THE DAILY CLIPS

May 14, 2009

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

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DEATH NOTICES

James R. Wright

Mr. James R. "Jim" Wright, 74, died Wednesday, May 13, 2009. He was a retired faculty member of the Department of English at East Carolina University.

A private memorial service will be held at a later date. Online condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com. Arrangements by Wilkerson Funeral Home and Crematory.
Installation of HealthSpan another step to improving patient care

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, May 13, 2009

The patient practice of the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University has installed HealthSpan, an electronic medical record system developed by University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina.

Representing another step toward a universal resource for health records, ECU Physicians joins a growing number of medical providers who utilize the system, including six UHS hospitals and Our Children's Clinic, a private pediatric practice in Greenville. HealthSpan contains more than 1.2 million patient records.

PCMH President Steve Lawler described the digital system as the "spine and backbone" of improving quality and care to patients.

"I think this sends and incredibly strong message," Lawler said. "It focuses on putting patients at the center of the universe."

HealthSpan uses a number of modules for a wide range of health care functions such as scheduling, pharmacy and radiology. It also has portals for both the patient and the referring physician.

UHS deployed HealthSpan in several phases by implementing the core clinical modules at its six hospitals in eastern North Carolina and then adding billing and registration for additional practices.

Dr. Clyde Davis, PCMH medical director for clinical operations, demonstrated how the system works. After logging in, Davis said he could perform a wide range of activities, from viewing X-rays to researching a patient's medical history. He said the system can even help eliminate human error by checking allergy complications to certain medications.

"I have access independent from space and time," Davis said.

Stuart James, chief information officer for UHS, said the goal of the system is to create a single record for patients so staff members from separate hospitals all have access to the same information.

"This has been about trying to connect patients and providers with the information to improve their care," he said. "It was a big challenge, but it was the right thing to do."

As UHS moves forward, James said patients will have the ability to access their records online. The new system also may provide a valuable tool for the medical school.

"We are a medical school, and we are responsible to teach our students how they should be and can be practicing medicine during the next decade," said Dr. Nicholas Benson, professor of Emergency Medicine and vice dean of the medical school. "It provides us a platform to provide the foundation for these medical students."

Benson listed examples of how HealthSpan will make local health care more efficient. He said doctors working in the emergency department can view exact procedures and prescriptions given to a patient at another hospital, which enhances their ability to care for that person.

"It increases care and reduces costs," Lawler said of the $40 million investment.

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What is HealthSpan?

An online medical record system that allows physicians to access patient histories

Contains more than 1.2 million patient records from six UHS hospitals, ECU Physicians and Our Children’s Clinic

Includes nine modules for managing a wide range of health care options

UHS invested roughly $40 million in purchasing and installing the system

The Duke Endowment awarded a $3 million grant to ECU and PCMH to help fund system implementation

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Shaw's president bows out

Clarence Newsome will get a year's pay as a new leader is sought

BY JOSH SHAFFER, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - Facing at least $20 million in debt, Shaw University will seek a new president and launch an aggressive fund drive to rescue the school from financial collapse. It's a familiar challenge for the school, and one that its backers vowed to whip.

Before a crowd of 400 faculty, staff and supporters, Board of Trustees Chairman Willie Gary announced Wednesday that President Clarence G. Newsome will take a paid, yearlong sabbatical. Newsome will not return, ending his six-year tenure at Shaw.

Newsome, former dean of Howard University's divinity school in Washington, was still under contract at Shaw, and the sabbatical sprang from a mutual agreement for his departure.

"We wished each other Godspeed," Gary said. "Even though we were going in different directions, we both agreed that no one or anyone is bigger than this university."
The school's financial troubles loom large enough that all 40 members of the board will contribute $50,000 each of their own money toward Shaw's shrinking coffers, Gary said. Shaw also will begin making tough cuts, perhaps whole departments, he said, while making a nationwide search for funds.

"Our major mainstay has always been the churches," said the Rev. David Forbes, a board member, announcing plans to approach the Baptist State Convention and churches -- both black and white -- nationwide. "We have enjoyed support from our Anglo brothers as well."

Chosen in 2003, Newsome was charged with guiding an ambitious 10-year agenda that included increasing enrollment from 2,700 to 10,000 and expanding the school's endowment from $15 million to $50 million. Shaw now enrolls 2,750, officials said. Its endowment figures were not available Wednesday, according to spokeswoman Terry Spicer.

Newsome was not at the gathering Wednesday. In a news release from the university, Newsome said, "The time has come for me to focus on other endeavors and new opportunities. Shaw University will always be dear to me."

Shaw has been there before

The oldest historically black university in the South, Shaw has experience with lean years.

In 1987, when former President Talbert O. Shaw took over, he inherited a financial shambles. No endowment. Missing money. Rock-bottom morale.

But he forged a relationship with the Baptist convention, winning gifts and rubbing shoulders with business leaders who could help with donations. He restructured debts and contracts to save money, and the school's rebound was featured in the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Gary, a prominent lawyer and alumnus, recalled when faculty members went months without pay.

"Thank God we don't have to do that again," he said, drawing immediate applause and adding, "I saw you looking at me kind of funny."

The school's current financial problems have been building since last year.

In December, more than 100 students packed Newsome's office protesting poor dorm conditions, including moldy bathrooms, toilets that don't work and overcrowded rooms. Some students wore strips of duct tape over their mouths with the words Rats and Ants written on them.

At the time, some asked why Shaw was millions in debt and a beloved dean had been laid off. Newsome noted that many students had not paid their debts to Shaw.

On the school's Facebook.com social networking page, a common question from students is, "Where is the money going?"

Departure terms private

The terms of Newsome's sabbatical are private, Gary said. He added that he wished the university could part with the president without spending any money. "Sometimes it's a matter of doing the right thing," he said.

Asked whether their differences were philosophical or financial, Gary smiled.

"We are moving on," he said. "Sometimes you just have differences of opinion with the way the ship is sailing."

Faculty and staff said they will miss Newsome, but that tough times require tough moves.
"We're a strong family, and we just want to see Shaw go forward," said Agnes Baxter, director of residence life and judicial services. "Are we a little bit nervous? Yes." If they weren't, she said, they'd be crazy.

Evangeline January, a staff nurse, said she is already a department of one.

"I'm Social Security age," she said. "If I need to draw Social Security and work for free, that's what I'll do."

Optimistic alumni

Alumni across the region said their school will weather this misery, which comes at a time when many institutions of higher learning are suffering.

"I guess some of the professors will be donating their time," said Virginia Talley, a 1965 graduate. "They would hate to see students go by the wayside."

A transition team plans to name an interim president within 10 days, Gary said, then conduct a nationwide search for Newsome's replacement.

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Graduation, recession style

For many, pomp being tempered by circumstances

By Tracy Jan, Globe Staff  |  May 14, 2009

It's a springtime ritual, one eagerly anticipated by hoteliers and restaurateurs. Each weekend starting this month and through the beginning of June, scores of parents descend upon the region for the college commencement season. In boom times, they rack up hotel bills, splurge on meals, and open their wallets at the shops along Newbury Street.

But this year, amid the recession, many families are injecting a sobering dose of frugality into the pomp and circumstance. More moms and dads are eschewing hotels to bunk in Spartan dormitory rooms or squeezing into their children's apartments for the weekend. Demand for $50-a-night dorm rooms at The College of the Holy Cross has jumped 60 percent, and latecomers are now being turned away.

Others from as far as New York plan to drive here on graduation morning and head home after the ceremony to save on costs.

Bracing for a leaner year, some local hotels have lowered their peak rates and dropped their two-night minimum. For high-end hotels and restaurants, though, the party continues as usual, with no cancellations for bookings made as far as a year in advance. After all, they say, graduation is no time to scrimp.

Some families say they don't have much choice.

At Boston University, which holds commencement Sunday, senior Kaia Balcos will blow up two air mattresses for her parents, aunt, and cousin to sleep on in her studio apartment near campus, saving them hundreds of dollars a night. For her high school graduation, her parents hosted a dinner for 15 at a New Jersey restaurant. No plans are in the works for a party this weekend, she said. And she discreetly penned "no gifts please" on her announcements.

"I know my mom's not comfortable spending that kind of money right now," Balcos said. "Her 401(k) went crazy. . . . Everyone's in a tough spot."

Her father, Ron, acknowledged he'd rather be in a hotel.

"We're worried about cutting back only because you never know what will happen," said Balcos, a biochemist at a New York hospital. "But we're not hurting yet."

Holy Cross has booked all 80 of the dorm rooms it set aside for next Friday's graduation. In years past, only about 50 rooms would be filled, said Paul Irish, cochairman of the commencement planning committee. The suites with private baths make bringing the extended family more affordable, he said, though they will be sleeping on twin beds.

Freddy Sinchi, the first in his family to graduate from college, wants as many family members as possible to see him receive his Holy Cross diploma. He reserved three dorm rooms for at least eight people - his parents, younger siblings, uncle, and church pastor. Those who don't fit will sleep in his dorm room. More guests will drive up for the ceremony Friday, leaving Harlem, N.Y., by 5 a.m.

"This is much more economical for us," Sinchi said.

Paige Singleton booked four Holy Cross dorm rooms for her parents, sisters, and grandparents, who otherwise would not all have been able to afford to come. They will spend one night in Boston before driving home to New Orleans in a rented van with her belongings. The "bonding road trip" will serve as
their family vacation this year, she said.

Instead of a fancy meal out to celebrate, her family will eat in the college dining hall, she said.

"I don't want them to have to go out," she said. "Everybody seems to be on a budget, so it makes it a little tough to full out celebrate."

Schools, too, are cutting back on the pomp. Wheaton College in Norton eliminated embossing on the program cover and ordered 400 fewer programs. Clark University has begun e-mailing invitations to commencement events. Gordon College in Wenham will no longer serve refreshments. And Brandeis is limiting the number of decorative plants to adorn the graduation stage; there also nixed the traditional balloon drop.

Each May and June, Massachusetts colleges draw more than 275,000 commencement guests, who have the economic impact of "back-to-back Super Bowls," said Richard Doherty, president and chief executive of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts.

In Greater Boston, home to 45 colleges and universities, graduations bring in about $90 million each spring to the local hospitality industry, said Pat Moscaritolo, president and chief executive of the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"Graduation week is a unique moment in a family's history," Moscaritolo said, "and especially given the colleges we're talking about here in the Boston and Cambridge area, people will come and celebrate and spend."

Some hotels like The Lenox hotel in Copley Square and the Fairmont Copley Plaza have lowered their room rates for the graduation season. The Lenox even has a sprinkling of rooms open two weeks from now, whereas last year, they were booked solid, said Daniel Donahue, general manager of The Lenox. Rates there start at $245 a night, compared with more than $300 last year.

"May and June in Boston, this is where the world wants to be. This is typically not a rate-sensitive time of year," said Paul Tormey, general manager of the Fairmont Copley Plaza. "But if your kid was a senior last year, you would have paid more."

In some quarters, though, parents are still shelling out big bucks for a luxurious commencement experience. At Upstairs on the Square in Cambridge, reservations are nearing capacity for the restaurant's $85-a-head prix fixe four-course dinner the night of Harvard's graduation, June 4. So far, there have been few cancellations, said owner Mary-Catherine Deibel.

She booked the 300 reservations the restaurant normally gets for the commencement dinner. Two families are even throwing private afternoon cocktail receptions for their graduates at the restaurant.

"Part of it is Harvard," she said. "There is still a lot of money at Harvard."

The Hotel Commonwealth in Kenmore Square, which raises its rates by a third, from $450 to $525 a night, during commencement season, is full for the BU graduation this weekend. Most rooms were reserved a year ago.

"In this economy, we appreciate all the more those events that will generate this kind of demand," said Adam Sperling, the general manager. "As long as people continue to graduate, we'll continue to reap the benefits."

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