Tech, colleges dramatically have expanded efforts to catch dangerous students in a safety net before they crash and take innocent victims down with them, school officials say.

"It's a different world since Virginia Tech," says Gwendo-lyn Dungy, executive director of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Colleges are trying to reduce the chances of violence by creating or beefing up risk assessment teams that typically include faculty, residence advisers, psychologists, administrators and police, college administrators say. The teams meet often to review reports on students who seem disturbed. The reports are submitted by professors, residence advisers, police and students.

About 20% of colleges had assessment teams before the Virginia Tech murders, says Keith Anderson, a veteran counselor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y. "Now I don't know any college that hasn't either created a team or strengthened the one they had," Dungy says.

Although troubled students rarely attack classmates — suicide is a far more common problem — more students have mental disorders, and their problems are getting more serious, experts agree.

The percentage of students diagnosed with depression was 15% in 2007, up from 10% in 2000, according to surveys.
Depression, bipolar disorder often surface in college

Continued from 1D

by the American College Health Association. And 23% coming to campus counseling centers are on psychiatric medicine, up from 9% in 1994, another survey shows.

The shift to more rigorous monitoring of students' lives comes as experts agree there is no sure way to prevent shootings.

"Anyone who wants to get a gun in this society can get a gun," says Richard Bonnie, a specialist in psychiatry and law at the University of Virginia School of Law.

An independent report in August on the Virginia Tech shootings recounts in chilling detail how many people noticed Cho's disturbing behavior and how little they communicated with one another. The risk teams provide a central place to lodge concerns.

"Very often, trouble with a student who's becoming psychotic or manic will surface in several areas at the same time — athletic staff, sorority sister, professors will see changes," says Joan Whitney, counseling center director at Villanova University outside Philadelphia.

Many schools are training professors and staff members to look for troublesome signs, Dungy says. More professors and others on campus are consulting with counseling centers about "students of concern" since Virginia Tech, according to 66% of center directors in a new survey of 272 colleges.

"We coach professors in how to deal with students, and usually students welcome the attention," Whitney says. "They'll often say, 'Yes, I'm having trouble. I think I'm depressed.' Sometimes there's a painful breakup or another problem. It's rare that there's nothing going on when professors see students they're concerned about."

If there are serious problems, a student may be asked to get treatment. Parents may be informed if college officials are concerned, counselors say.

At Virginia Tech, Cho's parents were never told he was judged by a psychiatrist to be mentally ill (and ordered in a court hearing to outpatient treatment, which he never received). Now many colleges, including Virginia Tech, according to spokesman Larry Hincker, say they're making sure they follow through on troubled students asked to get psychological help.

Most legal scholars agree that colleges have the right to expect students to get mental health evaluations and treatments if there is cause, to contact parents and to ask students to withdraw if there is a documented concern about safety, says Bonnie, the University of Virginia law professor.

Medications have improved, allowing people who have bipolar disorder (manic depression) and even some with schizophrenia to get an education.

Depression on campus

Mental health problems are somewhat common on campus, according to a new survey of students.

Students

In the past school year, how many times have you felt so depressed that it was difficult to function:

- Never 35%
- 1-10 times 38%
- 7 or more times 7%

If you've been diagnosed with depression, was it in the past school year:

- Yes 67%
- No 33%

If you've been diagnosed with depression, are you in therapy or on medication:

- Yes, medication 35%
- Yes, therapy 25%

Source: 2007 American College Health Association survey of 71,860 students at 257 colleges

"Before, they would have stayed home," says John Greeden of the Depression Center at the University of Michigan.

It can be a rough transition.

"They leave home, lose their support systems. If they had therapy at home, it's gone. Their workload increases, sleep is erratic, and they may be exposed to lots of alcohol.

Depression and bipolar disorder often surface for the first time dur-
ing college, Greden says.

Students who feel they have no
body to confide in are most vul-
nerable to mental health problems,
suggests a new study by University
of Michigan researcher Daniel
Eisenberg. Men are more at risk
than women, though fewer men
come to counseling centers, and
minorities tend to be more isolated,
his study shows.

Pressure is turned up

Competition has turned fer-
cious for college-bound kids of
every race, and that also is triggering
mental health problems, suggests
Susan Lipkins, a psychologist prac-
ticing in Port Washington, N.Y.

"They burn themselves out
through high school trying to have
a résumé much more impressive
than adults have," Lipkins says. "It's
become a culture of winners vs.
losers, reflected in the reality shows.
There's just more acceptance of
demeaning, humiliating behavior if
you're a loser."

Lipkins says the reported rates
of students on psychiatric medicine,
high as they are, are underestimat-
ed. "Most don't even tell the
schools they're on meds," she says.

Susan Putnins, a senior at Har-
vard, came to college on medica-
tion for bipolar disorder and didn't
tell anyone at the school.

"The transition was really hard.
The biggest difference was, I had
a fantastic support system of friends
in high school. At Harvard I didn't." She has gradually made friends
and learned to curb stress during
exams.

In new surveys, students say
they're most likely to share their
anxieties and depression with oth-
er students. Efforts to raise stu-
dents' awareness of mental health
problems and the value of treat-
ment are underway.

For example, cable channel
mtVU has teamed with the Jed
Foundation to run more than 8,000
public service announcements on
the widely watched college net-
work, says Courtney Knowles of
the foundation.

They're also airing videos of pop-
ular musicians, such as Mary J.
Blige, talking about their mental
health at halloffames.com. Troubled
students can find links to counsel-
ing centers at a site created by Jed
Foundation, ulifeline.org.

Active Minds, Inc. (active
minds.org) is a student group that
sponsors activities to inform stu-
dents about mental disorders and
decrease stigma. Executive director
Alison Malmon, 26, who founded
the first chapter in 2001, says chap-
ters are on 119 campuses.

Emily Parsons, 21, started a
chapter at Central Michigan Uni-
versity in Mt. Pleasant in November.
Depression had dis-
abled her so much
she couldn't go away
to college after high
school. During the
next spring she felt a
surge of energy, her
thoughts raced, and
she started spending
lots of money. After
not sleeping for four
nights, she began hallucinating.
Parsons was hospitalized and diag-
nosed with bipolar disorder. "It's a
real shocker to get a diagnosis like
that when you're 18."

By taking medicine and stay-
ing in close touch with doctors, she has
been able to go away to college.

"One thing that helps me a lot is
ceramics. It's such a stress reliever,
it keeps me centered."

She has become philosophical
about her illness: "This is not going
to go away. I know I need to take
good care of myself."

The stigma deepens

Students need to stay on their
medicine or reduce amounts only
under a doctor's care, "but there's
still a learning curve for young
people. They want so much to be like
everyone else," says Joy Himmel,
director of the health and wellness
center at Pennsylvania State Uni-
versity-Allentown.

Steven Kazmierczak, who killed
five students and himself at North-
ern Illinois University in February,
had stopped Prozac abruptly be-
cause of side effects, his girlfriend
told CNN.

After the Virginia Tech and
Northern Illinois shootings, many
people are drawing a link be-
tween mental illness and murder,
says Lucas Bough, 26, a student at
the University of Colorado-Colorado
Springs.

He has depression and an anxiety
disorder, "but I am not a violent
person. I know a lot of people with
mental illness, and they aren't vi-
olent, either. This false equation just
contributes to stigma."

Most mentally ill people are not violent;
says Edward Mulvey, an expert on mental
disorders and violence at the Uni-
vity of Pittsburgh Medical
School.

The best predictor of violent behavior is
prior violence, says Mulvey, but
Cho had no record of physically at-
tacking people. "Massacre killings
are almost impossible to predict," he
says.

Horrific as they are, such mass
campus shootings are rare, says
James Alan Fox, a criminal justice
professor at Northeastern Univer-
sity in Boston. With about 16 mil-
ion U.S. college students, "the
chances of being murdered on
ampus are about as likely as being
fatally struck by lightning," he says.

Nobody knows whether the vigi-
lance with troubled students will
prevent mass murders. But colleges
must try, says Richard Kadison,
chief of mental health services at
Harvard. "The pendulum is swing-
ing away from being laissez faire.

...If you're going to make a mis-
take, it's better to err on the side of
keeping students safe."