THE DAILY CLIPS

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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@.ecu.edu Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
Several flags were planted in the ground as East Carolina University students gathered to celebrate the death of Osama bin Laden in front of the Mendenhall Student Center Monday, May 2, 2011. The students gathered to celebrate United States Armed Forces and their success in killing Osama bin Laden over the weekend in a gun battle in Pakistan. (Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector)

Locals react to Bin Ladin death
By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector
Tuesday, May 3, 2011

Sunday was a long day for Your Perfect Cake owner Amber Rudder.

After leaving a two-day cake show in Westminster, Md., she and three friends stopped in Washington, D.C., to take in some sights, grab dinner and get a good night's sleep before venturing home. The pajamas weren't on for long, Rudder said.

One of the women traveling with her got a text from her boyfriend telling them Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden had been killed in Pakistan. The women quickly decided to join the crowds gathering in the nation's capital.

“It was the coolest thing we've ever done,” she said Monday afternoon. “As we got closer to the White House, throngs of people were running down the sidewalk.”

People were holding flags and wearing patriotic shirts, she said. They crowded the White House gates. Everyone was singing.

“I was pressed on all four sides by friends and strangers, which isn't as uncomfortable as it sounds,” Rudder said. “Nobody was angry. How often can you say, ‘This is history, and we're a part of it?’”

They stayed out until 4:30 a.m.

East Carolina University student Brandon Hill was studying for final exams when his phone rang Sunday night. It was his father.

“He asked if I was watching the news,” Hill said. “I thought there'd been another terrorist attack. He sounded serious.”

What he saw instead — “in big, bold letters” — was that bin Laden was dead.
“It's a textbook case of justice being served,” he said Monday.

A dozen East Carolina University students joined Hill outside Mendenhall Student Center at noon to mark the death. American flags dotted the lawn.

“We didn't come out in celebration of Osama's death,” senior Tremayne Smith said. “It's a celebration of life, a rejuvenation of patriotism, pride and passion. “Justice may be delayed, but it's not denied,” he said.

ECU professor Saeed Dar, a member of Greenville's Islamic Center, said bin Laden's death is important to Muslims, too.
“Muslims are the biggest victim of this extremism,” he said, citing thousands of deaths in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and his native Pakistan.

Dar was in his home nation 10 days ago, visiting his younger sister and other family living there. He worries about the Pakistanis and American troops that could become the target of Taliban backlash.

“It's shocking,” Dar said of bin Laden's death. “For 10 years I've been hearing he's here, he's there, he's here.
“It's good news, but it is also frightening for me, to be from that part of the world. (His supporters) are angry.”

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or 252-329-9566.
Other Opinion:

**Jetties against the shore**

BY JACK BETTS - THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

RALEIGH—A bill allowing more rock jetties on the North Carolina coastline was sidetracked the other day in the state Senate, but it's not because legislators don't want to permit more of them. It's just that legislators disagree on how many more should be allowed.

The Senate wouldn't cap the number. The House would allow no more than three - and would prohibit local governments from financing them unless voters approve in a referendum. So the writing is on the seawall: More jetties are on their way.

These jetties are called terminal groins. They would be allowed only at coastal inlets. The hope is that they would stabilize inlets and thus protect beaches, where significant beach erosion and other factors threaten beachfront houses up and down the coast.

The bill has attracted a lot of attention because it would significantly change public policy of the state - a ban on hard structures - that has helped protect beaches for decades. That policy has been a good one, because jetties, by any name, have an unpleasant side effect: They cause erosion to neighboring property and require costly repairs such as pumping or bulldozing sand to rebuild beaches scoured away by ocean waves whose power the jetties have redirected.

The Senate's refusal Thursday to go along with the House restrictions on terminal groins comes after news broke that Oregon Inlet along the northeastern N.C. coastline has become highly dangerous for commercial fishing boats because the navigation channel has filled with sand and become too shallow.

That inlet has long been a treacherous place for recreational boaters and fishers and for commercial fishermen who needed safe passage to some of the East Coast's most productive fishing grounds.
And there's a lesson in that inlet for policymakers and property owners alike who believe the costs of terminal groins won't be as high as opponents argue and won't cause as much damage as many fear. That lesson and a good many more are printed in the plain language of a forthcoming book by one of the state's most knowledgeable coastal geologists, Stan Riggs, and three of his colleagues who are well known in coastal area research.

The new book, "The Battle for North Carolina's Coast," will be published by UNC Press but won't be widely available until September. That's too bad, because the history, the analysis of complicated coastal systems and the vision it presents would be helpful to legislators who have been asked for years to undo the state's ban on more hardened structures on the coastline.

In the new book, Riggs and his colleagues describe the series of things that happened at Oregon Inlet, opened by a hurricane in 1846, as local, state and federal officials tried to figure out how to keep it open late in the 20th century. The inlet was migrating southward, and placement of the Bonner Bridge across the inlet required a lot of dredging to hold the channel in place, the authors wrote. The inlet continued to move south. A rock jetty on the south side was completed in 1991 to stop the movement.

Trouble was, the northern side of the inlet continued to move south, making the inlet narrower "and substantially deepening the navigational channel under the fixed bridge span." This required more rock to shore up the pilings. But the jetty significantly increased erosion on adjacent Pea Island. The solution: more sand dredged from the inlet to rebuild the Pea Island beach.

"However, Pea Island's ocean shoreline continues to erode at rates for specific beach segments that average up to 13 feet per year, some of the highest erosion rates in North Carolina," the book notes. And it goes on to predict that building another costly bridge and keeping N.C. 12 open "has a high probability of failure for the simple reason that it is virtually impossible to maintain a fixed road on a constantly shifting pile of sand."

Most coastal property owners don't want to hear this kind of talk. Many are wealthy and willing to pay the high costs of building a terminal groin, such as at Rich Inlet at the upper end of private Figure Eight Island.
But Riggs and his colleagues want them to know: "(H)ardened structures on beaches and inlets inevitably cause increased erosion and ultimate loss of the beach."

And that doesn't count the effects of relative sea level rise, forecast to be as much as 55 inches by the end of this century, the continued recession of beach fronts and the big changes ferocious coastal storms can make quickly.

There's a long list of changes in the state's coastal future. The state's coastal plain has a lot of flat land with low elevation. If you've driven in that area and seen roadside ditches filled with water, you've probably been looking at water "at or close to sea level," the book observes. Carteret, Currituck, Dare, Hyde, Pamlico and Tyrell counties are a foot or two above sea level; if the sea continues to rise as projected, some of those areas will be underwater during the lifetimes of children born this decade.

So if they want coastal property, perhaps they should buy inland in places like Martin, Pitt, Jones, Lenoir, Duplin, Bladen and Columbus counties. Those areas, on major river systems, the book notes, "will become coastal counties with all the associated risks that the present coastal counties face."

Jack Betts (jbetts@charlotteobserver.com) is a Raleigh-based columnist and associate editor for The Charlotte Observer.
Dwayne Harris: I'll fight to get my spot on the team; I don't want anything given to me

By SportsDayDFW.com

Dwayne Harris is a wide receiver out of East Carolina University. He was drafted by the Cowboys in the sixth round with the 11th pick, which was the 176rd pick overall. Here are some highlights of a conference call with the new Dallas Cowboy:

On if he had a lot of discussion with the Dallas Cowboys to show him that they were interested in him:
“I talked to them when I was in Indianapolis for the combine. They said that they were very high on me as a special teams player and as a third down receiver and a third down receiver in the slot.”

On if he feels his game is suited to being a third down receiver:
“I feel like what I can do in the inside, I would say I am. With Dez (Bryant) and Roy (Williams), I would bring a third compliment to the team. With them on the outside, it’d be great with me in the inside to be a third receiver to spread the ball.”

On if he asked to return punts or did the coaching staff brought it up to him:
“I don’t know if it was one of those guys that suggested it, but if it would help the team out to punt return or kick return, and also it would give me a chance to get the ball in my hands, I would. We didn’t really have anybody else to do it and I was the one who stepped up to it with the ball in my hand and my coach agreed with it.”

On what he thinks he can improve on the field:
“I’ve been doing a lot of working on over the shoulder catching; down the field, deep ball catching. Those are the main things I’ve been working on to make it in the NFL and in my past season.”

On if he feels comfortable as a returner at the pro level:
“I enjoy returning the ball and the other aspects of the return game or the special team game, or wherever you want me to play whether it’s a returner or just going out there just to block. I’m down to do whatever. I’ll play on the special teams game anytime.”

**On what he likes doing as a returner:**
“I like punt return. I’m a punt return guy. I like kickoff return, but if you ask me which one I like better, I love both about the same. I’ve played both. I like doing both. But if you made me choose one, I’d go with punt return.”

**On his thoughts about the Cowboys receivers tradition:**
“I think it’s great to be put in the same category as those guys and wanting to play behind them. As far as keeping the legacy going, a guy like me compared to those kind of guys, it’s going to be a tough act to follow. But If anybody had to do it, I’m glad it’s me.”

**On how familiar he is with the current Cowboys depth chart and where he sees himself fitting in:**
“Wherever I am on the depth chart, it’s not up to me and I’ll fight to get my spot on this team and I don’t want anything given to me. I’m going to fight for my job and fight for my position.”

**On if he knows any of the players on the team:**
“Personally, no. But I know the guys on the team from watching the Dallas Cowboys play on Sunday or on Monday, or whatever day they’re on. So that’s how I know about guys on the team.”

**On since having a foot injury in 2008 if he’s had any problems since then:**
“No sir. In 2009 I had a big season and the following season in 2010 I had an even better season.”

**On if the lockout continues, where will he workout and get prepared for the season:**
“If I’m able to be in Texas, then I’ll work out in Texas. If not, then I’ll be at home and I’ll work out here in one of the facilities down here that I’ve been working at. And I’ll plan to get myself better, stronger, faster.”

**On if he was a captain for his final season at East Carolina:**
“Yes sir.”
New UNCW chancellor to be announced Tuesday
By Jason Gonzales & Patrick Gannon
Jason.Gonzales@StarNewsOnline.com
The University of North Carolina Board of Governors plans to announce the new chancellor of UNCW around 2:45 p.m. Tuesday in Room 162 of the Watson School of Education.

The search has been conducted mostly in secret, and the search committee has not released the names of the three finalists submitted to the university system president.

Hannah Gage, chairwoman of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, said the board's Personnel and Tenure Committee would meet at 10 a.m. Tuesday in Chapel Hill to consider UNC President Thomas W. Ross's recommendation and contract terms for the proposed new chancellor.

If the committee comes out of that meeting with a consensus, Gage said, the full Board of Governors will meet in closed session Tuesday afternoon at the University of North Carolina Wilmington to consider the candidate and contract.

Many members will join the meeting by phone, she said. Gage said at this stage in the search, the president is "very confident" about the selection, and the candidate has agreed to take the position if the Board of Governors offers it.

She said the candidate would be at the meeting in Wilmington Tuesday to be introduced if the board makes it final.

Gage added: "It's going to be a good person."
College students push to restrict bottled water
By Jenna Johnson

Bottled water: It’s a vending machine’s healthy alternative to sugary soda, a convenient way to hydrate on the go and, lately, a total faux pas on many college campuses.

Some environmentally gung-ho students are not only glaring at those who choose to chug from disposable bottles — rather than earthy-friendly reusable containers — they are also pushing for restrictions on bottled water sales on campus.

At the University of Maryland College Park, students have persuaded the undergraduate and graduate student governments to stop buying bottled water for their meetings and events. Now they serve large pitchers of tap water.

Washington University in St. Louis has adopted an all-out ban in the hope of alleviating the waste going into landfills. The president of University of Mary Washington in Virginia forbade spending school funds on bottled water. Goucher College in Baltimore removed bottled water from its dining halls and campus eateries, but not its bookstore and vending machines.

Proposed restrictions often are met with opposition and caution. Some administrators say they want to avoid discouraging water consumption, especially when students can become dehydrated while playing intramural sports (or drinking games). And there’s the ongoing fight against the Freshman 15: If a student is standing at a vending machine, a bottle of water is usually the least-fattening option.

“It’s definitely a complex issue,” said Aynsley Toews, coordinator of the U-Md. Office of Sustainability and a member of a task force looking at other possible restrictions. Already the group has heard concerns about the university losing money from bottled water sales and not keeping its
students properly hydrated. “Then there’s flavored water, there’s vitamin water. What do you do with those?”

Similar concerns are echoed by the industry. “You are telling people not to drink water? Holy mackerel,” said Tom Lauria, a spokesman for the International Bottled Water Association. “It’s odd that colleges would look to ban a healthy, legal product.”

Even some environmentalists worry bans could alienate students who are just starting to warm to eco-friendly ideas such as running fewer loads of laundry. When DePauw University in Indiana contemplated a bottle ban in 2010, an opposition group popped up on Facebook, where one student wrote, “guess the next logical thing is to make meatless mondays official. this is ridiculous.”

Americans purchased 8.45 billion gallons of bottled water in 2009. Environmentalists say resources are wasted on producing and transporting bottles of water when most people could receive the same product — for far less money — from their kitchen faucet. Each year about 50 billion water bottles end up in landfills, according to estimates.

Rallying against bottled water has become a cause for college environmental groups in the past few years, especially with the popularity of “Tapped,” a documentary about the bottled water industry.

While bans remain controversial, many colleges are instead trying to make it easier for students to pick refillable bottles over throwaway ones. They are also educating students about recycling and how their several-bottles-a-day habit quickly piles up in a landfill.

Often that means building a giant sculpture made up of thrown-away water bottles. At Maryland, a group of students spent two hours pulling bottles out of trash cans to construct its five-foot-tall plastic statue of a water bottle. At Penn State University, students opted to spell out the word “NO” in collected bottles. (Lauria and water bottle proponents, meanwhile, note that their bottles are the single most recycled item in curbside programs.)

Many schools have also installed “refilling stations” that filter tap water and are easier to use than traditional water fountains. The University of the District of Columbia is in the process of installing “hydration stations” in all
of its buildings, while American University is upgrading 100 water fountains to include a bottle-friendly faucet.

American also gives each incoming student a free, reusable water bottle at orientation, and a few times a year the sustainability director hosts a blind-taste test of an array of water options — including tap, filtered and several bottled varieties. The goal is not to limit the number of options students have, but to make reusable bottles the hippest choice, said Chris O’Brien, American’s director of sustainability.

“It’s cool to have a refillable water bottle,” he said. “It’s not cool to be seen with a product that produces greenhouse gases and is not sustainable.”
American Universities Group Votes to Expel Nebraska

By TAMAR LEWIN

For the first time in its 111-year history, an organization made up of the nation’s leading research universities has voted to oust one of its members, the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

The ouster by the prestigious and prominent group, the Association of American Universities, was particularly painful to Nebraska since the university was one of its earliest members, admitted in 1909. But for several years, Nebraska has lagged behind most others on the criteria for membership — primarily competitive research financing and the share of faculty in the National Academies, which issues policy reports and advice.

“We have known we were at risk of this for 10 years, and successfully fought off a similar threat in 2000,” the university’s chancellor, Harvey Perlman, said in a Friday afternoon e-mail to faculty and staff announcing what he called the “disconcerting news.” “I had hoped our extraordinary accomplishments and steep trajectory would have made us less vulnerable, but the A.A.U.’s approach to the review made this result inevitable.”

Nebraska’s ouster was reported Monday by The Chronicle of Higher Education, along with a decision by Syracuse University to leave the organization voluntarily. Syracuse has been a member since 1966, and, like Nebraska, was placed on review last fall.
“We went through the review process, and it was very clear from A.A.U.’s point of view, and our point of view, that they had recommitted to this narrow set of criteria,” said Nancy Cantor, the Syracuse chancellor. “I don’t see it as a big blow. We have tremendous strength, and we’re very confident in our profile.”

Although membership in the association — which now will have 61 members, including most Ivy League institutions and many of the top state schools, like Texas A&M and the University of North Carolina — brings no specific benefits, many campuses see it as a proud indicator of their status.

“Some believe it helps attract faculty,” said Barry Toiv, a spokesman for the group, “and the presidents of member universities appreciate the opportunity to meet twice a year with others facing the same set of issues, and work together on policy and funding issues.”

The association’s meetings are closed, and its votes confidential, so the news of Nebraska’s ouster came from the university, not the group.

According to The Chronicle of Higher Education, the voting process began at a meeting in Washington on April 10, and Chancellor Perlman learned that evening that a committee had voted for his university’s removal. Mr. Perlman made a 20-minute presentation before the full membership of the organization the next day, and was then excused from the meeting. When the other university leaders went off to dinner that evening, Mr. Perlman dined alone.

According to association rules, it takes a two-thirds majority — 42 votes — to remove a member; 44 voted against Nebraska.

The university, the state’s flagship, had several factors working against it. Its medical school is under a separate administrative structure, so the research dollars it brings in are not counted by the association. And as a land-grant institution, Nebraska has about a quarter of its faculty involved in agriculture and extension work, and most financing for agricultural research is noncompetitive and so does not count heavily in the group’s ranking.

Last year, the association invited Georgia Institute of Technology to join, its first new member in nine years.
Alexander Lataille, 23, of Laurel, Md., graduated from college last spring and was worried about being kicked off his parents' plan.

**College Grad's Parting Homework: Pick Health Insurance**
by Michelle Andrews and Phil Galewitz
May 3, 2011

As the season of college commencements approaches, planning for the ceremonies isn't the only topic grads-in-waiting need to discuss with Mom and Dad.

If students have been covered by the college health plan and want to get onto their parents' insurance plan, they have 30 days from the date their student coverage ends to do so. Miss that window, and they may be left out until the plan's next annual enrollment period, usually at the beginning of the new year.

"The [college] coverage will probably end in August, but students should check the date," says Aaron Smith, co-founder and executive director of Young Invincibles, a health care advocacy group for young adults. "It's an important piece of information. They could have a gap in coverage." The group has created a toolkit for new grads to help them understand their health insurance options.

Under the health overhaul law, young adults can stay on their parents' health plan until age 26. They're allowed to even if they're in school or financially independent, and even if they're married. The only real exception is if they have an offer of health coverage through their own employer. In that case, even if it's a bad policy, they can't remain on their parents' plan.
Young adults have one of the highest rates of uninsurance, estimated at up to 30 percent. The health care overhaul has helped make a dent in that figure: At least 600,000 young adults have signed on or stayed with their parents' plans since the provision became effective last fall. One of them is Alexander Lataille, 23, of Laurel, Maryland, who graduated from college last spring and was worried about being kicked off his parents' plan. But Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Rhode Island, where his parents live, adopted the under-26 provision early — and that kept him insured, even as he took jobs that didn't offer health coverage. "It was a big relief," said Lataille, who has asthma.

But while federal officials and consumer advocates are pleased that demand for dependent coverage appears greater than projected, some employers are worried about the cost of the additional coverage.

Helen Darling, CEO of the National Business Group on Health, which represents more than 300 large employers, said employers generally don't like the idea of anything that will add to their health costs. "I don't think anyone is eager to spend more money," Darling said. "This is not something employers would have done on their own."

Adding young adult coverage is likely to increase average family premiums by about 1 percent, according to the federal estimates.

Unfortunately, graduating students who are currently uninsured don't get a special enrollment opportunity under the law, says Smith. Those students likely have to wait until the next annual enrollment period to sign on with their parents' plan.
Going for Broke

For-profit colleges have been accused of preying on poor students, loading them with debt and pocketing their government loans. But lawmakers are finally fighting back

BY ANDRÉA FORD

WHEN MELISSA ROTHROCK, 33, DECIDED in the spring of 2009 that she wanted to become the first in her family to go to college, she knew a traditional program was out of the question. The mother of four children—one of them just an infant—couldn’t afford a babysitter, and her husband was on the road for days at a time as a truck driver. An online ad targeting stay-at-home moms got her thinking about distance learning. She filled out her information, and soon the phone began to ring with calls from recruiters for various for-profit colleges who were eager to sign her up. One recruiter from Westwood College, a school headquartered nearly 800 miles (1,300 km) away in Denver, was particularly persistent, calling Rothrock at her San Marcos, Texas, home nearly every day for two weeks, she says.

Sure, she had questions—and the recruiter had all the answers. What about the school’s credentials? Nationally accredited. She was interested in perhaps becoming a criminal case researcher or a paralegal—how much money could she make with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice? As much as $80,000. It all sounded great. “The recruiter convinced me that I couldn’t afford not to do this,” she says.

The high-speed Internet access she needed for the classes was too expensive, so Rothrock soon found herself planted at a table at the local IHOP, with her Rent-A-Center laptop and her kids, drinking bottomless cups of coffee and using the free wifi. Sitting among students from nearby Texas State University at San Marcos, Rothrock thought, “I’m progressing. I’m getting somewhere. Even though I’ve got kids, I’m just like you, and I can do this.”

So toodid the federal government, which awarded her $12,000 in student loans and more than $5,000 in Pell Grant money. To start, Rothrock didn’t have to pay any out-of-pocket tuition. But a year later, life began to get in the way of her studies. The family was planning a move nearly 300 miles (500 km) northeast to Mount Pleasant, Texas, and the stress was taking a toll on Rothrock’s grades. After consulting her adviser, she decided to avoid tarnishing her transcript, she would withdraw and re-enroll the following August, when the move was complete and her two oldest kids were back in school. But when she tried to return, Westwood officials told her that the Texas workforce commission had ordered the school to stop enrolling new students in its online programs because it hadn’t been certified to operate in the state.

“You don’t expect any institution, especially an educational institution, to just blatantly lie to you,” Rothrock says. (Westwood claims that it alerted students to the problem via email.)

Stories like Rothrock’s are not unusual. Anecdote by anecdote, a firestorm has been building around for-profit education for some time. But it was a scornful Government Accountability Office report released last summer that revealed a portrait of a predatory industry. The report, which questioned the higher tuition fees of for-profits compared with those of traditional schools, included outrageous undercover video footage of recruiters appearing to encourage students to omit required financial information or to claim nonexistent dependents on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Since for-profit colleges get huge amounts of government money—they enroll about 11% of all higher-education students yet receive nearly a quarter of all federal financial aid, for a total of $24.6 billion in loans and $7.5 billion in Pell Grants last year—many lawmakers see the situation as tantamount to massive

A place at the table Melissa Rothrock, with her daughter Faith, studied in an IHOP for the free wifi
College Students Who Default On Their Loans

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<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Default Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Harvard University</td>
<td>Private, 4 years</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>Public, 4 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston Community College</td>
<td>Public, 2-3 years</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westwood College</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: U.S. Department of Education. Percentages are based on the number of borrowers who began repaying in 2008 and defaulted within three years.

The Virtual Classroom

But it was the Internet age and the rise of distance learning that accelerated enrollment at for-profits, which has nearly tripled, to 2.2 million, since 2001. For-profits today have both virtual and physical campuses—the behemoth University of Phoenix has locations in 40 states and on the Web—and their students can earn every kind of degree, from a certificate in fashion merchandising to a Ph.D. in industrial psychology. Many are nationally accredited, though others have the more sought-after regional accreditation that puts them on comparable footing with traditional schools.

Aside from government loans and grants, there is a lot of private money at stake. “Historically, they’ve proven to be very profitable companies,” says Jarrel Price, an education analyst at Height Analytics, who noted that for-profits’ stocks became particularly attractive to investors during the economic downturn but have been underperforming since 2009 because of regulatory threats. Still, the Washington Post Co., for example, derived 55% of its revenue in the fourth quarter of 2010 from Kaplan, the for-profit education subsidiary it acquired in 1985.

None of this would be troubling if the schools produced good results—and many of them do. But some alarming trends have emerged. Graduation rates are poor: only 27% of first-time, full-time bachelor’s-degree seekers at for-profits finish within six years on average, compared with (still nothing to write home about) 55% at public schools and 65% at private nonprofit schools. For-profits also account for a high portion of student-loan defaults—more than 40%.

“Yes, we have a higher default rate than the Harvards and the Yales,” says Harris Miller, CEO and president of the Association of Private Sector Colleges & Universities, an industry group. “But if Congress required Harvard to have the same demographic as the American people, instead of drawing from the top earners in the country, they’d have very different outcomes.”

But what the industry can’t defend is the aggressive marketing tactics for-profits use to reel students in, which include, as the GAO report showed, overstating future earnings potential or job-placement rates. In the coming weeks, the Department of Education will be finalizing a highly contentious “gainful employment” rule, whereby programs with many graduates whose paychecks can’t cover their student loans—known as a high debt-to-earnings ratio—could be disqualified for federal financial aid. Miller argues that the rule would block hundreds of thousands of students from access to higher education. “Many community colleges have had to cut back their programs, which is probably the only alternative that most of these students would have,” he says.

The Bottom Line

On that point, at least, Senator Harkin agrees. “I think we have missed the boat in terms of providing adequate funds to community colleges,” he says. “I am not against distance learning. I think it can provide a great service to a lot of people. It’s just that… the primary purpose of the for-profit schools is to make a profit, not to educate people to get them a job.”

Christina McNeely, 47, feels that distinction as keenly as anyone. McNeely worked her way through a program in medical billing at Westwood College while she was homeless, sleeping many nights on bus-stop benches or on classmates’ floors. She was desperate for a job, which recruiters assured her would materialize, and they even promised to help her find housing. Since graduating from the program in 2010, McNeely has indeed managed to get her own apartment but only by working three jobs, none of them in medical billing. She now cleans houses, drives a forklift at a warehouse and works in a craft store every day. She is due to begin repaying her $15,000 loan this month.

“I cannot explain to you the odds I had to go against to do that and finish it. I hate them,” she says. As for paying back her loans: “It’ll take me forever.”

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