THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU seeking permission to convert home to guest house

The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University will go before the city tonight for permission to transform a single-family home into a guest house for the chancellor.

The Greenville Board of Adjustments will hold a public hearing on the request, along with one from a local dentist, during its 7 p.m. meeting today in the City Council chambers in City Hall.

ECU bought the two-story house at 601 E. Fifth St. last year with the intention of using it for administrative offices, university spokesman John Durham said.

However, the neighborhood association opposed changing it from single family, Durham said, and the idea for a guest house evolved from that discussion.

The facility would house visitors to the university, particularly guests of Chancellor Steve Ballard.

The house was a private residence when the university purchased it for $255,000.

The house will need renovations, Durham said, but the cost isn’t known. If the permit is granted, the guest house could open within six months to a year.

Also at tonight’s meeting, a dental practice will be seeking permits from the city so its educational center can be used as a small convention center.

The practice, Michels and Gauquie, opened the Ronald C. Michaels Center about 18 months ago, Dr. Chris Gauquie said. It was originally designed as a educational facility for their dental practice.

“Because the place is so pretty lots of folks wanted to use it for private functions and (the city) is requiring us to apply for a special use permit,” Gauquie said.

The center is located at 2335 Hembry Lane, and the permit is required because the facility is in a medical district.

Public hearings also are scheduled for a request to have residential quarters for a resident manager at 618 S. Pitt St. and a request to operate a psychic advisor business at 222 S.E. Greenville Boulevard.
Greenville grooves with Billy Taylor Jazz Fest

Event includes concerts and jam sessions with jazz bands from Pitt County schools

The Daily Reflector

The annual Billy Taylor Jazz Festival will be held today through Saturday.

The festival includes a variety of concerts and a gala concert featuring the music of Billy Taylor with guest artist pianist and composer Geri Allen.

The festival is organized annually by Carroll V. Dashiell Jr., the Director of Jazz Studies and professor of bass at ECU's School of Music.

The festival started with high school and middle school jazz bands visiting the East Carolina University campus to perform at critique sessions. Then the ECU Jazz Ensemble A and a guest artist would also perform.

It quickly outgrew A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall, and in 2005, jazz musician Billy Taylor lent his name to the festival, and it was moved to the

BILLY TAYLOR

Greenville Convention Center.

The festival offers three public concerts, a free jam session and critiquing sessions for eight or more high school and middle school jazz bands.

Allen, this year's guest artist, has recorded and performed with such artists as Mal Waldron, Sir Simon Rattle and the Birmingham Symphony, Bill Cosby, Charlie Haden and Marianne Faithfull since 1982.

She has released a number of major recordings under her own name, including “Twenty One,” “Eyes in the Back Of Your Head,” “Maroons,” and, most recently, the critically acclaimed “Geri Allen: Timeless Portraits and Dreams.”

A Detroit native, she is a graduate of Howard University, where she also served as assistant professor of music.

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ECU to request $36.8M in state appropriations

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

After nearly 10 years and multiple sets of plans, officials at the Brody School of Medicine said they are confident about securing a new family medicine center building.

The planned 118,000-square-foot facility is to be built at the corner of Arlington Boulevard and Hart Drive.

Plans show it to be more than three times the size of the current space, with 33 exam rooms for the clinical area along with 12 exam rooms in the geriatric area. It will also have areas for urgent care and sports medicine, along with more office space for faculty and staff.

Dr. Nicholas Benson, vice-dean of the Brody School, said the new building will help the medical school achieve its three-part mission by providing more modern and efficient space, improving teaching methods and helping reach its research goals.

"We are very confident this is the time that we will see it through to completion," Benson said.

A document from the health sciences report given to the University Health System's Board of Directors last week underscored the need. "The department has outgrown its original rented space and currently has no permanent home," it read.

The document states a new facility is required to meet existing and future needs.

To help with the financing, East Carolina University is requesting $36.8 million in state appropriations, which will be added to $10 million in funding from the university.

"We hope to get the funding from the General Assembly some time this

THE PLANNED 118,000-square-foot facility will have 33 exam rooms for the clinical area, along with 12 exam rooms in the geriatric area. It will also have areas for urgent care, sports medicine and more office space.

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summer," Benson said. "If we get the funding, we may have a groundbreaking this fall."

Benson said officials from ECU have met with eight legislative members, most of whom are from outside Pitt County, and informed them of the importance of this new facility.

In addition to state funding, Benson said, the Brody School has received donations from local supporters, including a $2.5 million gift from the Monk family in Farmville and a $1 million grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation.

Dr. Kenneth Steinweg, head of the geriatric division of the Department of Family Medicine, said the chancellor and board of trustees have made this building the number two priority after the new dental school.

"We are out of teaching space, and this facility will allow us to teach more medical students," Steinweg said. "We've worked very hard to design it and demonstrate the need for it."

"It's hard to do a good job teaching when you are competing with other conversations."

In terms of long-term benefits, Steinweg said this "national-class building" will attract, train and keep family physicians in North Carolina.

ECU leads all other state medical schools with 59 percent of its graduates remaining in North Carolina to practice medicine, according to statistics provided by the Brody School.

Steinweg said the construction papers are already completed, but the building will take approximately two years to complete. He said he hopes to walk through its doors sometime near the end of 2010.

Until then, he said, those in the department will grin and bear it, much like they have for the last 18 months.

"(The new facility) will change the face of medicine in eastern North Carolina," Steinweg said. "We will train the next generation of family physicians."

Pitt County Memorial Hospital owns the building that houses the family medicine center. President Steve Lawler said once the department moves to its new location, the hospital will use that site for clinical services.

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Pirates on the rise on and off the field

Programs getting stronger, interest up

BY TIM STEVENS
STAFF WRITER

More than 300 area members of East Carolina's Pirate Club turned out at the North Raleigh Hilton Wednesday night to cheer athletic director Terry Holland, football coach Skip Holtz and men's basketball coach Mac McCarthy.

There is a lot to cheer.

ECU has one of the most respected athletic directors in the country, one of the top young football coaches and a proven winner at the helm of the basketball program.

The Pirate Club's membership in Wake County is about 900, up from 750 a year ago and perhaps headed quickly to 1,100. The overall membership tops 12,500.

ECU sold all 22,000 of its football season tickets last year and is well-ahead of last year's pace for the 2008 season.

Holland, a Clinton native, took the opportunity to praise and challenge the faithful.

He talked about the power, collectively and individually, of what he calls the Pirate Nation.

"Collectively, you can see the power with the atmosphere we are creating at our stadium," Holland said.

"After our Southern Miss game, they said it was the best atmosphere they had ever played in ... and they had played at Tennessee the week before."

Individually, Holland said ECU fans have great power.

"Ordinarily, if you want to double the size of your booster club, you hire a consultant, spend a million dollars and double the membership in 10 years," Holland said.

"What I'm going to ask our members to do individually is to enlist one more member. If they are accountable and they do that, we'll double the membership overnight and it won't cost a penny."

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ECU
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BOWL GAMES: Holland and Holtz, the football coach, are enthused with a football schedule that includes Virginia Tech, West Virginia, N.C. State, and Virginia.

Holland said the schedule included four "bowl games."

"We can't get into some BCS bowl games, but we can play the teams that do," Holland said.

"If we were playing Virginia Tech in Charlotte in the post-season, we would think it was a great bowl game. That's exactly what we are doing except it's our opener."

Holtz said he is on the same page with Holland as far as scheduling.

"We need to play people of that caliber," Holtz said. "We need to learn to compete at that level."

PIRATE PRIDE: Holtz is pleased with the progress that the football program has made, but he said he is most proud of progress off the field.

"When I got here, we had five players in the program who had 3.0 [grade-point averages]," he said. "Last fall, we had 42."

Nothing the team has done on the field has made him happier.

FOOTBALL RECRUITING: East Carolina's football recruiting base used to be east of I-95, but there are few if any hidden gems there now.

Holtz said the Internet, combines and camps have changed the recruiting landscape.

"There may be a player at a small school in Eastern North Carolina, but if he can play, Southern Cal, Notre Dame and everybody else knows about him," Holtz said.

"We may not win many of those head-to-head, but we can find 25 players who believe in what we are doing and who can help us do it."

BREAKTHROUGH RECRUIT: McCarthy said there is no reason that East Carolina can't have a great basketball program, but acknowledges it hasn't been in the past.

He said Memphis' run to the NCAA Final Four was a positive for the Pirates.

"It showed that a Conference USA team can get to the national championship and that its best players can be drafted by the NBA," McCarthy said.

A team like Memphis forces the other teams in the conference to get better. McCarthy said Memphis' success raises the bar for the rest of the league teams.

East Carolina probably sometime will need a breakthrough recruit — a player who is capable of boosting the entire program.

When McCarthy was an assistant at Auburn under Sonny Smith, the breakthrough recruit was Charles Barkley.

"He helped us get to the NCAA," McCarthy said. "He got there only once, but we went for six straight years."

Holtz proud of team's high GPAs.

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Bicyclist fatally injured by truck

NCSU junior, 21, faces DWI charges

BY MARCIA A. WALKER
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — Brian Anthony Reid celebrated part of his 21st birthday behind bars, charged with hitting and injuring a bicyclist while he was driving intoxicated Wednesday morning. The bicyclist later died.

Reid, a junior engineering student at N.C. State University, was driving a Ford F-150 pickup on Nazareth Street when he struck Nancy Antoine Leidy, 60, of 5128 Norman Place, at 10:57 a.m.

Leidy was riding on the right side of the road when she was hit, Raleigh Police Department spokesman Jim Sughre said Wednesday. According to the incident report, Leidy, who was wearing a helmet, was thrown 58 feet after she was hit.

Records indicate Reid had a blood-alcohol content of .12. A reading of .08 is illegal.

Reid, of 302 S. Sixty Court in Graham, was charged with one count each of felony serious injury by vehicle, driving while impaired and failure to reduce speed.

Leidy was taken to WakeMed Raleigh Campus with life-threatening injuries. She died just before 8 p.m., officials said Wednesday night. Reid was not injured.

Officer F.M. Patercity of the Raleigh Police Department wrote that Reid had a strong odor of alcohol, glossy eyes and slurred speech and that he admitted to drinking.

News researcher Becky Ogburn contributed to this report.
ORANGE COUNTY

UNC protesters to rally at noon

CHAPEL HILL — Marking the first week of what students say is the longest sit-in at UNC-Chapel Hill since 1993, a group will hold a rally at noon today demanding that the university join a program the group says will enhance efforts to ensure fair labor practices in factories producing apparel bearing the UNC-CH logo.

Chuck Stone, a longtime activist and a journalism professor emeritus, will serve as the keynote speaker. He will be joined by professors, representatives from several major labor unions, members of the UNC Women's Center, and representatives from the more than 20 organizations that have expressed their support for the Designated Suppliers Program, DSP, organizers said.
Wasted medical dollars

‘Defensive medicine’ isn’t good for doctors, patients or our health care system

By Kevin Pho

A recent analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers concluded that more than half the dollars in our $2.2 trillion health care system are wasted. Medical errors, inefficient use of technology and poorly managed chronic diseases were all cited as factors. Dwarving these reasons is a phenomenon in which doctors order tests to avoid the threat of a malpractice lawsuit. This is known as “defensive medicine.”

At $210 billion annually, defensive medicine is one of the largest contributors to wasteful spending, and it can manifest in many forms: unnecessary CT scans, MRIs, cardiac testing and hospital admissions. A 2005 survey in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that 93% of doctors reported practicing defensive medicine.

When you consider that rampant testing is a major driver of escalating health care dollars, addressing defensive medicine should be a primary goal of cost containment.

Testing to protect the doctor

Why do doctors order these unnecessary tests? The simple reason is that every physician wants to avoid being sued. Win or lose, the ordeal of a malpractice trial is a devastating experience. The American Academy of Family Physicians, citing a study that interviewed doctors who had fought medical liability cases, said 90% “suffered significant mental effects from the lawsuits” and, disturbingly, 10% contemplated suicide.

In an optimal system, every case should involve clear medical malpractice — wrong-site surgery or performing an incorrect procedure, for instance. But reality is far from that. Poor medical outcomes occasionally occur despite textbook medical care.

A landmark study from The New England Journal of Medicine analyzed more than 1,400 malpractice claims and found that in almost 40% of cases, no medical error was involved. Facing such an unpredictable malpractice climate, a physician’s instinct is to increase testing. When facing jurors and trying to explain a medical catastrophe, who wants to tell them why a specific test wasn’t ordered?

In my experience, patients don’t seem to mind the extra testing, and they often equate defensive medicine with “more thorough” care. After all, if one test is good, wouldn’t more be better?

More harm than good

Not necessarily. Every test has the risk of a “false positive,” which is a positive test in the absence of disease. Doctors generally act on every abnormal result, so a simple X-ray finding could lead to further tests, such as an advanced imaging scan or biopsy. When you consider that a CT scan can expose patients to radiation equivalent to several hundred X-rays, and a biopsy might have serious complications such as bleeding or infection, there comes a point where increasing the frequency and degree of diagnostic studies could lead to harm.

This is what studies have found. Pioneering work by researchers at the Dartmouth Atlas Project concluded that higher intensity medical services have led to worse outcomes, higher costs and an increased number of medical errors.

How do we tackle this problem? Whenever a test is performed, there has to be a willing patient. Know that more tests might not always be better medicine. Before undergoing a scan or procedure, understand why it is being ordered. This includes a thorough discussion of the risks as well as a sense of what the physician is looking for. Patients tend to decline tests of questionable benefit when appropriately informed of possible complications. Don’t be afraid to ask questions.

For physicians, remove the incentives to order defensive tests. Specifically, the malpractice system needs to do a better job to not try doctors who experience poor medical outcomes despite practicing the appropriate standard of care. Although the majority of physicians win malpractice cases, remember that the trial itself is emotionally scarring and that the statistics do not reflect the vast number of cases settled out of court. Until the system is perceived as being fairer, physicians will do all they can to avoid being sued. That involves ordering unnecessary tests, which is a shame, because those billions of dollars can be put to much better use.

Kevin Pho is a primary care physician who blogs at www.kevinmd.com.
In Choosing A College, It's Prestige Vs. Debt

By M. P. DUNLEAVY

The colleges have given their answers. They have sent acceptance letters to high school seniors and their parents along with notifications of how much, if any, financial aid they are offering.

Now, those parents and students have until May 1 to address what may be the toughest questions: Should they choose the most affordable school? Or should they pick the one with more prestige, even if it's a financial stretch, even if it means going deep into debt?

While the questions are not new, they are particularly difficult to answer in this economically tumultuous year. Traditional and even nontraditional sources of college financing are suddenly in question. Dozens of companies that once provided billions of dollars in student loans have left the market. Other banks are tightening their standards, making student loans harder to get.

On top of which, the continued turmoil in real estate has meant that home equity — a source of security for many families and a fallback for college funds for some of them — is not as easy, or in some cases impossible, to tap.

As a result, many parents are being forced to reconsider what has become a $200,000 question: Is a higher-priced private education really worth what you pay for it?

Perhaps the most obvious thing that can be said is that there is no cookie-cutter answer that would make sense for all students and their parents in all cases. Of course, there are vigorous arguments and countless anecdotes on both sides, many of them seemingly justifying the higher costs of private or more elite schools.

Actual research on the subject is scant, and what exists offers conflicting evidence. One often-cited study from 1998, however, concludes that attending a more selective or elite institution does

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not translate to an economic advantage for students later on, as measured by their reported income. Attending a more elite college does seem to affect the later incomes of poorer students. The study, written by Alan B. Krueger, a professor of economics at Princeton, and Stacy Berg Dale, then a researcher at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, concluded that the qualities that students themselves bring to their education may be what matters most.

Professor Krueger says that he and Ms. Dale are updating the study this year, with new data from more recent students. But he says he sees no reason yet to question his original conclusions. What pays off for students in the end, he believes, is not attending a prestigious or highly selective college, but finding one with strengths that match a student’s skills, needs and interests.

That said, he acknowledges that it is difficult for parents and students to make a decision that might require downshifting their expectations. “There is so much pressure for kids to get into top schools, and pressure on parents to send them there,” he said. “You can get a good education at a number of universities. It doesn’t have to be the most elite.”

The pressure, emotionally and financially, is intense, as many parents will attest.

“We’re in a place now where it’s easy to make some really bad financial decisions,” said Don Stanyon, a consultant in Gloversville, N.Y., whose oldest son, Christopher, will start college this fall. “You have to find a balance between mortgaging your own future and helping your kids get to where they want to be.”

Mr. Stanyon said he had his fingers crossed that his son might want to attend a state college in New York that costs about $15,000 a year. Instead, Christopher set his sights on Siena, a private college near Albany, that costs nearly $35,000 a year.

“With $15,000, I could take care of that relatively easily,” Mr. Stanyon said. “But now we’re looking at $140,000 to $150,000 for the full four years, which is not something we were prepared for.”

Nonetheless, Mr. Stanyon said he believed that Christopher was making a good decision by choosing a school with a strong pre-law program, his main interest. “So there’s a big reason to invest in something like that,” he said.

Given their income and assets, which include several real estate properties, Mr. Stanyon said, they do not qualify for financial aid. To come up with the additional $20,000 a year, Mr. Stanyon plans to sell a couple of his rental units.

He and his wife, Lisa, and Christopher will also take out student loans, and Christopher will get a work-study job on campus, choices that Mr. Stanyon now views philosophically, “I think this is part of the maturation process,” he said.

Because his son will share some of the burden of paying for his school of choice, “this a good thing for him, because then his skin is in the game,” Mr. Stanyon said.

The trouble for many parents caught unprepared for the high cost of college is that too much of their own skin may be on the line if they tap their home’s equity, credit cards or, worse, their retirement savings. Gail Sullivan, a nurse in Middlesex, Vt., says she knows many people who are willing to borrow against their homes to pay for college, but she is not one of them. “We have a lot of home equity, but I think of that as my safety net. And I don’t want to touch our retirement. We’re a little behind on that as it is.”

That said, Ms. Sullivan and her husband are not sure yet where the money will come from to pay for college for their oldest daughter, Cecilia — especially if she chooses one of the three pri-
private colleges that accepted her, where the tuition at each is about $40,000 a year.

She was also accepted at the University of Vermont, a public institution that costs about half that, Ms. Sullivan said. Including the grants and scholarships offered, the university would cost the family only $3,000 out of pocket. "It would basically be paid for," Ms. Sullivan said.

For many parents, the decision would end there. Indeed, Ms. Sullivan said that many friends have urged her to make this a practical, financial choice. "They tell me, 'Make Cecilia go to UVM for a year. If she hates it, she can transfer. But maybe she'll like it and stay.'"

But Ms. Sullivan said that choosing a college should not be governed solely by finances. Nor does she think she or her husband, John Pulio, should make the decision. "She's going into an adult world now, when you start making your own decisions — and this decision is going to be with her for the rest of her life."

To that end, Ms. Sullivan says, she and her husband are prepared to take out loans, and to show Cecilia the college expense spreadsheets they have created, and help her understand that she may have to borrow as much as $4,000 a year herself, if she chooses a private institution.

But many parents would side with Professor Krueger and others who question whether the value of paying for a higher-priced education pays off for students or their parents.

Rosalie Glauser, owner of the Slow Down Food Company in Andes, N.Y., is one. While her son Tex immediately found a good fit with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, Mass., a small, inexpensive public college that offers him the promise of a potential soccer scholarship in a year or so, his twin brother, Taylor, is torn between the State University of New York at Potsdam and Mercyhurst, a small private college in Erie, Pa., where he would like to study medieval archaeology.

Ms. Glauser says she can understand her son's attraction to Mercyhurst, and the college did offer him about $20,000 in grants and scholarships. But that still leaves a balance of about $15,000 a year. SUNY Potsdam also offers an undergraduate archaeology major, and would cost about half that.

Ms. Glauser is adamant that her son not put himself in the position of graduating with $60,000 in debt — and into a field where typical starting salaries are low.

Even if Taylor attends the state university, they still have to come up with about $3,500 a year out of pocket, and that is not looking easy either. "With the economy being what it is, and banks being so much more stringent, as a small-business owner, I don't know that I could even get those loans."