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ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard answers questions from the media regarding the expansion of Conference USA on Friday afternoon. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

**Ballard hopes to add 14th school**  
By Nathan Summers  
Saturday, May 5, 2012

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard took the announcement of five new members joining Conference USA in stride on Friday afternoon.

The East Carolina University chancellor, in fact, seemed ready to keep the process rolling and ultimately rebuild a conference of 18 to 20 schools.

The addition of Texas-San Antonio, Louisiana Tech, Florida International, North Texas and Charlotte means a 13-member football league, but Ballard wants to keep moving on from there.

“The 14th school is the next step, and I hope by the second or third week in May we would have the 14th school identified,” Ballard said on Friday inside the Spilman Building on campus. “I don’t think that’s going to be hard. I think one or two schools are going to say yes in the very near term.

“Step two is a 16- or maybe even an 18-team league. If it were up to me, I’d have that ready for the fall 2013 schedule.”

Beefing up to 13 members admittedly pleases Ballard, but it immediately creates the new question of which institution No. 14 will be.
Ballard noted that while some of the local options are nice, the decision will be for the good of the league.

“The North Carolina people have been strong for Appalachian (to be included) and Appalachian is not currently in the mix,” Ballard said. “Every one of the current (C-USA) schools could think about other schools that they might be interested in, but this shows there was a big commitment by Conference USA to kind of go back to an eastern and a western or an eastern and a central-western or southwestern flavor and geographical dispersion.”

Ballard specifically wants Old Dominion to come on board, but said there are a number of schools in the east that make great candidates.

The ECU chancellor said C-USA commissioner Britton Banowsky is in regular communication with those schools.

“I’m happy with the markets,” Ballard said. “Except for Shreveport (La.) — and ultimately they’ll be in the western division and not the east part of Conference USA — these are major markets that will ultimately bring more revenue to Conference USA. And I’m especially happy with the regional rivalries — ECU playing Charlotte and Old Dominion and Marshall, and other eastern schools down the road — I think that’s a very good thing.”

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East Carolina University fans may be disappointed by last week’s announcement that Conference USA would add five new members by 2015. School officials publicly expressed aspirations to join the Big East Conference, going so far as to formally apply in September, so staying in the current alignment will be seen as fairly significant setback.

However, with changes coming to the Bowl Championship Series selection process and the likely elimination of the onerous “automatic qualifier” designation, the main goal of conference affiliation will be achieved. It was imperative that East Carolina put its main revenue sport, football, in position to compete for championships and share the BCS windfall, and the school may well see that achieved by staying in CUSA.

When the tectonic shift of conference realignment began changing the landscape of college athletics in December 2009, East Carolina officials began in earnest to position the school for advancement. CUSA was excluded from the BCS cartel, which means its teams have a more difficult path to play for the national championship and to share in the revenue generated by the television contract.

Consider that the six automatic-qualifier conferences split $145.2 million in the 2010-11 bowl season while those like CUSA were resigned to divide $24.7 million. Entry into an “AQ” conference would mean millions for East Carolina annually, money that could dramatically improve funding for academic programs as well as athletic facilities and initiatives. East Carolina officials made no secret of their interest in joining the Big East and secured pledges from state politicians like Gov. Beverly Perdue to aid that effort.

That was for naught as the Big East lost schools to the ACC and Big XII Conference, before adding nine new members — none of which named East Carolina. CUSA then looked to a union with the Mountain West Conference before announcing Friday the addition of UNC Charlotte, Florida International, Louisiana Tech, North Texas and the University of Texas at San Antonio. All will join in 2013, except Charlotte which will follow two years later.
That plan is unlikely to excite Pirate fans, who long for regional rivalries and more manageable road trips to away games. Yet, if potential changes to the BCS create a clear path to the national title game and a more equitable distribution of revenues to conferences like CUSA, then the goals of realignment will have been met from East Carolina’s perspective. That may not be ideal, but it represents an improvement over the status quo.
Investigation of ferret use requested

“We’re not violating federal law. We are within the USDA Animal Welfare law guidelines.”

Scott Gordon
ECU scientist

By K.J. Williams
Monday, May 7, 2012

The use of live ferrets for medical student training on an emergency pediatric procedure at East Carolina University’s Brody School of Medicine is the focus of a letter to a state agency requesting an investigation into the legality of the approval process that was followed.

The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) has charged ECU’s Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee with inadequate oversight of an investigator’s recommendation of the training procedure, and has alleged the committees should not have approved it.

ECU officials call the allegations baseless.

The allegations are included in a letter dated April 26 from the PCRM to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in Raleigh.

Dr. John Pippin, PCRM’s director of academic affairs, said pediatric simulators, a mannequin-like device, are better suited for teaching endotracheal intubation, a procedure for inserting a breathing tube.

He also said the federal Animal Welfare Act requires medical research committees to show animals will not be exposed to any unavoidable discomfort or pain during scientific research.

In a Daily Reflector article published last year on the use of ferrets, an ECU veterinarian said the animals are sedated and receive anesthesia prior to their use so they aren’t awake or traumatized.

According to PCRM’s letter, the use of ferrets isn’t substantiated because pediatric simulators are an example of “excellent validated and widely implemented non-animal methods for the training of endotracheal intubation.”
The chairman of the ECU committee, scientist Scott Gordon, said the principal investigator has to provide a written narrative explaining why alternative methods without animals aren’t as effective.

“And in this case, the investigator actually provides a lot of evidence that the alternative models are not as good,” he said. “We’re not violating federal law. We are within the USDA Animal Welfare law guidelines.”

Gordon said the investigator provided documentation to the committee that use of the pediatric simulators is not as realistic as using a ferret, a “good model that can’t be duplicated by the non-animal model.”

He said living tissue feels and reacts differently to the procedure than a simulator.

Dr. Gregory Davis, an anesthesiologist in Greenville who joined Pippin and Dr. Roberta Gray of Asheville in signing the letter calling for the investigation, disagrees that ferret use has advantages.

“There are non-alive animal methods that give you, these days, much better training in securing an airway,” Davis said.

Pippin said that ECU’s principal investigator “could not have provided a justification for animal use because 94 percent of the pediatrics programs in the U.S. and Canada do not use animals, ferrets, or anything else for these purposes.”

The letter to the USDA states that Brody is the only medical school in North Carolina that uses ferrets for this training procedure.

Doug Boyd, a Brody spokesman, said, “ECU experts believe this method yields the best training experience and we are working with colleagues here and at other universities to refine simulation methods to yield similar results.”

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Another class of Pirates set sail into life beyond college with commencement ceremonies at East Carolina University on Friday morning.

“What a great day to be a Pirate,” Chancellor Steve Ballard said as he conferred degrees in Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium to about 3,800 students in the Class of 2012.

Roughly 2,860 bachelor degrees and 1,200 graduate degrees and certificates were awarded, with some students receiving more than one. Members of the Class of 1962 joined the ceremony to mark their 50th reunion.

“Our new journey is about to begin,” senior class officer Casey Anthony said. “We are finally ready to set sail. Congratulations Pirates, we did it!”

“I’m excited and relieved to be done,” said graduate Amanda Lapp, who earned a bachelor of science degree in biology.

“I feel very proud,” her grandfather, Bob Lapp, said.

Vidant Health CEO Dave McCrae, who holds a graduate degree from ECU, delivered the commencement address.

“Here we are at the end of one road and the beginning of another,” McCrae told graduates. “Be a lifelong learner.”

McCrae gave career advice on entering a rapidly changing workplace.
“Don’t expect everything to fall into place right away. Let your career evolve and grow,” he said.

Graduate James Davenport earned a bachelor’s degree in economics and has a job lined up with a supply chain logistics consulting company.

“It’s definitely a bittersweet feeling. You want to grow up but you don’t want to leave college life behind,” Davenport said. “I was worried, but I landed a job on the first interview. I guess the job market is turning around.”

For Lane Young, commencement was his first time on ECU’s campus. The distance education graduate earned a master’s degree in business administration from his home in South Carolina.

“It was wonderful,” said Young, who brought his wife Jami and his two children to the ceremony. “It was a good experience to have the kids here.”

Young said ECU’s distance education program “seemed like a good fit.”

ECU continues to be a leader in distance education, teaching, nursing and medicine, university representatives said.

“The world is changing constantly,” McCrae said. “But change is necessary; it brings opportunity.”

“Navigate creatively through your world,” outgoing chairman of the faculty Marianna Walker told graduates. “Continue to learn and remember to serve.”

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567 or follow her on Twitter @JackieDrakeGDR.
Molly Pleasants’ path to becoming a physical therapist included working in the business offices of a large car dealership and weight loss franchise, in the benefits office at an academic medical center and a series of jobs with a temporary agency.

But a visit with an ailing aunt seven years ago introduced her to the possibility of a career in health care. She graduated Friday with a doctorate in physical therapy from East Carolina University.

“For a long time I didn’t know about the profession,” she said.

In 2005, her aunt had knee-replacement surgery and went to a rehabilitation center in Columbia, S.C. After meeting the physical therapist working with her aunt, Pleasants decided to look into it.

“From that one visit, it started the process and thought toward this,” she said. She will take the national board examination this summer and in September will begin work at Vidant Medical Center in Greenville.

With an undergraduate degree in communications from Queens College, she began taking pre-requisites for ECU’s physical therapy program at Central Piedmont Community College near her home in Charlotte in 2007. Just a year earlier, she had given birth to her second child, Stephen, who is now 5. She also has a daughter, Grace, who is 13. Pleasants worked as a tutor while completing enough credits to earn an associate’s degree.

She only considered North Carolina universities with a physical therapy program.

“It felt like East Carolina was where I needed to be,” she said. “It was always my first choice.” She didn’t even apply to a second school. Her grandparents are from Rowland in southeastern North Carolina, and she had spent many summers at their home. She also was awarded two scholarships at ECU.

Being a single mother became even more hectic after she started the program and moved in 2009 to Greenville from Charlotte. Her parents live in Charlotte and helped with her with child care.
While Pleasants finished her final year of physical therapy class work, research and clinical rotations, her daughter has spent the 2011-12 school year with her grandparents to attend Randolph Middle School, an international baccalaureate magnet school in Charlotte. Pleasants’ son has been with her and is a kindergartner at Lakeforest Elementary in Greenville.

“Typically we’re in class all day, every day, a lot of the time, so on (a typical day) I get home, I get him, do dinner, clean up and get ready for his bedtime,” she said. “By that time, it’s 8:30 or 9 o’clock, and I have to study. That’s been the most difficult part: time management. You really have to plan.

“It’s been a struggle,” Pleasants said. “Mentally, at times, it has taken its toll and made me question if I was doing the right thing. I have to keep in the back of my mind this will be over, and I’ll be a better mother and I can give them the attention they need and I’ll have financial stability to provide for them, better than I’ve had in the past. So that’s what keeps me going.”

Although pressed to fit in extracurricular activities, she competed in a sprint triathlon in September and a half-marathon in November. She ran in the Run, Walk and Roll 5K and has volunteered at the on-campus massage clinics that physical therapy students offer throughout the year.

“Somehow it has all worked out,” she said. “I have a friend in my class who has just been available when I’ve needed her. In a pinch, she will volunteer to assist me, and I really appreciate that.”

Her fellow physical therapy students were supportive and tried to arrange group or team meetings around her schedule. Faculty members also worked with her on the rare occasion when she was late or had to miss class for her children.

“Molly is an exceptional person and student. Despite difficult circumstances she has persevered and performed at a very high level academically and clinically throughout our curriculum,” said Dr. Walter Jenkins, chair of physical therapy in the College of Allied Health Sciences. “She is always positive and has been a wonderful representative of our program for the past three years.”

Her doctoral research centered on neuropathic pain and changes in proteins after spinal cord injury. She presented at the state physical therapy conference and at the ECU neuroscience symposium and research and creative activity week.
Pleasants talks by phone with her aunt, who now lives in Texas and has been cared for by other physical therapists after more surgeries.

“She is walking around, and she credits a lot of it to physical therapy,” Pleasants said.

**Child center is named for alumnna**

The ECU Child Development Center has been named for the late Nancy W. Darden.

Darden’s estate donated a substantial gift to establish the first endowed professorship in the ECU Department of Child Development and Family Relations in the College of Human Ecology.

On April 21, the college celebrated Darden’s life and generosity by naming the Nancy W. Darden Child Development Center in her memory. The naming coincided with the 100th anniversary of the ECU home economics education and family consumer sciences program, from which Darden graduated.

The Darden bequest qualifies for state matching funds from the Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund created by the North Carolina General Assembly. Remaining funds from the gift will be used for scholarships for undergraduate students preparing for careers working with children and families.

Darden was born and raised in Creedmoor. Following her 1956 graduation from ECU, she taught high school home economics in Durham for several years. She then co-owned and operated “L’Nanz,” a fashion design company in Durham. From 1978 to 1998, she managed the Creedmoor office of a Durham real estate company, eventually opening her own agency in Creedmoor.

Darden also founded the Ruth Home, a transitional home for women with drug and alcohol abuse problems, and Angel Spirit, a nonprofit organization that provided financial backing for the Ruth Home.

In 2007, Darden established the Nancy W. Darden Scholarship in Criminal Justice to provide financial support to ECU students majoring in criminal justice.

ECU Women’s Roundtable named Darden one of the 100 Incredible ECU Women in 2007. She was honored as one of the 100 Legacy Leaders for the College of Human Ecology in 2009. Darden died in January 2011.
The Mid-East Commission recently installed new officers during its 45th annual banquet, held at Rock Springs Center.

Greenville Mayor Allen Thomas installed Merrill Flood as Mid-East chairman, Doug Mercer as first vice chairman, McCoy Pierce as second vice chairman, Walter Willet as secretary, and Dayle Vaughan as treasurer.

Flood presented a plaque and framed certificate to outgoing Mid-East Chairman Joe Jernigan Sr.

The Mid-East Commission is an organization that works with businesses and municipalities in Bertie, Martin, Pitt, Hertford and Beaufort counties to enhance the quality of life of its citizens.

Ted Morris, who works in the ECU Office of Engagement, Innovation and Economic Development, gave the keynote address and said he wants East Carolina University to be the honey that attracts the worker bees to eastern North Carolina.

Morris stressed that jobs could not be created in the region without workers who are educated and have the skills to perform the needed tasks.

ECU has the programs in technology, computers and science to produce tomorrow’s leaders, he said. But in many instances graduates pursue opportunities to work in another state or country.
He said that is why Mid-East along with its partners need to develop new businesses to keep ECU graduates in the region.

“I want ECU to be the reason they come and learn, and be the reason they stay in eastern North Carolina,” he said.

Morris said the video game industry has become one of the most profitable businesses in the country.

“Many people don’t know that North Carolina has an incredible presence in the gaming company,” Morris said. “We actually have 30 of the world’s top 50 gaming companies in North Carolina, and they are not in Greenville. Most of them are in the Triangle.”

Morris said many of the people who work in the state’s video gaming industry are ECU graduates.

But he said since there are no film studios or gaming companies in the region, these graduates have no choice but to go somewhere else.

He said the eastern North Carolina region needs to do everything it can to attract or start new businesses where they can hire as many people as possible.

“We need to create as many new enterprises as possible,” Morris said. “We need to send the message to kids that we value creativity. That’s the one thing I’m most passionate about.”
LOS ANGELES - Kevin Williamson was at his lowest ebb. The North Carolina native was trying to hustle his way into Hollywood in the early ’90s, but he was jobless, broke and housesitting for a friend after his unemployment ran out.

While walking his friend’s dog, Williamson would see another young man doing the same thing.

“I’m a writer,” Williamson said. “I’m an actor,” the other guy said. They wished each other luck.

Eventually, things would work out pretty well for both. Williamson hit it big as the screenwriter of 1996’s “Scream,” 1997’s “I Know What You Did Last Summer” and the teen-drama series “Dawson’s Creek.” That other guy was Jon Hamm, star of AMC’s “Mad Men.”

“We’ve stayed in touch,” Williamson said. “I made it before he did, and I’d invite him to parties, help him get auditions. It took a while, but he hit it big. He’s a good guy who worked hard. He deserves it.”

Williamson’s greatest successes came in the late 1990s, starting with “Scream.” He had a fallow stretch after that, but is back with two shows on the CW network – “The Vampire Diaries” (which wraps its third season on Thursday) and “The Secret Circle.”
To that lineup he’ll add a show in development. Settling into an easy chair in his Hollywood home, Williamson offered a visitor candy from a bowl on a glass-top coffee table held up by a boat propeller (a nod to his family of fishermen). Along with the expected assortment of lollipops and chocolate drops, the bowl contained a bunch of plastic eyes.

“My new show on Fox is about a serial killer who removes eyes,” he said. “So to congratulate me on selling it, a friend of mine gave me a bunch of plastic eyes as a gift.”

Williamson was born to a fisherman’s family in New Bern in 1965. Upon entering Pamlico County High School, he and his friends took over the drama club. He was “the nerdy A/V guy wheeling the cart whenever someone needed a TV monitor.”

Williamson went on to East Carolina University, where his first year found him taking set-design classes alongside future Oscar winner Sandra Bullock.

‘Just do it’

His classmates recall him as the life of the party. But in his telling, he had difficulty getting out of his shell. Edgar Loessin, founder of ECU’s theater department, took Williamson under his wing and encouraged him to audition for everything including musicals, even though he couldn’t sing.

“Just do it,” Williamson said Loessin told him. “Learn how to stand in front of people and fail.”

He was not, he admits, the most avid student. But that changed when he began studying the Sanford Meissner Technique (an internalized method of acting centered on connecting with emotional truths). Williamson said it was “perfect for an overly sensitive young gay boy from Goose Creek.” The work was intense, and he “went total theater geek.”

After graduating from ECU in 1987, Williamson moved to New York to try to break into theater. Between big-city culture shock and the difficulty of landing parts, he was miserable, spending more time hustling odd jobs than acting. He spent four years bouncing back and forth between New York and North Carolina, doing production-assistant work in Wilmington and the occasional bit part in soap operas.

After landing a job as an assistant to a music-video director, Williamson began to focus on the behind-the-scenes part of the process. He’d always written, but meeting some professional writers on the set of “Another World” started him writing more seriously. By the early ’90s, Williamson was in Los Angeles
housesitting for his friend. He’d actually sold a script called “Killing Mrs. Tingle.” But the fee wasn’t much, and the movie was never made.

It was during this time that Williamson discovered an open window one night and became convinced someone had broken in and was lying in wait. Alarmed, he dialed up a friend as he searched the house, and they bantered back and forth about serial killers and slasher movies like “Halloween” and “Friday the 13th.”

There was no intruder, but the scary experience started the wheels turning. Soon after that, Williamson locked himself away for a weekend and wrote a screenplay he called “Scary Movie.” As inspired by that phone call, the opening scene showed a young woman on the phone with a serial killer who eventually burst in to murder her.

Other influences were at work, too. In New York, Williamson had waited tables next to the theater where Stephen Sondheim’s “Into the Woods” was playing and saw it almost every day (Sondheim would let the waiters in for free). He took inspiration from that musical’s deconstruction of fairy tales to do a similar reworking of horror movies. And Williamson’s own real-life desperation made it all the more manic.

‘Scary Movie’ to fame

“I was so broke I had to borrow $15 to get a cartridge to print it out,” he said. “But things happened fast.”

A bidding war broke out for “Scary Movie,” and the Weinstein Brothers bought it for $400,000. Retitled “Scream,” the movie was a huge hit when it reached theaters in late 1996, eventually grossing more than $170 million worldwide.

Williamson was off and running. “I Know What You Did Last Summer,” based on a script Williamson adapted from the Lois Duncan novel, followed in 1997. Then came “Dawson’s Creek,” which debuted in 1998. Williamson named the series after an actual creek near Oriental – the place where high school kids would go to party – and he based many of the episodes on things that had happened during his own wonder years. It, too, was wildly successful, launching then-unknown actresses Michelle Williams and Katie Holmes.

That rush of success gave Williamson the clout to revive his long-dormant first script, although he had to change the name to “Teaching Mrs. Tingle” (because of the Columbine High School massacre). Williamson directed the 1999 movie starring Helen Mirren, and it bombed. But that hardly seemed to matter. “My 20s were slow and starving,” he said. “That all changed as soon as I hit 30 and wrote ‘Scream.’ That’s the overnight part, and it was bang-bang-bang for a few years. Then there was a spiral downward because I was so overworked and overtired. I
went crazy. I was creatively spent, couldn’t write. I’d get wrapped up in projects I didn’t care about, and they went south. I did not have the mojo to get it done. I also had to deal with my personal life. My mom got sick; some relationships went sour. Life got in the way.”

After a nearly decade-long funk, redemption arrived from an unlikely source. The CW network was looking to get a piece of the vampire craze trigged by the “Twilight” series and wanted Williamson to take a crack at adapting a book series called “The Vampire Diaries.” Though he was initially skeptical, Williamson decided that working through personal issues by creating a show about people literally coming back to life was something he wanted to do.

“‘Vampire Diaries’ is like a perfect combination of everything I’ve lived through,” he said. “It’s an epic love story that reminds me of every Judith Krantz novel I read when I was 10 – thank you, mom! Every episode is epic, which is the key word on that show. It’s emotional, and my favorite genre is emotional horror. I like the emotion of horror, but I don’t like horror movies. You have to pull me in, wrap me up in it, make me care and then scare the hell out of me. Put together ‘Dawson’s Creek’ and ‘Scream,’ and you’ve got ‘Vampire Diaries.’”

Where Williamson describes his 30s as “glamorous,” nowadays he leads a more sedate existence. He comes back to North Carolina frequently to visit his father and his older brother John (his mother died in 2004), and he has a circle of Hollywood friends he’s very generous with.

“Kevin always remembers everybody’s birthday, and the cupcakes always show up,” says Andrew Rona, president of Silver Pictures, who has been working with him since “Scream.”

When he’s not writing and developing shows for television, Williamson is content to spend his time watching them.

“Nothing beats laying on the couch watching TV every night,” Williamson said. “I’ve got a good core group of friends, we go out to dinner, and then I come home and watch TV. It’s boring, but it’s life. I’m not good at highs and lows. The bottom is too far to climb out of, and it’s too easy to fall from the top. I’d rather be comfortable in the middle, so I’ll just try to keep it there.”

A version of this story originally appeared in the Spring 2012 issue of East magazine. It is reprinted by permission.
Basketball, A-10 takes a back seat to Charlotte 49ers football in conference shift
By Tom Sorensen

Some universities are football schools and some are basketball schools. Charlotte might be the only football school that has yet to play a game.

The administration’s support for the sport was evident Friday when the 49ers announced they were abandoning the Atlantic 10 and joining Conference USA. The move has nothing to do with basketball. It offers no advantages to the basketball program.

This is about football. Charlotte will play its first football game in 2013 and its first conference – and Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS means big time) game – in 2015.

Conference USA includes East Carolina, and Charlotte-East Carolina should evolve into a big-time rivalry. If the 49ers want a primer, they ought to drive to Greenville. The Pirates have among the best fans, facilities and traditions in North Carolina.

Football might not be the reason school officials filled the ballroom in the Student Activities Center Friday. But it is the reason fans stood 10 deep outside the door.

The Atlantic 10 experiment, which began in 2005-06 and will end after the 2012-13 season, was a basketball failure.

The conference has a cache in Philadelphia. But no Charlotte kid has ever said, “Mom, dad, someday I want to play in the same conference as St. Bonaventure.”

Xavier has a superior program, and Temple, which beat Duke last season, makes passes most teams don’t even see. Yet despite consistently good, and loud, support from Charlotte students, there always were plenty of good seats available for Atlantic 10 games.

This is how empty Halton Arena was for the Temple game: If the new professional lacrosse team had attracted such a crowd, the Charlotte Hounds would have been disappointed.
So Charlotte the city has little interest in the Atlantic 10. It also has little interest in 49ers’ basketball.

The program has no identity. The team is as faceless as the Charlotte Bobcats, and its winning percentage is not much better.

The 49ers are as likely to run a player off as they are to beat somebody. Coach Alan Major has had only two seasons. That’s not enough, of course. Three is.

In 2013-14 the 49ers will compete in Conference USA in every sport but football. I figured the basketball team had one automatic victory on the schedule. Then Florida International fired coach Isiah Thomas.

The Golden Panthers joined the conference Friday. Also joining were North Texas, Texas-San Antonio and Louisiana Tech. Along with East Carolina, incumbents include Marshall, Rice, Southern Mississippi, Tulane, Tulsa, Alabama-Birmingham and Texas-El Paso.

Three of the schools have hyphens.

I don’t see a natural basketball rival. But, again, the move has nothing to do with basketball, and I applaud it.

Fans already have shifted their allegiance from basketball to football. Now the school has, too.

The football program had been looking for a place to land. Playing as an independent would have worked for a season or two because the 49ers are new and everything will work for a season or two. But what good is a team without standings?

The 49ers are part of something now, and the jump to the FBS is huge for football coach Brad Lambert.

High school players watch bowl games. The 49ers can now promise them an opportunity to compete in one.
Yow’s challenge: Put N.C. State athletic department on top

By Andrew Westney The News and Observer

After taking over as athletic director at N.C. State in June 2010, Debbie Yow declared her five-year plan for the program: to become a perennial top 25 school as measured by the Directors’ Cup rankings, which award points for national places in varsity sports.

To achieve that goal, the school would need successful teams across the board – not only the big-ticket sports, football and men’s basketball, but also the Olympic sports, from swimming and wrestling to women’s basketball and soccer.

All of State’s 23 teams would have to step up. OK was not going to be enough; passable would no longer get a pass.

“I think being mediocre is boring,” Yow said in a recent telephone interview. “It’s a disservice to the university as well. It’s a disservice to anybody who contributes to athletics. I don’t think people say, ‘Gee, let me make a gift to Wolfpack athletics, because I think they’re going to be mediocre.’ So I don’t make any apologies for expecting worth and movement toward excellence in each of our sports.”

Yow doesn’t think any athletic program has been able to establish itself in the top 25 in such a short timeframe, and she knows that ambition entails risk.

“I’d rather shoot high and fail than shoot low and cover ourselves,” she said. “I don’t want to celebrate being number 40 or number 35, I just can’t! So we’re going to go for it.”

The effort to raise the profile of the program involves money for facilities and travel and increased pressure on all the program’s coaches to win.

But Yow said it starts with the school’s revenue sports, football and men’s basketball.

“When you’re thinking as an AD about Olympic sports and what you might be able to achieve so you have an across the board, very strong, top 25 athletics
program, it always starts with football and men’s basketball,” Yow said. “So your investment initially has to be there.”

The men’s basketball team’s recent Sweet 16 run will benefit Olympic sports – a term she prefers to “nonrevenue sports” as “more respectful,” Yow said.

“We haven’t had a lot of positive national exposure recently, so it’s going to be good for all 23 varsity teams.”

But with the school willing to step up its commitment to all of its teams, Yow expects every coach to take on the challenge of becoming a top national program.

Gymnastics coach Mark Stevenson said that level of accountability hasn’t been the norm for Olympic sports at N.C. State.

“I’ve never been in a position where anybody said I was going to win,” Stevenson said. “Usually, it was, ‘We don’t expect you to win, because we’re not supporting you enough.’”

Stevenson became a head coach at N.C. State in 1980 – he shared a hiring party with Jim Valvano – and has seen administrations come and go.

“Nobody has stood in front of me like Debbie did and said, ‘I’m going to support you and you’re going to be a top 10 team, or you will find a different job,’ ” Stevenson said. He added that Yow might not have used those exact words, but he got the message.

“There’s that little bit of extra pressure, and I’m OK with that.”

Stevenson thinks that support is already paying dividends. In 2010, the team finished sixth in the NCAA regionals. In 2011, the team moved up to fourth, and this year finished third, coming within two-tenths of a point of advancing to the NCAA finals. Stevenson was named 2012 Southeast Regional Coach of the Year at the tournament in Raleigh.

“We’ve seen an increase in our funding, and just from last year to this year we moved up nine spaces (in national placement). We’re finishing the season 17th in the country. Last year we were 26th.”
The Wolfpack baseball team is also in the midst of a promising season. Going into Saturday’s games, the team (31-12, 16-8 ACC) was ranked No. 17, led by freshman pitcher Carlos Rodon and freshman third baseman Trea Turner.

Coach Elliott Avent credited increased funding and improved facilities for helping the team recruit better, not just against ACC schools but other prominent regional programs such as East Carolina and two-time defending NCAA champion South Carolina. He also said for a team to succeed, the coach in charge has to be the motivating force.

“(Yow) has a great expectation and a great desire to win, and she backs that up with a tireless work ethic. But I think the commitment to excellence and the desire to win always lie within the coaches themselves and the programs themselves.”

Approaching the end of her second year at the school, Yow believes the athletic program as a whole has taken the first steps on a long road to achieving its goals. In 2011, N.C. State finished 67th in the final Directors’ Cup standings after finishing 89th in 2010.

This year, N.C. State ranked 41st as of April 26, when the latest results were announced. But the school still falls short of its local rivals, UNC and Duke, who are established as consistent top 20 programs. In the April 26 list, UNC ranked eighth after finishing sixth in 2011, and Duke ranked 17th after finishing fifth in 2011.

**Money a key**

The main obstacle to reaching the top, Yow said, is money.

“We’re so far below the average per-student-athlete investment among the ACC publics, it’s ridiculous,” she said. “We’re way down. We’d need another 7 million in funding annually to reach the average.” Yow based her assessment on data provided to the federal government as part of the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) and other financial information analyzed by her department.

Like N.C. State, UNC and Duke rely on the two revenue sports as the foundation for their success in other sports.

“All of our Olympic sports do not generate revenue, so our revenue sources are from football and men’s basketball, as well as from the ACC with TV revenue,” said Beth Miller, senior associate athletic director for Olympic sports at UNC. UNC fields 28 varsity teams, second most in the ACC to Boston College’s 29.
Bubba Cunningham, athletic director at UNC, said the university focuses on the Directors’ Cup and ACC championships as primary benchmarks for overall athletic achievement. UNC has continued to finish high in the Directors’ Cup standings despite spending less than the ACC average per student-athlete, an accomplishment Cunningham credits to the school’s coaching staff.

“The most significant reason for the success is the long-tenured coaches we have that enable us to maintain success over an extended period of time,” Cunningham said.

Jon Jackson, associate director of athletics at Duke, said the school “strive(s) to be a top 10 Directors’ Cup program.” He added that academic achievement by athletes was another key goal. Jackson said economic conditions in the past few years made it harder for the athletic department to continue to produce athletically while remaining fiscally responsible, but said: “We have not dropped off in any form or fashion because of the economic world around us.”

At UNC, budget issues have somewhat limited spending. “We’ve done the major things, the things we feel are critical for the success of our sports,” Miller said. “But there are things we’d like to do that we haven’t been able to do because of the resources not being there,” she added, including making facility improvements.

Despite the financial gap between N.C. State and other ACC schools, Yow said she’s not discouraged by the task she’s set for the program.

“You get used to the enormity of it, and we’re chipping away,” she said.

A new soccer coach

Though men’s basketball coach Mark Gottfried is Yow’s most prominent hire, Yow also replaced N.C. State’s longtime men’s soccer coach, hiring Butler’s Kelly Findley in December 2010 to replace George Tarantini.

“Professionally, it was my dream job,” Findley said. “Debbie and the administration had a great vision for where nonrevenue sports need to get to.”

“She said, ‘Men’s soccer is important to me; we want to win a national championship; we want to give whoever gets this position everything they need to be successful.’”

He said he hopes to institute a new attitude to rebuild the N.C. State program.
“Over the last few years the team has not been great, so it takes some time to change that culture, and that’s part of the reason I got the opportunity to come in,” Findley said. The team finished 7-11-2 in Findley’s first season as coach, a drop-off from the team’s 10-8-2 record in 2010, but he believes three years or so of coaching and recruiting are needed to create the ethos he wants.

“It’s not professional sports, you can’t just come in and get rid of everybody and bring a whole new team in,” Findley said. “So it takes a little bit of time to turn the existing guys, get the culture right with them.”

Findley praised Yow for making many facility improvements possible for the soccer team this year, including new field lights, locker rooms, bathrooms, stands and a press box.

“Now, we’re actually recruiting with some of the best facilities in the country,” said Findley, who is signed to a five-year contract with the school. The women’s soccer team is making its own effort to raise its profile. On Thursday, head coach Steve Springthorpe announced the team’s tougher, 2012 schedule.

“The 2012 schedule is the toughest one that we have played in a number of years here at State,” Springthorpe said in a statement. “With 13 out of 19 teams (on the schedule) coming off an NCAA tournament appearance in 2011 it will be a fantastic challenge for us.”

Gymnastic coach Stevenson also pointed to scheduling as one of the ways the school has pushed to improve Olympic sports. The team has funds to travel this season to compete against high-ranking teams such as Oklahoma, LSU and Georgia, as well as new equipment, team clothing and office space.

“It’s a tremendous boost to recruiting when you can walk in and say, ‘Well, we’re going to see six of the top 15 teams in the country this year,’ ” Stevenson said.

**Turnover in wrestling**

Carter Jordan, who was hired by former athletic director Lee Fowler in 2004, won’t be around to reap the benefits of Yow’s approach.
Despite making what he considered solid progress with the wrestling team, Jordan was fired in early April. Pat Popolizio, former head coach at Binghamton University, was hired to replace Jordan on April 10.

“That chapter in my life is over,” Jordan said in a recent phone interview. “It was a wonderful chapter. It probably, in my opinion, ended a little too shortly.”

He said the wrestling team had done its best “with nothing” before Yow came to the school, having to patch together a program with part-time assistant coaches, a limited budget and facilities inferior to those of other ACC programs.

After Yow arrived, Jordan heard and welcomed the same message from Yow that Findley and Stevenson received.

“The common theme has been that we have to give our coaches the necessary resources and tools to be successful,” Jordan said. “I think that’s a very good thing to have, and that’s what we were told over and over again.”

The wrestling program’s budget jumped from about $60,000 to nearly $80,000 after Yow’s arrival in 2010, Jordan said, allowing the team to compete on more even terms with other ACC schools. Another increase in 2011 pushed the budget to near $120,000, which Jordan considered an average budget for an ACC wrestling program.

Jordan said the additional money was “like manna from heaven. And we were able to take advantage of that. We had a $10,000 recruiting budget before Debbie got there. … We got it bumped up to $25,000, and bam, we got a top 25 recruiting class.”

Wrestling Insider Newsmagazine ranked N.C. State’s 2011 recruiting class fifth best nationwide.

The team was able to travel more in the past two years and hire full-time assistant coaches for the first time, Jordan said. The team finished fourth in the ACC championships, up from fifth in 2011 and sixth in 2010, and finished 44th in the country, according to the Directors’ Cup standings, bettering its 56th place finish in 2010.

But that wasn’t enough for Jordan to keep his job.
N.C. State associate athletic director Sherard Clinkscales, who oversees the baseball, wrestling, and the men’s and women’s soccer teams, said the administration didn’t believe the wrestling team was making enough progress under Jordan. “If you look at the ACC record of our wrestling team, it hasn’t been up to par,” Clinkscales said.

Jordan felt he wasn’t given enough time to continue what he saw as his team’s gradual improvement under tough circumstances.

Clinkscales, hired by Yow in July 2011 after two years working at the NCAA as assistant director for championships, said ACC titles and, ultimately, national championships are the ambition of all Olympic sports teams at N.C. State. He thinks the administration’s supportive but demanding approach marks a change from the culture that used to prevail.

“We see ourselves as partners with our coaches,” he said. “We want to help them reach their goals. ... At the same time, we hold them accountable for those goals.”

That accountability gets passed down from the coaches to their teams. New wrestling head coach Popolizio, who competed for Oklahoma State squads that finished in the top five nationally during each of his four years at the school, has jumped right into recruiting and trying to raise the standard of discipline among the team’s current wrestlers. He said, so far, his efforts have not received the response he wants.

“They have to realize what it really takes to compete for a national title as individuals right now,” Popolizio said. “I know there’s talent here. I just need to map out for them what they need to do day to day, week to week, month to month, and then year-round.”

Yow wants to continue to increase the athletic budget without overburdening the school’s supporters.

“We can’t do this on the backs of our donors,” she said. “Certainly we need their support and help, but we have that.” Yow is looking to “business deals” to help continue to provide funding for all the school’s sports.

One major deal closed in March, with N.C. State signing a 10-year, $49 million contract with Wolfpack Sports Properties, LLC to manage the school’s multimedia rights. And on April 25, the school announced a four-year, $7 million apparel contract with adidas that covers all 23 teams, replacing the deal adidas had with the
football and men’s basketball teams. The comprehensive contract brings N.C. State in line with Duke and UNC, which have apparel deals with Nike that cover all sports.

The final Directors’ Cup standings for 2012 will be released in late June.

Finishing in the top 25 this year remains a distant – but suddenly, tantalizingly attainable – possibility for N.C. State.
N.C. State/UNC project explores external devices for mobility-impaired

By Tyler Dukes - Correspondent

Bruce Wiggin, left, gets ready to test to device, worn by Dr. Greg Sawicki, director of the Physiology of Wearable Robotics laboratory. They are gathering data on the movement of the and ankle interact.

A man with mechanical legs is standing a few feet away, but Bruce Wiggin’s attention is fixed in the opposite direction.

There, on a monitor against the wall, an orange stick figure sways gently above a bobbing red line.

“Ready to roll, Greg?” Wiggin asks the man. “I’m ready.”

The massive treadmill beneath Dr. Greg Sawicki’s feet begins to whir. In sync with his motion, the stick figure on the screen swings, the red line now a series of peaks and valleys.

Even with his back to the test subject, Wiggin, a Ph.D. student in biomechanical engineering at N.C. State, can see more than he ever could with his own eyes. Above his head, eight infrared cameras track a collection of marble-sized sensors on Sawicki’s right leg, rendering him as a virtual wireframe. Pressure sensors beneath the treadmill track impact in three dimensions while a force gauge in the device strapped to Sawicki’s leg measures the strength of every flex.

This is what observation looks like in the Physiology of Wearable Robotics laboratory in Raleigh, a joint project of the Department of Biomedical Engineering at NCSU and UNC-Chapel Hill. By using gadgets and devices adapted from other
disciplines, motion researchers here are no longer limited to measuring only what they physically observe.

“It was only five years ago that physiological measurements in this detail were first made on a person wearing a device like this,” Sawicki, director of the lab and assistant professor of biomedical engineering, said after stepping from the treadmill and detaching the spring-loaded brace from his calf. “Until then, it was like, ‘Hey look, they can walk.’ It was more like stopwatch and ruler type of measurements.”

Using the data they’re collecting, Sawicki and his team are working to create more effective orthotics for patients suffering from mobility impairments like strokes and spinal cord injuries. And as they do that, they’ll have to use their inventions to help deconstruct basic motor functions most of us mastered by the time we were just a few years old.

**Learning to walk – and run**

That’s no easy task, namely because the interplay between the muscles and tendons in the legs is so complicated.

Take the calf, where Sawicki and fellow researcher Dominic Farris are focused. It’s made up of three muscles, including two, called the gastrocnemius, balled up like fists at the top. Instead of expanding and contracting itself, the gastrocnemius makes your Achilles tendon do all the work, helping you push off from one step to the next.

“The muscle part of it is actually staying pretty much the same length, and it’s stretching the tendon like a catapult,” Farris said. “That’s really good, because that’s a really efficient way for the muscle to contract.”

As you come to the push-off stage, the “catapult” releases, firing back with all the energy stored from your body weight. This energy-efficient model of motion—essentially allowing the tendon to act like a spring—sets the calf apart from other muscle groups.

“You don’t normally think about a muscle becoming spaghetti to allow the spring to get out of the way and then becoming rigid to allow the body to stretch a spring,” Sawicki said. “But the calf, the ankle muscle, seems to be doing that most of the time.”

Keeping that efficiency intact may be one reason we naturally shift from walking to running when we start moving about 4.5 miles an hour. In a study published in January in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Farris and Sawicki used a small ultrasound device originally designed as a rectal probe to take
cross-sections of the calf muscle while participants switch from walking to running.

Maximizing efficiency

The imagery revealed that the faster we walk, the faster the muscle shortens. That’s inefficient – more work, less force. Around 2 meters per second, the researchers found most participants started running, prompting a change in gait that reset the calf muscle to a much slower and more static pace.

“So now the tendon is doing most of (the work) again,” Farris said. “You’re getting more bang for your buck that way.”

For some patients though, achieving efficiency like this isn’t possible. Conditions like muscle weakness on one side of the body can set normally symmetrical motion out of sync, shifting the burden to areas like the hips, where movement is more costly.

“One of the hardest things for people who have suffered a stroke or perhaps have a partial spinal cord injury or anything else that affects their gait is that they’re using a lot more energy to get around,” Farris said. “It’s super tiring for them just to go out and do their shopping or anything you or I do.”

But “bio-inspired” orthotics like the ones created in Sawicki’s lab can apply a better understanding of human motion to normalize these flaws.

Wiggin’s device, for example, uses a carbon-fiber and aluminum brace connected to a regular running shoe by a spring. Mimicking the Achilles tendon, the spring stretches when the ankle is at an angle specified by a clutch, which acts like the gastrocnemius. Accounting for its extra weight, Sawicki’s team found the device can reduce energy consumption by about 5 percent, according to their measurements of oxygen intake.

“If I were a baby boomer and I just retired, I might be used to hiking 20 miles when I was 25,” Sawicki said. “I just slap these on and expend the same amount of oxygen that I did when I was a young person going the same distance.”

Widespread use of devices like these to improve quality of life is on the horizon, Sawicki said. In the meantime, they’ll use the devices – coupled with all the observation tools at their disposal – to add to our understanding of human motion.

“We build these devices so we can learn more about human physiology,” he said. “There are certain questions that you ask that you couldn’t otherwise ask unless you use the exoskeleton as an experimental device.”
All day long, I write preachy stories about what people should do with their money. So it only seems right that I set up the best college funds for my kids. It's now clear to their mom that these brilliant preschoolers, ages 2 and 4, are destined for the Ivy League. So one would assume that by using a few online calculators, I could approximate the sum I need to embezzle from a multinational corporation to cover future tuition bills.

Yet there are so many variants to these figures: What if one of them gets a full ride to Cornell? What if the local college is a better fit? What if they decide to pursue entrepreneurship in lieu of a formal education? What if they drop out of the 10th grade to spend their youth smoking weed on a commune in Costa Rica? Even as kids get into school, it's difficult to figure out how much to save for their future. God forbid you save too much - then what?

I reached out to a few experts to get some guidance on how to estimate future higher-ed costs.

"It can be so hard to predict your future college expenses, to know where your child will be academically," says Kalman Chany, author of Paying for College Without Going Broke and a college financial aid consultant. "When their kids are 2, everyone thinks their child is destined for Harvard. (Guilty!) Instead of getting hung up on the exact numbers, the most important thing is to regularly set aside money."

Joseph Hurley, founder and CEO of SavingForCollege.com, a leading site on 529 plans, suggests investing at least the $25 monthly minimum into one such fund. "Now, $25 a month will not get you all that far toward the cost of college, but it will certainly help some, and it will always be a reminder of the need to save for
college, so that contributions may be increased in the future," Hurley says. Chany seconds Hurley's cry to save regularly for college, plus designate any windfall like a bonus at work or inheritance to the cause.

Here are a few basics for getting a grip on your family's future college costs. First, check out the SavingForCollege.com calculator to get an idea of what college will cost, and how much you need to be saving now.

Once your kids are in middle school, you can get a sense of where they are headed academically, Chany says. Aside from their interests and motivations, consider you and your spouse's academic and professional accomplishments as well as the posthigh school paths of the kids in your neighborhood and school. The College Board runs extensive reports that link family income and education to a child's education path.

Then map out a savings plan. This can be a mix of 529 plans, IRAs and loan plans. But Chany mentions two surprising points:

1. "The most important thing is to figure out their chances of getting need-based financial aid," Chany says. "Even that is hard to figure out - you have no idea what your job will be, if you'll be married or disabled." But getting a sense of whether you could afford to pay for college outright or will struggle to make it happen determines how you will save.

   For example, avoid investing in a trust fund or custodial account in the child's name, as financial aid offices assess these accounts at as much as 25 percent. Meanwhile, parents' assets are assessed at just 5.5 percent, Chany says. So say you have $100,000 in your retirement account. The most you will be assessed at as $5,500, while a custodial account with the same investment would be assessed at $25,000. "The biggest mistake you can make is to not save anything just so you get more aid," Chany says.

2. Prioritize your retirement savings. Time and again, experts recycle the same clever quote: "You can take out loans for college, but you can't take out loans for retirement." Sacrificing your retirement savings for your kids' education can result
in a family-wide burden - your kids might be forced to finance their mom and dad's retirement for decades - a much bigger burden than even student loans.

Chany urges parents to maximize any employer match and shift their focus to IRAs, as these allow investors to take out money penalty-free for college expenses. "Plus, the overwhelming majority of schools don't look at retirement accounts when calculating financial aid," he says.

Most parents default to 529 college savings plans. The benefits of a 529 plan are that in most states, you can get a break on state taxes for any contributions, and you're not taxed on any gains on your investment. Plus, if you find you saved too much, you can redirect those funds to another family member or withdraw the excess and pay tax and a 10 percent penalty on any gains.

Chany suggests other ways to think about money earmarked for college. Consider investing in your own education, which will likely boost your earning potential and establish a precedence of education as a priority at home. Also, consider investing discretionary income in a home in a good school district, which will improve access to academic programs and the extracurricular activities that universities look for.

One shining example of college planning is Agapios Kyritsis and his family. They currently have $150,000 saved and plan to invest $700,000 in the college education of their three daughters who are now all teenagers. The Mountain Lakes, New Jersey family has had about $25,000 to invest in each of the last 10 years and plans to put that sum toward tuition and student loans going forward. The oldest daughter, Evie, 17, is a high school senior and was just accepted into the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which costs $60,000 a year.

"College planning has been a long-term process," says Kyritsis, who owns a restaurant. His wife is an accountant. "The key is not to be blindsided by your kids' plans. We're close to our daughters and know what their interests and strengths are. But we're also really concerned about the return on investment. We're not interested in just plowing money into college and telling our kids to go find themselves."
Instead, the girls know that they must maintain their grades but are free to pursue whatever course of study at whatever school makes the most sense for them. Evie plans to be an engineer, and MIT grads in this field often earn six figures right after graduation, her father says. "We tell them that paying for college is our pleasure, but they must appreciate it - college is not an entitlement," Kyritsis says. As such, each kid will be responsible for some student loans "to keep them on edge," he says. "But at the end of the day, my wife and I will take care of everything." Just don't tell them.
**Susan Tompor: Do the math before you borrow the money for college**

One trillion dollars.

If you're a parent or a student, dwell on that number like it's one of the worst report cards ever. Student loan debt has hit $1 trillion, and it's bigger than credit card debt and auto-loan debt.

By contrast, about 40 billionaires worldwide control a little more than $1 trillion in assets, according to the Bloomberg Billionaire Index.

So what does everyone else do?

College acceptance letters are hitting households now, and it's essential to carefully read what's being promised where and compare the real costs.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau recently created a student debt calculator as part of its "Know Before You Owe" initiative. See http://www.consumerfinance.gov/payingforcollege.

The new calculator is in the draft stage but can be a big help when trying to work through the loan amounts, scholarship offers and savings needed to attend a specific college.

Odd as it seems, some college grads have absolutely no idea what they owe.

"The typical conversation I have with a borrower who is in trouble with their loans is as follows: 'How much do you owe?' 'I dunno,' " said Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.org and FastWeb.com.

What are the interest rates? What are the monthly payments?

Again, Kantrowitz said, the typical answer can be "I dunno."

Kantrowitz noted that there are rough edges with the new federal student loan calculator. For example, he'd like to see side-by-side comparisons. And he'd like to
see the debt burden based on data that's specific to a given college or university, rather than national averages.

Still, he said, someone who runs the numbers with this calculator can get a good, overall comparison.

"It's a way of getting your feet wet," Kantrowitz said.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's site includes information from about 7,500 colleges and universities.

The bottom line: What would that student loan debt cost each month after college?

Many people are very well aware of the monthly car payment before they buy a car. Not so much for student loan debt.

So let's look at one example.

Plug in Central Michigan University at the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau site and you see that the in-state sticker price for the first year is $20,556.

On average, the site shows that grants and scholarships amount to $6,945. If all the rest of the money must be borrowed - and again that is a big level of borrowing - that would leave total borrowing at $13,611 for one year.

How much could you owe after four years?

Ever dream someone could pay $809 a month for student loans for 10 years?

The estimated debt after school calculated on the site assumes you borrowed the same amount each year of your program, finished a degree in four years and paid your loan on a standard 10-year repayment schedule. Other assumptions are included in the calculation.

Kirk Yats, the director of CMU's Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, said the federal consumer website can over-inflate actual borrowing. The fact that the site calculates "Total Borrowing" by simply subtracting $6,945 in average grants and scholarships from CMU's cost of attendance without factoring in any parent loan is inaccurate, he said.

"The $13,611 amount that is displayed in the CFPB site is not correct," Yats said. "The maximum amount of federal loan that a junior or senior is allowed to borrow is $12,500." See http://studentaid.ed.gov.

Students could borrow more in private loans, though, to reach higher levels. On average, he said undergraduate borrowers at CMU would take on about $28,000 in student loans - not nearly $55,000 as the site indicates. So monthly student loan payments would be more in the $300 range, not $800.
Kantrowitz noted that families do pay something from savings, so the initial debt figures estimated by the calculator will be high.

"Yet it does this consistently for all colleges, providing at least a uniform yardstick," he said. "I wouldn't treat parent and private student loans necessarily any differently from federal student loans."

Patrick Kandianis, co-founder of SimpleTuition, says the federal calculator will put a spotlight on the challenges and start more dinner conversations on actual cost.

If you want to pay around $350 a month for student loans, you could borrow about $30,000 for college overall. That assumes a 10-year repayment schedule. Various loan calculators exist, including those at FinAid.org.

"Debt should be your last option, not your first," said Jeffrey Taylor, certified college planning specialist for College Funding Resources in Southfield, Mich.

Another good guideline: Do not borrow more than $10,000 a year for each year in college as an undergraduate. If you borrow more than $10,000 a year, Kantrowitz said, you'd graduate with more debt than 90 percent of your peers.

Starting July 1, the interest rate on new subsidized Stafford loans to undergraduate students will be 6.8 percent for the 2012-13 school year.

That's up from 3.4 percent in 2011-12. The interest rates are fixed for these loans, so past loans would not be affected.

The rate dropped significantly as part of a special effort that began in the 2008-09 school year. President Barack Obama has backed extending the 3.4 percent rate another year at a cost to the government of $5.6 billion.

College grads and parents, of course, must keep an eye on the overall cost, including interest.

It's far better to do the math before you borrow the money.

**CONTROLLING COLLEGE DEBT:**

- Every dollar borrowed for student loan debt costs you about $2 by the time the debt is paid off.

- FinAid.org has a student debt checklist that encourages borrowers to have a record of what kind of loans they have taken out and what they owe.

- Multiply the first year of student loan debt by the length of the educational program, and you can get an idea of the total debt at graduation.
Some colleges front-load grants - meaning you might need to borrow more money in the second, third and fourth years, said Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.org and FastWeb.com. Ask whether your college front-loads grants.

-Consider your starting salary in a given field before deciding how much money to borrow.

If the total education debt is less than your annual income, Kantrowitz said, a college grad should be able to repay that debt in 10 years. Who wants to be paying college loans any longer than that?

-Parents might want to review graduation and loan default rates for specific schools.

-The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's "Know Before You Owe" calculator can be found at http://consumerfinance.gov/payingforcollege/.

-Other sites with calculators include SimpleTuition.com, StudentLoans.gov and http://collegecost.ed.gov.
Trust us. That’s what UNC system administrators have said in response to staff, faculty and students’ challenges to state Senate Bill 575, which would deprive 22,000 University of North Carolina system employees of job protections now provided under the State Personnel Act (SPA).

Employees’ concerns make sense. Worry is warranted when an employer tries to swap one set of legal protections for a vague alternative. We doubt that any UNC administrators took their jobs without contracts that specified the terms of their employment.

The SPA is not perfect, but it spells out rights that protect people’s jobs. The proposed alternative offered by the UNC system administrators is a set of “guiding principles” that are ambiguous and lack detail.

Critics of SB 575 have asked what, if any, protections would remain if UNC system employees are no longer covered by the SPA. The key questions concern just cause, protection for whistleblowers, enforcement and grievance procedures.

UNC system administrators say that they are willing to maintain a just-cause standard for terminating employees, as opposed to an at-will policy that would allow employees to be fired for any reason not forbidden by state or federal law.

But this expression of willingness is meaningless. The proposed guidelines create no statutory requirements for termination. Nor do they constitute a legally enforceable promise. So in effect UNC system administrators are saying that they will provide just-cause protection – unless they decide not to.

In all organizations, whistleblowers can help to expose waste and malfeasance. Current law recognizes this and protects whistleblowers from retaliation. All taxpayers who want the benefits of clean and efficient government should support such laws.
It’s not clear how the guidelines proposed by UNC system administrators would protect whistleblowers. Vagueness with regard to such protection, along with uncertain just-cause protection, creates legitimate fear of being fired for bringing waste or malfeasance to light.

Perhaps the worst problem with SB 575 is that it leaves unspecified the mechanisms that employees could use to challenge unfair treatment. No matter how many protections exist on paper, they mean little if the procedures for enforcing them are inadequate.

Currently, the SPA allows employees to make their case and present evidence to a neutral judge. The guiding principles proposed by UNC system administrators say only that there will be “fair processes.” What processes, exactly? And fair according to whom?

The proposed guidelines imply that job disputes would be decided not by a neutral judge but by UNC. It should be clear what’s wrong with a procedure that allows the party being accused of unfair treatment to decide the outcome. Such a procedure, if put into place, would be a major loss for UNC system employees.

One needs only to look at the UNC Health Care workforce, which went through a similar change, to see the potential harm. Informal reports from Health Care workers suggest it has become incredibly difficult to file a grievance, much less win one. Is this the outcome UNC administrators want to achieve on a system-wide basis?

The SPA also provides remedies for employees who can prove that they have been treated unfairly: reinstatement, back pay and payment of attorney’s fees. What remedies would be available under the proposed guidelines? They’re not specified.

UNC system administrators have been trying for years to get this change through the state legislature. It thus seems odd that they haven’t, by now, been able to put details on the table. This is hardly the sort of thing that inspires trust.

One reason trust is low among UNC system employees is that administrators have often denied problems or been slow to address them. The UNC-Chapel Hill housekeeping department is just one example. After years of complaints, university administrators hired the PRM Consulting Group to investigate. In its report, issued on Sept. 29, 2011, the PRM consultants said, “... current practices in the Department [of Housekeeping] have created a culture with employee morale issues, lack of trust, and overall frustration.”

This situation developed with the SPA in effect. A system with fewer protections would likely lead to more problems and longer response times. Without specific,
enforceable job-protection guarantees, all it takes for a valuable employee to lose his or her job is one bad supervisor.

Unless UNC system administrators and the Board of Governors offer an alternative that includes real job protections and guarantees of enforcement, distrust remains a rational response to SB 575. Trust between administrators and employees should be cultivated. The best way to do this is to back up trust with solid law, not airy guidelines.

Jeffrey M. Hirsch is an associate professor at the UNC School of Law. Sherryl Kleinman is professor of sociology at UNC-Chapel Hill.
Highlights of the investigation

Here are some excerpts from UNC-CH’s investigation into its Department of African and Afro-American Studies:

From summer 2007 through summer 2009, 9 of these 616 courses (8 during summer sessions) with a collective total of 59 registered students were found to be aberrant: there is evidence that students completed written work in these courses, submitted it to the department and received grades, but no evidence that the faculty member listed as instructor of record or any other faculty member actually supervised the course and graded the work...

... grade rolls (for those courses) were submitted to the Office of the Registrar with faculty signatures that appear to be forged. The faculty members whose names appear on those grade rolls stated that they did not teach the courses in question and that the signatures on the submitted documents are not in their handwriting.

In this same period ... an additional 43 courses ... with a collective total of 599 registered students were either aberrant ... or were taught irregularly, by which we mean: the instructor provided an assignment and evidently graded the resultant paper, but engaged in limited or no classroom or other instructional contact with students. Professor Nyang’oro was listed as the instructor of record or his name was listed on the grade rolls for each of these 43 courses.

No instance was found of a student receiving a grade who had not submitted written work. No evidence indicated that student-athletes received more favorable treatment than students who were not athletes. In addition, no information was found to indicate that the Department personnel involved in these courses received a tangible benefit of any kind, beyond their standard University compensation.

Allegations

Among allegations in UNC-CH report on Department of African and Afro-American Studies:
• Students in nine courses received grades, but there was no evidence that faculty members supervised the courses and graded the work.

• Some professors say their names were forged on documents used to certify they had taught classes.

• In 43 courses, there was limited or no instructional contact with students. Professor Julius Nyang’oro was listed as the instructor of record or his name was listed on the grade rolls for these courses.
Report finds academic fraud evidence in UNC department

By Dan Kane - dkane@newsobserver.com

An internal investigation into UNC-Chapel Hill’s Department of African and Afro-American Studies has found evidence of academic fraud involving more than 50 classes that range from no-show professors to unauthorized grade changes for students.

One of the no-show classes is the Swahili course taken by former football player Michael McAdoo that prompted NCAA findings of impermissible tutoring, and drew more controversy when the final paper he submitted was found to have been heavily plagiarized.

The investigation found many of the suspect classes were taught in the summer by former department chairman Julius Nyang’oro, who resigned from that post in September. The university now says Nyang’oro, 57, who was the department’s first-ever chairman, is retiring July 1.

“Professor Nyang’oro offered to retire, and we agreed that was in the best interest of the department, the college and the university,” said Nancy Davis, associate vice chancellor for university relations.

The report, released Friday, evolved from the athletic and academic scandal that engulfed UNC’s football team, but it said there is no evidence that student-athletes
received more favorable treatment than students who were not athletes. It also said that no student received a grade without doing course work. The report has been shared with the NCAA, which could not be reached for immediate comment.

The 10-page report said the findings are a blow to the university’s academic integrity. The findings were so serious that the university consulted with the district attorney and the SBI about investigating forgery allegations, as some professors said their signatures were forged in documents certifying that they had taught some of the classes in question. Professors also said they had not authorized grade changes for students that the department submitted to the registrar’s office.

Law enforcement officials declined to investigate because they did not think the forgeries, if proven, rose to the level of criminal activity, according to the report.

“We are deeply disturbed by what we have learned in the course of our review,” said Jonathan Hartlyn and William L. Andrews, two senior faculty administrators who conducted the investigation. “Our review has exposed numerous violations of professional trust, affecting the relationship of faculty and students and the relationships among faculty colleagues in this department.”

They added, “These violations have undermined the educational experience of a number of students, have the potential to generate unfounded doubt and mistrust toward the department and its faculty, and could harm the academic reputation of the university.”

‘Surprised and shocked’

Less than a year ago, Chancellor Holden Thorp expressed full confidence in Nyang’oro as concerns about his instruction began to surface. But Friday, in an interview, he was hard pressed to recall a more serious case of academic impropriety at UNC-CH, which is considered one of the top public universities in the nation.

“I was surprised and shocked and sad that these things could happen here, and that some students didn’t get the full benefit to a Carolina education,” Thorp said.

Hartlyn and Andrews looked at all courses taught within the department starting with the summer 2007 sessions and ending with the summer 2011 sessions. Nearly all the problem courses took place in the summer sessions of 2007, 2008 and 2009. They are a small minority of the nearly 620 courses taught during that period.

The report said the department’s long-time administrator, Deborah Crowder, would have overseen much of the course scheduling and grade recording. She retired in September 2009 and declined to be interviewed for the internal investigation.

Crowder made $36,130 a year before retiring. She could not be reached.
The NCAA investigation

The problems first surfaced two years ago during the NCAA’s investigation into improper benefits for football players. The NCAA found that a tutor, Jennifer Wiley, had provided impermissible academic help to three football players. Wiley was a student when she began tutoring for UNC-CH’s athletic department, but by the time she had graduated, the university had dropped her for being too friendly with student athletes.

But in the summer of 2009, Michael McAdoo, a defensive end for the Tar Heels, asked Wiley to help him on a paper for an intermediate Swahili class taught by Nyang’oro. Wiley, the NCAA found, had supplied a bibliography and footnotes for the paper, work that McAdoo was expected to do. The impermissible help played a big role in the NCAA’s decision to revoke McAdoo’s remaining two years of eligibility.

McAdoo sued in state Superior Court to try to get back on the team, and in doing so, he included the paper as an exhibit. Rival N.C. State fans quickly analyzed the paper and found several passages of plagiarism that the university, its honor court, university athletic and academic officials, and the NCAA did not catch. The Wolfpack fans buzzed about the plagiarism on message boards, and the media, particularly a blog known as SportsbyBrooks, took notice. The N&O confirmed the plagiarism in a follow-up report.

Professor-less classes

But the plagiarism was just the beginning of the questions for Nyang’oro, who was the department’s first chairman when it was formed 20 years ago.

The N&O later obtained a partial academic transcript of Marvin Austin, another football player caught up in the football scandal. The transcript showed that Austin took an upper-level summer class from Nyang’oro before Austin began his first full semester as a freshman, and before he had taken a remedial writing class. Nyang’oro gave Austin a B-plus on the course.

Nyang’oro could not produce a syllabus for that class, Bioethics in Afro-American Studies, or the Swahili class that McAdoo took. That was another red flag, particularly because syllabi provided by other professors teaching intermediate Swahili focused on reading and writing in Swahili, not writing papers about Swahili culture in English.

Nyang’oro told the university investigators he did not teach the Swahili class. The plagiarized paper McAdoo submitted lists Nyang’oro’s name as the course professor. The investigation found it was one of nine classes in which there is no evidence that any professor “actually supervised the course and graded the work,
although grade rolls were signed and submitted.” Other professors who were listed on grade rolls for those classes said their names were forged on course documents. McAdoo was one of 59 students taking those classes.

The investigation found more than 40 other courses, most of them during summer sessions, in which Nyang’oro was the instructor of record but there was little evidence of teaching. The instructor would provide an assignment and grade the class paper, “but engaged in limited or no classroom or other instructional contact with students.” Austin’s class was one of them, Hartlyn said.

The report also found a “strikingly high” percentage of cases in Nyang’oro’s classes in which temporary grades were converted to permanent ones. Several other faculty said they had not authorized grade changes for students.

**Independent study courses**

While the investigation casts no blame on the athletic department, information obtained by The N&O showed the department’s independent study courses were popular with football players, and that Nyang’oro was often teaching them. Such courses have drawn suspicion in athletic circles because they do not require attendance and often allow students to produce a paper at the end of the course. Athletic programs have gotten into trouble at other universities after questions surfaced as to whether the athletes were doing actual academic work.

Athletic advisers said Nyang’oro was a favored professor, not because he made it easy for athletes to pass, but because he was willing to work with them in getting the classes they needed. But his relationship with the athletic department came under question when he hired a sports agent – a former athletic department academic adviser and adjunct professor – to teach a summer class last year while the NCAA was investigating the football team for allowing other agents and their runners to have too much access to players.

**Nyang’oro’s credentials**

Nyang’oro has taught at UNC-CH since 1984, and his résumé lists two teaching honors – one from undergraduate students for the 1990-91 academic year, and the outstanding faculty award from the Class of 2000 – and four pages of published books and articles.

Nyang’oro has a law degree from Duke University, and masters and doctoral degrees from Miami University of Ohio, according to his résumé. He received his bachelor’s degree from a university in Tanzania.

He could not be immediately reached for comment. His final salary is $159,249 a year.
The university also reviewed independent study courses across the College of Arts & Sciences, which includes the African studies department. That report did not find misconduct, but it made several suggestions for more accountability in tracking independent study classes and making sure professors are actively engaged with the students taking them.

The African studies department will have strict requirements for those courses. They will only be open to juniors and seniors, and only if they carry a 3.0 grade point average.