THE DAILY CLIPS

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The secretary of U.S. Health and Human Services visited Pitt County Memorial Hospital on Monday and announced University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina has been chosen as an example of a health care provider that has improved patient care while lowering costs. She also said that in two years providers will find their Medicare payments tied to their performance.

Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the federal agency, said the Affordable Care Act led to the creation of the public-private Partnership for Patients that aims to prevent hospital-care related problems, preventing about 60,000 patient deaths and saving up to $35 billion in health care costs, including about $50 billion in Medicare with additional savings in Medicaid.

After a group tour of the East Carolina Heart Institute at PCMH, which included a visit with a patient, Democratic Congressman G.K. Butterfield in a roundtable discussion praised the health care reform he supported, which he said has resulted in $81 million in grants for North Carolina.

“People are really just starting to see that these were real, needed and constructive changes that will truly address the worst abuses by insurance companies and rein in costs,” he said.

Sebelius said there is a need for more programs similar to the UHS program that works to reduce incidents of patients being “harmed” in hospitals.
“As Congressman Butterfield knows well, one of the biggest challenges we face in this country is actually a fragmented and too often broken health care system with continuing skyrocketing costs and uneven results,” she said.

She pointed to a recent study that found one in three hospitalized patients experience some type of harm during their care.

“That's not a good picture about patient care in this country,” she said. Sebelius said she was visiting exemplary hospitals nationally to see how they are changing that picture and improving the bottom line.

“You can drive down the costs of having patients have to spend extra days in the hospital,” she said. “Drive down the cost of needless readmissions by actually delivering better care the first time around.”

The goals of Partnership for Patients are to reduce preventable injuries by 40 percent in three years and decrease incidents of complications after hospital discharge that can lead to readmission by 20 percent. This “change to the delivery system” will result in higher payments for those that improve the outcome for patients, not payments based on “volume,” she said.

“We are going to shift Medicare payments to facilities that do this,” she said. “We are trying to realign the payment systems.”

Sebelius said communication between medical workers with the participation of patients and their families is key.

“Because it's really about patient-centered care, and it's about the best care in every hospital every time a patient enters that hospital,” she said.

She noted that PCMH has reduced the number of infections contracted by patients during their hospital stays by 50 percent in two years, and she praised the UHS goal of zero incidents and its “focus on safety and quality initiatives.” PCMH is operated by UHS, a Greenville-based, not-for-profit organization.

The federal program will offer training on evidence-based methods of improving patient care and saving money. More than 1,500 hospitals have agreed to take part in the new initiative announced in April. More than $1 billion in funding through health care reform has been designated for this purpose.

“This is one of the models that we would like to shine a bright light on and find out what you're doing and how we can encourage others to do it,” she said of PCMH, the only North Carolina facility she has visited to date. “So this is real. It's not someone's hypothesis. (It's an) example of what could happen.”
Lanier Cansler, secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, said the visit to PCMH “demonstrates some of the innovations, some of the things we are doing in North Carolina.”

Sebelius noted that the N.C. Hospital Association passed a resolution urging all hospitals in North Carolina to take part in Partnership for Patients.

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East Carolina has broken the $10 million plateau on its way to raising $15 million for its proposed practice facility for its men's and women's basketball programs.

The East Carolina University Educational Foundation has received a gift of $250,000 from Metrics, Inc. founder and owner Phil Hodges and his wife, Lisa, toward its “Step Up To The Highest Level Campaign.”

This latest gift brings the total to more than $10 million donated to date by over 200 benefactors.

“After talking with coach (Jeff) Lebo and Dennis Young, the need for this facility really hit home for me,” said Hodges, who received his bachelor's and master's degrees from ECU. “The university is very important to me and I want to see it continue to grow and prosper. The construction of this building will ensure that persists and allow our basketball program to move forward.

“I hope other area businesses will step forward to offer their support to this campaign. What's good for the university is good for Greenville and good for Pitt County.”

The proposed two-story 48,000-square foot facility will accommodate separate courts for the men's and women's teams, separate office suites, and team meeting and locker rooms.

It will also house the ECU Athletics Hall Of Fame and an area designed to showcase the history of Pirate athletics.

— ECU Media Relations
For more than a month, the N.C. General Assembly and Gov. Beverly Perdue sparred over how best to close a massive funding gap that threatens the solvency of the State Health Plan. A bill that won approval by the Republican-controlled Legislature was vetoed by the Democratic governor, setting the battle lines for the impasse that followed.

Last week, the two sides announced a compromise solution that cuts cost while continuing to provide affordable care for teachers, public employees and retirees. In finding common ground on this important issue, the two sides may have offered a blueprint for striking a similar, mutually agreeable deal as negotiations over the state budget unfold.

North Carolina lawmakers arrived in Raleigh this year facing a massive funding shortfall in the State Health Plan that serves current and retired public employees. Estimated at $515 million, it paled in comparison to the larger revenue gap affecting the state budget, but it landed the health plan as a key area of concern for the incoming Republican majority.

Like many states, North Carolina made unrealistic promises to its teachers and state employees, promising to provide low-cost health care for life after only five years of service. The tremendous liability of that compact threatened the future solvency of state budgets and has caused many legislatures to revisit and revise their plans. It has been a source of upheaval in many state capitals, though North Carolina, as a right-to-work state, does not have the union membership that could serve to frustrate compromise.

The General Assembly's first proposal was unnecessarily harsh, proposing smaller benefits, higher co-pays and charging a monthly premium for the first time. That went far beyond the reasonable compromises that public employees seemed willing to accept. And since it would have inflicted undue harm on those who serve the public's interest, Perdue announced plans to veto it.

That decision forced the two sides into negotiations and, as a result, a better agreement was reached. It promises to close the funding shortfall without imposing a monthly premium on state workers. It moves the plan under the control of the Office of Treasurer, removing it from the political shadow cast by the Legislature. And it won praise from both sides of the aisle since all made concessions to find common ground.

Fixing the State Health Plan may not resemble a task as Herculean as balancing the state budget, but it may provide the blueprint for the progress Raleigh will need in the coming weeks.
Surgery by robot will be on display

By Karen Garloch

The first daVinci robot in North Carolina was used for heart surgery at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, the teaching hospital at East Carolina University, in May 2000.

Today, more than 1,300 U.S. hospitals have the daVinci robotic system, named for the Renaissance painter. More than 25 N.C. hospitals now offer daVinci robotic surgery, including 10 in the Charlotte area.

On Saturday, visitors to Discovery Place science museum will have to "test-drive" the robot by moving the controls as a doctor would in surgery.

Doctors from Midtown OB-GYN, Southeast Bariatrics and Urology Specialists of the Carolinas will be on hand to talk about the device, on loan from Intuitive Surgical in California.

A robot-assisted surgery looks like something out of science fiction. Instead of standing beside the patient, the surgeon sits at a console with a 3-D viewer, hand controls and foot pedals.

The huge robot with three spiderlike arms hovers over the patient. The ends of each arm reach through small incisions in the patient's chest. Two arms have tiny pincers attached; the third holds a camera that projects a view of the heart, magnified 12 times, to the console.

When the surgeon moves his hands and feet at the console, the robot's arms respond, grasping and cutting, as the doctor watches on his viewer.

The first Charlotte hospitals to offer robotic surgery were Carolinas Medical Center and Presbyterian Hospital in 2005. Other hospitals have since added them. They include CMC-University and CMC-Mercy in Charlotte, CMC-Pineville, CMC-NorthEast in Concord, Presbyterian Hospital Matthews, Presbyterian Hospital Huntersville, Gaston Memorial Hospital in Gastonia and Lake Norman Regional Medical Center in Mooresville.

The daVinci system is used for gynecological, urological, cardiothoracic and bariatric surgeries. Whether outcomes are better with the robot than traditional surgery is still a subject of debate, but proponents say patients who have robotic surgery heal more quickly with less pain.
The robot will be on display from 10a.m. to 6p.m. at Discovery Place, 301 North Tryon St. Tickets are $12 for adults (14-59); $9 for children (2-13) and seniors (60+); and free for children younger than 2. For more information: www.davincisurgery.com.

More on sports screenings

Last week I wrote about the "Heart of a Champion" sports screenings being offered to Charlotte-area student-athletes by Carolinas Medical Center and OrthoCarolina. They include electrocardiograms and echocardiograms to detect heart problems.

I've since learned that Presbyterian Sports Medicine also provides EKGs as part of free physicals to Union County public high school athletes.

Screening day is June 4 at Sun Valley High School, starting at 8a.m. Each school is assigned a specific time slot; contact schools for details.

By the way, the mother of a home-schooled athlete inquired about where she could take her son for screening. The CMC and Presbyterian programs are open only to students at participating schools. Home-schooled students have to see private physicians for physicals.

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Senate budget proposes merit pay

BY LYNN BONNER AND JIM MORRILL - McClatchy Newspapers

The $19.4 billion state budget the Senate will make public today will include a proposal to pay state employees and teachers based on their performance. It also includes more than $320 million for pay raises, effective in the 2012-13 fiscal year.

The call for performance pay is one of the major differences between the Senate and House budgets. The idea drew mixed reactions from state employee and teacher representatives.

Senate leader Phil Berger, an Eden Republican, said he wants teachers' performance evaluations to include reviews from peers, supervisors, parents and students. The idea is to look at proposals being developed and work with others to come up with the best plan, he said.

The Senate budget will include $1 million to study performance pay next year. As for state employee pay, there are corporate designs that the state can consider, Berger said.

Dana Cope, executive director of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, said the association would welcome performance pay, if legislators find a way to eliminate politics and favoritism from the system.

"If you ask rank-and-file state employees, they would tell you the patronage system is very much alive and well in state government right now," Cope said.

Scott Anderson, executive director of the N.C. Association of Educators, said teachers would be skeptical of performance pay because the state abandoned the ABC bonus system when the economic downturn started.

"It's going to be a challenge to get a system that is fair that they will buy into," Anderson said. Teachers will say, "you're going to make us meet all these goals, but when times get tough, there isn't any money there to fund it."

A Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools plan to test performance pay has triggered a backlash.
The Senate budget committee is expected to pass the budget this week, with the full Senate voting next week. The House will then consider Senate changes. The Senate budget would spend about $70 million more than the House plan.

GOP leaders outlined major aspects of their plan to editors and reporters at state newspapers Monday.

**Education**

Senate Republicans are emphasizing their education plan, which will include hiring 1,100 teachers for grades 1 through 3 to get a start on their plan to reduce class sizes in those grades to 1 teacher for 15 students. The budget would pay for teacher assistants for kindergarten classes only.

The Senate included slightly more money for K-12 schools and state universities than the House, but a little less for community colleges. The university cut is 12.5 percent in the Senate budget versus 15.5 percent in the House.

Senate Republican leaders said most school districts have saved money from last year's federal school-jobs stimulus bill that they can use to help compensate for state cuts.

In addition, the Senate budget would add $115 million for district school construction.

Senate leaders are trying to turn the focus from budget cuts to what they say is a plan that will improve student performance.

"We think it's important that you look at how the money's being spent; what we are doing to try to target the dollars without forgetting that we're approaching this in the context of a $2.5 billion shortfall," Berger said.

Democrats criticized the education budget and what Senate Minority Leader Martin Nesbitt said would be the largest education cut in state history.

"The Republican leadership in both those chambers does not seem to value education in the way the rest of North Carolina does," said Chrissy Pearson, spokeswoman for Gov. Bev Perdue.

**Taxes**

The Senate budget includes the expiration of the temporary sales tax and the income tax surcharge, while adding $670 million in tax cuts over two years. Perdue proposed keeping a portion of the temporary sales tax increase.
The Senate tax-cut proposal includes cuts in every tax bracket and an exemption for small businesses' first $50,000 of income.

"That is the money being put back in the economy to help individuals and small businesses," said Sen. Bob Rucho, Finance Committee chairman and a Matthews Republican. "The government spending money is not job creation. The government putting it back in the hands of the (taxpayers) is job creation."

The budget does not include the reduced corporate income tax rate Perdue had in her budget.

"Jobs are created in this state by small businesses, by and large, so the emphasis is on small business and individuals," said Sen. Richard Stevens, a Cary Republican and a lead budget writer.

Bob Morgan, president of the Charlotte Chamber, said businesses would have welcomed cuts in either the income tax or corporate taxes.

"North Carolina's corporate and personal income tax rates are higher than any states around us," he said. "Any reduction in the corporate tax rate or the personal tax rate we have long welcomed.

"We find the sales tax to be less of a detriment. We hope the temporary increase will be lifted but we also hope the state will find a way to adequately fund our needed transportation and education investments."

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Ex-UNC board chairman is disbarred

BY JOSEPH NEFF - STAFF WRITER

Sam Neill, a former Democratic congressional candidate and 12-year member of the UNC Board of Governors, has been disbarred for stealing trust fund money. Neill agreed to give up his license and admitted misconduct.

Neill, who is from Hendersonville, is well known in Western North Carolina political circles. He twice ran against former U.S. Rep. Charles Taylor and lost. He served as chairman of the UNC Board of Governors for two years.

According to The Asheville Citizen-Times, Neill was named trustee of a charitable trust by Barry E. Clemo, who died in February 2009. The trust called for Neill to distribute the money to the Community Foundation of Henderson County and Four Seasons Hospice. A recent court filing said the two organizations received nothing from the trust, and that Neill hasn't accounted for the money when asked.

The Hendersonville Times-News reported on a recent lawsuit that alleges that Neill took about $900,000 from the trust fund. Now there are "little to no assets remaining in the trust to be distributed to the beneficiaries," according to the suit.

The State Bureau of Investigation is investigating. District Attorney Jeff Hunt has asked the state Attorney General's Office to lead the prosecution; Hunt told the newspaper he wanted to avoid any conflict of interest in prosecuting his long-time friend.
Duke University has named its eight picks of top North Carolina students for its Benjamin N. Duke Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship covers full tuition, room and board and fees for eight semesters and includes leadership development opportunities and two summer enhancement experiences, one of them overseas. It is awarded based on outstanding leadership and community service.

The Benjamin N. Duke scholarship recipients with ties to the Triangle are:

**Dominique Andrée Beaudry** of Concord, a graduate of the N.C. School of Science and Mathematics in Durham, daughter of Martha Anne Sommer and Laurent Dominique Beaudry. At N.C. School of Science and Math, she worked in a psychology research lab at Duke University, served as a Resident Life Assistant, and was public relations director for the student government, president of French Cultures Club, and president of the Habitat for Humanity Club. Outside school, she was a cheerleader and yoga instructor and traveled to southern Africa for an internship with Peace Corps Mozambique, where she taught adult English classes and lived and worked in an orphanage.

**Isa Louise Ferrall** of Cary, a graduate of Athens Drive High School in Raleigh, daughter of Drs. Isabel and Robert Ferrall. At school, Isa participated in math and science competitions, Key Club, Psychology Club, National Honor Society, track and soccer. She spent one summer as an assistant counselor at Gwynn Valley Camp, teaching children about nature, and another one studying optical engineering at UNC-Charlotte through the Summer Ventures Program. She was also in her school's wind ensemble, jazz band and marching band. During her senior year, she was a drum major.

**Jordan Pierce Thomas** of Chapel Hill, a graduate of Carrboro High School, son of Gayle B. and Jim C. Thomas. Jordan competed all four years at Carrboro High School in cross country and participated in student government, Spanish Honor Society, and the Tutoring Club. He is also president and founder of the Carrboro Community Club, which brings together American and Karen student refugees from Myanmar. He played in All State Orchestra and was selected for the N.C. Governor's School West in
Instrumental Music. He has conducted diabetes screenings at the Chapel Hill Latino Health Fair and traveled to Mexico with UNC medical students to screen patients for diabetes, hypertension and depression.

**Natalie Marion Williams** of Roaring Gap, a graduate of N.C. School of Science and Mathematics in Durham, daughter of Tamala M. Pelphrey and Peter D. Williams. Natalie was a varsity cheerleader, a member of the Solid Rock Youth Group & Drama team, and has traveled on five summer mission trips. She participated in student government, NCSSM's Student Ambassador Program, Model United Nations, Key Club and a physiology program at UCLA. She tutors at Voyager Academy, works with elders with intellectual disabilities through Durham County Community Living and volunteers at Solid Rock Food Closet.
Jimmy Bass, right, greets Martha White and other members of the UNCW women's basketball team following a press conference announcing Bass as the new athletic director at UNCW in the Burney Center at the school on Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2010.

**UNCW aims to raise $20 million for athletics in 5 years**

By Brian Mull  
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Generating $20 million in the next five years through fundraising and revenue sources is the foundation of the UNC-Wilmington athletic department's new strategic plan.

Athletic director Jimmy Bass collaborated with Collegiate Sports Associates and two committees, made up of coaches, program donors, administrators and members of the Board of Trustees, to evaluate the department's needs and goals. They created a 35-page document that maps out the department's goals through 2015 and beyond.

"The process was as important as the final product," Bass said. "We had broad-base participation from our constituents, both internal and external, and appreciate their time. Everyone in our community has taken ownership. The key is fluidity, it will be a work in progress. We wanted it to be long on goals and tangible measurable objectives, so we could evaluate the things we're doing."

The planning began in December, shortly after Bass assumed his role as athletic director. Head coaches were required to complete a survey that
asked them to list their goals, their desires and the obstacles facing them. Administrators completed a similar survey. After 90 days on the job, Bass reported 19 observations to the committee, many of which he discussed with the StarNews during interviews in early December.

Prioritizing sports, rebuilding relationships in the community, operating with transparency and continuing academic success are imperative. Yet, the most glaring need is the first one listed – adequate financial resources so the university's 17 athletic teams can compete for Colonial Athletic Association championships.

"The next three years are very important from a budgetary standpoint," Bass said. "We need to get everyone in the department in the right roles."

Funding athletic scholarships and upgrading facilities head the list. Through the university's fundraising arm, the Seahawk Club, Bass aims to raise $7 million for scholarships in the next five years. The plan calls for "traditionally underfunded" sports – men's and women's golf, men's and women's soccer, men's and women's tennis, baseball and volleyball – to fulfill their scholarship limits by 2016.

To generate this revenue, the plan calls for Seahawk Club membership to increase 50 percent by 2013 and reach 2,000 members by 2015. There are currently 883 members, according to executive director Patrick Ransdell.

Beyond funding scholarships, the plan also emphasizes the university's need to enhance its athletic facilities, and sets a goal to raise $10 million in major gifts over the next five years. Major renovations to Trask Coliseum are scheduled for this summer. Hanover Gym, home of the volleyball team, has received a new playing floor and will undergo further upgrades.

Other improvements listed include: renovations to Brooks Field; an indoor hitting facility for baseball and softball; an office and locker room facility for softball and soccer; expanded strength training facilities; replacing or resurfacing the track; and a new tennis center with indoor capabilities.

Bass also wants to increase ticket revenue by selling more season ticket packages for men's and women's basketball and baseball. He hopes to generate $400,000 annually through a multimedia rights holder by 2014, and, by the end of this year, have 100 members in a Champions Fund that will generate $1.25 million over a five-year period to improve athletic programs as needs arise.

One of those needs is the ability to retain quality coaches.
"We want this to be a destination job, not a stepping stone," Bass said. "That doesn't necessarily mean we can match another school's salary offer, but we want to be competitive."

Further strategies include remodeling the university's Seahawk logo and athletics website.

Altogether, the plan focuses on seven areas: resource development; sound business, operations and management practices; equity and diversity; competitive success; student-athlete wellbeing; stewardship; compliance. There are 65 distinct and separate strategies and 207 initial action steps listed to implement the strategies.

"We're going to distribute this to all our administrators and all our coaches, have them look at it weekly," Bass said. "I'm very pleased with the final product. Everything in there is to make the program better."

The university paid Collegiate Sports Associates $35,000 for their services and worked directly with consultant Todd Turner, the former athletic director at N.C. State. Prior to working with UNCW, Turner helped fellow CAA member Old Dominion form their strategic plan.

This is UNCW's second attempt at a strategic plan in the last 12 months. Former athletic director Kelly Mehrtens released a 45-page plan last July that was vague and lacked specific fundraising goals.

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Analysis of 171 college majors puts engineers at the top
By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY

Just one word of advice for the nation's 2011 high school graduates: petroleum.

An analysis of the projected lifetime earnings of 171 college majors provides a clearer picture of what one bachelor's degree means compared to another in the labor market. And the answer can be as much as $3.64 million.

That's the difference between what petroleum engineering majors can expect to earn over a 40-year career ($4.8 million) and what counseling psychology majors could earn ($1.16 million). Even the lowest-paying major beats the $770,000 average earnings of a person who holds only a high school diploma.

"Getting a (college) degree matters, but what you take matters more," says Anthony Carnevale, director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, which released its analysis today. It's based on data on undergraduate majors across all age groups, collected for the first time in the Census Bureau's 2009 American Community Survey and released last year. Estimates were based on 319,081 responses from bachelor's-degree holders who work full time over a full year.

The study is the latest, and most finely detailed yet to demonstrate a financial payoff for college. A study this month by American Institutes for Research found economic returns are greater for people with degrees from highly selective colleges than from less selective schools, but that even those degree holders were likely to earn $230,000 more over a lifetime than a person with no more than a high school education. (It also found that less selective schools generate a "much better bang for the taxpayer buck.") And a Pew Research Center study out last week found that, even after the cost of going to college and the foregone income while in college is considered, an education reaps greater benefits.

White workers and men fare best, the Georgetown study found. Even in their highest paid major, electrical engineering, blacks earn $12,000 less a year on
average than Asians and $22,000 less than whites with the same major. Women tend to hold the majority of degrees in many of the lower-paying fields, such as education. Female chemical engineering majors earn on average $20,000 less a year than male counterparts.

Other details:
• Annual incomes for liberal arts and humanities majors — think English, history, philosophy — averaged $47,000. About 40% of those majors also obtained a graduate degree, which boosted their average earnings almost 50%.

• Four majors among the 10 with the highest average annual earnings also are among the least popular majors, "suggesting there's a real demand in these areas that we have yet to meet," Carnevale says. Those are mathematics and computer science, naval architecture and marine engineering, metallurgical engineering, and mining and mineral engineering.

Richard Fry, an economist who crunched lifetime earnings data for the Pew report, cautions that the data can't predict what today's students will make: "The future is inherently unknown."

Visit cew.georgetown.edu/whats itworth for details.

**College Majors**
**Ten majors with the highest median earnings per year:**

Petroleum engineering: $120,000

Pharmacy sciences and administration: $105,000

Mathematics and computer science: $98,000

Aerospace engineering: $87,000

Chemical engineering: $86,000

Electrical engineering: $85,000

Naval architecture and marine engineering: $82,000

Mechanical engineering: $80,000

Metallurgical engineering: $80,000
Mining and mineral engineering: $80,000

Ten majors with the lowest median earnings per year:

Counseling/psychology: $29,000

Early childhood education: $36,000

Theology and religious vocations: $38,000

Human services and community organizations: $38,000

Social work: $39,000

Drama and theater arts: $40,000

Studio arts: $40,000

Communication disorders sciences and services: $40,000

Visual and performing arts: $40,000

Health and Medical preparatory programs: $40,000

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce