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DOT, businesses meet over connector

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, April 30, 2009

The cries of local business owners frustrated with the 10th Street/Stantonsburg Road Connector project reached the ears of some City Council members this week. The business owners are asking to meet with the project’s steering committee.

The N.C. Department of Transportation oversees the initiative, which would connect East Carolina University and Pitt County Memorial Hospital by one four-lane roadway including bike lanes and sidewalks. Greenville has handled the planning process.

Mayor Pat Dunn, Mayor Pro-Tem Mildred Council and Councilwoman Rose Glover attended an information session for business owners Wednesday night at Sheppard Memorial Library. Councilman Bryant Kittrell joined Council at an additional meeting for local officials Thursday afternoon. The city council approved a program in February 2007 to help homeowners relocate nearby, but hasn't addressed business or renter relief.

It remains unclear how many businesses, property owners and residents will be affected in total because the final plan has not been selected. However, more than 50 people representing at least a dozen businesses attended Wednesday's meeting. It was the first session targeting business owners exclusively, though others have been held for residents and all affected parties.

There are currently three connector options narrowed from an earlier field of 11, and the steering committee will make the final decision to send to the NCDOT after the input phase is complete. The committee consists of Greenville’s Community Development Director Merrill Flood and City Engineer David Brown in addition to one representative each from PCMH, ECU and NCDOT.

"Why can't we be before them?" Air Mania Owner William Gorham asked. "The people that are actually going to make a decision. They can't hear his question, they can't hear this gentleman. They're not having to put a face to it."

Brown said he would take the request to the other steering committee members.

"They should have to come and face these business people," Glover said after listening to businessmen and women for two hours. "All these business people are just hearing this at the final stage. It is not fair. Bring the 300-pound gorillas in the room."

Brown was there throughout the meeting as project manager, and Flood was there for about an hour before departing for another engagement. The City Council will have a chance to weigh in on the issue but the Council's opinions will be represented by those Brown and Flood.

Most questions Wednesday centered around the property acquisition process, which is scheduled to begin in 2011.

Nancy Wilson, a right-of-way agent with NCDOT, explained that an appraiser will determine what payment is appropriate for land and buildings in the connector’s path based on fair market value. She said that the payment can be negotiated to a certain extent.

Business owners also will be eligible for relocation funds, she said. They can select from a $20,000 maximum fixed payment or a reestablishment grant with no cap on moving costs, a $2,500 maximum searching fee and up to $10,000 to set up the business in a new location.

Several people who spoke were dismayed that other factors weren't taken into account when deciding the
payment amount.

"There's no consideration about ... whether it's a one-week old business or a 25-year-old business," one man said. Others based on nearby streets worried there will be no compensation for the decreased traffic they'll see. Gorham and his wife, Melinda Gorham, requested the plans be amended to shift an expansion of 14th Street north, saving Air Mania and several other businesses near the intersection with Farmville Boulevard.

"I think the city really needs to start stepping out on this situation," said Janette Cox after posing several questions. As co-owner of Hardee and Cox Welding, her business will be affected regardless of which plan is selected.

Glover and Council both pledged to keep the business owners in mind, and Glover urged them to get in touch with each city council member.

"Every single one of them needs to hear from you all," she said.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9566.

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Jason Michael Carroll to play ECU sorority fundraiser to benefit St. Jude's Children's Hospital

By
The Daily Reflector

Friday, May 01, 2009

A local sorority will provide a little first aid to a national charity later this week when East Carolina University's Epsilon Sigma Alpha will hold its eighth annual Band-Aid event at 8 p.m. Thursday at the Greenville Convention Center.

The concert is a fundraiser for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in memory of a late Epsilon sister, Samantha Trost, who passed away from cancer Jan. 19.

St. Jude's is a pediatric treatment and research facility in Memphis, Tenn., and is the second largest health-care charity in the United States. All patients accepted for treatment are treated regardless of the family's ability to pay.

Performers at the Epsilon event include local band Spare Change and country musician Jason Michael Carroll.

Carroll released his sophomore album "Growing Up Is Getting Old" on April 28. His single "Where I'm From" has already made into the Top 20 on the country singles charts.

Carroll's first album, "Waitin' in the Country," debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart and was a Billboard 200 pop chart entry at No. 8. Carroll achieved both the best unit sales and the highest pop-chart debut by a new country male artist since Billy Ray Cyrus in 1992.

"Waitin in the Country" produced two top-five singles, "Alyssa Lies" and "Livin' Our Love Song," with the latter earning him a Gold Mastertone Certification. He wrote or co-wrote five of the 11 tracks on the CD, including a collaboration with three-time Grammy Award Winner Jewel.

Billboard magazine named him "Top New Country Artist of 2007." He also been a guest performer on ABC's "Good Morning America."

Carroll's music depicts him as a family man, reflecting his generation's transition from partying to parenthood.

Through his music he expresses the joys inherent in both worlds and the tensions that can arise when moving from unencumbered freedom to the responsibilities of being a husband and father.

"There have been many times when I've wanted to just hang out and party, but then responsibility kicks in," Carroll said. "While I hate being away from my family when on tour, I honestly believe I'm doing what I was meant to do — entertain audiences to the best of my ability and try to provide a better life for my children."

Carroll, a Houston native, grew up in Raleigh in a religious home. His father was a conservative Christian minister who viewed modern music as sinful and would not allow any secular music to be played in the home or on family trips in the car. Carroll's father went so far as to spank him when he found a copy of Billy Ray Cyrus' "Achy Breaky Heart" in his bedroom.

As a teenager, Carroll joined a band, rapidly making a name for himself in the country bars in and around the Raleigh-Durham area.

Through his friends and a job in a motor shop, Carroll immersed himself in country music. Then he met Don Gehman, who produced albums for both Hootie and the Blowfish and John Mellencamp. It was through
Gehman that Nashville began to take notice of Carroll.

Landing opening spots on some of country's biggest tours for Brooks & Dunn, Carrie Underwood, Martina McBride and Trace Adkins, Carroll has perfected his stage show, winning over thousands of fans across the country.

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NCAA narrows window for NBA draft prospects

The Associated Press

Thursday, April 30, 2009

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA is trying to end the continual guessing game for college basketball coaches. Next season, coaches will have all their answers by May 8.

On Thursday, the NCAA’s board of directors approved legislation that shortens the time players have to withdraw from the NBA draft, moving the date up from mid-June to early May.

“This is a topic that I think has been frustrating for the college community as well as the professional community,” Division I vice president David Berst said during a conference call announcing the change.

The new rule has attracted support from several key constituencies.

Coaches wanted an earlier date so they could sign additional players to make up for unexpected departures. School presidents were concerned players may spend too much time preparing for and attending NBA workouts at the expense of classwork.

One NBA official even suggested teams don't need that much time to scout players.

"It's not like we're sitting waiting with bated breath to see who's going to stay in and who's going to go out," Denver Nuggets vice president of player personnel Rex Chapman said. "If they stay in, they stay in. If they don't, they go back to school. In many cases, we're happy that they go back, because most kids, frankly, need to stay in school."

That is still a longer window than it is for college football underclassmen, who have 72 hours after declaring for the NFL draft to withdraw and return to school.

The rules change also poses some unique challenges for the NCAA.

The NBA's collective bargaining agreement requires the list of players pulling out of the draft to be released in mid-June, a date that won't change until the league reaches a new CBA with the players association. The CBA expires after the 2010-11 season.

But if a player decides to pull out, he must still notify the NCAA by May 8. The legislation does not establish how that notification will occur.

"Rest assured it will be communicated," Berst said. "The manner by which it is communicated still has to be determined. They'll have to opt out of the draft to our satisfaction."

Berst said the NBA is helping with the change.

The league agreed to move up the date for individual workouts from early June to April 30, giving college players a little more than a week to showcase their skills.

And this may only be the start of a broader discussion.

Atlantic Coast Conference officials proposed moving the cutoff date to mid-April, when the spring signing period opens each year. The legislative council approved the compromise date after seeking the advice of NBA officials and the NBA Players Association. Those groups and the National Association of Basketball Coaches, Berst said, have agreed to meet with NCAA officials to find an even better resolution.

Berst also acknowledged there could be more changes before the 2010 draft.
The board also rescinded a provision that allowed undrafted underclassmen to announce within 30 days of the draft whether they would return to school.

Concerns remain for coaches who are increasingly talking about academic success because of the potential penalties assessed to underperforming teams based on Academic Progress and Graduation Success scores.

"I don't think you can have any situation where players are missing classes, and I'm all for chasing the dream," Indiana coach Tom Crean said Thursday.

"When Dwyane Wade was going to be (drafted) between 5 and 13, there was no question he should go. But you're very hamstrung when people are leaving and their grades aren't intact. I just don't think you can have anybody leave and have days on end doing workouts."

President Myles Brand, who is fighting advanced pancreatic cancer, spoke briefly on the conference call but did not discuss his health.

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AP Sports Writer Pat Graham in Denver contributed to this report.

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May 01, 2009 - 04:06 a.m. EDT

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Two likely swine flu cases found in N.C.

BY SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer

Comment on this story

Two people in North Carolina, a traveler to Wake County and an Onslow County resident who recently returned from Texas, have probable cases of the new flu virus, state health officials reported Thursday.

Additional tests to confirm the illness are being conducted at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

An additional 100 cases of illness in North Carolina have been ruled out as being the new H1N1 virus - usually called swine flu, and 135 other cases are awaiting testing at the state laboratory in Raleigh, said Dr. Jeffrey Engel, state health director.

"The numbers are exactly as we predicted they would go - upward," Engel said.

The new flu has been reported in 11 states, including South Carolina, where a cluster of 13 illnesses were reported among a group of students who recently visited Mexico. In addition, 11 countries have confirmed cases.

As a result, Engel said, the state is operating as if it were here.

An allotment of the federal stockpile of anti-viral drugs and protective garments arrived early Thursday morning. With that shipment, there's enough of the medicine on hand to treat 1 million people with twice-daily doses for five days.

"We do not anticipate needing to tap into the stockpile," Engel said, adding that supplies at pharmacies are ample.

The new virus, while deadly in Mexico, has claimed only one life so far in the United States. Most who have gotten sick have had mild to moderate symptoms.

On average, seasonal flu claims 36,000 lives each year in the United States, including up to 2,000 in North Carolina.

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Pain, perspective

State employees are unhappy with pay cuts, but steps taken by the governor are modest in the context of a budget crisis.

Comment on this story

No employer enjoys the prospect of telling dedicated workers that they will have to absorb salary reductions or unpaid furloughs. Yet that's the news many have had to deliver to employees in recent months, and it's what Governor Perdue brought to state workers this week. Her reductions are fairly small, with salaries cut by one-half of 1 percent. Employees will be able to take 10 hours of flexible time off if they choose.

The truth is that state workers are dedicated and that their compensation is rarely extravagant. What they have enjoyed, besides the satisfaction of public service, is job security to get through tough times and good retirement benefits.

But while some workers have complained about Perdue's decision, most don't have to go far, perhaps just outside their front doors, to see neighbors who have received larger pay cuts or long furloughs or who have lost their jobs. Likely the fear on the part of many state employees is that the first round of salary reductions will be just that, a first round of several, if the economic picture doesn't swiftly improve.

At this point, it's impossible to say. Perdue is pulling out all the stops to get the state through the fiscal year ending June 30 with its budget balanced as required. Alarmingly, the shortfall in that budget now looks to be $1 billion more than the $2 billion that had been expected. The governor is even using $400 million from federal stimulus money that had been slated to go into next year's budget to help with this year's. Reserves are being raided.

This raises questions about the consequences such actions will have for next year. Legislators and the governor of course want to keep any tax increases to bolster the budget to a minimum at a time when many families are just scraping by as it is. If the economy improves, signaled by an upturn of consumer spending ... if there is more federal money coming to the state ... if job losses stabilize ... all are factors to which legislators look for signs that the state's economic situation is on the upswing. But as of now, such signs are scarce.

In the meantime, state workers surely understand the much more harsh realities that many employees in private industry in North Carolina currently are facing. That said, state workers are public employees, in many cases doing jobs that directly serve many hundreds if not thousands of people. Therefore, trying to protect them and their relatively modest wages from further harm makes common sense. Perdue shows good instincts in that regard.

Impatience, frustration, even anger, on the part of those being asked to work just as hard for less money are to be expected. But the times are what they are, and just as is the case with other recently unemployed workers and those struggling to do more with less, or living on savings until they can find new work, state employees will have to carry on and hope the
recovery period from this severe economic crisis is shorter and more robust than expected.

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Mary H. Schweitzer, NCSU associate professor of marine, earth and atmospheric sciences, uses molecular biology tools to study fossils. The slide behind her is of soft-tissue vessel structure that she removed from a T-rex fossil.
SHER STONEMAN

An artist's rendering shows the hadrosaur, nicknamed Dakota, as scientists think it would have looked, based on their analysis of the fossil evidence so far. One of the most complete dinosaur mummies ever found is revealing secrets locked away for millions of years, bringing researchers as close as they will ever get to touching a live dinosaur.
National Geographic Society Photo

Team claims second batch of soft dinosaur tissue

NCSU scientist led team on Montana dig; skeptic still expresses doubt

BY JAY PRICE, Staff writer
Comment on this story

RALEIGH - A team of researchers led by the N.C. State University scientist famed for the controversial discovery of soft tissue in the fossilized bone of a 68 million-year-old Tyrannosaurus rex in 2005 has found more soft tissue in an even older dinosaur skeleton.

Results of the more recent discovery, from the femur of an 80 million-year-old duckbill dinosaur, appear today in the journal Science. The new evidence not only undermines skeptics of Mary Schweitzer's earlier work, but also may offer clues about where more bones with such material may be found. That could help other scientists replicate the findings and
investigate how such delicate material could last for such an extraordinary length of time.

Schweitzer is an associate professor of marine, earth and atmospheric science at NCSU and has a joint appointment to the staff of N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences. She and John Asara, a pathologist at Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, were the principal authors of the paper. They collaborated with a team of researchers, including several from Montana State University.

A crew including Schweitzer and some of her students dug the duckbill femur out of a Montana cliff in 2007, after other research suggested that soft tissue may be more common in bones that had been buried quickly in deep sandstone.

They left a layer of stone around the bone to help preserve any soft tissue that might be inside and reduce the potential for contamination, Schweitzer said. That meant retrieving a chunk of rock and old bone that weighed 750 pounds, a feat that involved fashioning a sled from an old truck hood and dragging it up the cliff with a winch.

Then the crew rushed the rock and bone back to Raleigh, where the testing and examination began. Some of the material was eventually shipped to Asara’s lab in Massachusetts.

Some critics had said the earlier study wasn’t elaborate enough. This time, the researchers subjected the bone and its contents to more thorough analysis, including examination by more sensitive equipment and verification of the results by several independent labs.

As with the T. rex bone, there was no DNA, the code stored in cells that acts as a blueprint for every living thing, which may keep the talk of recreating live dinosaurs to a minimum this time. But the bits of protein provided at least some information about the dinosaur, including support for the theory that dinosaurs are more closely related to modern birds than reptiles such as alligators, something supported by the earlier T. rex study.

Thomas Kaye, a fossil researcher with the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, remains skeptical that Schweitzer and her team have found dinosaur tissue. Last year, Kaye joined researchers in Poland and California in writing a paper published in an online journal suggesting that material her team believed was blood vessels was actually more recent biological contamination from slime that grew after moisture invaded the channels in the bones which once held blood vessels.

Kaye said Thursday that the new study shows material with structure similar to that in the earlier one. He said that the team found barely detectable amounts of protein that they believe came from the dinosaur and said that if the researchers had found real dinosaur blood vessels large enough to be visible, as those in the studies are, they would contain vast amounts of it.

He noted that the paper mentions that Schweitzer’s team had also found some bacterial protein, which could be consistent with his slime theory.

Asara said the question of why all that soft material isn’t showing up on the tests as protein is a great one and could be an interesting area of new research. He thinks that something about the process of fossilization changes the nature of soft tissue so that it doesn’t behave the same as fresh tissue when tested.

If it were some form of recent biological contamination, though, that would be obvious to the researchers, not only because of the sheer quantity of protein but also because it could be identified as coming from bacteria, Asara said. Researchers have found only small quantities of protein from bacteria, he said.

In addition, researchers tested the stone surrounding the bone and did not turn up the same kind of protein thought to be dinosaur tissue, he said.
The researchers were able to identify not just one kind of protein but five, Asara said, most in minute amounts. The main one, collagen protein, is present in 500,000-year-old mastodon bones, albeit in much greater quantities, he said, which also supports the team's research.

If, as the research suggests, protein fragments aren't extremely rare in fossilized bone, it could have big implications for scientists who want to learn more about the biology of extinct species.

Being able to analyze soft tissue from the remains of animals that lived across a range of eras opens the door to all kinds of research, such as how quickly molecules evolve and in what directions.

Schweitzer said an obvious next step is figuring out how common such material is and how widely distributed.

And she is particularly intrigued by the question of what would allow the material to survive so long, a question that may have practical applications in an array of disciplines, such as medicine. Asara and Schweitzer said they hope the more robust evidence would prompt other researchers to join them.

"We're just scratching the surface of this," Asara said.

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College anglers fish for rivalry

N.C. State, UNC, Wake Forest take it easy in first Tobacco Road event

MIKE ZLOTNICKI, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

CARRBORO - The phrase "Tobacco Road" typically is associated with the college basketball rivalries of North Carolina, Duke, N.C. State and Wake Forest.

One day soon, it also could trigger images of similar bass fishing rivalries, albeit on a smaller scale.

On Saturday, angling teams from N.C. State, UNC, Wake Forest and East Carolina were among the eight teams that met at University Lake in Carrboro for the inaugural Tobacco Road Bass Tournament. (Duke was a no-show.)

And N.C. State again showed why the BassPack is one of the dominant clubs in competitive
collegiate bass fishing.

The anglers arrived before 7 a.m., a few hiding bloodshot eyes behind sunglasses and managing bed heads with weathered ball caps, the telltale signs of late nights.

"It's been a long time since I saw so many sober college boys at one time," said lake warden Bob Glosson, an avid bass angler himself.

The anglers, 15 in all, loaded their gear in the 14-foot rental johnboats that would serve as their fishing platforms. No metal-flake fiberglass hulls with 250-horsepower outboards would be allowed this day. Only electric trolling motors are allowed on University Lake, and the live wells were aerated plastic tubs.

The BassPack anglers did sport team jerseys, though.

There was surprisingly little trash-talking between the participants, only some Needling and banter among teammates.

"I'm bringing a West Coast swagger to the tournament," joked Wake's Andrew Jacobs, 19, formerly of Seattle.

"Drop shots and swim baits, baby," added partner Ryan Casey, describing the lures associated with Western states.

Casey, 19, from Roanoke Rapids, is the founder of the Wake Forest Fishing Demon Deacons.

**Heading out**

After a rules briefing by the BassPack's Alex Freeman, the eight teams set out, and before long, the tournament began to have a distinct college feel to it.

Freeman came directly from his bartending job to the lake without any sleep.

Later in the morning, Glosson started to make the rounds, checking on his charges. The first boat he stopped at belonged to the BassPack team of Casey Johnson, 20, and Mark Kozaczki, 18. Things were looking promising.

"We should have four in there," Johnson said, motioning to his tub. "I had one on the measuring board, and it flopped in the water."

Johnson, who recently purchased a used bass boat, was still trying to adjust to the format.

"I think [the tournament] is a great idea," he said. "Johnboats, not so much. I'm used to a bigger johnboat."

At the lake office building, volunteer Doug DeWitt of Apex set up a portable weigh station, complete with a modest public-address system and a table for trophies. DeWitt liked seeing the kids on the lake.

"I think it's a good cause," he said. "I don't think there's enough attention paid to outdoor sports at the college and high school level."

**Snakebit**

Out on the water, Zach D'Alessio, 19, of East Carolina should have paid more attention to his boat driving. Before it even started, he was having a tough day already.

His partner couldn't make it at the last minute, so D'Alessio, a bass fishing rookie, gamely came on his own. In the morning, he accidentally backed his boat into a bush, where a snake became entangled in his propeller. He had to cut the dead snake out, and when he tried to lift his motor, the throttle unit came off.
D'Alessio was later spotted on the lake twisting the shaft for direction while manipulating the throttle with his other hand.

"Not a great day for ECU," said D'Allesio, who had released his two bass earlier when he thought he was out of it. He went through another motor before returning to the competition, but he never boated another bass.

**Working hard**

In one cove, Will Cimino, 19, and Jarrett Wood, 21, of the Carolina Fishing Club were fishless.

Cimino, from Greensboro, is president of the club and was instrumental in organizing the event. He landed a small bass from the shallows.

"It's better than going back with your tail between your legs," he said.

In the Price Creek arm of the lake, BassPackers Jared Beard and Drew Gregory, both 23, shirtless and shoeless, had figured out the fish and already had culled twice as they increased the weight of their five-fish limit.

They kept a radio tuned to a country station, and when Brad Paisley's ode to fishing, "I'm Gonna Miss Her," came on, the pair joined in the chorus "Oh, lookie there, I've got a bite."

They were using Texas-rigged Zoom Magnum Lizards.

"We're little bit superstitious," said Beard, who would celebrate his birthday at midnight. "We don't turn [the radio] on until after the first bite."

Their karma worked well enough for them to take first place with five bass weighing 8 pounds, 12 ounces.

**Weighing the future**

Henry Veggian, an English professor at UNC and faculty adviser to the Carolina Fishing Club, was on hand for the weigh-in.

He liked the scale of the tournament and doesn't see it having to shed its grass-roots feel.

"I like it the way it is," he said. "Fishing, camaraderie and friendship."

Freeman and Cimino agreed.

"This way it brings you back to your roots," Freeman said. "It's fun this way."

"I agree," Cimino said. "Fish don't care what you're driving."

Freeman said that 10 years from now, he would like every school within 100 miles to field teams, complete with trash-talking, jerseys and sponsors.

Time will tell whether the Tobacco Road Bass Tournament remains a johnboat event or grows into the metal-flake mainstream of bass fishing.

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UHS, hospital pact in effect

McRae: Financial stability first goal

By REGGIE PONDER
Staff Writer

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Beginning today, Albemarle Hospital is managed by Greenville-based University Health Systems.

But Albemarle Health Chief Executive Officer Sharon Tanner said patients, staff and the community as a whole should expect to see nothing different at the hospital as a result of the agreement taking effect.

"Not a thing," Tanner said Thursday. "It's exactly the way we said it would be. We're continuing to run the hospital the way we've always run the hospital."

The two benefits the agreement will provide are cost savings and opportunities to work together with UHS, she said.

"That's all back office stuff," Tanner said of the savings. "Nobody's going to see that."

As for joint ventures with UHS, it could be a while before those begin to take shape.

But Tanner credits the UHS management agreement with helping the hospital to recruit two neurologists who will coming to Elizabeth City during June and July.

The doctors will be able to work at both Albemarle and Chowan hospitals under the agreement, she said.

The management agreement will continue to boost physician recruitment, Tanner said.

At the end of August a new plastic surgeon will be joining the medical staff at Albemarle Hospital, Tanner said.

Albemarle soon will be talking to East Carolina University about the prospect of medical students and residents working at Albemarle Hospital.

"We'll start meeting on that this summer," Tanner said.

Tanner said it would be a year or more before the hospital began to see medical students or residents from ECU.

Dave McRae, chief executive officer of University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, said Thursday that "improving financial stability" was the first goal under the new partnership.

"We are very pleased to finally be starting on this journey with Albemarle Health," McRae said. "For some time now, we have believed that Albemarle Health will add great value to our developing health system serving all of eastern and northeastern North Carolina. We also are confident that UHS will add value to Albemarle Health in serving its region as well."

University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina is a regional health system serving 29 counties in eastern North Carolina. UHS includes Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville, community hospitals, physician practices, and home health and other independently operated health services. UHS is also affiliated with the Brody School of Medicine at ECU.

Under the management agreement, Tanner and Chief Financial Officer Ray Owings become employees of
University Health Systems but all other hospital employees remain employees of the Albemarle Hospital Authority.

The agreement obligates UHS to make joint purchasing and other cost savings available to Albemarle Hospital as much as possible. Legal services are made available to the hospital through the UHS counsel’s office and included under the management fee.

Albemarle Hospital Authority will pay UHS $500,000 to manage the hospital the first year, with the fee rising 4.5 percent each year after that. UHS will reduce the management fee if the savings generated by UHS management are less than the fee, but the total fee will not drop below $300,000.

UHS will be eligible for a bonus of up to $500,000 in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. The maximum bonus will increase 4.5 percent each year.

The bonus will not exceed the management fee in any year and it will not be based on net profits.

The Albemarle Health Authority Board of Commissioners will determine the amount of the bonus based on UHS’ performance as it relates to goals set by the board.

The agreement makes the payment of the management fee and bonuses to UHS subordinate to payment of rent to Pasquotank County under the existing lease agreement.

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[Signature]
Graduates, lend them your ears

The Forum

Cal and Bob weren't invited to douse the Class of 2009 with their wisdom, but that didn't stop them. So please take your seats and save the applause for the end.

Bob (backstage): This is the first graduation speech you've given since Calvin Coolidge was president, isn't it? Cal? You think you're nervous. Think about these graduates. Let me channel them for a second. They're being hurled into the angry mosh pit that is a severe recession. Hunting for a job today is like searching for integrity in Washington! But I do see a glimmer of hope. A 2007 survey of Harvard's graduating class showed that 58% of men and 43% of women were going into finance and consulting, instead of pursuing science, engineering or other jobs we need to compete in the world. The days of the Wall Street cash machine are over, and in the long run, that's good for the country.

Cal: I agree that making money should not be anyone's sole purpose in life. Remember that ancient wisdom, "The love of money is the root of all evil?" It isn't money that is evil, though. It's what you do with it that can be good or bad. There is nothing wrong with making money. If there were, who would pay the taxes to big-spending government? I want them to know they will find more satisfaction by being good stewards of what they have while helping others rather than just accumulating stuff. Now let's go get 'em!

Bob: Students, parents, faculty, lefties, righties and all of those in between. Congratulations . . . I think. With our economy in shambles and millions out of work, I know many of you graduates are tempted to simply adopt a well-known political chant — "Four more years!' — while begging your parents to ante up for another degree. But speaking for your parents, let me say, "Get a job!' They didn't shell out this cash for your education only to watch you move back home into your old bedroom, which — by the way — has already been turned into a home office. On a serious note, when I sat where you are sitting today, the job market was better, but the world was a far more dangerous place. Our nation was divided over the Vietnam War. Tens of thousands of our young people were dying in the jungles of Southeast Asia. The mighty Soviet Union had nuclear weapons aimed at us and we at them. We were sworn enemies. It was a frightening time.

Cal: But your challenges will be far more complex than any we faced. Islamic fundamentalists seek to destroy our way of life. They are after nuclear weapons, including the remnants of those from the Cold War. The Soviets were officially atheist. Today's terrorists want to kill you in the name of their God. You can't negotiate with such fanaticism. Strength and resolve maintain peace. The economy is suffering, and we are in debt greater than any nation has ever known. When I graduated from college, the possibilities were endless. As Americans today, the possibilities ... are still endless. Your generation faces daunting challenges, to be sure, but no country responds to crises like this one. You will be the authors of the next great chapter in American history.

Bob: Fanatical Islam is, as Cal says, a grave threat, but we cannot live our lives in a constant state of fear, determining what we do and how we do it only after first consulting a color-coded chart. It is time to turn home and address the future of our country on our terms.

Cal: One must not live in fear, though, in order to simply be prepared. Whether your first job after graduation, your first — and let's hope only! — marriage, or your first child, preparation and anticipation only clear the path for a better future. And that future — your future, your children's future — will depend on this country's ability to keep terrorists at bay. Ignoring a threat will not vanquish it.

Bob: Despite threats to the homeland, whether terrorism or fiscal dangers, we still live in a dynamic time. The recession will fade; our dynamism never will. When I sit where you sit, we hadn't yet heard of cellphones or the Internet. No
week. Your generation is the one that must literally "save the world." That once-hackneyed phrase has become a moral mandate.

**Cal:** This is not the place to debate climate change, but let me say this: Question anyone who tells you with certainty what will happen 10 years from now, let alone 100 years out. Skepticism about global warming is a sign of independent thought, which I believe is supposed to be cultivated in academe. The cry of the young in the '60s was, "Never trust anyone over 30." I would suggest another slogan: "Never trust a politician." Don't get caught up in their causes.

**Bob:** And speaking of the '60s, you can — indeed, must — learn from the failures of past generations. Most of you are Millennials, born from 1982 through the early 2000s. I am a member of the Baby Boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964. Boomers have been the most pampered, obnoxious, know-it-all, over-rated generation in U.S. history. Sadly, Boomers are so self-absorbed that many have failed to contribute to their communities. Your generation has already shown a commitment to volunteerism unparalleled in my lifetime. You have shown that idealism is more than tie-dyed shirts and chants.

**Cal:** But this same sense of commitment to country must not be poisoned by class warfare or generational envy. Just before coming out on stage, Bob mentioned to me Calvin Coolidge (who by the way left office with a surplus and without a tax increase). Coolidge said, "Do the day's work. If it be to protect the rights of the weak, whoever objects, do it. If it be to help a powerful corporation better to serve the people, whatever the opposition, do that. . . . Don't hesitate to be as revolutionary as science. Don't hesitate to be as reactionary as the multiplication table. Don't expect to build up the weak by pulling down the strong." Character issues begin in each of you, not in Washington.

**Bob:** And this, my friends, is where Cal and I ultimately find common ground. Government can do many things, but it cannot instill values in you, let alone morality. Those come from family, community, your church and most importantly from within. We live on a small planet that gets smaller by the day. We need to depend on each other if we are to live at peace with our neighbors and ourselves. I get the sense you already understand that.

**Cal:** I close with ancient wisdom from the Book of Ecclesiastes: "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. . . . As goods increase, so do those who consume them, and what benefit are they to the owner, except to feast his eyes on them?" Seek wisdom and all else will follow. Bob and I wish you good luck, and may God bless.
NCAA report: College sports spending keeps skyrocketing
By Steve Wieberg and Steve Berkowitz, USA TODAY

Critics rail. The NCAA preaches restraint. But spending on college athletics continues to soar, a new study finds.

Major college programs increased their operating budgets by nearly 11% annually — bumping up expenditures by well more than a third over a recent three-year span — according to the report commissioned by the NCAA. That more than doubled the average 4.9% annual rise in universities’ overall spending.

Spending on sports at the average school in the NCAA’s top-tier Football Bowl Subdivision went from a little more than $31 million in 2004 to $42.2 million in 2007, the most recent year covered in the report.

The findings are to be presented Thursday to university presidents and chancellors who sit on the association’s Division I board of directors.

"It’s unsustainable. Those trends cannot continue," says former University of Arizona President Peter Likins, who headed a high-level NCAA panel that looked into financial and other athletic issues four years ago.

"The real important question for people to ask — for alumni, for taxpayers and tuition-payers — is: Where is the (additional) money coming from? If it’s coming from the university while that university is firing people and reducing programs and diminishing services to the students it’s intended to serve, that is worthy of protest."

All but about two dozen of the 120 athletics programs in the Bowl Subdivision are subsidized to some degree by their respective schools.

The study finds athletics revenues largely keeping up with expenses, though earnings from ticket sales, TV and marketing rights and other sources were predicted to level even before the nation’s economy deteriorated. Jim Isch, the NCAA’s chief financial officer, says he expects the downturn to finally slow spending: "That’s going to be a natural governor."

An earlier version of the spending study, released in 2005, found that schools had little to gain by stepping up their already sizable investments in athletics. For every additional dollar spent, that report found, programs realized only an additional dollar in athletics revenue. And no correlation was found between increased spending and win-loss records.

NCAA President Myles Brand predicted at the time that it would result in "more restrained and measured spending."

It hasn't yet, the follow-up study finds. From 2004-07, spending on athletics in the NCAA’s top-tier Football Bowl Subdivision rose 10.7% annually. Athletics accounted for a modest 6% of schools’ total spending in 2007. That share was up sharply from 3.8% four years earlier, though the latest study utilizes new, NCAA-compiled spending data in addition to federally compiled data that was available previously.

"I think we need a longer data run to really draw a conclusion," the NCAA’s Isch cautions.

Notably, the new report departs from the earlier study in finding that some programs can spend their way to greater success on the field.

An extra $1 million spent on football increases winning percentage by 1.8 percentage points and the chances of a top 25
finish in the Associated Press media poll by 5 percentage points, the report estimates. And with a top 25 finish comes roughly $3 million more in revenues before a school ponies up for a bowl trip.

In basketball, the study similarly finds "a significant relationship" between non-salary expenditures and both winning percentage and the probability of reaching the NCAA tournament.

But the growing roll of schools investing in big-name, high-dollar coaches might take note. It suggests their money might be better spent on recruiting and other areas of their program.

The study finds no connection between coaches' salaries and winning. "The only category of spending that has a statistically significant effect on performance," the authors say, "is 'team expenditures'." — recruiting, equipment and other "game-day expenses."

Co-author Jonathan Orszag, an economist who once served on President Clinton's National Economic Council and as assistant to the Secretary of Commerce, says there are instances in which big salaries for coaches prove to be sound investments. But "in aggregate," he says, that's not the case.

"There's a lot of pressure on university presidents to hire an expensive coach," says Orszag, whose brother Peter is the new White House budget director, "but the evidence suggests that spending more on coaches does not bring the benefit to the university that they expect."

There are obvious exceptions. "We won a national championship two years ago, we went to the Sweet 16 this year and we're going to have an opportunity (next season) to hopefully get to the Final Four," says Kansas athletics director Lew Perkins, who made KU basketball coach Bill Self a $3-million-a-year man last August. "So we look at it as money well spent.

"If you have the ability to pay your coaches —in our case what I think they're worth — that's a decision we make. And if we need to cut someplace else, we'll cut someplace else."

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Pro Football’s College Tuition Bill

By ALLEN BARRA

Last weekend the National Football League drafted 256 players from America’s colleges. On May 19, the National Basketball Association will take around 60 more. Then, on June 9 and 10, Major League Baseball will pick another 45 or so. All of these athletes will have one thing in common: The cost of their training wasn’t paid for by the professional leagues that drafted them, but by their colleges.

There are many reasons for the rise of the NFL and NBA over the past half-century, but one of the most important is seldom discussed: They don’t pay for the development of their players. Though MLB does draw some talent from the nation’s top collegiate programs, the major percentage of their players are brought up through an extensive minor-league system.

Who pays for NFL recruits? Many writers who have analyzed the economics of college football believe that between 70% and 75% of athletic departments lose money. Murray Sperber, author of “Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports is Crippling Undergraduate Education,” believes the number is higher than that. “Almost all athletic departments lose money if they do their books honestly. The NCAA’s latest accounting report, doing the books more honestly than ever before, supports my belief.” This means that much of the bill for maintaining football and basketball programs comes from alumni and even taxpayers.

Despite talk of reform in college sports, the system remains pretty much what it has always been: a cost-free minor league for professional football and basketball, and one in which those who produce the revenue get the least from it. The National Collegiate Athletic Association Manual states that the basic purpose of their organization is “to maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the educational program . . . and by doing so, retain a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports.” We can think of at least one very clear line of demarcation between professional and college sports: In college, the athletes don’t get paid; and the colleges don’t get full benefit from the talent they produce for the pros.

Until someone comes along to establish a union for college athletes as Marvin Miller did for baseball players, there isn’t much that can be done for the exploited players, but there is a solution for reimbursing the colleges that could benefit almost everybody.

Professional sports leagues are involved in college scholarship programs on several levels. For instance, the NFL endows $300,000 worth of scholarship money for the National Football Foundation’s Scholar-Athlete Award and both the NFL and NFL Players Association endow USA Football, a nonprofit organization for developing youth, high school and international amateur football. (One source indicates that last year’s endowment was “in the neighborhood of $1 million.”)

But this is minor league compared to the actual cost of preparing athletes for the pros. Andrew Zimbalist, author of “Unpaid Professionals: Commercialism and Conflict in Big-Time College Sports,” estimated in 1999 that colleges would be justified in charging pro football and basketball as much as $130.5 million annually — approximately $170 million in today’s dollars.

According to the College Board, the total estimated cost for a full scholarship at a public school for four years (including tuition, room and board and books) is approximately $65,000. At a private school, it’s around $140,000.

In other words, based on the approximately 361 athletes who will be drafted by professional leagues in 2009 it can be reasonably estimated that the total cost of putting those students through four years of college at the schools that produce most of the
professional athletes is around $26 million. That's only 53% of last year's combined salaries for Ben Roethlisberger and Jason Kidd, the two highest-paid players in pro football and basketball, respectively, to have played college ball. And it's only 62% of the minimum salary the Detroit Lions are guaranteeing this year's bonus baby -- quarterback Matthew Stafford of the University of Georgia -- over six years.

Here's an idea for a stimulus package for America's colleges: the NFL and the NBA and MLB should provide a full, four-year scholarship to each school for every player they draft from that college.

First of all, this pays a debt, or at least part of it. The cost of providing a scholarship for every player drafted would still be just a fraction of what it costs to train and care for each athlete.

Second, a reimbursement plan could be a stimulus package for national education. The recipients of the scholarships could even be chosen for their aptitude in science and math instead of for spiraling footballs or making 20-foot jump shots. The hundreds of millions in gross revenues produced by college students playing sports would at least benefit other students. Instead of dumping hundreds of uneducated former jocks on society every year, colleges would be sending out hundreds of professionals into our work force. Now that's a stimulus package for everyone.

Mr. Barra writes about sports for the Journal. His latest book, "Yogi Berra: Eternal Yankee," was just released by W. W. Norton.