THE DAILY CLIPS

May 7, 2010

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
   The New York Times
   The Wall Street Journal
   USA Today
   The Charlotte Observer
   The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
   Newsweek
   U.S. News & World Report
   Business Week
   Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
   252-328-6481
Editorial: Newest East Carolina graduates set to begin new chapter

Friday, May 7, 2010

As family and friends gather on the East Carolina University campus for this weekend’s commencement exercises, they will do so with a healthy mix of joy and anxiety. The completion of a degree is a monumental life achievement, but to enter the work force in such an uncertain economic environment is sure to inspire some measure of trepidation.

Yet, there is reason for confidence. The students gathered in caps and gowns this weekend are the future leaders of America — teachers, nurses, executives and public servants — and the work they will do is sure to change the world. One expects an East Carolina education has instilled in them determination and resilience, two traits that will serve them well as they begin the next chapter of their lives.

When many of this weekend’s graduates first came to Greenville in the fall of 2006, they found a university coming into its own. Chancellor Steve Ballard had recently marked his second anniversary in his leadership post, and Athletics Director Terry Holland was soon to do the same. The Brody School of Medicine was cementing its reputation as an institution of national recognition, as East Carolina’s undergraduate programs continued to fulfill the school’s mission of service to the region and the state.

Those same shy and timid teenagers will stride confidently across a stage this weekend as young adults, having earned diplomas that will open doors to new possibilities. East Carolina’s reputation precedes it as an institution of excellence, a school whose alumni hold up their alma mater with pride and cherish memories of the time they spent in Greenville.

Sadly, the economic climate is grim for the newly graduated, with unemployment reaching levels unseen in decades. Some may choose to brave the job market while others return to school to pursue higher degrees. For both, the road will almost assuredly be a difficult one, since the search for gainful employment requires a concerted effort on par with the intellectual rigor required for graduate work.

What these young men and women will learn, however, is that their time at East Carolina has imbued in them a commitment to achieve. It is a spirit that empowered a small teachers college in eastern North Carolina to become a nationally recognized institution of higher learning, and it will serve them well as they begin a new stage in their lives, diplomas in hand and memories of East Carolina held tightly forever more.
East Carolina University hosts graduation ceremonies
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, May 6, 2010

About 3,400 East Carolina University students are expected to graduate in ceremonies today. Erskine Bowles, president of the University of North Carolina system, will be the featured speaker at the 101st spring commencement at 10 a.m. today at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium. A band concert will begin at 9:30 a.m. on the field. The university will award an honorary doctor of letters degree to Dorothy Spruill Redford, the retired director of the Somerset Place State Historic Site in Creswell.

Bowles, who announced in February that he will retire at the end of this year or when his successor is chosen, became the leader of the UNC system on Jan. 1, 2006. He is known for his non-stop work ethic, and is widely applauded for bringing increased focus and efficiency to the system.

He was a White House chief of staff in the Clinton administration, and he has been selected by President Obama to co-chair a bi-partisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform charged with proposing long-term strategies for reducing the federal budget deficit and restoring the nation’s fiscal health.

In addition to the university-wide ceremony, many colleges, schools and departments will hold recognition ceremonies today and Saturday.

Guidelines for students and guests and more information is available at www.ecu.edu/commencement.

Departmental ceremonies:
FRIDAY
Minges Coliseum
2 p.m. College of Education
5 p.m. College of Business
8 p.m. Allied Health

Wright Auditorium
2 p.m. School of Communication
5 p.m. Biology
8 p.m. College of Nursing

Hendrix
2 p.m. English
5 p.m. Political Science
8 p.m. Economics
Fletcher
2 p.m. Sociology
5 p.m. Geography

Mendenhall Great Rooms
2 p.m. History

Howell Science B103
3 p.m. Physics

Willis Building
1:30 p.m. International Studies

McGinnis Theater
3 p.m. School of Theatre and Dance

SATURDAY
Minges Coliseum
9 a.m. Human Ecology
12 noon Health and Human Performance
3 p.m. College of Technology and Computer Science

Wright Auditorium
9 a.m. Psychology
12 noon Brody

Hendrix Theater
9 a.m. School of Art & Design
12 noon College of Music
NCSU women get sub duty

RALEIGH -- Two members of N.C. State University's Naval ROTC program are among the first women selected to serve aboard Navy submarines.

The women, Midshipman Megan Bittner, 22, and Officer Candidate Karen Achttyl, 25, received word of their new assignments on Monday after an interview with a four-star admiral in Washington. It came just days after the Department of the Navy announced it would change its policy that forbade women to serve on submarines.

"There was always talk that there would be women on submarines," said Bittner, who is from Chesapeake, Va., and whose father is a retired Navy commander. "I found it interesting, but I didn't want to get my hopes up."

As the talk swelled, Bittner said, she researched life aboard a sub and then toured one.

As for the close quarters with 150 to 170 men for months at a time, Bittner said, "I think as long as I handle myself in a professional way, just as anyone is expected to at work, I don't foresee any problems."

The Navy had been studying for about a decade whether to allow women on submarines, according to Capt. Tim Daseler, the nuclear programs coordinator for NROTC. It's been a touchy subject, with concern about romantic relationships among sailors in such close quarters. Many of the same fears were expressed before women were allowed to serve on Navy ships.

Submarines will be equipped with separate sleeping and living quarters for men and women. In addition, crews will receive extra training for living on a "coed" sub.

Eleven women from the U.S. Naval Academy have already been chosen for submarine assignments. Bittner and Achttyl, who is from Rochester, N.Y., were the first women selected from the NROTC program, which is on college campuses across the country and graduates naval officers. Seven more women in NROTC programs from schools elsewhere in the country will interview with the admiral next week, officials said.

Daseler, who previously commanded a submarine, said he's happy to see women allowed on board.

"It's exciting to be part of the leadership to this make happen," he said. "Now, it's up to us to implement it in a professional manner."

Impressing the admiral

Capt. Stephen Matts, who oversees NCSU's NROTC program and who once commanded a sub, said the Navy looks for "hardworking, smart and dedicated" as well as technologically adept people to serve on its submarines. Bittner and Achttyl, he said, have the intelligence, motivation and talent to work in such an environment.
Daseler sat in on their interviews with Admiral Kirkland Donald, the top Navy officer in the submarine force, and he said their answers were impressive.

"It was a very intense situation," he said. "It's not every day you sit across from a four-star admiral who is sizing you up. He was very impressed with both of them and happy to have them on board."

**Magna cum laude diplomas**

Bittner and Achtyl will be commissioned as ensigns in the U.S. Navy on May 14. A day later, they will graduate from NCSU magna cum laude. Both women will receive bachelor's degrees in chemical engineering.

They will then head to Charleston, S.C., for training at the Navy's nuclear power school for six months, followed by six months at a nuclear prototype site for hands-on submarine experience. They will finish training at the Naval Submarine School in Groton, Conn., and receive their first assignment aboard a submarine in the fall of 2011.

[leah.friedman@newsobserver.com](mailto:leah.friedman@newsobserver.com) or 919-829-4546
Awkward out

Lee Fowler has been a solid athletic director at N.C. State. His ouster seems both unfair and unwise.

It is going to cost the athletic department at N.C. State University about $900,000 to pay off the contact of Lee Fowler, who has been fired as athletic director. He deserves the money, because he's upheld his end of the bargain of 10 years ago — to run a clean program and to oversee the expansion and improvement of facilities while balancing all the challenges of setting priorities, emphasizing academics and being a superb public representative of the university.

The decision is apparently the result of pressure from big donors to the university's sports programs, who weren't happy with the Wolfpack teams' performances in the last few years, particularly in men's basketball and football. There's some irony there, because football coach Tom O'Brien, charged with rebuilding a troubled program, has his team on the upswing, as does basketball coach (and NCSU alum) Sidney Lowe. Perennially powerful athletic programs aren't built on short notice, and are subject to ebb and flow.

But N.C. State athletics weren't exactly in a downward spiral when, The News & Observer reported, interim Chancellor Jim Woodward, who came in after the resignation of James O'blinger, told Fowler he needed to look for a job. New Chancellor Randy Woodson's arrival on campus came shortly thereafter. He did the formal deed with regard to Fowler's departure, a tough baptism in decision-making. Apparently, it had been no secret that disgruntled Wolfpack supporters had been throwing high, hard ones at Fowler for a while.

Woodson took responsibility, and he did so with admirable candor and without trying to dodge the issues involved. Even those who disagree with this decision have to grant him that. Now he must look carefully for the new athletic director, trusting his own judgment.

Woodson's quite right in saying that the university should expect a strong performance in athletics. NCSU is a major university with a great history in sports and ought to compete at the highest level. And it is a reality that the millions and millions of dollars that must be spent, and raised from boosters whose patience often runs short, have given coaches a shorter rebuilding period than they might have had years ago, when the money wasn't so ridiculous.

That said, the university doesn't cover itself in glory when it dismisses someone like Lee Fowler, who worked hard to unite all the members of the university community and alums, who had the respect of the faculty, who did by all accounts (even those of his critics) a terrific job in overseeing some facilities upgrades that have given NCSU a showplace for football, and in partnership with the Carolina Hurricanes (and taxpayers) also a palace for basketball.

What in the world, then, did the man do wrong? Some boosters are apparently grumbling about recent football teams. Others expected a quick resurrection of the basketball program. The not-so-subtle translation of that dissatisfaction is a fear on the part of university officials that big contributors will tighten their purses.

One of Fowler's great assets at this point in his career is his experience. He's witnessed the explosion in both the financial side of college athletics and in the pressure on all involved to win. He's demanded the best academically of N.C. State. Some school will be lucky to land him. N.C. State would have been wise to keep him.
A Campus Where Unlearning Is First

By MICHAEL SLACKMAN

CAIRO — When Rafik Gindy graduated from high school, he knew he wanted to become an engineer. So he enrolled at the American University in Cairo and prepared to immerse himself in math and science.

But the university had a different idea.

Mr. Gindy knew what he wanted to be, but did not exactly know who he was. That was what the university wanted him to think about, in a class called “The Human Quest: Exploring the Big Questions.”

“I thought identity was just your name, your culture, but now I know it’s really complex,” said Mr. Gindy, a slender freshman who shook his head at that revelation.

Who am I?

What does it mean to be human?

These are the kinds of questions posed to undergraduate students entering this 90-year-old university during what the president, David D. Arnold, called a first year of “disorientation.” During disorientation, the students — 85 percent of them Egyptians — are taught to learn in ways quite at odds with the traditional method of teaching in this country, where instructors lecture, students memorize and tests are exercises in regurgitation.

“It’s different here because there is room for people to express themselves,” said Manar Mohsen, a junior majoring in political science and journalism. “It is not that simple outside, where it is more about conformity.”

Egypt, like much of the Arab world, demands conformity in many corners of life. Education is based on the concept of rote learning, and creativity in the classroom is often discouraged.
Students at Cairo University say they memorize and recite, never analyze and hypothesize.

So the idea of a liberal arts education aimed at developing critical thinking skills is often new to the students. That can make for a difficult transition. Plagiarism is often a problem at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, officials here said, because the students — accustomed to rote learning — see nothing wrong with spitting back someone else’s work and have never been held to rigorous academic standards.

“For a lot of the kids here, the idea that you are supposed to have your own ideas is a novelty,” said Lisa Anderson, the university provost who is on leave from Columbia University. “There was nothing in their previous education that would have exposed them to these standards.”

American University is a private, elite school, although university officials sometimes recoil at the elite label. Yet, the school is expensive and so is generally out of reach for all but the wealthiest families and a handful of scholarship students. Tuition and fees for Egyptian students run about $19,600 a year, a princely sum in a country where about half the population lives on about $2 a day.

The campus exudes affluence. Students joke about the “Gucci corridor,” a spot where well-coiffed students gather each afternoon. There is no cafeteria, only expensive fast-food stands.

“We are all rich and spoiled,” said one student, upset that more of her classmates were not more politically aware. But in some respects, the elite label is a strength. American University plays a central role as a sort of intellectual boot camp for young people who will become leaders in government and the economy.

“If we teach the elite to be good citizens, that’s not a bad thing,” Ms. Anderson said.

Nabil Fahmy, the former longtime ambassador to the United States, said that over his nine years in Washington, at least 40 percent of the embassy staff was made up of American University graduates, as was he.

The university was founded in 1919 by a group of Presbyterian missionaries. Unlike the satellite campuses of prestigious American universities in oil-rich Persian Gulf states, it is quite homegrown and often reflects the community around it.

The university was located originally in Tahrir Square, in the center of Cairo, a hyper-urban landscape where the air is thick, the din overwhelming and the mosaic of Egyptian life on every corner. That was part of the university’s appeal.
But over the years it has grown, and now serves 5,000 undergraduates on an architecturally inspiring, if geographically isolated, $400 million, 260-acre campus in a suburb called New Cairo. Instead of urban grime the campus is surrounded by villas and developments with names like Golden Heights.

The location redefined the university just as the university was beginning to redefine itself, as a first-rate university rather than a finishing school for Egypt’s elite. But as the school has grown, so has a conflict within the university itself: can it change its mission while retaining its liberal arts core and preserving classes like the Big Questions?

Some say it needs to move away from that way of thinking.

“We are moving more and more into professional schools, like business, engineering, sciences,” said Mr. Fahmy, the former ambassador, who is the founding dean of a new school of global affairs and public policy.

“The challenge we have now is we have moved from a small college that thought it was a university, to a university that has to change its thinking from being a small college,” he said, defining a view that is anathema to some others on campus.

There are other pressures, too, coming from a society that holds engineers in such high esteem that the profession is also a courtesy title, like doctor.

“The humanities in general, and philosophy specifically, are seen as either frivolous or, at the very least, not financially prudent, by many of the very people who seek what makes A.U.C. unique,” said Nathaniel Bowditch, an assistant professor of philosophy. Dr. Bowditch argued that “learning how to think rather than what to think prepares a person for all professions,” and that without that “the academy becomes nothing more than a trade school.”

For now, the university leadership says it remains committed to its core mission, and will continue to ensure that incoming Egyptian students relearn how to learn, officials here said. “We want our students to be imaginative in their fields,” Ms. Anderson said.

So for the time being, at least, the Big Questions class remains safe, which seems to suit the students just fine.

“I took the course because my brother took it two years ago,” said Mr. Gindy, the freshman construction engineering major. “I like how it explained things we never knew, like how the world began.”

END XXX