THE DAILY CLIPS

May 20, 2010

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

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

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
ECU ranks high for in-vitro fertilization success

The fertility clinic at East Carolina University has been ranked fourth-best in the nation for helping women become pregnant through in vitro fertilization.

The ECU Women’s Physicians had a 68.8 percent success rate for embryo transfers that result in live births among women under age 35, according to the Society for Assistive Reproductive Technology, which collects fertility clinic data nationwide. The data was from 2008, the most recent available.

Nationally, the average success rate in 2008 for women 35 and younger was 47.3 percent, SART reports. ECU had an overall success rate of 56 percent for all ages of women undergoing IVF.

That success rate ranked ECU fourth in the country among 500 IFV clinics, and first in North Carolina.

“We’ve had an established program that has concentrated on continued quality improvement and higher pregnancy rates,” said Dr. Cal Hayslip, medical director of reproductive endocrinology and infertility services at ECU. “In the past year, some of that hard work has been realized.”

Leak triggers a fine for UNC-CH

BY MARK SCHULTZ
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — The state has fined UNC-Chapel Hill $15,000 for a leak of treated wastewater at an animal research facility that reached a creek feeding the Haw River.

The fine plus investigative costs totals $16,612.

UNC-CH officials first suspected that a partially filled 1.6-million-gallon storage pond at the Bingham Facility was leaking in October, according to university correspondence. They did not report it to the state until December as they continued to investigate the problem.

"It was a violation," Jay Zimmerman, environmental program supervisor at the Division of Water Quality, said Wednesday. "It did occur for an amount of time, but they were trying to determine if it was a leak or not." The leakage likely contained very low levels of nitrogen and fecal coliform, he said.

UNC-CH FACILITY FINED

The state has levied $15,000 fine for a treated wastewater leak that reached Collins Creek.

It led to a fine because it reached state waters, Collins Creek, not because it posed an environmental threat, he said. Collins Creek flows into the Haw River, which feeds Jordan Lake. The leak triggered the first of three violation notices that the state issued to the research facility in Bingham Township, in rural western Orange County.

A more recent notice cited encroaching onto wetlands, among other findings. UNC-CH has until Friday to respond.

For the 2009 wastewater leak, UNC-CH can pay the fine, ask for a reduction or appeal the fine in court, Zimmerman said.

Associate Vice Chancellor Bob Lowman, now overseeing the Bingham Facility, said university officials will discuss their options Friday.

The Bingham Facility houses about 85 research dogs. The university recently received $14.5 million in federal stimulus money through the National Institutes of Health to add two buildings that will house more dogs and hogs used to study hemophilia, heart disease and muscular dystrophy.

Plans call for housing about 200 dogs and 100 hogs once the university closes a blood research center near University Lake in Carrboro and moves dogs used in the muscular dystrophy work from Hillsborough.

The NIH has sent UNC-CH a letter asking about the wastewater problems. Lowman said the university has until Friday to respond, but he does not think the funding is in jeopardy.

"They clearly have heard about the problems we’ve had and are curious about it," Lowman said. "At least that’s how we’re interpreting it.

mark.schultz@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2003
May 19, 2010

Teaching Candidates Aplenty, but the Jobs Are Few

By WINNIE HU

PELHAM, N.Y. — In the month since Pelham Memorial High School in Westchester County advertised seven teaching jobs, it has been flooded with 3,010 applications from candidates as far away as Colorado and California. The Port Washington district on Long Island is sorting through 3,620 applications for eight positions — the largest pool the superintendent has seen in his 41-year career.

Even hard-to-fill specialties are no longer so hard to fill. Jericho, N.Y., has 963 people to choose from for five spots in special education, more than twice as many as in past years. In Connecticut, chemistry and physics jobs in Hartford that normally attract no more than five candidates have 110 and 51, respectively.

The recession seems to have penetrated a profession long seen as recession-proof: superintendents, education professors and job-seekers say that teachers are facing the worst job market since the Great Depression. Amid state and local budget cuts, cash-poor urban districts like New York City and Los Angeles, which used to hire thousands of young people every spring, have taken down the help wanted signs.

Even upscale suburban districts are bracing for huge levels of layoffs — school officials and union leaders estimate than more than 150,000 teachers nationwide could lose their jobs next year, far more than any other time, including the last major financial crisis of the 1970s.

Juliana Pankow, who just graduated from Teachers College at Columbia University, has sent out 40 résumés since January. A few Saturdays ago, she showed up at a Harlem school because she heard the principal would be there (she was invited back to teach a demonstration lesson, but it may be for naught since the city has a hiring freeze). Now, Ms. Pankow said she may have to move back in with her parents in Scarsdale, N.Y., and perhaps take up SAT tutoring.
“I can’t think of anything else I’d rather do,” said Ms. Pankow, 23, as she waited outside the Pelham principal’s office last week, one of 619 people applying for one English position. “Which is a problem, because I might have to do something else.”

At Teachers College, so many students like Ms. Pankow are looking for work that two recent job fairs attracted a record 650 students and alumni, up from 450 last year. And last month, the college added a new job fair focusing on Harlem schools.

But job postings are down by half this year, to between one and two dozen a week — mostly in charter schools, according to Marianne Tramelli, the college’s director of career services.

Charter schools, which are publicly financed but independently run, are practically the only ones hiring in New York and elsewhere, because of growing enrollments amid expanding political and economic support for school choice. Even so, they do not have nearly enough jobs to go around.

In New York, where the Success Charter Network is hiring 135 new teachers for its seven schools in Harlem and the Bronx, some of the 8,453 applicants have called the office three times a day to check on their status. Veteran teachers have also offered to work as assistant teachers.

“It’s heartbreaking — there’s much more desperation out there,” said Eva S. Moskowitz, a former city councilwoman who is the network’s founder and chief executive.

KIPP, another charter school network with 82 schools nationwide, has received 745 applications since January at its seven schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, compared with 385 last year.

At the University of Pennsylvania, most of the 90 new teachers who graduated last weekend are still jobless. Many had counted on offers from the Philadelphia public schools, but had their interviews canceled this month after the district announced a hiring freeze.

“We’re trying to encourage everyone to hold on,” said Kathy Schultz, an education professor at Penn. “But that’s very difficult because students have taken out loans and want to be assured of a job.”

Michigan State University has pushed it 500 graduating teachers to look out of state. As local jobs have dried up, it started an internship program in Chicago, which is a four-hour drive from the East Lansing, Mich., campus. Professors now go with students to the annual campus job fair to make sure they do not hover around the Michigan tables, but walk over to, say, North Carolina, Virginia or Texas.
“We have a culture of people wanting to stay here and teach where they went to school, but we also want them to get jobs,” said Suzanne Wilson, chairwoman of the Department of Teacher Education.

Jade Stier, 27, finally gave up and enrolled in a nursing program last fall — along with five other former teachers — after three years of looking for an elementary school job. She sent out hundreds of résumés, only to land one interview a year. She settled for working as a substitute teacher, earning $85 a day with no benefits.

“Spending $50,000 for an education you can’t use is really frustrating,” she said. “I definitely miss teaching, but I felt like I had no other choice. I had to just move on.”

If there is an upside to the shortage of teaching jobs, it is that schools now have their pick of candidates.

Teach for America, which places graduates from some of the nation’s top colleges in poor schools, has seen applications increase by nearly a third this year to 46,000 — for 4,500 slots. From Ivy League colleges alone, there are 1,688 would-be teachers.

Here in Pelham, a well-regarded district where teaching salaries range from $50,000 to $134,000, high school administrators and teachers have spent the past three weeks winnowing résumés. Candidates with grade-point averages below 3.0 were eliminated (3.3 in some departments), as were those who missed the April 30 application deadline. Almost 200 were invited for interviews.

“It’s very difficult,” said Jeannine Clark, the high school principal in Pelham. “More so than in years past because there are so many very qualified candidates.”

While Ms. Clark and the English supervisor were meeting with prospective teachers last week, candidates for the social studies job were down the hallway typing a 40-minute timed essay on the French Revolution. Upstairs, interviews for physics and biology teachers were being conducted.

“People will come in here begging for anything,” said Dennis R. Lauro Jr., the superintendent, who started closing his office door this year because out-of-work teachers would drop in unannounced to hand him résumés. “We’ve never seen these kinds of numbers before.”

Top candidates will be asked to return several more times to meet with Dr. Lauro, parents and students, and to teach a demonstration class.

Ms. Pankow is hoping she will be among them.
“It would be unbelievable,” she said. “I would love it here, but I’m not necessarily putting all my eggs in this basket.”
The Washington Post

First lady pays off on challenge to serve with GWU commencement speech

By Jenna Johnson
Washington Post Staff Writer
Monday, May 17, 2010; B01

It was a very Washington graduation: About 5,000 George Washington University students sat on the Mall on Sunday morning, along with 20,000 proud friends and family members. The FLOTUS arrived in a motorcade to give the keynote speech. The Capitol loomed grandly in the background.

But first lady Michelle Obama told the graduates that they need to look beyond the District and this country to do good. She challenged them to learn more about the global community, to serve broken countries, to travel far and wide or, if weighed down by student debt and job searches, to at least surf foreign news sources and learn how people in other countries view issues.

"We are no longer isolated from what happens on the other side of the world," Obama said. "It's in our best interest to look beyond our immediate self-interest and look out for one another globally. . . . So many of today's challenges are borderless, from the economy to terrorism to climate change."

She said that this generation of graduates grew up with technology that breaks down global barriers that limited earlier generations. As Obama spoke, several students and others tweeted her words (and a few complained that their iPhones were not getting a signal because so many were saturating the Mall).

"We are the service generation!" @BEXwithanX tweeted. And@sjetreault picked this quote from the first lady to share: "You didn't think I'd show up here without another challenge, did you? Be yourself, just take it global." Michelle Obama."

Obama's 30-minute address was the payoff in a bet with students: In September, she challenged them to do 100,000 hours of service in exchange for a keynote graduation speech. Students and other GWU community members met that goal a month before the May 1 deadline, and by the time the first lady took the stage, the count was up to 163,980 hours of service.

"If I had known that you would complete more than 3,300 hours on the first day of the challenge, I would probably have picked a higher number," Obama said with a laugh.

Each month, Obama said, she received letters from students updating her on their progress. In addition to the total tally of hours, Obama said, the letters "were filled with wonderful stories" of service work.

GWU students spent 29,574 hours tutoring children. Students and others logged 13,160 hours in alternative spring breaks. So many medical school students volunteered to provide care at an Anacostia clinic that organizers used a lottery to divvy up the spots.
Students assembled care packages for troops, shoveled driveways during February's epic snowstorms (which the first lady referred to as "Snowmageddon"), restored an entire high school, hung out with veterans and danced at a senior citizens' prom.

"And, yes," Obama said, "I saw the photos -- and it looked like they were showing you all how to dance."

Because the students exceeded the first lady's first challenge, she gave them a second one Sunday morning: "Keep going. Keep giving. Keep engaging."

Obama's presence made tickets to this year's graduation a hot commodity. The university has been holding an outdoor, university-wide commencement since 1992, but this was one of the largest crowds university officials could remember.

The first lady also gave the keynote address this month for commencement at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, a historically black college. She will speak at graduation ceremonies next month for Anacostia Senior High School in the District.

Each GWU graduate was allotted six tickets, some of which popped up for sale on Craigslist for about $15 to $20 each. Students and their entourages of parents, relatives and friends began to arrive as early as 6 a.m. to snag the best seats for the 10 a.m. commencement.

"There are people here who would never come to graduation," said Dana Kessler, a finance major from Philadelphia. The 22-year-old was cheered on by a bunch of relatives, including her 95-year-old grandmother. "This is a huge, big deal."

Waiting for the ceremony to begin meant hours of sleepily snapping group photos, swapping stories about Senior Week parties, standing in the long restroom line, accessorizing the environmentally friendly gowns (made from recycled plastic bottles) with Mardi Gras beads or funky 2010 sunglasses and, in the last few minutes, trying to do the wave.

During the ceremony, senior Zoe Petkanas spoke on behalf of students, gushing about seeing a presidential motorcade on her first day of school, rallying at the White House the night President Obama was elected and attending classes steps from the State Department.

"We've been in the real world since the day we got here," she said. "The world is a scary place right now, but I'm not worried."

GWU President Steven Knapp presented Obama with an honorary public service doctorate and introduced her as "Dr. Michelle Obama." He also presented honorary degrees to entrepreneur A. James Clark and Dave Brubeck, the 89-year-old jazz pianist and composer.

In a short speech, Brubeck told students: "You are going to do something great. Believe me."
A Lament for the Class of 2010

New college graduates face a labor force that neither wants or needs them; a plum job interning at a street fair

By JOE QUEENAN

A few weeks ago I ran into one of my son’s oldest friends. He had attended an Ivy League school, studying drama and music, and was now back living at home. He is a smart, talented, enterprising young man and I have always liked him, in part because he engages with adults in a way many young men do not. (For example, he actually makes eye contact.) I asked him if he had found a job yet and he replied, a bit sheepishly, "Not exactly." He then explained that he was working as an intern at a street fair on the Lower East Side of New York City. An Ivy League education runs around $200,000, not counting meals and transportation. The internship paid about $250 a week. But presumably, it could lead to bigger things, like a full-time job at a street fair in New York. Even so, it did sound like my son’s friend was ever so slightly underemployed.

Over the next few weeks, hundreds of thousands of Millennials will graduate from institutions of higher learning. They will celebrate for several days, perhaps several weeks. Then they will enter a labor force that neither wants nor needs them. They will enter an economy where roughly 17% of people aged 20 through 24 do not have a job, and where two million college graduates are unemployed. They will enter a world where they will compete tooth and nail for jobs as waitresses, pizza delivery men, file clerks, bouncers, trainee busboys, assistant baristas, interns at bodegas.

They will console themselves with the thought that all this is but a speed bump on the road to success, that their inability to find work in a field that is even vaguely related to the discipline they trained in is only a fleeting setback. They may even spell this out in detail on their Facebook pages, perhaps accompanying it with a pithy quote like "When you’re going through Hell, keep on going." They will do this right after they have finished deleting the summer-year-abroad photo where they’re shaking hands with Hugo Chavez. In asserting that the sun will soon break through the clouds, they will be echoing what college grads told themselves last year, and the year before. This is only a temporary reversal. Surely, IBM or the State Department or Morgan Stanley will eventually respond to that glittering resume. After all, every company worth its salt needs a few Gender Studies majors! The sun’ll come out tomorrow. Tomorrow. Tomorrow.

It’s only a day away.

More sophisticated young people may already suspect otherwise. With the obvious exception of youngsters born during the Great Depression, no generation in American history faces more daunting obstacles. Economists theorize that this may be that very rarest of things—a generation that does not do as well financially as the generation that spawned it. Even the pasty-faced Pilgrim toddlers gamboling around Plymouth Rock in 1620 had better prospects than this one; at least the Massachusetts economy was still expanding back in the 17th century. And kids entering the work force after the Alamo or the Donner Pass Incident or the Crash of 1873 weren’t
saddled with the kind of debts kids tote around now. Back then, ordinary people didn't go to college. And back in those days, you could always pack up and move west, to California, let's say, where the streets were paved with gold. Now the streets aren't paved, period.

There are three formidable obstacles confronting college graduates today. One, the economy, though improving at a glacial pace, is still a wreck. There are no jobs, and the jobs that do exist aren't the kinds anyone in his right mind would have spent $100,000 to $200,000 to land. Two, nothing in most middle-class kids' lives has prepared them emotionally for the world they are about to enter. Three, the legacy costs that society has imposed on young people will be a millstone around their necks for decades. Who's going to pay for the health care bill? Gen Y. Who's going to pay off the federal deficit? Gen Y. Who's going to fund all those cops' and teachers' and firemen's pensions? Gen Y. Who's going to support Baby Boomers as they suck the Social Security System dry while wheezing around Tuscany? Gen Y.

Americans have never shrunk from adversity, so in the fullness of time young people may put on their game face, create new industries, discover fresh roads to affluence and solve the nation's vexing economic problems. But all that lies far in the future. The immediate problem is psychological: the sudden, shocking realization that work as it is constituted in the early 21st century is going to be hell. In the workplace, you don't get to pick your company. In the workplace, you do not get a trophy just for showing up. In the workplace, the boss gets to scream at you as a perk. Probably your first day on the job. Your boss, who doesn't have an iPad, isn't on Facebook, and doesn't know how to text. Your boss, who doesn't particularly care for Lady Gaga. Your boss, who probably has a nightschool degree.

Young people can be forgiven for thinking that the portrayal of the working world in comedies like "The Office" and "Office Space" is completely over the top. Now they're going to find out otherwise. Reality is a mean trick that grown-ups play on the young. Companies really do schedule annual outings where everybody is required to see "Jersey Boys." Managers really do give motivational speeches with lines like, "If we can't enhance value for our shareholders, why on Earth are we here?" Young people really do have to work all day in offices where the plaintive voice in the tinny radio on the adjacent desk ceaselessly pleads, "Give me the beat, boys, and free my soul, I wanna get lost in your rock 'n roll."

And slip away.

If you're a recent grad and you think you're going to hate your bosses, wait till you meet your coworkers. You're going to be working with people who believe in UFOs. You're going to be working with people who play in REO Speedwagon tribute bands. You're going to be working with people who participate in French and Indian War re-enactments every summer. They're going to try to get you to join, mon beau chevalier. You really have no idea how awful this is going to be.

In olden days—say three years ago—young people could suck it up and endure this kind of fleeting torture, knowing that they would rapidly clamber up the ladder of success and leave the dregs of the work force behind. Not today. Economists predict that it could take five years for employment to return to pre-recession levels. Five years of working with Parrotheads. Five years of playing softball with fat, middle-aged drunks. Five years of listening to "You Had a Bad Day" while you're trying to converse with irate customers. Five years of having a bad day.

Or maybe you were thinking of throwing in the towel, giving up on launching your career right away, and spending a year abroad. After all, a year in a foreign country can give you a wonderful perspective on life that will come in handy in the years to come. So where were you thinking of going? Greece, where the unemployed were recently gunning each other down in the streets? Great Britain, which no longer has a fully functioning government? Sweden, which just officially slipped back into recession? Ireland, whose economy has imploded? Spain, whose economy has imploded? Or no, hold on, here's an idea: How about Iceland?

Of course, there's always law school. Never mind that applications are at an all-time high and that thousands of
legal positions at investment banking firms have disappeared forever. Never mind that recent Ivy League law school graduates are now working as file clerks, substitute school teachers, census takers. Never mind that in order to pay back the $200,000 it's going to cost you to go to law school, you'll need to land one of those plum legal jobs at Goldman Sachs or AIG or one of those other firms that are no longer hiring because they owe so much to the lawyers they already did hire to defend them from lawsuits brought by the government's lawyers, public prosecutors who only took those jobs because Goldman Sachs and AIG weren't hiring. Good luck getting your parents to pay for that one.

Is there any silver lining in all this? Yes. As of 2014, insurance companies will no longer be able to deny young people coverage because of a pre-existing condition. After Millennials have slaved away at going-nowhere jobs for a few years, and have forked over literally thousands of dollars of their hard-earned cash to support mean-spirited, nostalgia-crazed Baby Boomer retirees who don't even like them, and are probably going to waste a lot of the money on overpriced tickets to attend "Rod Stewart Sings the Billy Joel Songbook and Vice Versa" at Madison Square Garden, those pre-existing conditions will probably include ulcers, inflamed duodenums, irritable bowel syndrome and chronic headaches. But at least the Pepcid will be competitively priced.

Baby boomers get sick of hearing young people bellyache about the grim jobs situation. They cite studies proving that entitled, self-absorbed Millennials make the worst employees ever. They recall with belligerent pride how they themselves withstood the Arab oil embargo, stagflation, the soaring interest rates of the Carter years. But Baby Boomers conveniently forget that it didn't set anyone back a year's salary to go to college in the 1960s and 1970s, and that college graduates back then were not entering a work force filled with other college grads. When I got my first job in 1973, I was surrounded by high-school dropouts. They weren't even especially bright high-school dropouts. So it was possible to make a vertical move quickly. Not today, when everybody in the white-collar world has a college degree. Today, even the idiots have college degrees. And the idiots have seniority.

My son, who graduated from college in 2009, will start law school this fall. During his brief sojourn in what is sometimes mirthfully referred to as "the real world," he worked as a bouncer, a delivery man, a focus group participant and a furniture mover. Ergo, law school. He says that when he talks to his friends, a persistent complaint is that for the first time in their lives his peers have no way of measuring their progress. "All through school, we got A's and B's, so we knew where we stood," he points out. "How do you know where you stand when you're waiting tables or parking cars?"

Good point. It's brutal out there, all right. Blogs and instant messaging and social networking systems don't help much because everyone is using the same cutting-edge tools to compete for the same low-tech jobs. The easiest way to get a job is still the oldest way: To know somebody who can get you a job or give you a job. Perhaps the biggest hurdle for freshly minted graduates is that they are now competing against last year's grads: savvy, wizened pros that already have the most sought-after jobs locked up. For example, let's say you've just finished college, and you're a reasonably creative sort, and you're looking for a job that will free up plenty of time so you can polish your chops as a dancer or a singer or an actor. For example, a job as an intern at a Lower East Side street fair.

Sorry, pal. That job is long gone.

—Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of the memoir "Closing Time."