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Postal Jobs Leave Down Tobacco Road as Chicken Jobs Await

By Angela Greiling Keane on May 01, 2012

Kinston, North Carolina, is near just about nothing. The textile jobs went overseas years ago. Tobacco fell victim to lawsuits and health concerns. The airport has a runway two miles long and no commercial flights.

The Kinston Indians baseball team, pride of this town of 21,677 residents, left this year. Now the mail-processing plant and its 93 full-time jobs might follow the minor-league ballplayers to Raleigh -- leaving more room for the landlord of part of its space, a homeless shelter.

The U.S. Postal Service plans to shut 223 of its 461 mail-processing plants as it tries to stanch losses that Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe predicts may reach $18.2 billion a year by 2015. The service’s moratorium on closing plants lifts May 15, and it said it could save $3.1 million a year by closing up in Kinston and moving its work 92 miles.

“Around here in these times we’re living in, you can’t even give a house away,” said Perry Welch, 64, who has worked at the plant since 1973,
making him the longest-tenured employee. If the plant closes, he said he’ll retire or try to find a job at the adjacent post office.

Donahoe, who started with the service in a post office, said plants like Kinston’s aren’t needed with first-class mail volume 25 percent less than in 2006. The plant closings would save about $2.5 billion a year, he said in February.

The service wants to stop promising overnight service for letters. Without that self-imposed mandate, it may have fewer processing plants that are farther apart. Plants on the list to close are spread around the U.S. in rural and urban areas, including facilities in Los Angeles, Chicago and Staten Island, New York.

‘Tell Me’

The U.S. Senate passed a measure last week that would put off closing processing plants and rural post offices. Donahoe is encouraging the House to take up a bill that would make it easier for him to close facilities.

Processing plant workers across the U.S. earn an average of $53,159 a year, said Sue Brennan, a spokeswoman for the Washington-based service. Average wages in the region including Kinston are $41,949, according to North Carolina’s Eastern Region, an economic development agency.

The Kinston workers, protected by a union agreement, may choose to commute to Raleigh or, if they’re old enough, to retire. While some plant workers live in Kinston, other employees already commute as much as an hour -- through little traffic -- to and from work.

Naomi Fairfax, 32, has worked at the plant for 6 1/2 years, commuting about 45 miles (72 kilometers) from Jacksonville, North Carolina. She said she’s “resigned to it closing. I wish they would tell me because I’ve got children. “People have to sell their houses if they’re going to relocate,” she said. “And what if you move and have to move again? What if you go to Raleigh and they say ‘go to Charlotte?’”

Global TransPark

Boarded-up storefronts occupy parts of Queen Street, Kinston’s main drag, while Christopher’s Cafe and a handful of other eateries bustle during breakfast and lunch. The Chamber of Commerce occupies a stone-columned building that includes vestiges of what it once was -- the main post office.

Kinston’s unemployment rate in February was 10.9 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That’s down from a high of 13 percent two
years earlier. Unemployment has stayed at more than 10 percent since January 2009.

The region, starting about 20 years ago, pinned its economic development hopes on developing a giant cargo hub on the grounds of its airport. The state-backed Global TransPark has a runway capable of landing the world’s biggest planes.

**Airfield of Dreams**

Local business development executives traveled last year to the Paris Air Show and to the Farnborough International Air Show the year before to try to drum up business. They courted FedEx Corp. (FDX) before it chose to build a facility in the Greensboro area, about 150 miles away.

Spirit Aerosystems Holdings Inc. (SPR), a supplier to Airbus SAS and Gulfstream Aerospace Corp., is the biggest tenant at TransPark with 270 employees.

Global TransPark was a “build it and they will come. And they just weren’t coming for two decades,” said Kinston Mayor BJ Murphy.

“At one time, Kinston was one of the foremost economic areas east of Raleigh,” Murphy, 31, said over breakfast at Christopher’s, where he greeted entering patrons by name or as sir or ma’am.

“But tobacco and textiles left and that really hurt us,” he said.

**Homeless Neighbors**

The postal processing plant is two blocks from Queen Street, in a building it shares with Friends of the Homeless. Rent paid by the service provides about a third of the $71,000 annual budget for the 40-bed shelter and soup kitchen.

“That would cut deep into us providing the services we provide,” Jasper Newborn, 67, the shelter director, said during a mid-day lull.

Sanderson Farms Inc. (SAFM) is hiring manual labor for a new chicken processing plant at the edge of town. Murphy is excited about the new jobs, which Newborn knows about because his clients would be happy to land them, at $8 to $9 an hour.

They’re not jobs postal workers are likely to want, said Jim Kleckley, a professor at East Carolina University in nearby Greenville who studies the region’s economy.
Spirit announced last year it would add as many as 200 jobs over five years, though they’re expected to be skilled manufacturing jobs that would require specialized training.

“Jobs change over time,” Kleckley said. “It’s going to be that everywhere. But one of the difficulties we have in eastern North Carolina is it’s more difficult to get new jobs to replace the jobs lost.”

**228-Mile Commute**

Inside the postal plant, 40 workers stand operating hulking machines from 10 p.m. until around 6 a.m., seven nights a week, sorting mail for zip codes starting with 285. It’s an area stretching from beach towns Morehead City and Atlantic Beach through salt marshes and collard shacks to the one-time tobacco fields closer to Kinston.

On a busy night, a million pieces of letter mail may move through the plant’s machines. On an average night, 400,000 to 500,000 pieces do. Trucks back up to 14 loading docks to bring the sorted mail to post offices for delivery that day.

Will Smith, 53, and many of the other workers have been told for the past five years that their facility might close. Should that happen, Smith faces a 228-mile round trip commute between Raleigh and his home in New Bern, North Carolina.

**Big Picture**

“I really, really wouldn’t want to move or commute to Raleigh,” said Smith, the American Postal Workers Union local president, shaking his head. He said he hasn’t decided for sure.

Keisiva Ward, 32, started working at the plant five years ago, about the time mail volume and postal finances started their downward spiral.

“You never thought working for the Postal Service you’d go through this,” she said in a parking lot across from her workplace. “You thought you had a foundation.”

The plant’s temporary manager said it can be hard for the employees to see the scope of the Postal Service’s distress.

“To some degree, they don’t see the big picture,” Brenda Edwards said from her office. “It’s their whole world. And this area here is so depressed.”

*To contact the reporter on this story: Angela Greiling Keane in Washington at agreilingkea@bloomberg.net*
McNeill visits Wilmington to rally ‘Pirate Family'
By Tyler Heffernan
Sports@StarNewsOnline.com
Published: Tuesday, May 1, 2012 at 10:10 p.m.

East Carolina University athletic director Terry Holland and head football coach Ruffin McNeill paused before walking up the ramp to the USS North Carolina Battleship. Holland, wearing an ECU short-sleeved collared shirt, stood next to McNeill, who donned a purple blazer.

"This is amazing," McNeill said, looking up at the ship.
"I want to get pictures of you two walking up the ramp," McNeill's wife Erlene said, holding a camera phone.

For a moment, two of Greenville's most influential sports figures were spectators in Wilmington. Holland and McNeill joined about 120 members of the Cape Fear Pirate Club for the annual Pirate Armada on Tuesday night.

"All year long in all our sports, our Pirate family came to our turf," McNeill said. "This is our chance to go visit them, go to their home turf and say hello, give them hugs, tell them how the programs are doing and progressing."

It was the 11th of 13 pre-football season stops for the featured guests. Last week, a chapter in Raleigh hosted a similar event and next week, Charlotte will rally ECU fans. Before boarding the Battleship, McNeill said the event was already a success.

"The pride, the passion, the tradition, the teamwork, you'll see it embodied here tonight," he said. "The fundraising, the gifts and the donors, that's a part of it, of course, but it's not just Pirate Nation. It's a Pirate family."

On board, fans swarmed Holland and McNeill, shaking hands, asking questions and taking pictures. One wore a T-shirt reading "The Boneyard: Enter at Your Own Risk," referencing the student section at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, and another had a skull-and-crossbones tie. No matter the character, all were welcome to interact with the two.

"It's the energy," McNeill, a Lumberton native, said. "The concept of teamwork, commitment and family, which is what East Carolina means to me, being a graduate. … This Wilmington chapter embodies all of that."

Unanimously, Pirate fans talked about raised expectations for the upcoming football season. Holland and McNeill shared the same enthusiasm.

"It was a rebuilding job when Ruff took over (in 2010). I don't think there was any question about that," Holland said. "Talent-wise, we'll be in a good shape this year. It'll be a lot of fun to watch this team develop over the next few years."

McNeill admitted to being less than pleased with the team's 5-7 record last season.

"I'm a competitive individual; we're competitive individuals," he said. "We have a lot of pressure on us to make sure we do well and go at it, so we're looking forward to this year. The team is doing great, and the whole athletic department is doing great."
ECU parking meters stolen
Wednesday, May 2, 2012

East Carolina University police are investigating the theft of 14 coin-operated parking meters, according to a news release issued Tuesday.

The thefts occurred at an ECU lot at East Fifth and Harding streets between midnight and 8 a.m. on April 23.

The meters were attached to poles and imbedded in the ground, the release said.

Pitt-Greenville CrimeStoppers will pay a reward for information that leads to an arrest in this case.

Persons who may have information are asked to call CrimeStoppers at 758-7777 and refer to case number 2012-0410.

Those with information also can call Det. D.J. Gregory at the ECU Police Department at 328-6215.
Up, up and away?

Credit Hannah Gage, chairwoman of the University of North Carolina system Board of Governors, with voicing proper alarm over dramatic increases in a university-sponsored health insurance plan for students.

“I find it very disturbing,” Gage said. “... It’s just one more thing you add on top of tuition, with books and fees.”

Next year, students will be looking at an average of an 8.8 percent increase in tuition and fees for undergraduates, system-wide. At UNC-Chapel Hill, the boost will be nearly 10 percent.

But that percentage is peanuts compared to the ones in health insurance costs, which in dollar terms amount to $500 to $700 a year. UNC system President Tom Ross noted in a memo that rates would go from the current $61-$77 a month up to $118-$133 monthly. Percentage increases aren’t final at all campuses, but at UNC-CH it will be 60 percent and at N.C. Central it will be 66 percent.

Many North Carolinians paying their share of company insurance in the working world might ask, "And they’re complaining?" because their outlay is much higher. True enough, just as it’s true that the UNC system rate is lower than at many other public universities.

But these are college students, and for many who are on partial scholarships, doing work study and perhaps more work outside of that, $500 to $700 a year is a potential deal-breaker. This will be a shock.

Gage’s response should be shared by other university officials, many of whom have supported higher tuition and increases in fees in the name of raising faculty salaries and maintaining academic quality. That’s all well and good to a point, but when something like this increase in insurance costs arises, it ought to give administrators pause.

Fortunately, indications are that the system will be doing a “rebid” on the insurance next year. A pool of 220,000 students (64,000 get the insurance) should give the university muscle in the market.
Hundreds say farewell to LeRoy Walker
By Jane Stancill
Published May 2, 2012

DURHAM - His grandchildren called him Papa. Olympians he mentored called him Doc. And though he was a Ph.D., a university chancellor and president of the U.S. Olympic Committee, most people called him Coach.

And that’s just how he liked it.

Hundreds gathered at Duke Chapel on Tuesday to bid farewell to LeRoy Walker, the legendary track and field coach who died last week at 93. The funeral drew mourners from all over the nation – Olympians, coaches, politicians, family and friends.

The one-and-a-half-hour event was fitting for a man who had gained international stature during a 60-year career. At the service, U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield read a letter from President and Mrs. Obama. Outside the stately chapel, a horse-drawn glass caisson waited to take Walker’s casket to burial.

A former N.C. Central University coach, educator and chancellor, Walker went on to coach the U.S. Track & Field team at the 1976 Olympics and was the first African American president of the U.S. Olympic Committee, from 1992 to 1996.

He was remembered as a man with an easy smile, a positive outlook and a way of bringing out the best in people.
“He had a passion for excellence,” said NCCU Chancellor Charlie Nelms. “Anything less was unacceptable. His rallying cry was short but powerful. Three powerful words: ‘excellence without excuse.’”

Walker’s record was all about excellence. He coached 111 All Americans, 40 national champions and 12 Olympians.

The presiding minister at the funeral, the Rev. Harmon Smith, described Walker as a “shepherd” who led and protected athletes, especially during travels through the segregated South decades ago.

George Williams, track coach at St. Augustine’s College, said somehow he always expected Walker to be there “to take care of us.”

“I thought he would be here forever, really,” Williams said. “Everything we do is Dr. Walker. Every championship we win is Dr. Walker’s championship.”

Harvey Glance, a gold medalist in the 4X100 meter relay in the Montreal Olympics, drove from Alabama to pay his respects to Walker.

“He was more than just a coach,” said Glance, who went on to coach at Auburn University and the University of Alabama. “When I first got my coaching job, he mentored me through all kinds of tough times. ... He was very significant in developing me to do great things and have people believe in me.”

‘You didn’t want to disappoint’

Walker inspired his athletes long after he coached them. In the late 1980s, Walker approached Glance and told him he was disappointed in him for never completing his college degree.

“Of course, that coming from Doc was like a knife being stabbed 3,700 times, because you didn’t want to disappoint Doc,” Glance said. “So immediately, two weeks later I enrolled back at school. I was only one semester away from finishing, and got my degree.”

Another of Walker’s track stars was Herman Frazier, now associate athletics director at Syracuse University. Frazier won gold in the 4X400 meter relay, and a bronze in the 400 meter.

He described Walker as a genius and “a citizen of the universe.”

The venerable coach could be tough. Frazier remembers the Olympic training camp before the 1976 Olympics.

“I mean, it was brutal, but he knew what we needed to be successful,” Frazier said. “And when you’re at the top of the podium, it’s hard to argue with that success.”
UNC women’s basketball coach Sylvia Hatchell dug through her closet Tuesday to find a small USA Basketball pin that Walker had given her. She wore it on her lapel.

When her team won the national championship in 1994, Walker presented her players with Olympic jackets as a gesture of congratulations.

“He treated everyone special, yes he did,” she said. “He didn’t care what age you were, what race you were, what country you were from, he just treated everyone special.”

A citizen of the world

Though he was a beloved Durham resident most of his life, mourners described him as a citizen of the world and a “one-man diplomatic mission.” He coached athletes and teams from Israel, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Italy and Kenya, as well as the United States.

“He was one of the most admired and respected leaders in the worldwide Olympic movement for four decades,” said William Hybl Jr., president emeritus of the U.S. Olympic Committee. “He embodied the principles of Olympic ideals throughout his life as an educator, coach, father and role model, for achievement and for overcoming barriers.”

When the Atlanta-born Walker led the U.S. team into the opening ceremonies of the 1996 Olympic games, Hybl said, it was a triumphant scene.

“He was the son of Atlanta, coming home 78 years later as the leader of the most powerful team on earth. It was a moment that no one could forget.”

Tuesday’s farewell was another unforgettable moment.

Three open limos billowed with flowers. Behind them, as Walker’s casket was loaded into the glass coach, mourners took photos with their cell phones or bowed their heads in prayer.

As the caisson started its slow journey across Durham, two members of NCCU’s track team jogged in front of the horses. They carried a torch, the same one used in the 1996 games. Its flame flickered in the May sunshine.
UNC Asheville arms students for anxious economy

May 2, 2012

ASHEVILLE — Emily Pineda will be among the 432 graduates walking across the open-air stage Saturday at UNC Asheville to receive her diploma.

Headed onto grad school at East Carolina University, she’s already well on her way to a career in combating childhood obesity. As a health and wellness major at UNCA, she was able to work on research in the new $42 million Wilma M. Sherrill Center, using a state-of-the-art “bod pod” machine to study discrepancies in how body mass index is measured.

Interviewing 150 local residents of all ages recruited with fliers at local Walmarts, McDonalds and other places in the community, Pineda discovered that most people had fairly accurate perceptions of their weight. “I was surprised. We think people who are overweight are often in denial,” Pineda said. “That’s not what we found at all.”

That ability to adjust to new problems and the flexibility of thinking are hallmarks of a liberal arts education, giving UNCA graduates an advantage in a tough job market and a changing world, UNCA Chancellor Anne Ponder said Tuesday.

Speaking to the Citizen-Times editorial board, Ponder praised the heroism of a faculty that took on extra classes and more students in the face of state budget cuts.

The state appropriation for UNCA has gone from $42 million in 2008 at the start of the Great Recession to $35 million this year as the General Assembly cut public spending. “Our faculty understand this has been an emergency situation. They’ve done their best to keep that academic excellence for our students.”

But Ponder also warned that the faculty have “performed wonderfully at the 100-yard dash, but you can’t run a sprint forever. We have to address and invest in education and our future.”
Research shows that every $1 invested in state money in the public university system returns $3.65 to the North Carolina economy, Ponder said.

UNCA has done better than some campuses in keeping tuition affordable and graduating students without crushing levels of debt. With a $17,000 annual price tag including room and board and books — or “toothpaste to tuition” — UNCA is still a bargain for its quality, Ponder said.

And studies show graduates like Pineda will on average earn twice as much as high school graduates over their lifetimes, spending more money and generally living longer, happier, healthier lives, Ponder said.

“The old saying is still true: the only thing more expensive than going to college is not going,” she said.

“There’s no better investment in the future for our democracy and for our economy.”
East Carolina suspends three basketball players after arrests

By Ronnie Woodward
The Daily Reflector
Tuesday, May 1, 2012

GREENVILLE — Three East Carolina men’s basketball players were suspended indefinitely by head coach Jeff Lebo on Monday, including Shamarr Bowden, who faces felony charges for illegal possession of a firearm and prohibited use of a firearm.

The other players, Corvonn Gaines and Tylisma Armstrong, were arrested in downtown Greenville early Sunday morning on misdemeanor charges of being intoxicated and disruptive, and resisting a public officer.

Bowden, who just completed his junior season at ECU, was arrested by the U.S. Marshals Service in a YMCA parking lot in Greensboro on Monday and was taken to the Guilford County Detention Center and given a $50,000 secured bond.

The charges for the 22-year-old Bowden stem from an Easter weekend incident in which he was accused of firing shots into the air.

“At this point, we have to let the judicial system take its course,” Lebo said in a statement released by the school. “Any charge filed against an ECU basketball player is something we take very seriously, but since this is an ongoing legal matter, any further comment on our part would be premature and inappropriate.

“Due to the nature of the charges however, Shamarr has been indefinitely suspended from all team activities. Once the issue has been resolved, his status with the team will be re-evaluated.”

ECU Director of Athletics Terry Holland said in the statement that ECU student-athletes are expected to represent themselves, their families and East Carolina University in an appropriate manner.
“The athletic department works closely with the Office of Student Affairs to ensure that student-athletes are disciplined in a fair and consistent manner within the expectations for all ECU students when there are charges filed and until those charges are resolved,” Holland said. “I have every confidence that Coach Lebo will handle this and all such matters properly for the student-athlete involved and for East Carolina University.”

The Greenville Police Department issued a news release Monday regarding the arrests of Gaines and Armstrong, who are both 21.

The incident occurred near the Still Life Nightclub. Officers were called to the club around 1 a.m. because patrons were refusing to leave the club when asked to do so.

The release said the two were “verbally abusive to the police and resisted repeated attempts by the police officers to convince them to go on their way.”

According to the release, Gaines and Armstrong were escorted from the business.

Armstrong attempted to re-enter the club and, when officers tried to stop him, he directed profanity toward them, the release said. When the officers attempted to arrest Armstrong, Gaines tried to grab an officer in an attempt to free Armstrong, according to the report.

Gaines played in all 31 of the Pirates’ games last season and is a rising senior point guard. Armstrong, a 6-foot-9 transfer from Auburn, sat out last season per NCAA transfer rules and was expected to be eligible to play next season.

Bowden started 23 games last year after transferring from Chipola (Fla.) College. He averaged 8.3 points per game and ranked third in Conference USA in 3-point percentage (40.4).
Gaston Gazette

Forestview grad Varner named C-USA golfer of the year

May 01, 2012 3:18 PM

Sports staff reports

IRVING, Texas — East Carolina University senior golfer and Forestview graduate Harold Varner has been named Conference USA golfer of the year as voted upon by the league’s 11 head coaches.

Varner is the fifth player in ECU golf history to be named conference player of the year and first to receive that distinction in C-USA.

“To be chosen out of so many great players in Conference USA by the coaches is a very humbling honor,” said Varner. “I’m surprised and excited to receive this award.”

Varner ranks third in C-USA in scoring average this season, averaging 71.79 strokes per round. He placed in the top-10 in seven of 11 tournaments this season, including five top-5 finishes. Varner was the individual medalist at the Autotrader.com Collegiate Classic and runner-up at the Sea Best Seafood Invitational at TPC Sawgrass. He also posted a 2-1-1 record against four top-35 opponents at the 2012 Callaway Collegiate Match Play Championships. He was named C-USA Golfer-of-the-Week twice during the season and five times during his career.

“This award represents the culmination of four years of hard work from Harold,” said Pirate head coach Press McPhaul. “He has developed into a high-level player that gets a great deal out of his talent. To have him recognized by the Conference USA coaches is a great honor for Harold and for the entire ECU golf program.”

Varner and the rest of the ECU golf team await an at-large NCAA regional bid to one of six host sites, May 17-19. The NCAA Championships take place May 29 - June 3 at the Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif. Regional selections will be announced on May 7.
The Georgetown U. clock hand caper

By Jenna Johnson, Published: May 1

As Georgetown University tour guides lead visitors past Healy Hall, they often point to its iconic clock tower and explain that generations of mischievous students have attempted to steal the clock hands and mail them to the pope. But that hadn’t happened in more than six years.

This week, a hands-free clock face proved that the pranksters are back.

“I don’t understand how that is even possible,” senior Amanda Reese said Tuesday afternoon as she shaded her eyes and gazed up at least six stories to the clock face and a small square door that someone might pop open to nab the hands.

The hands disappeared sometime before dawn Monday, the last day of class. Late that afternoon, maintenance workers removed the hands from a second clock on the back side of the tower to check for damage.

Campus police are searching for a 51-inch minute hand and a 38-inch hour hand. A university spokeswoman called the theft “a serious violation of Georgetown’s Student Code of Conduct.”

There is little documentation of the history of this tradition, although generations of students have written their initials or nicknames, along with the date, inside the clock tower, according to those who have been there. The prank dates to at least the 1960s, although the tradition of mailing the hands from the Jesuit university to the Vatican apparently didn’t start until the 1970s.

The prank is much more difficult to execute these days, because the tower’s staircases and passageways are barricaded. After the last theft in September 2005, the university added more security.

“There are not a lot of ways that you can stop them,” said Thomas D. Erb, president of Electric Time Co., based in Medfield, Mass., one of the world’s largest suppliers of tower clock hands. (The company did not supply the Healy hands, and a Georgetown spokeswoman was unable to identify the provider.) Erb said he has responded to dozens of such pranks during his 25-year career. “They are very creative.”
Pranks are rife at colleges as seniors seek to make a mark before they graduate and other students try to escape the stress of finals. But college administrators worry that these adventures can lead to injuries, lawsuits or expensive damage.

The 2005 Healy hand heist was executed by a junior and a freshman who shared a love of adventure and climbing. They seized the hands early one September morning but were caught later while trying to return the goods. They were nearly suspended, but instead they had to complete dozens of community service hours and write essays about Georgetown traditions that are less dangerous.

“We were just looking for an adventure, that’s all,” said Wyatt Gjullin, now 24, who is graduated in 2009 and is living in Seattle — working, studying for his LSATs and waiting on a Fulbright application.

The two men said they learned the hard way that Georgetown officials do not approve of students risking their lives and committing crimes in the name of tradition.

“We didn’t really anticipate the university being that upset about it,” said Drew Hamblen, 27, who is in the Navy and based in Norfolk.

That morning, the two scaled construction scaffolding near Healy, the university’s main administrative building. They climbed through an open window and trekked up the staircases inside.

“There are a number of locked doors,” Hamblen said. “There are ways to get around locked doors. Or unlock them.”

The two eventually reached a room with a trapdoor in the ceiling, which led them to the heart of the bell tower. They opened a small square window in the clock face and peered out.

“It was pretty serene and surreal,” Gjullin said. “You could see so much.”

The two students tried to strip the hands from the clock that faces Georgetown’s main gates but couldn’t. So they tried the second clock, on the back of the tower. After more than an hour, the hands were theirs. They walked downstairs and out the hall’s front door.

The pair told a few friends what they had done, and Hamblen showed the hands to his Bible study group. Meanwhile, the university announced an intense investigation. The culprits wondered: Would their friends rat them out? Would Gjullin’s initials inscribed in the tower give them away? And
why did some anonymous person write to the student newspaper and claim credit?

A few weeks after taking the hands, the two students decided to return them. But they wondered how. Hamblen’s roommate volunteered to take the hands directly to campus officials. That led to questions, confessions and a slew of disciplinary charges.

Hamblen and Gjullin were put on academic probation but stayed out of trouble for the duration of their time on campus. They graduated and moved away.

Meanwhile, the university spent $25,000 to buy additional hands, fix some damage to the clock and install even more security.

This week, Gjullin and Hamblen found themselves tagged in Facebook posts about the disappearance of the Healy hands. News spread through Twitter, too. The university, capitalizing on the publicity moment, even posted a photo of the handless clock on its social media accounts with a caption that described the image as “a visual reminder that Georgetown is timeless.”

“I was pretty pleased to hear the news,” Gjullin said.

Hamblen was also excited to see the tradition continue, although he hopes the hands will be returned undamaged. And he hopes that if the pranksters are caught the university doesn’t throw the book at them.

“They should be cool about this,” he said, “and embrace the tradition.”

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Admissions 101: Should lawyers sanitize high school transcripts?

By Jay Mathews

Phil Cox, a sharp-eyed newspaper reader, sent me a link to a provocative story in the San Mateo County Times, a newspaper I delivered when I was 12. It reports that parents of a student at Sequoia High School in Redwood City sued when their son was removed from a sophomore honors English class for copying and sharing homework.

This is relevant to the college admissions process because one of the parents’ concerns is that this will put a black mark on the student’s high school transcript and kill his chances of attending his first-choice college. High school counselors, particularly in affluent neighborhoods, have told me their own stories of lawyers being called in by parents to erase any sign of disciplinary action from anything college admissions offices might see.

Does this make sense to you? Should the high schools risk lawsuits in order to protect their records? Should wealthy families be allowed to distort the admissions process in this way? Or are they right to argue that the offense is often minor --- like what Jack Berghouse’s son did at Sequoia High --- and the high school should not sacrifice the kid’s future to its rules?

“What university will it keep him out of?” Berghouse said, according to Times reporters Sharon Noguchi and Bonnie Eslinger. “Will that have far-ranging consequences in what kind of job he can get?”

I personally know of a student who managed to get into Princeton after the family’s lawyer successfully pressured the high school to remove any hint of her cheating on a test. Teenagers will make mistakes, but bad deeds should have consequences. Is bringing in the lawyers the right way for a parent to go, and what should the high school do when threatened in this way?

By Jay Mathews | 11:48 PM ET, 05/01/2012
Free Internet lessons challenge textbook market
By Michael Alison Chandler, Published: May 1

For a modern take on Shakespeare, Montgomery County middle school teacher Amy Soldavini recently borrowed an online lesson comparing hip-hop artists to the Bard. Math teachers at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax County sometimes assign students to watch free instructional Web videos at home so they can solve more challenging problems in class.

And Billy Shulman, a Prince George’s County high school government teacher, often adapts civics lessons from a repository on the University of Virginia Web site.

“I don’t really use my traditional textbooks,” Shulman said. “There’s almost too much good stuff online.”

Enterprising teachers have long scoured the Internet for ways to improve on their textbooks or local curricula. Now, though, lessons accessed via the Web are proliferating in the classroom as never before and are challenging the position of the powerful education-publishing industry in public schools.

Fueling the trend, most states in the past two years have embraced national standards for what students should learn in English and math classes. The new standards should make it easier to share curricula across state lines. In addition, budget pressures after the recession have led many schools to scale back or freeze purchases of textbooks and other teaching materials.

As classrooms become better equipped with interactive white boards and other gadgets, more teachers are looking for digital content and adopting an assumption that prevails in much of the World Wide Web: That content should be free.

“Now that expectation has entered the American classroom,” said Jay Diskey, executive director for the school division of the Association of American Publishers.

Seventy-four percent of elementary school teachers reported that they used free Internet resources for lessons that they flashed on computerized white boards or offered on desktops or other gadgets, compared with 65 percent who said their digital content came from commercial providers, according to a January survey by Simba Information, a market research company. The
survey found that middle and high school teachers also gravitated more toward free online content.

Analysts say private vendors are likely to regain their edge as school budgets improve, but the market is undoubtedly changing.

Most school systems across the country have delayed new textbook purchases, which often run on a six- or seven-year rotation, to bridge budget gaps and to wait and see what the next generation of standardized tests will look like. New tests, tied to the national standards, are scheduled to begin as early as the 2014-15 school year.

Sales of textbooks and “core instructional materials” dropped from more than $4 billion in 2008 to about $3.3 billion in 2011, according to the Association of American Publishers. Pent-up demand for new materials could lead to a buying spree.

But advocates for open-source materials — free online content that can be shared and customized by users — say the national standards offer a unique opportunity to create high-quality curricula at low cost.

With Maryland, more than 40 other states and the District basing instruction on the same standards for the first time, they will not be forced to shop for separate textbooks. Instead they can pool resources, hire the most talented curricula writers and subject experts, and share the results. (Virginia is among four states that have not adopted the full standards.)

Foundations have kicked in millions of dollars to promote access to free instructional materials tied to the new standards. The federal government is also encouraging the movement.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan lauded the “tremendous transformational promise” of open resources. “In America, what a child gets a chance to learn will no longer depend on their ZIP code,” he said in an online video.

Federal Race to the Top funds are helping Maryland and the District develop curricula based on the new standards that can be used by school districts anywhere.

Some states have invested in online textbooks that can be easily updated and printed and offered to districts for free.

A free digital textbook initiative in California launched in 2009 led to the creation of nine open-source math and science books. In Utah, the state office of education is developing open-source textbooks in language arts,
science and math that could be ready by the fall. Virginia also created an open-source physics “flexbook” in 2009; it’s written by volunteer teachers to help update lessons with more cutting-edge research.

Much of the growth in free online resources still comes from the grass roots — teachers sharing with teachers.

Arlington County math teacher Kevin Hall likes to post his most successful algebra lesson plans on Curriki.org, a Web site that boasts more than 250,000 members.

OER Commons, a California-based organization, maintains an archive of free educational resources and offers a new tool to measure how well aligned they are to national standards.

Commercial publishers offer expertise and reliability, things you can’t count on when sifting through thousands of hits online, said Diskey, from the publishers association.

“We question whether [free online textbooks or materials] are sustainable,” he said. “Most people don’t realize they are like a puppy; they require a lot of care.”

The publishers also offer complete packages of content, including print and digital textbooks, and a range of supporting quizzes, activities and materials, so teachers don’t have to work so hard to assemble lessons.

Major publishers, including Pearson and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, are marketing new books and materials advertised to match the new standards, with more in the works. In one unusual effort, Pearson is partnering with Montgomery County to design an elementary curriculum and matching assessments that will be sold nationwide.

To adapt to the changing market, major publishers are moving beyond textbooks and into a broader world of educational technology and consulting.

At a particularly turbulent time in public education, with legions of reform-minded programs transforming classrooms, the companies are positioning themselves as experts who can walk school systems through the changes and help improve student achievement.

They offer training and software to help schools adapt to the new standards and teacher-evaluation systems.

The traditional printed textbook is dying, said Peter Cohen, chief executive of Pearson School, and that’s a fact that makes industry changes inevitable. “The only real question is when,” he said.
May 1, 2012

Social Media Rules Limit New York Student-Teacher Contact

By DAVID W. CHEN and PATRICK McGEEHAN

New York City public school teachers may not contact students through personal pages on Web sites like Facebook and Twitter, but can communicate via pages set up for classroom use, the city’s Education Department said on Tuesday after it released its first list of guidelines governing the use of social media by employees.

The guidelines do not ban teachers from using social media and, in fact, recognize that it can offer tremendous educational benefits. Nor do they address cellphones and text messaging between teachers and students, which, according to a review by The New York Times of dozens of Education Department investigations in the past five years, have been more widespread and problematic.

But the guidelines do reflect growing concerns nationwide about the instantaneous ease with which teachers can interact electronically with students, and the potential for misuse or abuse. New York City’s guidelines, which were reported on Tuesday in The Wall Street Journal, represent the latest official response to a number of episodes involving teachers accused of behaving inappropriately with students.

At least seven school employees have been arrested in the past few months in relation to sexual offenses involving students, and the schools chancellor, Dennis M. Walcott, is pushing to fire several teachers accused of such offenses.

In recent years, dozens of teachers have been investigated and some have been fired for inappropriate interactions and relationships with students that began or were conducted on social media Web sites, according to Richard J. Condon, the department’s special commissioner of investigation. In 2009, for instance, there were 14 such accusations involving Facebook; in the first 11 months of 2011, there were 69.

The guidelines say, in general, that teachers should maintain separate professional and personal Web pages. They may not e-mail, “friend” or otherwise communicate with students via the teachers’ or students’ personal pages. Teachers also should use privacy settings “to control access to their personal social media sites.”
They may communicate with students via professional pages, devoted to classroom business like homework and study guides, but must get a supervisor’s approval before setting up such pages. Parents must sign a consent form before their children can participate on those pages.

And teachers should “have no expectation of privacy” when using social media, because principals and other officials will be on the lookout for any “questionable” behavior.

“If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on the professional social media site,” the guidelines state.

But the unions representing school employees reacted coolly.

Chiara Colletti, a spokeswoman for the principals’ union, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, said the guidelines appeared to be “overbroad.”

“We are concerned that our principals will be expected to bear the burden of monitoring social media activities that are, in fact, almost impossible to monitor,” she said.

Michael Mulgrew, president of the teachers’ union, the United Federation of Teachers, said that he was “taken aback” by the tone of the guidelines, which he worried would discourage teachers from using social media tools.

“The D.O.E. is basically telling the people who have gone above and beyond to make education more interactive, ‘Hey, if you want to do it, you do it at your own peril.’ ”

But compared with some other school boards, New York City’s is taking a more measured approach to electronic communications.

Last month, the Board of Education in Paramus, N.J., for example, approved restrictions on employee use of social networks and cellphones, including a prohibition against naming students as “friends” on social media and giving out cellphone numbers to students without permission from supervisors. Even then, teachers cannot call students under the age of 18 on their cellphones without the authorization of a parent.

“All e-contacts with students should be through the district’s computer account or e-mail and telephone system,” the Paramus policy states.

New York officials said that they chose not to prohibit all forms of direct electronic contact, and that they could still discipline teachers who used cellphones inappropriately. “The last thing we want to do is prohibit
communication and prevent a teacher from helping a student in distress, even if that means making a phone call,” a spokesman, Matthew Mittenthal, said.

Numerous teachers in New York have been investigated for improper contact via cellphone or text messages, according to records obtained by The Times under a Freedom of Information request.

In one example, Soliber Martinez, a teacher at the Pablo Neruda Academy, a high school in the Bronx, exchanged 1,824 text messages in three weeks with a male student, according to investigators in Mr. Condon’s office. The boy’s mother told investigators that Ms. Martinez had professed her love for him, which she denied. According to the city, Ms. Martinez, who did not have tenure, was let go.

A gym teacher at Middle School 137 in Queens, Gerard Cassidy, called a female student 553 times in three and a half months, and sent 383 text messages to her iPhone — which he had bought for her, according to Mr. Condon’s office. The girl’s father said Mr. Cassidy was in a relationship with the girl, though the girl and her mother denied it. Mr. Cassidy was fired, according to the department. Neither Ms. Martinez nor Mr. Cassidy could be reached for comment.

But the use of social media also has been an issue in some cases. In 2007, for instance, Robert Ruiz was teaching at I.S. 217 in the Bronx when somebody complained about the listing of several of his students as “friends” on his MySpace page, though none of the students reported any inappropriate communication with Mr. Ruiz.

In an interview this week, Mr. Ruiz said his punishment had been a letter in his personnel file that said his MySpace page had been inappropriate. And while he took down his page, he noted that he was subsequently promoted to an assistant principal’s job at Young Scholars Academy in the Bronx.

“One doesn’t go from a teacher to a principal if they’ve got any questions,” Mr. Ruiz said.

But Mr. Ruiz also has been an active user of a newer form of social media, a Twitter account. Going by the name Rusword and identifying himself as an “assistant principal” without naming the school, he repeatedly wrote racy posts in response to sexual remarks from other Twitter users, and some suggestive photos he has remarked on have wound up on his Twitter page, though he said he had not intended to capture them. Though his Twitter feed was not private, no students appeared to be followers.
Asked about the tone of his Twitter feed, Mr. Ruiz said he did not think it was inappropriate and did not believe it violated any departmental policies. But he said, “I’m going to shut everything down today” out of fear that it could hamper his career.

By Tuesday, Mr. Ruiz’s Twitter feed was gone.
A Different Kind of Prom: When religious beliefs keep some of the girls at Hamtramck High School from an important senior function, they throw a sparkly and very pink alternative.

May 1, 2012

This Prom Has Everything, Except for Boys

By PATRICIA LEIGH BROWN

HAMTRAMCK, Mich. — The prom countdown was nearly complete, the do-it-yourself Greek columns, pink and white tulle bows and plastic flutes with the “Once Upon a Dream” logo awaiting the evening of evenings.

But as she looked at her reflection in the mirror, her one-shoulder lavender gown matching the elaborate hijab that framed her face in a cascade of flowers — a style learned on YouTube — Tharima Ahmed knew that what lay ahead was more than simply a prom.

As organizer of Hamtramck High School’s first all-girl prom, which conforms to religious beliefs forbidding dating, dancing with boys or appearing without a head scarf in front of males, Tharima, 17, was forging a new rite of passage for every teenage Muslim girl who had ever spent prom night at home, wistfully watching the limousines roll by.
“Hi, guys — I mean girls!” Tharima, a Bangladeshi-American, exuded into the microphone as 100 girls — Yemeni-American, Polish-American, Palestinian-American, Bosnian-American and African-American — began pouring into the hall on Bangladesh Avenue.

This was prom, Hamtramck-style: the dense scrappy working-class city of 22,500 encircled by Detroit, once predominantly German and Polish, has become one of the most diverse small cities in America. Its new soul lay in the music playlist embedded in Rukeih Malik’s iPhone: Lady Gaga, Cobra Starship, the Belgrade-born singer Ana Kokic and The Bilz, a Canadian-South Asian band, singing “2 Step Bhangra.”

In this season of wobbly heels and cleavage, the bittersweet transformation of teenagers in jeans and T-shirts into elegant adults barely recognizable to their friends is an anticipated tradition.

But at the all-girl prom, there were double double-takes, as some of Tharima’s classmates, normally concealed in a chrysalis of hijab and abaya, the traditional Muslim cloak, literally let their hair down in public for the first time.

Eman Ashabi, a Yemeni-American who helped organize the event, arrived in a ruffled pink gown, her black hair falling in perfect waves, thanks to a curling iron. Like many here, she stunned her friends.

“It’s ‘Oh my god!’ ” said Simone Alhagri, a Yemeni-American junior who was wearing a tight shirred dress. “This is how you look underneath!”

The dance was the denouement of seven months of feverish planning in which a committee raised $2,500, mostly through bake sales. Ignoring the naysayers who could not imagine anyone coming to a prom without boys, Tharima and her friends approached their task systematically, taking a survey of all the girls at Hamtramck High. They found that 65 percent were not able to attend the coed prom because of cultural and religious beliefs. After discussion, the school supported the student-driven alternative.

In addition to Muslim girls (and alumnae who never got the opportunity), non-Muslim students wanted to go, too. “I want to support all my girls,” said Sylwia Stanko, who was born in Poland and whose friends are mostly Bengali or Arabic. “I know how important it is to them.”

The prom promised “music all night, except during dinner and five minutes for prayer.” A former Knights of Columbus hall was transformed into princess-pink perfection.
Tharima placed a huge order for decorations with PromNite.com, including a light-up fountain to which the girls added pink food coloring.

Tharima had dreamed of prom night since her freshman year, squirreling away photographs of ballrooms and ads for tiaras.

As Tharima prepared for her big night, her mother, Roushanara Ahmed, recalled the fancy pink sari she wore to an all-girls party in what is now Bangladesh. “I was in high school,” she said, her voice low, eyes softening. “I know her feelings.”

Like the prom, the city of Hamtramck is a mixer of a different kind. Along Joseph Campau Street, a monumental statue of Pope John Paul II presides over Pope Park, with its festive mural of Krakow. A poster for the television program “Bosnian Idol” is displayed in the Albanian Euro Mini Mart, known for homemade yogurt and burek, traditional spinach and meat pies. During her English class, Tharima can hear the call to prayer over loudspeakers from the Islah Islamic Center a few blocks from school.

Diversity was hard-won: The mosque, one of five in the city, was the subject of controversy in 2004, when some people strenuously objected to the city’s decision to allow it to broadcast prayers five times a day; the city ultimately prevailed, regulating the hours when the call may be sounded.

In sharp contrast to earlier immigrants, drawn by the once-thriving auto industry, a quarter of the residents now live below the federal poverty level.

“People here have to work out their difficulties,” said Mayor Karen Majewski, an ethnic historian and Hungarian folk dancer. “There’s no opportunity to hide in your cul-de-sac.”

At Hamtramck High, which has 900 students, many non-Muslims respectfully tuck away their food and water bottles during Ramadan. The prom reflects a broad cultural shift. “Twenty years ago, parents used to pull fifth-grade girls out of school for arranged marriages,” said Chris Bindas, a library aide who brought chocolate-dipped cream puffs to the prom. “Now these same girls are going to college” — albeit a college close to home, where the girls will continue to live with their parents.

Tharima, who plans to work while attending Wayne State University in Detroit, has applied for 27 scholarships, saving all the rejection letters. “These are my weaknesses,” she said of her financial struggles. “But they are also my strengths.”
On Saturday night, when the strobe lights started, throwing jewels of light around the room, the shy comments of “Oh, you look gorgeous!” and “Ooh, I love your shoes!” gave way to the sheer joy of music, the girls fist-pumping in unison, some discarding their heels and some hugging one another in disbelief.

Shortly before 8, it was time for prayer, the spaghetti straps and empire waists disappearing under hijabs and abayas, a prayer rug taking its place on the dance floor.

Afterward, when the prom royalty was announced, it was no surprise — except to her — that Tharima was pronounced the senior queen, a tiara ceremoniously placed atop her hijab. Amid whoops and shrieks, she struggled to maintain her composure. Her mascara was not so lucky.

Then the hall erupted with a song by the band 3alawah, and the girls performed a debka, a Middle Eastern circle dance. Everyone held hands, snaking around the dessert buffet and columns decorated with artificial wisteria.

The jubilant energy of 100 young women feeling victorious and beautiful filled the room.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:
Correction: May 1, 2012
An earlier version of this article misidentified a student who wore a ruffled pink gown to the prom. She is Eman Ashabi, not Maha al-Shauweyh.
Higher education changes lives

By Diana Waterman
May 1, 2012

Education is the key to creating opportunity and changing your life, and my father would be the first one to tell you so. He inspired and reinforced the message for my brothers and me regularly at our dinner table: Education gives you choices, opens doors, enables you to earn a good living and shapes your entire life. He truly believed that lives could be transformed through education regardless of where you were from and how much money you made. He made us believers, too.

My father never graduated from high school. He had to grow up fast when his father passed away and had no choice but to leave school and to go to work. His youth was spent in poverty. My father did all he could to support our family and proudly earned his GED at age 35 through night school. This was a great example to our family of his commitment to education.

Every night, he spent time with my two brothers and me, reviewing our homework and talking about what we had learned that day at school. Committed to our success, he worked with us to develop a vision and plan for our futures.

Despite a lack of funds for college, the vision and drive my father instilled in me at an early age did not waver. It took five years of working full time and attending night classes to complete my first year of college credits. After 11 years of struggle and sacrifice, I earned my law degree and eventually went on to open a business in Washington, D.C., with my husband.

The benefits of a college education are irrefutable: higher salaries and lower unemployment rates. Cities with a higher percentage of college graduates have lower crime rates. Education benefits individuals, families, communities, cities and counties.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, only one in five Milwaukee residents age 25 and older has a college degree. In Milwaukee Public Schools, approximately 67% of students graduate from high school. Of that, less than 35% enroll in college within a year of graduating.
How can we reach those who choose not to continue their education? How do we program students at an early age to see college admission as achievable and beneficial? One such initiative, right here in Milwaukee, has been achieving remarkable results in graduating inner city youths, specifically young girls and women, and continuing their college educations. PEARLS for Teen Girls is accomplishing radical change in the lives of young women. It's all about investing in the lives of young women and helping them build leadership skills such as self-reflection, critical thinking, sound decision-making, goal-setting, clear communication and personal accountability.

When young women, regardless of race or their family's income level, receive the kind of care provided by PEARLS, the results are staggering. In 2011, each and every active high school senior enrolled in the PEARLS program graduated from high school. Even more impressive, every single one of those girls was accepted to at least one college. Every single girl will have the opportunity to continue their educations. It's remarkable.

There is a great need in our community for organizations and initiatives like this. In the past four years, PEARLS has grown from serving 120 girls annually to an estimated 1,100 girls in the Milwaukee area in 2012. Mark my words, in a few years, cities from around the nation will be looking at Milwaukee wondering how they can re-create the model PEARLS has achieved.

The real need for today's youth is hope and vision. For some Milwaukee girls, PEARLS creates hope and instills a sense of vision in them. For me, my father's dedication to my future and his deep value of education inspired me to work hard and stay focused on my schooling.

Years later, I am where I am because of the path my father helped lead me down. I am excited to see the different paths taken by PEARLS girls, as many of them will change their futures and their families by becoming college graduates.

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Can it be that earning a college degree is no longer enough to lift one from the daily grind?

Editor's note: Stephen Joel Trachtenberg is president emeritus and university professor of public service at The George Washington University. He is chairman of the Korn Ferry Higher Education Practice and senior client partner at Korn Ferry International, an executive recruiting firm.

(CNN) -- Over the last several decades, the reasons used to justify acquiring a university education has morphed from the academic to the applied, to the sublime and the ridiculous.

Once characterized as a noble intellectual pursuit -- something one did to gain knowledge and wisdom, contemporary references define college as utilitarian and practical: Without a college degree, one cannot hope to successfully enter the job market. Stay in school and you'll "earn more," as some like to say.

The children of the incumbent middle and upper classes are increasingly the offspring of college graduates and for the most part they follow their parents' lead (especially young women). They understand that to maintain the
lifestyle to which they have become accustomed, getting a degree is important both for image and long-term prospects. It is the thing to do, what is expected of the daughters and sons of doctors, lawyers, bankers, teachers, civil servants, etc. There are, of course, a small number of entrepreneurial types (the up-and-coming Steve Jobs and Bill Gates) who forgo college and seek their fortunes in garages. But most people trod a conventional path; they seek to get jobs rather than to be Jobs.

For those aspiring to the middle class -- the struggling working class, immigrants and children of immigrants -- going to college is probably the most important ticket necessary to take them from one stratum up to the next, all part of the passage from labor to management.

I regret that too few students of any of these economic groups attend college in order to stretch their minds or to mature to where critical thinking overcomes impulse. College is the time to embrace the joy of discovery and the world of ideas, passions and relationships.

But the current dour economic climate and the increasing talk of the need for colleges to justify themselves with questions such as, "Does it pay to go to college?" or "What do we get for our tuition dollars?" have thrown everyone a curve ball. Middle class students are frightened. They no longer expect to live as well or better than their parents but rather are treading water to simply keep afloat, accepting jobs that were once felt to be "below their station." PhDs are driving cabs and tending bars.

Followand

Lower class students are stunned at the changes afoot. Can it be that earning a college degree, something that takes enormous perseverance, energy and, of course, financial sacrifice is no longer enough to lift one from the daily grind?

What then to do? Perhaps the simple BA degree is not enough. Perhaps a few bells and whistles are needed: a double major; joint BA-MA degree; or a doctorate. For many people, these are viewed as resume enhancers, silver bullets that might just turn the head of a human resources person, getting her to take a second look at a prospect's job application. And, of course, if one doesn't have a job, then earning another degree is a way to fill one's days.

But, earning a livelihood and living a quality life do not always go hand in hand. Yes, everyone needs food and shelter and whenever possible, a little extra spending money. But having a job does not always satisfy the inner cravings or the imagination.
Just take a look at the essays written by folks attending their 40th or 50th class reunions and you'll discover people who have earned decent salaries for many years, were promoted up the ladders of their professions, who provided for the wants of their families in many ways, but who ultimately found their work to be unfulfilling, living lives of "quiet desperation."

When the economy allowed for retirement at the relatively young age of 65, some of these people jumped at the opportunity to change course, to go from boardrooms to ateliers, to move from the service professions to the field of craftsmen, musicians or community volunteers.

Too few jobs satisfy the soul. Higher education should help to address that shortcoming. But for that to happen, we have to learn how to combine the practicality of learning with the joy of exploration. We need to give instruction in Arabic and Mandarin so students can work successfully in the global economy, but we also should encourage learning about the culture and history of the countries where those languages are spoken.

Taking an elective in college used to mean studying something you wanted to learn about but not necessarily major in: the mathematician who took a class in 19th century Russian literature or the French major who studied Biology 101. It is a sad situation that many of today's students do not want to waste course time on something that is not perceived as advancing their careers. They don't care to learn things that won't be on the final exam.

Congress says it wants colleges to measure outcomes, to access what a person learned during their 4-year college education. I don't disagree with the need for accountability -- after all, the cost and price of getting an education is not trivial. I want, however, to be one of the people who writes the questions and decides the correct answers. As Winston Churchill said, "We make a living from what we get. We make a life from what we give."

*The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Stephen Joel Trachtenberg.*