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UHS receives $9 million donation
By K.j. Williams
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, May 18, 2011

The chairman of a corporation that owns the Golden Corral restaurant chain announced Tuesday the largest donation ever to University Health Systems.

James and Connie Maynard and their family have given University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina a $9 million donation for its planned Children's Hospital addition and $1.5 million to East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine for a distinguished professorship in the pediatrics department.

With the gift, the Maynards became the largest donors for UHS, a nonprofit organization that includes Pitt County Memorial Hospital and Children's Hospital. A groundbreaking ceremony for the $48 million addition is scheduled for June 14.

The announcement that the addition will be named the James and Connie Maynard Children's Hospital was met with a standing ovation at a news conference at Children's Hospital. It's the only facility dedicated to treating children in eastern North Carolina.

“We have a real passion about children,” James Maynard said. “We're just really thrilled as a family about our participation in what you're doing.”

The Maynards, who live in Raleigh, were raised in eastern North Carolina, and both graduated from ECU.

“We have an affinity for all things Down East,” he said, adding the region holds a “special place in our hearts.”

PCMH once played a direct part in their lives. Their son was taken there for treatment “because of an accident, so it got real personal for us,” Maynard said. He recovered from the accident.

David Womack, the chairman of the UHS board of directors, said the gift reflected the Maynards' “generous heart and depth of passion.”

He said the gift sends a message “that we will give quality care and nurture our children from the eastern part of the state.”
David Brody, chairman of the ECU Board of Trustees, thanked the Maynards on the university's behalf, adding that at one time, the planned addition had appeared to be “an elusive dream.”

The addition will help recruit pediatricians and residents to the area and result in more pediatricians statewide, he said.

“This gift will bring recognition and added support from the Triangle and beyond.”

UHS will fund about $31 million of the expansion, with the remainder coming from donations, a company spokeswoman said.

Children's Hospital serves the eastern third of North Carolina. The addition will improve the facility and expand on the services offered. Construction is expected to be completed in 2013.

The facility will be designed to foster a soothing environment. A Kids Immunosuppressed Special Unit will provide a controlled environment for children with diseases that affect their immune systems. A convalescent newborn unit will contain 21 beds, each in a private room. The addition also will contain a nine-bed unit for outpatient services, a radiology department, a Ronald McDonald suite and an outdoor area designed for play and therapy.

Maynard recalled that on a PCMH tour, he and his wife were impressed with plans for its future.

“We were just blown away by what has happened already and what you want to happen,” he said.

The $1.5 million donation for the Brody School of Medicine for the James and Connie Maynard Distinguished Professorship in Pediatrics will result in matching state funds of $667,000, creating a $2.16 million endowment to be used for physician recruitment, research and educational conferences, a Brody spokesman said.

Dr. Ron Perkin, co-director of Children's Hospital and chairman of Brody's pediatrics department, will have his professorship renamed as a result.

“This gift by the Maynards is the most recent and certainly the largest,” he said. “This is a great honor for the children of eastern Carolina.”

Dave McRae, UHS chief executive officer, said they were on the “fast-track” to improving health care for children.

“It's a very special day,” he said.
Maynard is the founder, chairman and CEO of Investors Management Corp., a private holding company. He is co-founder and chairman of its primary subsidiary, Golden Corral Corp., which either owns or has franchises for about 500 restaurants. In the 1980s, he served on the ECU Board of Trustees. More than 200 scholarships have been given to ECU students by the Maynards and Golden Corral Corp., according to a news release.

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Educator Ron Clark graduated from East Carolina University, whose mascot is a pirate, and recently took some of the students from his Ron Clark Academy to a school sporting event. / Provided to the Reno Gazette-Journal

**Educator Ron Clark speaks of higher expectations at Reno's WIN dinner**

Written by Michael Martinez, mmartinez@rgj.com

He's an award-winning educator. He's had a book that has been on the New York Times best-seller list. And his journey into K-12 education was made into a television movie.

Ron Clark, founder of the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, author of the book "The Essential 55" and the subject of the TNT movie "The Ron Clark Story," will be the featured speaker at the Western Industrial Nevada 2011 Lecture Series Dinner from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Friday at the Atlantis Resort Casino Spa.

"We looked at a number of different educators because it's such a hot topic issue, and Ron Clark is a lightning rod for education," said James Cavanaugh, WIN executive director. "The board of directors just thought that he would be an inspirational person to bring to Nevada."

Clark's journey from a teacher in a small North Carolina class to the national spotlight will be the subject of his talk as WIN handouts its Youth Leadership
scholarships to five students in the region who are passionate about their schools and community.

Passion also is a cornerstone for Clark's teaching philosophy, along with raising expectations and providing lessons for making students better people.

"I've been to all 50 states, and when I travel, I call it 'walking through molasses classes' because most of the classes are slow, the kids are bored. They are working out of their text books, teachers are sitting behind their desks," Clark said. "There's no passion. And I feel we really need to have that spark, that energy.

"We have to morph with times. We can't continue to educate kids the way we always have," he said.

He teaches sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders in global studies, reading and math.

"I rap my lessons. I dance on the desk. I stand on my head. I dress up as characters from books," Clark said. "I do whatever it takes that makes it exciting and brings it to life.

"If they like a particular football team, I use that team's stats to teach math," he said.

"Too many educators act like they don't want to be there."

Washoe County School District Superintendent Heath Morrison said, "We are seeing reform initiatives across the country as people are focused on improving education. Ron Clark is a great example of bringing those changes to the classroom."

**Higher teaching**
The second thing Clark focuses on is high expectations.

"A lot of the funding resources and attention in our country goes toward the kids who are struggling, kids we don't want to leave behind," Clark said. "I think we're doing a disservice to the brightest kids in our country. Our education system is not focused toward pushing the brightest, it's focused toward kind of hitting in the middle and hit them all the best you can."

He said his approach was shaped and crafted from what he learned teaching in North Carolina, New York and now in Atlanta.
"I have a program where we teach to the brightest child in the classroom, and then, we find ways to motivate, inspire and excite all the other kids in the class to get to that level," Clark said. "We get outstanding results."

He said he had kids in his algebra class who have been struggling and recently had them inflate balloons at the beginning of class.

"They each got a Magic Marker," Clark said. "So, they have to do equations on the balloons, and if they get them correct they get to pop the balloon."

The third focus is on manners and respect.

"Not only do I want to educate my students to be smart and give them knowledge, I want them to be good people," Clark said. "So, I have something called the 'The Essential 55,' about how to live your life in a decent way and respect those who come in and out of your life."

Fame

The book, published in July 2004, drew the attention of Oprah Winfrey, who previously had him on her show following his national recognition for successfully changing the success curve for students in Harlem, N.Y.

"He sort of fell into teaching by accident in North Carolina but saw a feature on school in Harlem on '20/20' and decided that's what he was going to do: go teach in Harlem," Cavanaugh said. "The thing for me about Ron Clark is that he really focuses on kids from disadvantaged backgrounds."

That experience also spawned the Emmy-nominated movie in which Matthew Perry of "Friends" fame portrayed Clark.

Built in part with proceeds from his book, the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta has about 100 children enrolled, about 85 percent of whom would be on free or reduced lunch if they attended public school.

"Most are low-income, but about 15 percent of our kids are from the high-end, and they pay full tuition," Clark said.

About 3,000 teachers visit the school each year to observe and practice the academy's teaching strategies and to develop ways to implement them at their schools.
New dive planned for Blackbeard artifacts
Associated Press

WILMINGTON – Researchers and divers will soon be looking for pirate treasure off the North Carolina coast.

The treasure in this case is historical knowledge, in the form of artifacts salvaged from a shipwreck believed to be the pirate Blackbeard’s flagship.

A news conference to discuss the expedition is scheduled for Wednesday at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

The plan is for divers to work from May 23 to June 3 at the site of the wrecked Queen Anne’s Revenge, which is near Beaufort. The ship ran aground in 1718.

Researchers aren’t sure what they’ll be able to salvage, but they’ll be looking for large artifacts, including the ship’s anchor.

Previous expeditions at the site have turned up a window pane, brass weights and a brass buckle.
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Education leaders talk college completion in tough budget times
Submitted by Jane Stancill

There were no easy answers on how to boost the college-completion rate at a forum today in Raleigh.

Leaders of public and private higher education gathered at the state Department of Public Instruction for a discussion sponsored by the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center and the National Conference of State Legislatures. The aim was to look for ways to increase college degree attainment in North Carolina during a severe budget squeeze.

Attending today's discussion were Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton, State Superintendent June Atkinson, Community College System President Scott Ralls, UNC President Tom Ross and Hope Williams, president of the N.C. Independent Colleges and Universities. Lawmakers on the panel were: Sen. Tom Apodaca, a Hendersonville Republican; Rep. Rick Glazier, a Fayetteville Democrat; and Rep. Ray Rapp, a Mars Hill Democrat.

There was wide agreement that college attainment is a key to the state's economic competitiveness, even as colleges and universities weather budget cuts, tuition increases and a drop in financial aid resources.

"We need to step up our game," Dalton said.

Not only do colleges produce highly skilled workers for the state's economy, they are themselves economic engines, the panelists said. Interesting tidbit: Williams said that the state's private universities and their hospitals, combined, are the largest private employer in the state, providing 10,000 more jobs than Walmart.

Apodaca said both sides of the aisle have a commitment to education, but added: "It's very difficult this time to find a way to pay for it."

The College Board's policy arm is conducting a tour of state capitals to push the national goal of having 55 percent of 25-34-year-olds with at least a two-year associate's degree by 2025. According to 2008 figures, the college attainment rate is 41.6 percent nationally and 36 percent in North Carolina.
Our View:

The college try
When the General Assembly finally completes its task of fashioning a balanced state budget amid the wreckage of the Great Recession, there will be no escaping the programs gutted and services slashed. But how much of that pain will fall on North Carolina's young people, via cuts in education? Surely that's one part of the budget where the knife should be used very carefully.

Instead, the spending plan approved by the House and sent across to the Senate opens the bidding with education cutbacks in the range of $1 billion - about half of the total shortfall that needs to be closed.

There will be plenty of pushback, not the least from Gov. Beverly Perdue, who makes great good sense in arguing that a temporary increase in the sales tax should be partly retained to help shield the budget from cuts that would do real damage.

However, it also makes sense for education officials to prepare for the worst. At the university level, N.C. State, for example, has moved to right-size several departments and economize on administration. Now the UNC Board of Governors may be on the point of considering a dramatic shift in overall system policy to cope with cuts that could approach 15 percent.

Fateful trade-off
The system's understandable emphasis on recent years has been on handling increased demand for access to classes, brought about because of population growth and today's consensus that young people need higher education so they can properly compete for jobs.

But the talk now, as The N&O reported this week, centers on whether to adopt a growth slowdown. If campus admission gates were made a little narrower, available money could be used to uphold the quality of programs for students who were allowed in.
Even if such an approach tends to conflict with long-standing goals of making college attendance as widespread as possible, there's a lot to recommend it.

Access to the state's public universities should be extended to students who are well-qualified to take advantage. It's fair for some campuses to be less selective than others, but when entering students throng to remedial courses and when graduation rates drop below 50 percent, as they sometimes do, it's clear that taxpayers' money could be put to better use in a time of budget crisis.

**Paths toward success**
That said, North Carolina cannot afford to neglect young people who, for one reason or another, aren't good bets to succeed right off the bat at a four-year university. There is too much untapped human potential at stake, and the state's future rests too heavily on tapping it.

If the universities move in some degree to trade quantity for quality, then there must be a safety net for students who otherwise would be left with little hope of advancing their education beyond high school. That has been a traditional role of the community colleges - a system that has served this state with distinction, both as a stepping stone for recent high school graduates and as a place where adults could resume their studies or pursue career-related skills.

Here, though, is the intolerable irony: The community college system even in good times has not been well-funded. Now, while it's being expected to shoulder an even greater share of the higher education load, its budget is being put through the wringer as well.

How many young North Carolinians must see their futures dimmed because our legislators have failed to put up enough money to meet the genuine needs of schools, universities, community colleges alike? Sadly, that's the road down which the General Assembly now is heading - a betrayal of the trust that one generation holds for another.
Metabolic Syndrome: Are You At Risk?
BY: Stacey Colino

Sure, you’ve heard of metabolic syndrome, but do you know what it is? More important, could you have it? A new study shows that Americans’ risk of developing metabolic syndrome is rising -- and the consequences can be deadly.

When researchers at North Dakota State University recently reviewed health surveys conducted between 1999 and 2006, they found that 34 percent of adults in the U.S. -- or 1 in 3 Americans -- had metabolic syndrome. This is an increase from the 29 percent found in similar surveys conducted between 1988 and 1994. What’s more, the most significant increases were among women, particularly women between the ages of 20 and 39.

“If you have the metabolic syndrome, your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes is two to four times higher than someone who doesn’t have the syndrome, and your risk of developing heart disease is two to three times higher,” says Dr. Robert Tanenberg, an endocrinologist and professor of medicine at The Brody School of Medicine and director of the Diabetes and Obesity Institute at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. You are also at increased risk for heart failure, fatty liver disease and stroke.

What’s Metabolic Syndrome?
Rather than being a discrete condition, metabolic syndrome is actually a constellation of risk factors. To have the syndrome, you must have three of the following criteria:

• Excess abdominal fat (waist circumference of 35 inches or more for women, 40 inches or more for men)
• Elevated blood pressure (130/85 or higher) or known hypertension
• Elevated fasting blood sugar level (100 mg/dL or higher) or known Type 2 diabetes
• Low HDL cholesterol (under 50 mg/dL for women or under 40 mg/dL for men)
• High triglyceride levels (150 mg/dL or higher)

How to Protect Yourself
To lower your metabolic syndrome risk, it’s important to reach or maintain a healthy weight, says Tanenberg. “Body fat, especially in the gut, is metabolically active: It makes hormones that cause harmful effects in your body.”

To slim down and improve all these risk factors:

• **Stick with a healthy, balanced diet.** Eliminate simple carbohydrates and sugary foods; consume lots of fiber, water, fruits and vegetables; and have small servings of whole grains and low-fat protein.
• **Exercise regularly.** Besides helping you burn more calories, doing a combination of aerobic exercise and strength-training will help you build muscle mass, which can increase your metabolic rate and keep insulin levels and stress hormone levels on a more even keel, says Dr. Danine Fruge, associate medical director and women’s health director at the Pritikin Longevity Center and Spa in Miami.

• **Manage stress and get plenty of sleep.** Getting a grip on stress and sleeping for at least seven hours per night can prevent surges in stress hormones -- like cortisol, which can promote fat storage in the belly -- advises Fruge.

“It’s absolutely possible to prevent or reverse metabolic syndrome in just about everyone who can move their body and make these lifestyle changes,” says Fruge. Just keep in mind that “as you get fat inside the muscles and organs of the abdomen, it can lead to insulin resistance and affect the way your body metabolizes food, which can cause your body to burn calories at a slower rate,” says Fruge. “People in the throes of a sluggish metabolism need to be patient, because weight loss may be slow in the first few weeks. But with consistency, it will happen.” And when it does, the health risks associated with metabolic syndrome will go down too.
Duke, UNC, N.C. State honored by NCAA
BY KEN TYSIAC - Staff Writer

Duke, North Carolina and N.C. State had widely varying degrees of success on the court in men's basketball in 2009-10, but all three schools posted stellar performances in the classroom.

All three Triangle ACC men's basketball teams received public recognition awards for performance in the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR) calculation for 2009-10. The only other ACC men's basketball team to receive recognition was Virginia Tech's.

The NCAA on Tuesday announced the awards, which are given each year to teams that finished in the top 10 percent nationally in their sport in the APR calculation, which measures classroom performance for each team.

On the court in 2009-10, Duke won the NCAA title, North Carolina was NIT runner-up and N.C. State played in the NIT.

Duke led all ACC schools with 15 sports programs receiving public recognition awards. In men's sports, Duke was recognized in baseball, basketball, cross country, fencing, football, golf, soccer, swimming, indoor and outdoor track, and wrestling.

The Blue Devils women's basketball, fencing, lacrosse and volleyball teams also were honored.

North Carolina was honored in seven sports - men's basketball and swimming, and women's fencing, golf, gymnastics, swimming and volleyball.

N.C. State's men's basketball, cross country and mixed rifle teams all were honored.

Boston College finished second to Duke in the ACC with 10 public recognition awards.

Wake Forest had six sports honored.

The NCAA will release the complete APR data on March 24.
Wake Forest on edge over 'Today' show allegations
BY KEN TYSIAC - Staff Writer
Wake Forest University is bracing for a national television interview that could cause the issue of violence against women to hit home.
A producer with NBC's "Today" show advised Wake Forest officials that it will air a segment Thursday morning concerning sexual assault on college campuses.

According to Wake Forest president Nathan Hatch, who disclosed the details Tuesday in an email to the university community, the "Today" segment will include an interview with a former Wake Forest student discussing an incident that occurred "several" years ago.

Hatch offered few other details on what the "Today" show would air.

On its Facebook page, an advocacy organization known as the National Coalition Against Violent Athletes wrote that in the morning news show's segment scheduled to air at 7:45 a.m. Thursday, a woman will talk about a sexual assault that she said involved members of the Wake Forest basketball team.

According to a Miami Police Department incident report, a female Wake Forest student accused a Wake Forest basketball player of sexual assault in an incident that occurred shortly before 5 a.m. on March 21, 2009, hours after the Demon Deacons were eliminated from the NCAA tournament in an opening-round loss to Cleveland State.

She also reported the incident to Wake Forest campus police, according to Miami police.

Miami police reported that they interviewed the woman in May 2009 when they were informed of the incident. According to the incident report, the woman told Miami police that a Wake player requested that she perform a sex act on him in the bathroom of a hotel room; she said she did so, according to the report, because she was afraid not to.
The player told police that he did not force the woman to perform the sex act, according to the Miami police report.

After Miami police reviewed the case with a state attorney, charges were not filed for reasons that included the "one-on-one" nature of the allegation, the delayed report to police and the absence of physical evidence and corroborating witnesses, according to the report.

In his email to the Wake Forest community, Hatch wrote that the university will take appropriate action to respond to the matter. He also wrote that the university takes such issues seriously, has procedures to enforce its code of conduct and supports students in times of need.

"Fostering a positive and respectful living and learning environment is of paramount importance at Wake Forest University," he wrote. "... As part of our Pro Humanitate mission we strive to treat all of our students with integrity and compassion."

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NCSU prunes Schenck forest
BY JAY PRICE - Staff Writer
RALEIGH—Schenck Memorial Forest has gotten a trim to give it a more youthful look.

Loggers have harvested trees from three sections of the popular, parklike wooded area on the western edge of Raleigh to create "young forest" habitat. The young forest is important for certain animal species and also for forestry students who use Schenck to learn their trades, said Tilla Fearn, a spokeswoman for N.C. State University's College of Natural Resources.

The college manages the 245-acre Schenck as a teaching forest, and too much of it was mature to give the students a full sense of how forests work, Fearn said.

"It needs to be a diverse and changing forest classroom for them to learn what they need to know about every thing from water issues to fertilizer and wildlife issues," she said. "This way, they get to see it all."

A small section had been young forest, but the trees grew to the point that animals that prefer such habitat are beginning to move out, she said.

Case in point: the woodcock, whose mating rituals have become the focus of guided evening walks in early spring. The woodcocks are expected to move to the newly-harvested forest next spring.

Replanting techniques
For educational reasons, the reforestation will be done in different ways. An 11-acre section on the western edge along Trenton Road was clear cut and will be planted with loblolly pine seedlings next winter, the normal planting season.

Meanwhile, two sections totaling about 45 acres along Reedy Creek Road, on the forest's northern edge, were selectively cut, leaving widely-spaced mature trees that will drop seeds to reboot the forest. In one of the sections, the seed trees are closer together than in the other.
The forest is popular for hiking and bird-watching, and it has picnic facilities and trails. Its fans can be protective.

Before logging began April 11, the university spread word about the plan, warning neighboring residents by mail and putting information on its website, Fearn said. Still, it got about 10 calls from people who wanted to know why the trees were being cut.

The work is nearly done, and about a week of cleanup remains, she said.

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Key Education Issues Dividing Public, College Presidents, Study Finds
By KEVIN HELLIKER
MAY 16, 2011

The general public and university presidents disagree about the purpose of college, who ought to pay for it and whether today's students are getting their money's worth.

But university presidents and the average American agree that the cost of higher education now exceeds the reach of most people.

Those are broad findings from a pair of surveys released late Sunday from the nonprofit Pew Research Center. The surveys took place this March and April, one posing college-related questions to 2,142 American adults, the other to 1,055 presidents of colleges large, small, public, private and for-profit. The two surveys contained some identical questions and some peculiar to each group.

The surveys show the two groups dividing along predictable fault lines. The idea that students and families should bear the largest share of college costs won approval from almost two-thirds of college presidents—but from only 48% of the general public. As for the value of a college degree, a majority of Americans say it isn't worth the cost—or anyway that "it fails to provide good value for the money students and their families spend," said the 159-page Pew report on the two surveys.

University presidents, meanwhile, suggest that quality-of-learning concerns might better be focused on high school; 58% of university presidents say that high schools are doing a worse job than they did a decade ago at preparing students for college.

Clearly, college remains a big part of the American dream. Of the surveyed adults who had at least one child under age 18, 94% said they expect that child to attend college, and 53% said they are saving to pay for it.

But college isn't their highest priority. When asked what it takes for a young person to succeed, the general public listed a college education as less important than a good work ethic, ability to get along with people and work skills learned on the job.

Moreover, 57% of 18- to 34-year-olds surveyed who had no bachelor's degree and weren't enrolled in college said they would rather work and make money than go to school. Two-thirds of that group attributed the discontinuation of their education to a need to support their families.
In both graduates and nongraduates of college, the survey found strikingly accurate assessments of the earnings value of a college degree. On average, graduates estimated that they earn $20,000 a year for having obtained a degree. That's the same amount that adults with only a high-school degree believe that their lack of a college degree is costing them per year. Both of those estimates are consistent with actual research on the two groups, the Pew study said.

Only 22% of the general population surveyed believes that most people can afford a college education today—a decline from 39% of Americans who felt that way a quarter century ago, Pew said.

The survey of college presidents, conducted in conjunction with the Chronicle of Higher Education, found that while six in 10 believe that American higher education is headed in the right direction, four in 10 see it headed the other way.

Only 19% of college presidents see U.S. higher education as best in the world, and only 51% see it as one of the best. Yet among presidents of highly selective colleges and universities, 40% see the U.S. system as tops in the world.

Write to Kevin Helliker at kevin.helliker@wsj.com
At St. John’s, a defender of liberal arts
By Daniel de Vise

The economic downturn has not been kind to liberal arts schools. Middle-income families with depleted portfolios are fleeing to public colleges. To some, the very term “liberal arts” now symbolizes impractical indulgence. Tuition is at an all-time high. So, too, are tuition discounts. The vicious cycle is driving colleges into debt. For Christopher Nelson, that fractured business model begets a single question: What would Socrates say?

Nelson is completing his 20th year as president of St. John’s College in Annapolis, one of the nation’s oldest and most distinctive schools, where there are no academic departments. At this college devoted to great works of Western civilization, Nelson has become a national spokesman for the liberal arts, a visible and passionate defender of learning for learning’s sake.

In an era when many recession-scarred parents have come to view college as a path to a higher income bracket, Nelson dares to define it as the route to a life well-lived.

“As important as the world of work is to us, we don’t live in order to get a job,” he told an audience in San Francisco this year. “But we work in order to make it possible for us to live a good life.”

Liberal arts colleges, once dominant in higher education, now command less than one-tenth of the higher-education market, which has gravitated toward schools offering more practical majors at lower price points. The sector is “always defending itself, always on the edge,” said William Durden, president of Dickinson College in Pennsylvania and fellow defender of the faith.

The Great Recession of 2008 exposed vulnerabilities at St. John’s. Applications fell from 460 in 2008 to 357 in 2010, yielding an uncharacteristically small freshman class. The average tuition discount off the school’s $54,000 annual price tag rose from 29 percent to 40 percent, driven by its commitment to meet spiraling need.

Nelson is nursing the school back to health by breaking with tradition. The famously anti-commercial school now actively recruits thousands of potential students, rather than waiting for the intellectually curious to find their way to Annapolis. Nelson even hired marketing consultants, who persuaded the school to
emphasize its high graduate-school placement rates and play down the fact that St. John’s has no majors.

Yes, he thinks big thoughts. But what makes Nelson a particularly effective president, colleagues say, is his canny ability to engage with the world, a skill honed in his previous life as a labor lawyer. He is perfectly at ease parsing what he calls “the human project” with a roomful of politicians.

“I count him among the three or four most influential presidents in the country,” said David Warren, president of the D.C.-based National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

In Nelson’s office one recent morning, an industry leader on speakerphone beseeched him to lean on a prominent state lawmaker to fund capital projects at several private colleges. “I know that you have a very good relationship” with the lawmaker, she said.

Nelson made the call. The projects were funded.

When not behind his desk, Nelson crisscrosses the nation, delivering speeches in a rolling, bass-baritone voice about the transformational power of liberal learning. “The well-educated adult,” he told a Washington group this year, “has an integrity of character, a rootedness in essentials, and a self-understanding that makes it possible to live well and consistently in an unpredictable world.”

Nelson was a founder of the Annapolis Group, a consortium of more than 100 liberal arts schools whose presidents first gathered at his residence in 1993. He was among the first presidents to boycott the U.S. News & World Report college rankings, dismissing them as foolish and withholding necessary data. Two decades later, St. John’s stands almost alone in its defiance.

Nelson, 63, did not fit the mold of future college president when he enrolled at St. John’s in 1966 with the lowest SAT scores in his class.

In the education vernacular of the time, young Christopher Nelson was “slow.” He tested poorly. He learned to read later than his younger sister. Try as he might, he could not follow a lecture.

Books delivered him from ignorance: first the Hardy Boys, then Edith Hamilton’s “Mythology,” then “The Iliad.” Soon, Christopher was reciting Homer in the family home, re-imagining the living-room rug as the river Scamander.
Great books were in his blood. His father, Charles Nelson, had hitchhiked to Annapolis from Chicago in 1941 to attend St. John’s, an intellectual pilgrim. He went for the unusual curriculum, adopted in 1937 to give the college a niche and stave off bankruptcy. The elder Nelson spent the formative years of his career disseminating those works to the masses.

Christopher Nelson grew up in the New York suburbs, the eldest of four. He rose to student-body president at White Plains High School. As a St. John’s student, he earned the nickname Hector, after the Trojan hero, for derring-do on the athletic field.

A comparatively tiny college of 500 students, with a sister campus in Santa Fe, N.M., St. John’s has one of the strongest brands in academe. The Annapolis campus traces its origins to 1696 and would probably rank among the top 50 liberal arts schools, if Nelson would cooperate. This year, U.S. News lists the school as No. 166 among national liberal arts colleges, based on incomplete data. Williams, Amherst and Swarthmore top the list.

St. John’s operates differently than other colleges. Its curriculum requires all students to read the same essential texts, in roughly the order they were written, starting with Homer’s “Iliad” and “Odyssey.” There are no lectures, only seminars guided by faculty “tutors.”

The Program, as it is called, attracts a small group of passionate students. Nearly everyone gets in, making St. John’s less selective than its peers. But the students generally bring high test scores and a strenuous work ethic. St. John’s ranks among the top 2 percent of colleges for producing future PhDs.

Johnnies, as they are known, drop words such as “truth” and “virtue” in casual conversation. At a recent morning coffee in Nelson’s office, a student told how he was wrestling with what it means “to be just, rather than just to seem just.”

A faculty member jumped in: “Well, there’s a very good book about that, called ‘The Republic.’ ”

The steady diet of Chaucer, Copernicus, Dante and Heidegger is no cakewalk; there is a high rate of burnout. Fewer than half of Johnnies graduated when Nelson arrived. The rate now reaches 70 percent.

St. John’s has always put academics first. Practical matters, such as buildings, fundraising and money in general, were something of an afterthought before Nelson arrived.
He was an unusual choice for president. Though active on the St. John’s governing board, Nelson had never worked in academia, an odd deficit for the leader of a most cerebral college.

But colleagues say he combines administrative skill and intellectual heft. Nelson ran meetings in much the same way the tutors ran seminars: listening, thinking, deliberating.

“He’ll sit at a table forever until we get it figured out,” said Barbara Goyette, vice president of fundraising and alumni relations.

St. John’s was chewing through its tiny endowment when Nelson arrived. Nelson built it up from $27 million to $135 million. He renovated neglected facilities. Longtime faculty have few quibbles with Nelson’s leadership. Some wish he traveled a bit less. Others say he deliberates a bit much. No one seems ready for him to retire.

“We may, if we’re very, very lucky, get someone in the future who’s as good as he is,” said Harvey Flaumenhaft, a tutor since 1968. “I don’t think we’ll ever have anyone who’s better.”

Applications to St. John’s rebounded to 394 this year. Nelson expects a larger freshman class and hopes financial aid expenditures will level off.

“Good news from admissions,” Nelson said, opening a meeting of the school’s financial committee on a recent morning. “I mean, those numbers are holding up really nicely.”
Yale Restricts a Fraternity for Five Years

By LISA W. FODERARO

A Yale fraternity whose alumni include both President Bushes has been banned from conducting any activities on campus for five years, including recruiting, as punishment for an episode last October in which members led pledges in chants offensive to women, the university announced on Tuesday.

Yale’s publicizing of its disciplinary actions is highly unusual, but officials said their move followed a remarkably public and far-reaching episode. After the chanting in a residential quadrangle by members of the fraternity chapter, Delta Kappa Epsilon, 16 students and alumnae filed a complaint with the federal Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights accusing the university of failing to eliminate a hostile sexual environment on campus. The department confirmed last month that it had started an investigation.

In a letter to students and faculty members on Tuesday, Mary Miller, dean of Yale College, said the Executive Committee, the college’s disciplinary board, had imposed sanctions on the chapter, which is not an official student organization. The fraternity will no longer be able to communicate with students via the Yale bulletin board or Yale e-mail, and its use of the university name will be severely limited.

As for the students who took part in the sexually explicit chanting — which included “No means yes!” — Dr. Miller said federal privacy laws prevented the college from releasing details about individual punishments. But she said the Executive Committee issued penalties after finding that “several fraternity members” had violated undergraduate regulations.

“After a full hearing, the committee found that the D.K.E. chapter, as an organization, one comprised of Yale students, had threatened and intimidated others, in violation of the Undergraduate Regulations of Yale College as they pertain to ‘harassment, coercion or intimidation’ and ‘imperiling the integrity and values of the university community,’ ” Dr. Miller wrote.
The letter said Yale had formally asked the national organization to suspend the chapter for five years. But Doug Lanpher, executive director of Delta Kappa Epsilon International Fraternity, declined to say whether it would do so and called the other restrictions excessive, saying that the organization had already put the chapter on probation.

The Yale chapter, established in 1844, was the first for the fraternity, which now counts 50 chapters in the United States and Canada.

“It’s disappointing for us because we want to be considered a positive contributor to the Yale culture and the whole scene at Yale,” Mr. Lanpher said.

“We’ve corrected the situation,” he added. “We suspended their pledging activities for six weeks so we could review their activities with them. Clearly, the chanting was inappropriate and in poor taste, but does it warrant a five-year suspension?”

Yale’s announcement was a striking departure from the quiet, some would say opaque, way that students are ordinarily disciplined. In her letter, Dr. Miller wrote that the move “may help prevent future incidents of this kind.”

Presca Ahn, a 2010 graduate who signed the complaint to federal officials, praised the university for making its actions public. “It’s good to finally see an exception to the impunity with which fraternities harass and intimidate women every year in their initiation rituals,” she said.