THE DAILY CLIPS

May 13, 2011

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
The math is beginning to favor buying. But in some cities, like Boston, renting still wins.

Buy vs. rent: These days, buying wins
By Les Christie May 13, 2011: 8:37 AM ET
NEW YORK (CNNMoney) -- For the first time in years, buying a home may beat renting.

Two factors are at play, according to researchers who recently crunched the numbers, Ken Johnson of Florida International University and Eli Beracha of East Carolina University for a paper to be published in Real Estate Economics.

First, rents, though mostly stagnant the past few years, are expected to head higher as more people bitten by the housing bust turn to renting. Rents could rise 7% in each of the next two years, according to Peggy Alford, president of Rent.com.

Second, home prices have finally dropped enough to create a buying opportunity. Nationally, prices are down 32% from their peak, set in 2006. The net result is that home price gains would need to average only 3.25% annually to beat renting, according to Beracha and Johnson. To make the math work, you have to stay in the home for at least eight years. (Buy or rent? 10 cities rated)
Beracha and Johnson compared the cost of owning with the cost of renting. Renting has usually come out ahead, they say. Buying typically leads to higher monthly and annual bills once all costs are factored in -- mortgage payments, property taxes, maintenance and transactional costs.

Those higher costs can be offset if the home gains in value. But renters -- the researchers assume -- can invest the savings. And that is a big part of why the professors say renting has typically been the better deal. "I was shocked at how often renters won," said Johnson.

Another reason had been the push to homeownership, which resulted in a premium on home values. "My dad always told me not to 'throw my money away on rent,"" said Johnson. "This mania toward homeownership tends to drive prices up."

But that's changing: Homeownership has dropped to 66.4% from a peak of 69.1% in 2005, according to the Census Bureau. (See "Home prices in 'Double-Dip'"

How much better buying will be depends on location. Of the 23 cities Beracha and Johnson looked at, Seattle is the best place to buy right now. When renters invest in portfolios that include stocks, the appreciation rate required over the next eight years there is 4.84% and the area's historical average is 6.06%.

For several cities, including New York, Boston and Dallas, renting is still preferable. In New York, for example, homeowners would need a 7% annual rise in home values to beat renters. (See "Fastest growing cities in the South")

Buyers should beware the assumption that home prices will rebound, even from these depressed levels, said Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Hiring has been slow and there are tons of potential foreclosures that could flood the market with distressed homes, depressing prices.

Even in cities where people are, theoretically, better off renting, they may not be in reality. Paying off a mortgage is a forced savings plan, said Baker.
The mortgage bill comes in every month, the homeowner pays it and the mortgage balance goes down.

Renters, meanwhile, are just as likely to spend their savings. They'll wind up with less money than homeowners, which is kind of what your dad was saying all along.
Editorial: Students' debt burden a threat
Friday, May 13, 2011

Hundreds of Pitt Community College students will leave tonight's spring commencement exercises with more than a degree in their hands. Many will share the fate of their East Carolina University peers, with the accrued cost of their academic study hanging over their heads, looming in credit card bills and haunting student loan statements.

The cost of higher education, be it at a community college or a public university, continues to rise, leaving students to shoulder a massive debt as they struggle to find work in a landscape barren of jobs. That trend should give the public pause, and it should prompt officials to turn away from policies increasing that burden while reducing programs helping to offset the cost.

Like the thousands of students who completed degrees at East Carolina last weekend, PCC graduates may be fully prepared for the grim employment market that greets them following commencement. Less likely is their readiness for repaying student loans and the other assorted costs of having attended a college or university.

Schools in the University of North Carolina system, including East Carolina, keep raising tuition to offset the loss of state funding. They remain a great value, but each successive hike steps further away from the constitutional mandate to keep higher education as free from expense as possible. It also threatens to price the dream of a university education beyond the reach of the state's poorest students.

Those issues are mirrored in the community college system, where students seek to supplement high school education and existing job skills. A community college degree is a personal investment, one that helps provide a step up in the job hunt, aid in securing a promotion and lead to greater earnings over a lifetime. Some students earn a two-year degree on the path to a four-year education, a road that could lead to greater academic achievement.

Despite that value, the N.C. House budget would eliminate a critical component of the N.C. Education Lottery, by routing money for college scholarships toward public school construction. Some 15,000 students attend college in North Carolina thanks to those scholarships and this change would effectively abandon them.

North Carolina must recognize that an investment in education — from the UNC system on down — represents the best expenditure in a recession, one that will help position the state for future prosperity. It should not ransom the future of students by adding to their burden or removing the steppingstone that leads to academic achievement.
Former Elon coach Tolley stays busy after Hall of Fame career

RALEIGH — Jerry Tolley’s football teams made a habit of winning close games leading to national championships for then-Elon College in 1980 and 1981 in NAIA.

That’s one of the things that makes Tolley most pleased about his career. A 22-2 record in games decided by nine points or less helped define his five-year stint as football coach at the university. His teams, then called the Fightin’ Christians, were 8-1 in national playoffs.

“Usually most (of those opponents) are state schools,” Tolley said. “They’re not little private schools.”

Since then, there has been plenty more associated with Tolley, who’s mayor of Elon.

Tolley’s induction into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame on Thursday night adds another accomplishment to a growing list.

Maybe that’s why his claim of nearly 30 years ago held true.

“The interesting thing about it was I always told people I was going to be out of coaching of by the time I was 39,” Tolley said this week.

Now 68, he continues to have things to accomplish.

He has written six football-related technical books.

“I’ve got two in mind,” he said.
One might include an historical perspective of Elon football. The other could be a collection of stories from top college football coaches and their recollections of the most inspirational players.

Tolley was a graduate assistant at East Carolina, specializing in the single-wing. So he became a natural fit as an offensive assistant under Elon coach Red Wilson. When Elon changed offenses, Tolley moved to the defensive side.

After he moved to the head coaching position and led Elon to national success, he pursued other endeavors. He completed work on a doctorate degree at UNC Greensboro, and he pointed out how thankful he was for the encouragement he received from both schools in helping make that happen. More recently, he has seen sons of players he coached at Elon play for Elon.

“That just meant a lot,” he said.

Tolley said he looks forward to this year’s celebration of his championship teams that will be held in conjunction with an Elon game.

Tolley retired in December 2009 from the university, remaining as a consultant until last May.

His roles changed through the years on Elon’s campus, raising funds for athletics and then moving to capital projects and overseeing annual giving campaigns. There was a 12-year break from college endeavors when he worked at what’s now LabCorp until 1999.

Then it was back to Elon, working on securing major gifts.

But he said he can’t take credit for the generosity of Dusty Rhodes, whose contributions led to the building of Rhodes Stadium on campus.

“I just thanked him for it,” Tolley said.

As a former football player at East Carolina, he remains closely tied to that university as well. He went to Greenville from Holmes High School in Edenton. He played wingback and then as a defensive back for East Carolina, where he also excelled on the track and field team.

Now, he’s on the board of East Carolina’s College of Health and Human Performance, meaning he’ll take at least a half-dozen trips annually to his alma mater, where he’s a season-ticket holder for football (though missing some games when Elon is playing at home as well).
Brenda Joyner Brown

WAKE FOREST - Brenda Joyner Brown passed away on Wednesday, May 11, 2011 at her home in Wake Forest, surrounded by her family. Brenda was born Nov. 16, 1960 to Robert and Judith Joyner of Murfreesboro. She attended Ridgcroft School in Ahoskie, and then at Atlantic Christian College graduating as a Registered Nurse. Brenda took great care of all the patients she served while working in Oncology in Lexington and Greenville hospitals. She dedicated 17 years of her life at Pitt Memorial Hospital.

In 1990, Brenda relocated from Greenville to Wake Forest. She then became a teacher's assistant for the first grade at Wakefield Elementary School. In March of 2010, she was diagnosed with Liver cancer. She was told she had 3-6 months to live, but survived for 14 months. In the last months on earth, she was able to attend her 50th birthday party, participate in her daughters wedding and see her graduate from ECU. Just a few days before she passed away, she saw her son confirmed at Wake Forest Presbyterian Church.

Brenda lived each day by her faith in God and was never concerned about herself, but always thinking about everyone else. She was the life of the party at neighborhood functions, school events and everywhere she was present. She loved the beach and ECU football games and had many friends that will always remember her love of life and tremendous strength.

Funeral services will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday at Wake Forest Presbyterian Church. Burial will follow in Pine Forest Memorial Gardens.

Brenda is survived at home by her husband, Norman; son, Drew; daughter, Brittney and her husband, Jim Massey Jr., reside in Knightdale; parents, Robert and Judith Joyner of Murfreesboro; brother, Eric Joyner and his wife, Katherine, of Greenville; as well as two brothers-in-law, a sister-in-law and many nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be given in memory of Brenda Brown to the Leo Jenkins Cancer Center Family Assistance Fund, Attn: Fredia Butts, 600 Moye Blvd., Rm 178, Greenville, NC 27834.

Friends may visit with the family tonight from 6:30-8:30 at Bright Funeral Home & Cremation Center, 405 S. Main St., Wake Forest, NC 27587. www.brightfunerals.com

Published in The Daily Reflector on May 13, 2011
UNC fights to shield records

BY ANNE BLYTHE - staff writer

RALEIGH—UNC-Chapel Hill plans to appeal a judge's order that requires the school to turn over phone records and parking tickets that a coalition of media organizations sought in the wake of an NCAA investigation of the Tar Heels' football program.

Judge Howard Manning entered an order in Wake County Superior Court on Thursday, echoing a ruling he made nearly a month ago in a legal squabble between top-level UNC-CH officials and The News & Observer, The Charlotte Observer and other North Carolina media organizations.

The media groups filed suit in October to get records related to the investigation into possible academic fraud and impermissible benefits.

Since the investigation began last summer, 14 players missed at least one game and seven players missed the entire fall season. The NCAA has yet to inform the school whether there will be any program sanctions.

On Thursday, hours after Manning issued his official ruling, Holden Thorp, the UNC-CH chancellor, said the school would ask the courts for a reprieve on turning over the records until the appeal is decided.

The suit represents an increasingly common collision of two legal arguments.

Universities - in North Carolina and elsewhere - have argued that federal student privacy laws prohibit them from releasing certain records. But media organizations say they are overstepping their legal bounds to keep from disclosing particular documents.

The N&O and other plaintiffs think the records sought in the wake of the NCAA investigation are public under North Carolina law, which states that records, documents and other information generated by state agencies and institutions such as UNC should be - with limited exceptions - made public.
Student privacy cited
"Our responsibility is to protect the privacy rights of all of our students, whether they're on the football team, in the marching band or in a Chemistry 101 class," Thorp said in a prepared statement. "So this is really not about the football investigation. If this ruling were to stand, it would put the privacy rights of all of our students at risk."

John Drescher, executive editor of The N&O, said he was disappointed that UNC-CH was appealing Manning's ruling.

The federal law that university officials are citing as reason to withhold phone records and parking tickets was not intended for such purposes, Drescher contends.

"It was intended to cover basic student records such as grades," he said. When the NCAA probe into the football program began in July, the initial focus was whether players had received improper benefits. The investigation was expanded to include allegations of academic misconduct involving a tutor.

Manning ruled in April and restated in his order Thursday that the university did not have to reveal the identities of student tutors working with athletes. The media organizations had not decided whether to appeal that aspect of the order.

The N&O and The Charlotte Observer are joined in the suit by the DTH Media Corp., which publishes the UNC-CH student newspaper The Daily Tar Heel; News 14 Carolina, a cable TV station operated by Time Warner Entertainment-Advance/Newhouse Partnership; WTVD Television; Capitol Broadcasting; The Associated Press; and Media General Operations.

The suit names as defendants UNC-CH Chancellor Thorp, athletic director Dick Baddour, football coach Butch Davis and Jeff McCracken, head of the UNC-CH public safety department.

More documents sought
One issue in the suit has not been decided.
The media organizations are seeking all documents and records of any investigation conducted by the university related to any misconduct by any UNC-CH football coach, any UNC-CH player, any sports agent, any UNC-CH booster and any UNC-CH tutor.

Lawyers have not argued their cases before Manning in regard to that request.

Media representatives argue that such records should be disclosed so the public can fully know what happened at a publicly funded institution.

"Until these documents are released and examined, there will be a cloud over the football investigation," Drescher said.

anne.blythe@newsobserver.com or 919 836-4948
WakeMed's bid for Rex pits money, care, pride
BY ALAN M. WOLF - Staff Writer
WakeMed celebrated its 50th anniversary Thursday evening with a 1960s-themed party featuring Raleigh actor Ira David Wood III as emcee, music, drinks, food and the unveiling of "Healing Hands," a monument in the courtyard of its flagship Raleigh campus.

Earlier in the day, leaders at Wake County's largest hospital system announced the biggest and boldest strategic bet in its long history: a $750 million hostile bid to buy cross-town rival Rex Healthcare.

WakeMed contends that buying Rex from the UNC Health Care System would improve patient care in Wake County and beyond, reduce costs by eliminating redundant services, and provide a much-needed cash infusion for the parent UNC system and the state. Wake Med is also trying to defend its home turf from what it has said are "predatory" expansion tactics by UNC Health using taxpayer money.

But a deal, which would reshape the Triangle's healthcare market, faces many obstacles.
UNC and Rex officials aren't interested in a sale. A deal could raise red flags among antitrust regulators worried that less competition in the local hospital industry could lead to higher prices and fewer choices.

While WakeMed has been seeking support for the acquisition from Gov. Bev Perdue and state lawmakers, several legislators said Thursday that selling Rex won't solve the state's longer-term financial problems. Senate leader Phil Berger said he has not looked at all the implications, but "it's something we need to be very careful about."

"There are a number of folks in the Senate who think it's a bad idea," said the Eden Republican. Berger said he thinks that any deal would need legislative approval.

As with most states, North Carolina is facing a massive budget hole and lawmakers are eager for possible solutions. Legislators could put pressure on UNC to do a deal by threatening its state funding, or even pass a bill that forces a sale.

"WakeMed is playing on the weakness of the state's finances," said Doug Townsend, a Durham consultant who previously ran an investment bank that specialized in health-care deals. "It's all going to come down to allocation of resources. If the state believes it can use that money to fill a hole somewhere, then the strategy of UNC Health could become a secondary concern."

Last week, WakeMed's board unanimously approved making an offer for Rex. Officials have been working for months with a team of investment bankers, lawyers, consultants and lobbyists. The effort is tied to a broader effort by WakeMed to attack UNC Health's expansion plans in Wake County, especially its recent affiliations with key physician groups.

Last winter, WakeMed started a lobbying and public-relations campaign, and made a formal request seeking records such as UNC's correspondence with Wake County doctors.

WakeMed leaders made their Rex offer official by delivering a letter to Tom Ross, the UNC president, Thursday morning.
In a prepared statement, Ross said the UNC Health board will meet Monday and plans to "consider the offer carefully and conduct extensive due diligence" to fulfill its financial responsibility to the people of North Carolina. But he also said that Rex is an important part of UNC Health's mission of providing high-quality medical care to all state residents, conducting cutting-edge research and educating the next generation of physicians.

"In this uncertain health-care environment, it is critically important that we maintain a long-term vision for the UNC Health Care System that extends beyond the current budget crisis," he said. "I do not believe that divesting UNC Health Care of Rex in order to generate one-time revenue for the state is in the long-term best interests of the people of North Carolina, and it would damage our ability to fully carry out our mission."

At a news conference Thursday morning at WakeMed's main campus in Raleigh, CEO Bill Atkinson said it would be a mistake for anyone to dismiss a legitimate offer.

"I hope it will receive serious consideration from UNC officials and lawmakers," he said. "Consolidation is happening across the entire health-care industry. It makes logical sense for us to go down this path. ... This is a bold idea in tough economic times."

WakeMed would use some of its $659 million in cash reserves to pay for the acquisition, but would also need to seek additional, outside financing. That would likely involve selling tax-free bonds on Wall Street.

Atkinson hinted in an interview that WakeMed might consider raising its offer, which is already worth more than $900 million with Rex's $158 million of debt included.

"I'm not going to bid up my own offer, but we do not anticipate a problem in putting this transaction together," he said.

WakeMed also is willing to walk away if the deal is rejected. "If they say 'no,' so be it," Atkinson said. "But it's worth asking tough questions. We see no harm in having this discussion."
The unsolicited offer could attract rivals from outside the Triangle who want a foothold in Wake County's medical market.

"There are probably a number of bidders who would love to have the Rex franchise," said Townsend, the Durham consultant.

Novant Health, a Winston-Salem hospital chain that has been trying to expand in Wake County for several years, is one potential bidder mentioned by health industry observers.

"If UNC put Rex up for sale, we of course would consider the opportunity," Novant spokeswoman Kati Everett said. "Rex is a quality organization, but it is also currently not for sale."

If a bidding war erupts, UNC officials and state lawmakers may decide a sale is the best option.

But during a separate press conference at Rex's main Raleigh campus, Rex chairman Dale Jenkins said the hospital's board was perplexed by WakeMed's bid, which he described as hostile.

"Rex is not for sale," he said.

Jenkins said during discussions that Rex and WakeMed have had during the past year about possible partnerships, such an offer was never broached. Orage Quarles III, publisher of The News & Observer, serves on Rex's board.

This isn't the first time executives at Rex and WakeMed have discussed a possible union. In the late 1990s, Wake Med wanted to buy Rex, but Rex opted to accept a buyout offer from UNC Health, which paid about $290 million, including the assumption of Rex's debt.

Staff writers David Bracken, Lynn Bonner and Craig Jarvis contributed to this report.
alan.wolf@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4572
WakeMed makes a muscular bid for rival Rex

Why does WakeMed want to buy Rex?

WakeMed leaders say the deal would improve care for patients, save money by eliminating duplication of services, create a stronger combined hospital system, and provide a huge cash infusion for Rex's parent, the UNC Health Care System, the broader UNC system and ultimately the state. Adding Rex would help WakeMed navigate an industry that's rapidly shifting because of federal health reform. For example, the combined hospital system would have more clout with insurers. WakeMed also wants to eliminate the increasingly competitive threat from UNC Health's expansion strategy in Wake County.

Why aren't Rex and UNC Health interested?

UNC Health bought Rex in 2000, and wants to use its Raleigh operations to continue expanding and providing more care and services to patients. UNC Health is seeking more affiliations with physicians, community hospitals and other providers as it looks to extend its network of services across the state. And Wake County is one of the largest and fastest-growing medical markets in the state.

Could a deal still happen?

WakeMed is trying to convince lawmakers that its offer represents a large amount of money at a time the state desperately needs fresh sources of revenue. State legislators could put pressure on UNC leaders to consider the deal, or even try to pass a bill that would force a sale. But several said Thursday that effort would face opposition.

Why is WakeMed offering so much money?

WakeMed has spent months with a team of lawyers, investment bankers, consultants and others to determine its offer price of $750 million. That price is based on a "complex formula" that includes a "significant gain" for the state, said WakeMed CEO Bill Atkinson. He hinted that WakeMed could even raise its bid to get a deal done.

One factor in determining the price: Rex reported operating profit of $35.8 million for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2010, up 74 percent from the previous year. Operating revenue rose 11 percent to $571 million.

How will WakeMed pay for the deal?

The private, not-for-profit hospital system has $659 million in cash reserves, and about $450 million of debt in the form of tax-free bonds. It would need to seek additional, outside financing - probably by selling more bonds on Wall Street.

What will it mean for patients and medical care?

WakeMed contends that patients will see improvements by consolidating its specialties with Rex services. Rex, for example, offers cancer care, while WakeMed doesn't. WakeMed is much stronger in heart services. But critics worry that reducing competition will limit choices and could lead to higher prices. It also could hurt physicians who would have little choice but to accept the combined hospital's terms and rules.

How does WakeMed expect this deal will help it reduce costs?
One step will be to eliminate redundant services that both Rex and WakeMed offer. That would also include cutting back on plans for various expansion projects, which have become a major economic engine during the downturn.

**What will it mean for employees?**

WakeMed employs more than 7,000 people, and Rex employs more than 5,000 -- making them two of the largest employers in the Triangle. Atkinson said that while the union could cut costs by creating efficiencies, this area's growing population will continue to fuel more demand for medical care. That's likely to mean additional hiring whether Rex and Wake Med operate together or separately.

**Won't merging Raleigh's two largest hospitals create a monopoly, which could hurt consumers and others?**

The deal could raise red flags among state and federal antitrust regulators. But the Triangle is one of the most competitive health-care markets in the country, with WakeMed in Raleigh, the Duke University Health System in Durham and UNC Health Care System in Chapel Hill. WakeMed officials argue that merging with Rex won't reduce competition.

Alan M. Wolf

**Rex Healthcare**

**Business:** 658-bed health-care system in Raleigh, owned by the UNC Health Care System  
**Size:** $571 million in operating revenue during last fiscal year  
**Employees:** more than 5,000  
**Top executive:** CEO David Strong (UNC Health CEO William L. Roper)  
**Specialties:** baby deliveries, cancer care, surgeries  
**History:** Founded in 1894 by John Rex; acquired in April 2000 for $290 million by UNC Health

**WakeMed**

**Business:** 870-bed private, not-for-profit health-care system in Raleigh  
**Size:** $916 million in operating revenue during last fiscal year  
**Employees:** more than 7,000  
**Top executive:** CEO William K. Atkinson  
**Specialties:** cardiovascular care, trauma and emergency care, high-risk deliveries and infants, children's hospital  
**History:** Opened in 1961 as a Wake County-owned facility; converted to private, not-for-profit status in 1997

**Ira David Wood III**

The well-known local actor became a WakeMed pitchman after he had extensive heart surgery at the Raleigh hospital last year. Wood is a Raleigh theater icon, mostly through playing Ebenezer Scrooge in Theatre in the Park’s "A Christmas Carol" for 35 years.

WakeMed now features him in television and other advertising. On Thursday evening, he was master of ceremonies for a party to mark the hospital’s 50th anniversary.
UNC study finds way to slow spread of HIV
BY JAY PRICE - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL A multinational study headed by a UNC-Chapel Hill researcher has led to a discovery that could help slow the spread of HIV.

Early treatment of heterosexual HIV patients with antiretroviral drugs sharply reduces the chances they will transmit the virus, according to results of the nine-nation study released Thursday.

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. The $73 million study found that people with HIV are 96 percent less likely to spread it to a partner if they're placed on the regimen of drugs sooner than normal, a startling result that triggered international media coverage.

Dr. Myron Cohen, a professor of medicine, microbiology and immunology, and public health at UNC and director of the UNC Institute for Global Health and Infectious Diseases, is the principal investigator of the study, which he designed and organized.

Cohen said Thursday that he was elated by the results and overwhelmed by the attention they were getting. He is widely recognized as an international authority on the transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS, and has spent more than two decades building a team at the university to study those topics.
Cohen announced the findings in a morning media telephone conference with an official from the National Institutes of Health, which paid for the study. Then he spent much of the rest of the day on the phone with journalists from the BBC, NBC, CBS, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and the Washington Post.

The study began in 2005 and had been expected to last until 2015. But the results were so profound that an independent monitoring board recommended that researchers release their findings early and tell the study participants.

"That was April 28, and I was just gobsmacked by the fact that we had essentially proven the hypothesis," Cohen said.

**Couples around the world**
The researchers then went to all 13 study sites to start spreading the word, he said. They explained the findings to ministers of health in all nine countries and began preparing the data for release years before they had expected.

The study involved 1,763 couples at sites in Botswana, Brazil, India, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Thailand, the United States and Zimbabwe. Each couple comprised one partner who had HIV but still had a relatively healthy immune system, and one partner who was not infected. The couples were randomly assigned to one of two groups.

In one group, the partners with HIV were immediately placed on the drug regimen. In the other, the drugs were withheld unless their immune systems weakened to a certain point, but were still above the range recommended by the World Health Organization for beginning the use of the drugs.

In 28 cases one of the previously uninfected subjects contracted HIV from his or her partner, all but one of them among the group in which use of the drugs was delayed.

UNC-Chapel Hill not only led the overall study, but it also operated one of the study sites, enrolling 251 couples at UNC Project-Malawi, the university's research, care and training center in Lilongwe.

The university has been conducting HIV research in Malawi since 1989.
Among those in the study, 97 percent were heterosexual couples. Because so few homosexual couples were enrolled, the study results can't be extrapolated to them, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Thursday.

**Participants given care**
All the participants were provided with health care, HIV testing, and counseling on safe sex and condoms.

It's not clear to what degree they used the condoms, though they self-reported high rates of use, Cohen said. Those with HIV in the deferred treatment group are now being offered the drugs. It's likely that both groups benefited from the study's focus on safe sex, he said.

The study had been expected to continue until 2015. The researchers will continue to gather data for at least another year, Cohen said, but it's unclear what will happen long-term until everyone involved, from the researchers to the drug companies and patients, has a chance to talk through the issues.

Antiviral drugs have side effects and can be costly, and doctors often wait until a patient's immune system weakens to a certain point before recommending them.

The study was aimed partly at determining whether early use of the drugs could reduce transmission, and partly at examining the effects of the earlier treatment on those already infected.

At least one effect on those already infected was found: There were three cases of tuberculosis among those in the group that got the drugs early, and 17 among those who did not.

The data collected through the study are complex and are expected to yield findings beyond those announced Thursday, Cohen said.

jay.price@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4526
N.C. State basketball player C.J. Leslie has apologized for comments about gay athletes he posted online on his Twitter account earlier this week.

While watching an ESPN "Outside the Lines" program on gay pro athletes Tuesday, Leslie wrote two comments on his account.

"I'm no anti gay But I would rather not have a gay n the locker room," Leslie posted. A follow-up comment posted on Leslie's Twitter feed said: "I'm not saying I hate gays but that's sumthing that I would not wnt n my locker room ..."

Both comments were deleted from Leslie's account Tuesday. Wednesday, he posted two apologies.

"Wanna apologize for hurting or offending any 1 with my tweets yesterday," Leslie wrote. "Was watching espn show about it and didn't think before I tweeted. Meant no disrespect to any 1."

Annabelle Myers, N.C. State's assistant AD for media relations, said Wolfpack coach Mark Gottfried spoke to Leslie about the comments.

Myers also said, "Any student has the right to express his or her personal opinion, but those comments certainly don't reflect the diverse and welcoming atmosphere at N.C. State. Our student-athletes are reminded and encouraged to be circumspect in what they say, post or tweet."

Leslie, a McDonald's All-American from Holly Springs, led N.C. State in rebounding (7.2 per game) as a freshman and was second in scoring (11.0 points per game).
A report in the St. Petersburg Times says an Arlington foundation founded and funded by conservative businessman Charles Koch gets to “screen and sign off on” certain hires in the economics department at Florida State University under the terms of a $1.5 million gift.

FSU leaders have since dismissed the story — more on that in a moment.

Wealthy donors don’t usually get to decide who is hired with the money they give. But the contract between the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation and FSU “specifies that an advisory committee appointed by Koch decides which candidates should be considered” for a newly funded program promoting “political economy and free enterprise,” according to the Times report.

“The foundation can also withdraw its funding if it’s not happy with the faculty’s choice or if the hires don’t meet ‘objectives’ set by Koch during annual evaluations,” it says.

The deal apparently dates to 2008 but drew notice only this month with a critical letter in the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper from FSU faculty.

David Rasmussen, dean of the College of Social Sciences at FSU, told the paper Koch rejected more than half of the candidates forwarded by the faculty in the first round of hiring before ultimately agreeing on two assistant professor hires.

Eric Barron, FSU’s president, sharply criticized the account in e-mails to the university community, according to this account in the Tallahassee newspaper.
(Although I hasten to add that the St. Pete Times story shows no signs of having been corrected, clarified or amended, which suggests that the editors are standing behind it.)

“Florida State University absolutely did not — and would not — sacrifice academic freedom in order to receive a donation of any kind,” he wrote, as quoted in the Democrat.

Barron emphasized that faculty ultimately voted to approve the hires in question, and that the two candidates actually were not on the list prepared by the “advisory committee” in which Koch wields some influence.

Barron wrote, “it is clear that FSU faculty were the decision-makers at every level.”
Improving the Science of Teaching Science

By BENEDICT CAREY

Over the past few years, scientists have been working to transform education from the inside out, by applying findings from learning and memory research where they could do the most good, in the classroom. A study appearing in the journal Science on Thursday illustrates how promising this work can be — and how treacherous.

The research comes from a closely watched group led by Carl Wieman, a Nobel laureate in physics at the University of British Columbia who leads a $12 million initiative to improve science instruction using research-backed methods for both testing students’ understanding and improving how science is taught.

In one of the initiative’s most visible studies, Dr. Wieman’s team reports that students in an introductory college physics course did especially well on an exam after attending experimental, collaborative classes during the 12th week of the course. By contrast, students taking the same course from another instructor — who did not use the experimental approach and continued with lectures as usual — scored much lower on the same exam.

In teleconference on Wednesday, Dr. Wieman and his co-authors said that some instructors at the university were already eager to adopt the new approach and that it should improve classroom learning broadly, in other sciences and at many levels.

Yet experts who reviewed the new report cautioned that it was not convincing enough to change teaching. The study has a variety of limitations, they said, some because of the difficulty of doing research in the dude-I-slept-through-class world of the freshman year of college, and others because of the study’s design. “The whole issue of how to draw on basic science and apply it in classrooms is a whole lot more complicated than they’re letting on,” said Daniel Willingham, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia.
Dr. Willingham said that, among other concerns, the study was not controlled enough to tell which of the changes in teaching might have accounted for the difference in students’ scores.

In the study, Dr. Wieman had two advanced students take over one of the two introductory physics classes during the 12th week of the term, teaching the material in a radically different way from the usual lectures. Both this class and the comparison one were large, lecture-hall courses, each with more than 260 students enrolled. Instead of delivering lectures, the new co-instructors conducted collaborative classes, in which students worked in teams to answer questions about electromagnetic waves. The new teachers circulated among the students, picking up on common questions and points of confusion, and gave immediate feedback on study teams’ answers.

The techniques are rooted in an approach to learning known as deliberate practice, which previous research suggests is what leads to the acquisition of real expertise.

“As opposed to the traditional lecture, in which students are passive, this class actively engages students and allows them time to synthesize new information and incorporate it into mental model,” said Louis Deslauriers, a postdoctoral researcher who, with Ellen Schelew, a graduate student, taught the experimental classes. “When they can incorporate thing into a mental model, we find much better retention.”

At the end of the study, students in the experimental class who took a test on the material scored 74 percent, on average, more than twice the average of students in the comparison course who took the test. On midterm exams the two classes had scored almost exactly the same.

Yet this being college — and the end of the term, at that — not everyone showed up with their calculators. More than 150 of the students were absent from the test, most of them from the comparison class. The researchers had no way to know how those students, if they’d come, would have changed the overall findings.

Experts said, too, that it was problematic for authors of a study to also be delivering the intervention — in this case, as enthusiastic teachers. “This is not a good idea, since they know exactly what the hypotheses are that guide the study, and, more importantly, exactly what the measures are that will be
used to evaluate the effects,” said James W. Stigler, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, in an e-mail. “They might, therefore, be tailoring their instruction to the assessment — i.e., teaching to the test.”

Dr. Wieman said he strongly doubted that the new instructors had this kind of effect on the students. As a rule, he said in an e-mail, students in such large classes “are remarkably removed from any sense of personal connection with the instructor. That does change with a more interactive class, but not enough and not fast enough to have any significant impact on learning in a week.”

Either way, Dr. Stigler said, the study is an important step in a journey that is long overdue, given the vast shortcomings of education as usual. “I think that the authors are pioneers in exploring and testing ways we can improve undergraduate teaching and learning,” he said. “As a psychologist, I’m ashamed that it is physicists who are leading this effort, and not learning scientists.”
University System Perk Becomes Pension Liability
By JENNIFER GOLLAN
A little-noticed cash benefit for some University of California employees is adding strain to the system’s battered pension plan just as the university prepares for a $500 million reduction in state aid, the deepest cut in 20 years.

At various points since 1992, the university has diverted about $875 million from its regular retirement fund to finance supplemental retirement benefits, in part to make up for salary cuts or meager increases tied to state budgets. But now the university system is carrying a roughly $1.3 billion obligation to more than 100,700 faculty, staff and administrators who were promised generous returns on those initial sums that the university salted away for them.

The initial goal of expanding these benefits under the so-called Capital Accumulation Payment plan was to attract and retain talented employees. But university officials acknowledged that there was no clear evidence that that aim had been achieved.

And while the supplemental plan represents a small fraction of the university’s overall pension obligations, it is compounding the system’s financial problems, which include an overall pension deficit of $14 billion tied to investment losses and a 20-year hiatus on contributions from the university system and employees that ended in April.

If the university hadn’t offered the perk, said Steve Montiel, a spokesman for the University of California, “we would be in a little bit better financial position.” The plan was overfunded at the time, Mr. Montiel said, “so it was like, ‘Yeah, this is not going to matter that much. Let’s assign some of it to this other plan.’ ”

That was a mistake, said Jason Sisney, director of state finance at the nonpartisan State Legislative Analyst’s Office.

“The idea that retirement benefits would have been expanded in this manner for a pension system in this particular position seems quite questionable in
"retrospect," Mr. Sisney said. “Clearly, a pension system that has employees accruing new benefits each year without any accompanying contributions is unsustainable.”

Neither of the state’s largest pension plans, the California State Teachers’ Retirement System and the California Public Employees’ Retirement System, provide supplemental retirement benefits financed with employer contributions and investment returns alone. But the Board of Regents of the University of California approved the enhanced benefits on seven occasions from 1992 to 1994 and 2002 to 2003. The university set aside the equivalent of 2.5 to 5.3 percent of each employee’s salary from a given year in a separate account with a guaranteed return of 7.5 or 8.5 percent, which varied depending on when the allocation was offered.

Joe Nation, a public policy professor at Stanford and a former state assemblyman who has overseen studies on California’s largest pensions, sees the university’s expanded pension benefits as anachronistic at best.

“It puts them in a really bad spot because they have these obligations that are iron clad firm obligations to employees,” Mr. Nation said. “It also means that tuition increases and other cuts will continue.”

jgollan@baycitizen.org
Push for Higher Education Plan Comes to Shove for a University Chancellor
By REEVE HAMILTON

At the end of a turbulent week in Texas higher education, the circumstances of the chancellors of the state’s two largest university systems stand in stark contrast.

On Tuesday, Mike McKinney, chancellor of the Texas A&M University system, abruptly announced his retirement, effective July 1. According to multiple higher education sources, it was a move quietly encouraged by members of the board of regents.

Two days later, the University of Texas System Board of Regents expressed unanimous support for Chancellor Francisco G. Cigarroa after a highly anticipated speech outlining his vision for advancing excellence throughout the system.

Interest in the actions of the university system regents has reached an unusual level, among the public and in the halls of the Texas Capitol, as distrust and acrimony have spread through the higher education community in recent months. And it seems that neither board’s action this week is likely to lessen that scrutiny.

The actions of both governing boards are tied, at least in part, to a debate over seven so-called breakthrough solutions for higher education. Since 2008, Gov. Rick Perry and the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a conservative study group, have encouraged regents to put into effect the changes, which were developed by Jeff Sandefer, a businessman and foundation board member.

Supporters of the measures, which include separating research and teaching budgets and providing professors large cash rewards based solely on student evaluations, maintain that they will deliver better educational results more efficiently. But the measures have generated a significant backlash among the academic communities at the state’s flagship public universities, Texas A&M and the University of Texas at Austin.
In e-mails to regents of the A&M system, where the most progress was made in putting the measures into effect, Mr. Sandefer and his father, the oilman J. D. Sandefer, who is known as Jakie, repeatedly expressed frustration with the chancellor’s methods of implementation. The e-mails were obtained through open records requests. The younger Mr. Sandefer noted at one point that Mr. McKinney’s approach was “WAY overcomplicated” and, later, that he had made “a serious error.”

The University of Texas System has been more reluctant to implement the proposed measures, and the pressure to do so was, until recently, largely under the radar. In February, Mr. Perry appointed new regents and a new chairman, Gene Powell, who were perceived as sympathetic to the measures.

The flashpoint that inspired a barrage of angry letters and e-mails from Texas students, faculty members and alumni was Mr. Powell’s hiring of a special adviser with ties to Mr. Sandefer and the conservative policy group, and the creation of two task forces to focus on university excellence and blended and online learning. Despite Mr. Powell’s insistence to the contrary, some perceived the moves as an effort to cut out Mr. Cigarroa and other high-level administrators.

On Thursday, Mr. Powell told the room at an uncharacteristically crowded regents meeting that it was decided nearly a month ago that there was a need for the chancellor to lay out a framework for how he planned to guide the system. The vision Mr. Cigarroa then offered — based on the four principles of opportunity, economic prosperity, quality of life and stewardship — directly conflicted with some of the “breakthrough solutions,” though it embraced the goals if not the specifics of others.

The University of Texas System has a legacy of not settling for mediocrity, he said, and the people of Texas look to it for excellence. He told the room that, before the people’s trust can be maintained, “We must first trust each other.”

Mr. Cigarroa also cautioned regents not to become overly involved in the day-to-day operations of individual institutions. “Our universities cannot be micromanaged,” he said. “I trust our presidents, and I will hold them and I will hold myself accountable.”
The remarks received a standing ovation from the room and a vote of support from the regents. Alex Cranberg, a recently appointed regent, said he approved of the chancellor’s message, but warned against confusing prestige with achievements like advances in knowledge and student outcomes. Afterward, Mr. Cranberg wrote in an e-mail, “The chancellor’s message reinforced the important reforms that this Board must push forward to advance excellence at the University of Texas.”

William Powers Jr., president of the University of Texas at Austin, who delivered his own speech on Monday laying out a vision for his institution, said in an interview that the vote “was a very positive development.” He said, “It included a commitment to excellence on our campus and emphasized a commitment to efficiency, accountability and accessibility, with which I strongly agree.”

Steve Hicks, who has served as a regent for two years, said the board’s vote was the most important of his tenure. “Now is the time to get fully behind the chancellor and not micromanage his affairs,” Mr. Hicks said. The unanimous outcome was not predetermined, he said, although he was pleased with it. “It’s a start to the healing,” he said.

Others agreed with the sentiment.

The University of Texas student body president, Natalie Butler, said the chancellor’s remarks could be interpreted in different ways. As for whether the board and administrators have regained her confidence and that of her fellow students, she said, “The question is still open.”

One question that Mr. Powell — who said he believes the debate has been productive and hopes discussion continues — hopes has been laid to rest is that the jobs of Mr. Cigarroa or Mr. Powers might be at risk.

“‘There’s rumors out there that somebody’s getting ready to be fired,’” Mr. Powell said in an interview. “That has not been discussed at all about either gentleman.”

“I thought it was important for us to show that we care about them, we care about the job they’re doing, and we fully support them,” he said.
Meanwhile, at A&M, Ray Bowen, one of 22 distinguished alumni who recently wrote a letter to the A&M regents opposing the seven measures pushed by the Texas Public Policy Foundation, said it was too early to determine what Mr. McKinney’s departure would mean for the system’s future.

He said, however, “Our regents at this point seem pretty much impervious from alumni pressure.”

Mr. McKinney and Richard Box, chairman of the A&M Board of Regents, declined to comment for this article.

Mr. Bowen said he was interested in seeing what the effect of legislative pressure might be. Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and the Texas House speaker, Joe Straus, Republican of San Antonio, issued a proclamation creating a joint oversight committee on higher education governance, excellence and transparency that will extend beyond the fast-approaching close of the regular legislative session.

State Representative Eric Johnson, Democrat of Dallas, the lone freshman legislator on the 12-person committee, said in a statement, “In order for quality higher education to be accessible and affordable for Texas families, it’s critical that the governing boards of our colleges and universities be held accountable for the policies they implement.”

rhamilton@texastribune.org
Apps make college easier to access
By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY
Updated 7h 4m ago   May 13, 2011

No time for class? Pull out your iPhone. A small but growing cadre of online universities is developing mobile apps to help students pursue their studies whenever and wherever they want.

Western Governors University, a non-profit online university that enrolls 24,000 students in 50 states, is developing mobile apps to allow students access to course content. Golden Gate University, a non-profit online university that enrolls about 4,000 students, anticipates the launch of an app in the upcoming year.

And the University of Phoenix, a for-profit college that makes its name by offering flexible schedules to busy adults, launched an app last month for the iPhone and iPod Touch that allows its 300,000 online students to experience what it calls "a true extension of the classroom." Students can use their smartphones to access online discussions, threads, assignments, and receive real-time alerts when grades are posted.

"It's a supplement … a very helpful tool on the go," says senior Tracy Lawson, 30, of Portland, Ore., who works full time while pursuing a bachelor's degree in health care administration. She is one of nearly 60,000 students who have downloaded the PhoenixMobile app since it came out late last month.

Rob Wrubel, executive vice president of Apollo Group, the parent company of the University of Phoenix, says the app was designed for non-traditional students but that the concept likely has wider appeal. "If this is the generation of the future, and they're … using these kinds of information-rich devices, we have to be able to migrate the classroom and educational experience more and more to that world," Wrubel says.

More than 5.6 million college students nationwide were taking at least one online course during the fall 2009 term, about a million more than the previous year, says a November report by the Babson Survey Research Group.

Other colleges appear to see potential, too. In a survey of nearly 1,300 Iowa State University students published in March, 78% said they wanted "mobile access" to course management systems, such as assignments and grades, though there was no clear agreement on exactly what form that should take.

Some critics say the University of Phoenix is encouraging a watered-down degree. "If you want to read Plato you can't do it on a cellphone," says Barmak Nassirian, of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. "You've got to have a little focus."