East Carolina University will hold commencement ceremonies Friday at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium.

The ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. with the processional of degree candidates into the stadium.

The commencement address will be delivered by U.S. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus. As the nation's 75th Secretary, Mabus oversees the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps with a budget that exceeds $150 billion. While serving as governor of his native Mississippi, Mabus was nationally recognized for his focus on education.

Tickets are not required for admission for family members, friends and guests. There is no limit on the number of guests. Family and guests of the degree candidates should enter Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium through the north stands and proceed directly to the seating areas. General parking will be provided in the lots surrounding the stadium.

Degree candidates participating in the ceremony should check in at Gate 2 under the south stands by no later than 8:30 a.m. to participate in the processional.

The university reminds participants that voluntary compliance with responsible and mature conduct is necessary to ensure that commencement will be dignified and memorable, a proud event in the degree candidate's life, and a credit to the university. Many colleges, schools and departments have a tradition of holding unit recognition ceremonies following commencement.

For more information, visit www.ecu.edu/commencement.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
Point of View:

The gain for grads

BY CHRISTOPHER SOPHER

CHAPEL HILL–A poster once hung in the guidance office of my high school, comparing the type of car I would supposedly own if I went to college and if I didn't. If I didn't go, I would get an ancient, threadbare sedan of the sort millions of freshly licensed 16-year-olds receive from their parents. If I did go, I got an oceanfront house with two pristinely restored muscle cars in the garage.

Since I first saw that poster, I've come quite a way - geographically, educationally, emotionally. As a native Virginian, I've come to love North Carolina and its deep, abiding commitment to the promise of education, higher education in particular. But as I prepare to graduate from the University of North Carolina this weekend, I've grown concerned about the future of that commitment amid the confusing, competing tides of economic and political change.

My high school's poster reflects how we talk about college to students: an investment in your future; a period of monetary cost now for great economic return later; a door to a better life. Every incoming student arrives armed with the promising knowledge that college graduates make one or two million dollars more over their lifetimes than do high school graduates. All these things are true. But they also miss the point.

Education isn't like remodeling a bathroom or buying index funds. It's an investment, sure, but not a strictly economic one. It's an investment in young people, with our many fascinations and flaws and futures.

Here and on campuses everywhere, most students and faculty understand and treasure this fact, frustratingly impervious as it is to the immediate needs of our economy or our politics. I wish desperately that our public discourse would understand and treasure it, too.

I've never had a professor begin class by announcing the global economic importance of studying "Measure for Measure" or the long-term public
benefit of knowing organic chemistry. The university has educated me for me, with the distant and difficult-to-measure hope that I one day pay forward the favor in civic participation and economic productivity.

We can't run universities as factories, calculating the cost of inputs and the market value of outputs. People aren't widgets. Even if they were, the human capital market will change drastically between now and the peak of students' future productivity.

The public debate about higher education seems often to forget that between high school graduation and eventual employment as a doctor, programmer or malnourished graduate student, life moves on for students. We meet people, encounter new ideas, explore paths we'd never considered. We learn to live with and around each other. While the system is busy trying to imprint us with preparation for the "future jobs" of the moment, we are busy being people.

This fact holds the potential for a deeper education that recognizes earning a degree is about more than preparing for a career. That potential is already being tapped at many of our universities, but there is more that can be done. There exists a great deal of data on this subject, and a great many people smarter than I debating what it means in practice. But the data tell only part of the story. The students tell the rest.

When my peers and I don caps and gowns and graduate, the remarkable thing about it won't be that we earned degrees, or learned applicable skills or assumed unbelievable amounts of per capita debt - though all these things are true. The remarkable thing about it will be that we got the incredible chance to learn in a place of unbridled possibility. That place is more than a training facility; it's a place that teaches the inescapable truth that we are dependent on and connected to one another in countless ways.

From North Carolina's commitment to higher education I've learned many things, from public policy analysis to journalism to the proper color of fire trucks. The most important thing, though, is that education helps us to be better - as citizens, as workers, as people. From that betterment comes the economic opportunity we love to advertise.

I'm not an economist or an educator or an expert on higher education. I am simply a student, and I don't presume to speak for my peers except to say
this: the opportunity to spend a few, far too short years in such a place is an immeasurably wonderful gift. And it is one this state should continue giving, in full and always.

For that gift, taxpaying citizens who have never met me and probably never will, I thank you. Regardless of what kind of car ends up in my garage.

Christopher Sopher is a graduating senior at UNC-Chapel Hill, from Annandale, Va. He majored in public policy and political science.
Huge layoffs are coming, but 30,000 figure is high

BY ROB CHRISTENSEN - Staff writer

Editor's note: As the legislative debate intensifies, the claims and counter-claims are flying. Over the next several weeks, The News & Observer will sort out the truth.

The claim: The House Republican budget would result in 30,000 jobs being cut.

Who made it: Democratic Gov. Bev Perdue in a speech at a Democratic fundraiser over the weekend. "We are about to see the largest public layoff in North Carolina and maybe in American history," Perdue said. The same 30,000 figure has been used by House Democratic Whip Deborah Ross and by Senate Democratic leader Martin Nesbitt.

Is it true?: The Republican House budget would result in major layoffs, but Perdue appears to have been playing to her political audience. The number is squishy because it's unclear how local school boards will handle their budget cuts. The House budget often pushes the cuts down to local school boards or state agencies with budget targets for them to make. This time, it requires
$42.1 million in additional savings spread out among the 115 districts. But the House Republican caucus puts the loss of jobs at 18,000 (with nearly 3,000 of those positions already vacant) - in part on the basis of early informal estimates by the legislature's Fiscal Research staff. The N.C. Budget & Tax Center, a liberal advocacy group, also estimates 18,000 positions cut.

The Governor's Office provided a breakdown that adds up to more than 26,000 positions cut - including 18,330 in the public schools, nearly 3,000 in the University of North Carolina system, 1,392 in the community college system and nearly 4,000 in other state agencies.

Chrissy Pearson, the governor's spokeswoman, said that when trickle-down jobs such as Medicare providers and local government jobs are considered the cuts will exceed 30,000. She also believes that all the job losses have not yet been spelled out because some of the GOP budget cuts do not specify where the savings will come from but will likely result in job losses.

The estimated 18,330 job cuts in secondary and elementary education, however, are open to question. The figure was provided by the Department of Public Instruction and is described by officials there as a conservative estimate. But it includes 5,550 positions that are already vacant and are being carried over to the new budget in "a negative reserve." They are not new positions being eliminated. Exclude those positions and the positions cut in education are 12,780.

**The upshot:** Large-scale layoffs are definitely in the offing. Nobody knows the exact number at this point. But there is little evidence that they will be as large as the governor and other Democrats suggest.

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UNC-CH student faces child-porn charge
BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO - STAFF WRITER
CHAPEL HILL–The FBI on Tuesday arrested a UNC-Chapel Hill freshman on a charge of sexual exploitation of children.

The FBI charged Corey Gallisdorfer, 19, of Lewisville after searching the Granville Towers South dormitory.

Gallisdorfer appeared before a federal magistrate Wednesday morning. The sexual exploitation charge covers making or transmitting child pornography. FBI spokesman Stephen Emmett declined to elaborate on the specific allegations.
**Student is hurt in fall through roof**

BY MARK SCHULTZ - STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL—A 19-year-old student was injured when she fell through a rooftop window and plummeted into the Bowman Gray Pool on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus, a police spokesman said.

Hannah Brown had gone through or over a construction fence and was on the roof of the Woollen Gymnasium with two other students, Nicole Simonsen, 18, and Lillian Knoepp, 19, just after midnight Monday, said Randy Young, spokesman for the Department of Public Safety.

Brown fell through the window that lets sunlight into the pool area, badly cutting her right knee. She was taken to UNC Hospitals, Young said.

"It's a substantial fall," he said, estimating it at 40 feet or more.

All three were cited on a charge of first-degree trespassing, Young said.
Miller-Motte Technical College has accreditation issues to address
By Andrew Dunn
Andrew.Dunn@StarNewsOnline.com
A for-profit college with a significant Wilmington presence is under scrutiny by the group that issues its accreditation.

Miller-Motte Technical College has had its application for reaccreditation deferred because of questions about whether it properly screens its students and faculty, among other concerns, according to a letter from the Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools.

The council has asked for a laundry list of documentation and will reconsider at its August meeting. It remains accredited until then.

"We are waiting for more information," said council spokeswoman Jessica Menjivar.

A letter sent to Miller-Motte officials outlines numerous problems in several of the private career-education college's 17 campuses across six states.

At its Wilmington campus, the council found that the school does not assure that its students are qualified and does not follow its refund policy.

The council has requested documentation to show that the concerns have been addressed, which is due by the end of June.

Miller-Motte spokeswoman Rachel Nester called it a "standard information request."

The college was founded in 1916 in Wilmington by Judge Leon Motte as a training center for court stenographers. Over the next few decades, it expanded into offering other business-related classes.
Wilmington served as the main campus until 1989, when it was moved to Clarksville, Tenn.

Now located on Market Street, the college offers associate's and bachelor's degrees.

The Wilmington campus had an enrollment of about 1,000 in fall 2009, making it among the most populous of the school's locations.

Tuition and fees for full-time students totaled $14,508 in the 2010-11 academic year, according to U.S. Department of Education data.

Should the school lose its accreditation, students would no longer qualify for federal student aid.

The median debt held by students at the Wilmington campus who received that aid was $7,600 in the 2009 fiscal year, the most recent data available from the U.S. Department of Education. That's about half the average amount for for-profit colleges.

About 27 percent of students carrying federal debt at the Wilmington campus were paying it down.

For-profit institutions have come under increasing pressure from the federal government over the past year as enrollment has grown dramatically.

A U.S. Government Accountability Office investigation last fall found that several were deceptive in what they told applicants about costs of attendance and graduation rates.

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How is it that so many people started saying "Awesome!", or started wearing Uggs?

These are examples of how individuals' behavior is shaped by what people around them consider appropriate, correct or desirable. Researchers are investigating how human behavioral norms are established in groups and how they evolve over time, in hopes of learning how to exert more influence when it comes to promoting health, marketing products or reducing prejudice.

Psychologists are studying how social norms, the often-unspoken rules of a group, shape not just our behavior but also our attitudes. Social norms influence even those preferences considered private, such as what music we like or what policies we support. Interventions that take advantage of already-existing group pressures, the thinking goes, should be able to shift attitudes and change behaviors at less cost in effort and resources.

Norms serve a basic human social function, helping us distinguish who is in the group and who is an outsider. Behaving in ways the group considers appropriate is a way of demonstrating to others, and to oneself, that one belongs to the group.

But surprisingly little is known about how attitudinal norms are established in groups.

Why do some people in a group become trendsetters when it comes to ideas and objects? "The questions are among the most challenging" in the field, said H. Peyton Young, a professor at the University of Oxford in the U.K. and at Johns Hopkins University in
Baltimore. Dr. Young studies how norms influence economic behavior. "It's definitely a big open research area where there's a certain amount of dispute."

One question is whether there is always a leader that sets or changes the norm, or whether norm change occurs organically over time, even in the absence of a strong leader.

Researchers have studied how new ideas and innovations—whether the latest fashion, electronic gadget or slang word—are introduced and spread within a group. Individuals who innovate tend to be somewhat isolated from the rest of the group, researchers say.

Being too much a part of a group may constrain one's ability to think outside of convention, says Christian Crandall, a professor of social psychology at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, who studies social norms. "There's a freedom to innovate" that comes with isolation, Dr. Crandall says.

Though innovators may be isolated, the group often adopts their innovations because these new ideas or objects are an accessible way for members of the group to bond or signal solidarity. It could be a baseball cap worn backwards, or a pocket square. Each conveys a different identity.

But before others will take up the new idea, someone central to the group, with more connections than the innovator, has to recognize it.

Another major factor is whether the new idea evokes emotion. Jonah Berger, marketing professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, studied what makes ideas "go viral." His team analyzed 7,000 newspaper articles in the New York Times and found the articles considered most popular on the newspaper's website were those that aroused more emotions, particularly happy emotions but also anger or anxiety.

Scientists know group pressure is a powerful influence over health behaviors, including alcohol use, smoking and exercise. By developing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of trend-setters and trend-followers, researchers may discover more behavioral options for promoting health and preventing disease.

The more public an object or behavior is, the more likely it is to spread, Dr. Berger says. The bright-colored bracelets worn to show support for cancer survivors are seen by others, making a private value visible. "Your thoughts are not public, but your behaviors are," Dr. Berger says.

Rarely does any one individual set an entirely new norm for the group. Group leaders, however, help perpetuate or shift the norm. Unlike innovators, leaders tend to be high-status "superconformists," embodying the group's most-typical characteristics or aspirations, says Deborah Prentice, a social psychologist at Princeton University. People inside and outside the group tend to infer the group's norms by examining these leaders' behaviors.
Societal attitudes toward gay Americans largely changed after high-status individuals like Elton John and Elizabeth Taylor spoke out and explicitly established a new norm of acceptance, the University of Kansas' Dr. Crandall says. But observation of others' behavior can also result in misperceptions of the norm, which in turn can cause the actual norm to shift. Misperceptions are dangerous when it comes to risky behavior. In a series of studies, Dr. Prentice and her team asked student participants, who filled out questionnaires, how much alcohol they drank, and how much they thought a typical student at their college drank. The researchers found students often overestimated how much others drank. The amount students reported drinking was closely related to their beliefs about how much others drank: Students who thought others drank more tended to report drinking more.

Many colleges have tried, with varying success, to correct misperceived drinking norms, for example by using posters to publicize real drinking rates. Similar norms-based approaches have been tried for influencing smoking and eating disorders within groups.

Occasionally, a misperception of societal norms can have a positive effect. Individuals who hold negative opinions about other ethnic groups, for example, may suppress these views if they think the attitudes won't be accepted within their own group. "Suppression becomes reality over time," Dr. Crandall says.

And recent evidence suggests happenstance plays a role in popularizing concepts. Matt Salganik, a Princeton sociologist, wondered why the Harry Potter novels became so popular, considering the original manuscript had been widely rejected before being published. His team created an artificial online market to examine the influences on individual preferences.

In a study published in Science in 2006, participants went to a website and listened to songs, rating and downloading the ones they liked. The 14,000 participants were randomly assigned to different "worlds." Individuals in the "independent" world simply rated and downloaded songs without any input about what others were doing. In the other seven dependent worlds, raters saw which songs other participants downloaded and how they rated them.

The researchers figured if ratings were based solely on each participant's taste, then the best songs would rise to the top and all the worlds would mirror the independent world. But if, as they suspected, participants were influenced by others' ratings, then different songs would be rated highest in each world.

The researchers found vast variation in rankings between different worlds. Often, which song was rated highly simply depended on who the first raters happened to be. In some circumstances, "if you rewound the world and played it again, you could see a potentially different outcome," says Dr. Salganik.

Write to Shirley S. Wang at shirley.wang@wsj.com
Students at West Virginia University in Morgantown celebrate after hearing the news of Osama bin Laden's death.

The 9/11 generation's bogeyman is gone
By Ann O'Neill, CNN
May 5, 2011 7:08 a.m. EDT

(CNN) -- They learned as children that the world is a scary place where strangers with hatred in their hearts steer planes into buildings, grown-ups cry for days and everything can change in an instant.

They grew up with color-coded terror alerts and long lines at airport metal detectors. They saw the economy sputter. And still, the bad guys appeared to get away with it.

Osama bin Laden was their bogeyman, the monster under the bed.

Now the 9/11 generation has come of age. Children who were 8, 9 or 10 when the World Trade Center towers fell and the Pentagon burned are in college. So when the news came that bin Laden was dead, it was young people across the country -- from the campuses of Penn State to American University to Vanderbilt to Stanford -- who filled the streets with a chorus of cheers, honking horns and fireworks that lasted well into the wee hours of Monday morning.

For the 9/11 generation -- the label experts give to a subgroup of the millennial generation or generation Net -- it was a celebration of America's renewed strength under a president they helped elect. To them, bin Laden wasn't so much a person as an embodiment of all things scary and evil, said Dr. Patricia Somers, an education professor who has studied college students affected by 9/11.

"They were celebrating a symbol," she told CNN over the phone from her office at the University of Texas in Austin.
The 9/11 generation, Somers said, actually is made up of two subgroups -- children who were in high school or college when the terror attacks occurred, and those who were in elementary school.

The experience for the older children was less filtered; many watched live television reports of the attacks in their living rooms and classrooms. The elementary school children were more sheltered, a conscious decision by parents and educators to spare them from trauma. They experienced 9/11 in later installments, through memorials and anniversaries.

The older group can remember a safe "before," Somers said. The younger ones, 10 years later, may not even recall a time when there was not a war on terror.

Members of the 9/11 generation seem to have more in common with their grandparents than their parents; both experienced attacks from outsiders with a clearly identifiable evil frontman -- Adolf Hitler during World War II and bin Laden during 9/11.

Students who grew up near New York City feel the effects of 9/11 more deeply than others, no matter their age at the time. They are more likely to know someone who died that day. The attacks are part of the region's shared experience.

At Rutgers University, 30 miles from New York, students in the communications department are compiling a narrative of the experiences of children who lost a parent at the World Trade Center. For many, it means profiling people from their hometowns in New Jersey. Those experiences appear to have shaped their reactions to bin Laden's death.

When the news broke, Rutgers junior Megan Schuster immediately thought of the Hargrave sisters -- Corinne, Casey and Amy -- whom she interviewed for the 9/11 Project. The girls' father, T.J., a former soap star and executive at Cantor Fitzgerald, died as the twin towers fell.

Schuster was troubled by the exuberant reaction to bin Laden's death. "I don't like the concept of 'celebrating' death," she said. "Killing bin Laden does not bring back the lives of all those lost on 9/11. I think it teaches the encouragement of death. But death is not the answer."

Senior Travis Fedschun was glued to the television for updates. He said he didn't feel like celebrating, even if capturing bin Laden seemed to be the first thing that had gone right for the United States in a long time. His thoughts turned to the teenager he interviewed for the Rutgers project, Kaila Starita, who lost her father, Anthony. He worked at Cantor Fitzgerald.
"Families don't use the word closure. What's this going to do? It's not closure," Fedschun said. "It was something we could check off our to-do list. I didn't think it would be appropriate to go out and parade around."

Added a fellow student working on the project, senior David Seamon: "It's not for us to say whether or not bin Laden's death will help a fatherless teenager sleep better at night." Seamon interviewed a brother and sister from Colonia, New Jersey, and he is still rewriting their story.

Jennifer Lilonsky is 24, at least a couple years older than the other students working on the project, and knows her perspective is darker because she was "less sheltered" from the horror.

"The truth is that it will never end. That is the goal of terrorism," she said. "This is not justice. There will never be justice. ... Even the end of his life alone brings fear." Experts who have studied the 9/11 generation say its members are more patriotic, more politically aware, more socially conscious and more plugged in than previous generations.

So yes, American flags were waved, not burned, on campuses Sunday night. Chants of "U-S-A! U-S-A!" thundered as if killing a terrorist was an Olympic event.

"We were young at the time of the September 11 attacks, so we have grown up with this constantly in our minds," Chris McDonald, a student at Vanderbilt, told CNN's iReport. "To see justice delivered after such a long, hard wait is a feeling of unspeakable happiness."

Noah Gray, an American University student who joined the celebrants in front of the White House, said a friend summed up how his generation feels in a tweet on Sunday night: "Osama was the first person I was ever taught to hate. I waited 10 years, but now it's done. Unreal."

But not everyone of that generation felt unbridled joy.

Betsy Mitchell, a 19-year-old student at East Carolina University, said she was ridiculed on Facebook for tempering her glee. "Celebrate our military, celebrate America for standing tall, don't celebrate the fall," she said. "I did not like it when the terrorists celebrated killing Americans, I don't like it when we do the same thing. Yes, bin Laden needed to die, but he is still a human being."

Ohio State University student Robert Peterson told iReport that he had second thoughts as "people ran through the streets, blowing noisemakers and shouting in happiness" but he didn't judge the revelers. "I do not feel it is right to celebrate the death of a person, but what we are seeing here is the demise of terrorism. Thus, I am not so much enamored for the death of bin Laden as I am for progression toward a safer, less violent world."
Somers, the University of Texas education professor, led a widely quoted study of 9/11's impact on college students. She said bin Laden's death represents "the end of an era" for them. "But there will still be terrorism, and there will still be terrorist attacks. Everybody was celebrating Sunday night, but then a sobering realization comes to them. It's been 10 years, and it was a rough 10 years," she said.

Somers based her study on what is known as Terror Management Theory. People who face their own mortality after acts of terrorism respond by seeking meaning and purpose in their lives, she explained.

After 9/11, most Americans reacted with shock, disbelief, a need to huddle with friends and family and retreat from gatherings of large groups. Some bought guns or stocked up on duct tape and canned goods. Others searched for information.

But among college students, Somers witnessed more lasting reactions. As the initial shock wore off, many students became intensely patriotic. Then, some questioned their patriotism, asking, "Do we have to accept everything the government does?" They grew interested in politics. Giving blood after the attacks fed a growing civic-mindedness, and they volunteered for charitable groups. Some even changed majors or signed up for military duty.

"Right after 9/11, we had the new normal," Somers said. "Maybe this is the newest normal."