THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU, emergency management hosting hurricane workshop
The Daily Reflector
Tuesday, May 25, 2010
As coastal communities turn their attention to hurricane preparedness, the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management, in partnership with the East Carolina University’s Center for Natural Hazards Research and the Renaissance Computing Institute Engagement Center at ECU (RENCI at ECU), will present a hurricane workshop for emergency managers today. About 100 emergency management personnel, ECU faculty, meteorologists and emergency technology specialists will attend a workshop from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Murphy Center at ECU. The workshop aims to educate emergency managers in the area on new technologies in the field of meteorology and weather prediction, said Donna Kain, outreach director for RENCI at ECU. Sessions will focus on meteorology, Hurricac software, evacuation, and sheltering and recovery.
Speakers include Rebecca Jennings, hurricane program specialist with the FEMA; Joe Stanton, Division of Emergency Management Disaster Assistance branch manager and deputy recovery chief; and Mike Sprayberry, deputy director and operations chief of the Division of Emergency Management.
Meteorologists from the National Weather Service and specialists from RENCI, including ECU Center Director Tom Allen, will present updates on meteorology and storm visualization. ECU faculty will present a panel on social responses to natural hazard risks moderated by Burrell Montz, chairman of geography. Jamie Kruse, senior adviser for environmental social science, NOAA, and ECU professor of economics, will discuss coastal effects.
Opening remarks will be presented by Doug Hoell, N.C. Emergency Management director; Deirdre Mageean, ECU vice chancellor for research and graduate studies; and Alan White, dean of ECU’s Harriot College of Arts and Sciences.
Margaret Moore Schiller

Margaret Moore Schiller, 93, passed away on Sunday, May 23, 2010. A graveside service will be conducted Thursday at 10 a.m. in Pine-wood Memorial Park.

Mrs. Schiller, a native of Union County, grew up in Marshville. She made her home in Charlotte until 1964, where she was employed as a legal secretary. In 1965, she moved to Greenville and worked as an administrative secretary at East Carolina University with the Home Economics Department and later with the Biology Department, retiring after many years of service. Mrs. Schiller was a member of the First Presbyterian Church, DAR, and the Order of the Eastern Star.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Martin F. Schiller Sr. in 1972, and a son, David M. Schiller Sr., in 2009.

She is survived by her sons, Martin F. Schiller, Jr., of LaRue, Texas, and Marshall G. Schiller, of Ayden; daughter, Marcia Jane Schiller, of Atlanta; grandchildren, Martin F. Schiller III, Amanda M. Schiller, Andrew B. Schiller, Daniel M. Schiller, David M. Schiller Jr., Richard E. Schiller, and Douglas A. Schiller; and eight great-grandchildren.

The family will receive friends tonight from 6 to 8 at Wilkerson Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Alzheimer’s Research Fund, ECU Medical Foundation, 525 Moye Blvd., Greenville, NC 27834.

Alumni urged to aid frats at UNC

BY ERIC FERRERI  
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL - Fraternities at UNC-Chapel Hill need more oversight from their alumni to improve behavior and strengthen academics, a new report says.

The report, to be discussed by campus trustees Thursday, was written by UNC-CH alumnus Jordan Whichard after a four-month analysis of the university's fraternity system.

In speaking with students, parents, administrators and alumni, Whichard found a system that, while far from broken, would benefit from a more active, structured alumni presence.

"The Greek system at UNC is maybe a step or two behind," said Whichard, a 1979 alumnus who was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. "It's more than fine-tuning. There's a need to drive positive cultural change."

Whichard wants to bolster alumni participation with a new Fraternity Alumni Association, which would have an executive director and provide formal oversight to the university's Interfraternity Council, the umbrella group for fraternities.

A more active alumni presence would provide steady guidance and a sounding board for fraternities. Some chapters have active alumni, others do not, Whichard said.

"It's not a baby-sitting service," Whichard said of the proposed association. "These people would be interested in helping the development of these young men ... There hasn't been adult engagement and supervision and involvement. Folks regarded that as a weakness."

Image, safety concerns

Campus leaders enlisted Whichard last fall after two incidents that drew unwanted attention to the Greek system. First, Delta Kappa Epsilon's president, Courland Smith, was shot dead by an Archdale police officer after an encounter along Interstate 85 hours after Smith left a fraternity party. The fraternity was later sanctioned for alcohol violations stemming from that party. Then, four UNC-CH students with fraternity or sorority ties were arrested on cocaine charges.

Whichard's report touches only briefly on drugs and drinking, recommending a clearer policy and more education that emphasizes the hazards of drug and alcohol abuse. But he acknowledged that problems exist.

"I would say alcohol abuse, binge drinking, substance abuse issues cut across the entire student population," he said. "But I think it's more than just an image problem [for fraternities] because those issues create safety concerns for students who engage in those behaviors."

Whichard's report also recommends that UNC-CH look for ways to improve academic performance, including rewards and recognition for good grades, and tutoring and mentoring for new fraternity members.

Campus officials track average grade point averages for fraternities and sororities. Last fall, the average GPA among sororities was 3.27; for fraternities, it was 3.07.

Campus officials hope to institute some improvements this fall.

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Campus police dispute layoffs
Meredith's less safe, one says

By Josh Shaffer
Staff Writer

RALEIGH — Police officers laid off from Meredith College say they were dismissed for being critical of the Raleigh school, a move that leaves the campus in the hands of a chief with part-time and volunteer experience and a staff largely composed of security guards.

Last Friday, the all-female school with more than 2,000 students laid off four of seven sworn officers listed with the state Attorney General's Office. Among the officers let go is Eddie Wheeler, a captain who had recently filed a gender discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against Meredith officials.

What remains is a disagreement about how much policing is needed at the private college in West Raleigh, the level of experience needed and the amount of force officers should carry.

The current chief, David Kennedy, has been a sworn officer with Meredith for slightly more than a year. His résumé shows 25 years with the Durham police, but officials there said that Kennedy was a nonpaid reserve officer – not sworn. Standards are the same between the two, officials said, but the workload is far shorter for reserves.

Kennedy's résumé also lists 11 years as colonel and police chief in the rural Granville County town of Stem, a part-time post in a community with a population of roughly 300 people. Kennedy did not return a call Tuesday.

Kennedy won much praise from Jack Day, Stem's mayor during the chief's tenure. "He would come up here and work and not hit the clock," Day said. "It was like gratis."

SEE COLLEGE, PAGE 7B

COLLEGE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

To draw a contrast with Kennedy, Wheeler cited his 10 years of experience as a lieutenant with Butner Public Safety, a state division that provides police and fire protection to the Granville County town heavy with government institutions.

"To say the college is just as safe as it was is just an untruthful statement," Wheeler said.

No 'serious incidents'

Meredith President Maureen Hartford said the move was made in response to low crime on campus. Its required reports to the U.S. Department of Education show one aggravated assault between 2006 and 2008, but otherwise no violence and only a handful of alcohol and drug violations.

"We have not had serious incidents on campus that suggest we have to have armed police," she said. Meredith has posted a job opening for another security officer. Security officers do not have the power of arrest or the ability to carry firearms, but Hartford said the school has a good relationship with the Raleigh Police Department.

The school's website offers this caveat: "Although there has been no violent crime against Meredith students on campus, it would be unrealistic to say it can't happen here."

Wheeler and former chief Frank Strickland point to a long history of friction between the officers and administration, including multiple discrimination complaints from officers. They say Meredith used the layoffs as punishment.

Strickland left Meredith last year and ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Oxford, where he lives. To him and Wheeler, the college is just ousting critics.

"I told them Eddie was the only one qualified to take over that department," Strickland said.

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BROWNS ROOKIE IN MIDST OF UNLIKELY JOURNEY

By Les Carpenter, Yahoo! Sports May 24, 7:11 am EDT

BEREA, Ohio – He cannot bear to leave the practice field, almost as if doing so would nullify the dream he has lived these past two weeks. And so defensive tackle Kwaku Danso, perhaps the unlikeliest Cleveland Brown ever, finds reasons to stay after a springtime workout even as his new teammates head for the locker room. He pushes against a blocking sled. He runs sprints. Then he lags behind the last group of players signing autographs for some children until, at last, he is alone on the wide green prairie behind the Browns offices.

“I can’t believe this,” he says, laughing into the afternoon sun. “Look at me.”

Who could have imagined? Rarely is there such a thing as a 28-year-old rookie in the NFL – let alone one raised in Ghana who learned to play the game just three years earlier, after walking into the head coach’s office at East Carolina and saying he wanted to join the team, then never once making a tackle. Sometimes he must wonder if one of the Browns coaches will run onto the field and pull him off, saying it is all a mistake.

But there is no error. The Browns have indeed signed an undrafted free agent whose entire college career consists of three brief appearances at the end of ECU blowouts. And they did so because a few weeks earlier, defensive coordinator Rob Ryan – observing on East Carolina’s pro day – noticed Danso step through a door at 6-foot-5, 336 pounds and gasped “Who the hell is that?” to the Cleveland scouts standing beside him.
Unfazed by the information that Danso had never advanced beyond a brief appearance at second string on the East Carolina depth charts, Ryan was transfixed as the player bench-pressed 225 pounds 39 times. So much so that even after Ryan continued to scout players with much better pedigrees at more important schools, Danso was the one he kept remembering. And when Browns head coach Eric Mangini told him he could have one player to bring in with the intent of keeping around for most of the year to develop, Ryan knew immediately whom he wanted.

"I like the look in his eye," Ryan says. "You have to root for a guy like that."

Standing alone on the practice field, Danso can only giggle, almost speechless about his good fortune. He starts to say something, then stops. It's all too overwhelming. So many times he thought of quitting football at East Carolina, figuring he was wasting his time. Now he is here? In the NFL? Finally he begins again, his words sometimes hard to decipher through a thick accent.

"This is a blessing," he says. "This right here is a blessing. This tells you that life is what you make it."

Then he shakes his head and laughs again.

"It's taken a lot of hard work," he says.

He came to the U.S. in 2002, from Kumasi, which is Ghana's second-largest city, with the hopes of playing basketball at an American college. Most of his family was already here. But a brief trial at tiny Wilkes University in Pennsylvania didn't work, he ran out of money and he was forced to move in with his brother Kojo in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C.

To raise money for school he took on three jobs: working days as a butcher at Sam's Club, stocking shelves overnight at Target and cooking at Burger King. On the weekends, Kojo - who stands 5-foot-11 - brought his much bigger, younger brother to his part-time job as a bouncer at a D.C. nightclub.

Kwaku soon drew the notice of Redskins players who came into the club and suggested he might make a fine football player. This was also the opinion of a track coach who was working with Kojo, then a graduate student and aspiring track athlete at nearby Bowie State. They pushed Kwaku to get into shape, directing him toward weekend flag-football leagues to let him get a feel for the game. By 2005, he had saved enough money to go back to school, this time with a new athletic dream.

He chose East Carolina because an uncle taught chemistry at the college. After dropping out for a year to again raise money for his schooling, he finally walked into the office of the head football coach Skip Holtz, saying he was from Ghana and wanting to walk onto the football team.

"You mean soccer?" he remembers Holtz asking.
“No, no, football,” Danso said. “I want to play the game where you put things on and hit.”

At first, the East Carolina coaches didn’t know what to do with Danso.

“If you put the football on the ground he could kick it through the goal like a soccer ball better than anybody, but getting into a stance and playing football, he couldn’t do it,” remembers Greg Hudson, who was the defensive coordinator at ECU before taking a job as Florida State’s linebackers coach this year. “Football to him was Chinese arithmetic.”

For a time they worked him on the offensive line, partly because he was so big, but Danso had no grasp of the stunts and the traps and the play calls that the others had learned from playing their whole lives. Even after he was switched to the more instinctive position of defensive tackle, he was bewildered when the coaches started talking about filling gaps.

He learned quickly but it was tough to keep committing to the game. He bonded with ECU defensive line coach Donnie Thompson, but Thompson left in May 2007. And even as he improved, his progress was blocked by the two starting tackles Linval Joseph (a second-round pick last month of the New York Giants) and Jay Ross (who is with the New Orleans Saints). Plus, the coaches didn’t feel they could dedicate the time to him. He was taking an aggressive load of classes in pursuit of a construction management degree, hoping someday to return to Ghana and build buildings. And because he didn’t have a football scholarship, he had to work – often on Sundays, which was an important meeting day for the players.

“We didn’t know if he would be consistently around,” says Hudson. “He sometimes had to miss practices for work and he’s smarter than four or five players put together. He had a lot on his plate.”

Danso would constantly ask his coaches: “What can I do to get better?”

But ECU was a small school trying to take on bigger programs. It had to play big teams in nonconference games to build credibility, depriving Danso of the opportunity to play in blowout games against weak teams. Mostly his role on game days was to warm up in front of opposing team’s benches, looking as big as he could, hoping to intimidate the other teams.

“You could see every head turning and looking at him,” Hudson says. “We’d stand in the end zone and watch laughing. The other coaches would be looking through their flip charts and saying, ‘Who is this monster?’ ”
Danso seemed to enjoy teasing the other teams. But he longed to play and the less that looked like a possibility, the more discouraged he got.

His salvation came in William Jennette, a onetime strength and conditioning coach at North Carolina who had worked with NFL star Julius Peppers (notes). Introduced by Thompson, Danso drove from Greenville, N.C., to Jennette’s MBS Fitness gym in Durham for a meeting. Jennette still keeps a video from that first day. Danso seemed in shape but had no football fitness. Asked to do a simple routine with 10-pound dumbbells, Danso dropped his arms in exhaustion after only a minute.

Still, much like Rob Ryan, Jennette was charmed by his new protégé.

“He is like a big sponge,” Jennette says. “He was just trying to soak up as much knowledge as he can.”

Soon Danso was driving to Durham as much as he could. And Jennette, too, came to Greenville, sometimes as often as once a week to push Danso.

“You can make it,” he told him, urging him not to worry about his lack of playing time at East Carolina. An NFL team will see past that, he said. Somewhere, he added, a professional coach will fall in love with that size and desire.

This spring, Danso had enough credits to graduate. Holtz and his staff had moved on to South Florida. Even though he had another year of eligibility, Danso figured now was the time to try the NFL. When the school held its pro day for NFL scouts and coaches, he showed up.

Several of his former teammates laughed at him, he says. But then Ryan saw him and Jennette’s words proved right: An NFL coach was indeed interested.

“What jumps out at you is his size and he’s all muscle,” Ryan said. “Shoot, he can be a two-gapper. He’s as strong as an ox.”

He immediately saw Danso as the perfect fit at nose tackle in Cleveland’s 3-4 defense, which unlike ECU’s 4-3, calls for a single, giant tackle to stand in the middle, be big and tackle ballcarriers.

“I like to think I know players,” says Ryan, who helped turn former Cardinals safeties Kwamie Lassiter and Brent Alexander and current Browns player Marcus Benard (notes) from undrafted free agents into NFL players. “I don’t care what happened at East Carolina. That doesn’t matter. This is the NFL and the only thing that matters is what happens between those white lines. They’re going to see what kind of man you are when they snap the ball.”

Only Danso had no idea of Ryan’s interest that day at East Carolina. That wasn’t clear until a few days before the draft, when the coach called him on his mobile phone.
“I said, ‘Hold on, someone is playing a joke on me,’ ” Danso says with a laugh.

But it was no joke. The Browns invited him to a tryout camp the week after the draft, just so Ryan could be sure Danso had the same strength and desire he saw that day at East Carolina. He did. A day after the camp, he was signed to a contract.

Back at East Carolina, a couple players who played ahead of Danso were stunned, he says. How was it possible that he had gotten this chance and they hadn’t?

Standing on the Browns’ empty practice field, he shrugs. Then laughs.

“Too many people said, ‘You’re that kid from Africa, nobody gives a crap about you.’ But I’m glad I tried,” he says. “Now I’m here at Cleveland Browns Stadium. I can’t believe it. My mother, she cries every time I talk about it. I don’t have words to say it. It’s like, ‘Who am I?’ I look around and say, ‘Why?’ ”

He shakes his head.

“I say, ‘If I quit, none of this would have happened.’ ”

Only it has.

And finally, more than half an hour after practice has ended and his NFL teammates have showered, Danso picks up his orange Browns helmet and slowly leaves the field of his impossible dream.
Colleges grapple with tuition hikes

By Mary Beth Marklein
USA TODAY

Tuition increases for undergraduates attending public colleges and universities in their home states appear to be all over the map this fall.

The range so far — from no change at Maine’s community colleges to double digits at some Virginia and Arizona universities — reflect the variety of strategies schools and states are trying to balance their economic challenges with those of students and parents.

"States are starting from different places," says Julie Bell of the National Conference of State Legislatures. But in general, money for higher education "just isn't there."

In most states, governing boards approve tuition rates for public institutions. But legislators and governors control state budgets, which influence tuition.

Missouri's public universities, for example, agreed to freeze tuition for the second year in exchange for a promise by Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat, to cut budgets no more than 5.2%. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a Republican, has proposed cutting state aid to public colleges that exceed a 4% tuition increase. He also proposes a 7.7% cut in higher education spending.

In West Virginia, public two- and four-year colleges honored a plea by Gov. Joe Manchin, a Democrat, to freeze tuition; stimulus money will replace a 5% budget cut.

Tuition freezes typically aim to ensure affordability at a time when many families are struggling. "They are putting the needs of students first," senior Antonio Cosme says of his school, Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, where tuition, fees and room and board will remain unchanged this fall. The plan assumes passage of a proposed 3.1% state budget cut.

Tuition caps get mixed reviews. A freeze since 2007 at the University of Maryland state system has been praised for keeping costs down for families and blamed for limiting enrollments on some campuses. The freeze ends this year.

In 2005, Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm, a Democrat, cut $30 million in funding to the state's 15 public universities after earlier vowing to spare those that held down increases.

"Further tuition restraint requests by the governor are respectfully declined," says Mike Bouluex, executive director of the non-profit Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan.

Sandy Baum, who tracks college costs for the non-profit College Board, says financial aid, rather than a freeze, may better help people "who have become unemployed or seen their incomes decline significantly." Despite rising sticker prices, the average net price at public four-year colleges — after grants and tax benefits — was lower last year than a decade earlier, after adjusting for inflation, her research finds.

A few states, including Texas, Virginia and Florida, have loosened legislative reins on tuition policy in recent years. At the University of Virginia, where tuition will increase 9.9% this fall, the extra revenue will go toward financial aid, academics, building maintenance and employee benefits.

That strategy, too, has raised eyebrows. In Texas, where average academic charges increased 72% from 2003 to 2009, according to data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, some legislators have called for a return to tighter state regulation.

Though controversial, tuition deregulation is gaining momentum, policy analysts say. Proposals have been debated this year in New York, Louisiana, Washington state and Colorado.

"It's been reassuring," says Daniel Hurley, director of state relations and policy analysis for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. "Despite pressure to keep college costs at a minimum, lawmakers are recognizing the vital role tuition revenue plays in meeting rising student enrollments."

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A sampling of tuition increases for this fall

Last year, published prices for tuition and fees increased an average of 6.5%, to $7,020, the College Board says. A sampling of public colleges that have announced tuition and mandatory fees for fall 2010-11:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Percent increase</th>
<th>Tuition and fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>$8,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arizona, Tucson</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$8,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Virginia, Charlottesville</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>$10,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Iowa, Iowa City</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>$7,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland, College Park</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>$8,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia University, Morgantown</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>$5,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri, Columbia</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>$8,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>$8,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Community College System</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>$3,283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In-debt grads with no jobs can sidestep trouble with student loans

You just graduated, and your parents are so proud of you. Which is a good thing, because there’s a good chance that you’ll be moving back in with them.

This year’s college graduates will be entering a wretched job market, where there are, by some estimates, five candidates for every opening. Perhaps this experience will give you the strength to deal with future challenges. But one of those challenges — not falling behind on your student loans — doesn’t exactly lead to much character building.

Interest and fees will inflate the amount you owe. If you default, the government could garnish your wages and withhold your tax refund.

These dire consequences are avoidable, at least as far as your federal student loans are concerned. The key is to understand your options and take action before you fall behind on payments. Tips for worried borrowers:

► Understand your grace period. Borrowers typically have a few months after graduation before they’re required to start repaying their federal student loans. For most federal student loans, the grace period is six months.

Grads with debt

More than two-thirds of bachelor’s degree recipients graduated with student debt in academic year 2007-08.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total debt of:</th>
<th>Less than $30,500</th>
<th>More than $30,500</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-year public school</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year private school</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: College Board

► Find out whether you qualify for the income-based repayment program. Under this program, your loan payments could be reduced, based on the amount of discretionary income you have available. In most cases, your loan payments won’t exceed 10% of your total income. After 25 years, anything you still owe on the loan will be forgiven.

To apply for the program, you’ll need to contact the company that’s servicing your student loan. If you’re not sure who that is, check the database of the National Student Loan Data System, www.nslds.ed.gov. You can also find links to major student loan servicers at www.illhrinfo.org, a website set up by the Project on Student Debt.

When you apply for income-based repayment, you’ll need to authorize the IRS to provide last year’s tax return to the Department of Education. If you feel that your tax return doesn’t reflect your current situation, there’s a form you can use to show how your situation has changed, says Lauren Asher, head of the Project on Student Debt.

► Consider deferment or forbearance. If you’re unemployed, still in school or experiencing economic hardship, you can apply to have payments on your federal student loans deferred for up to three years.

If you have subsidized Stafford loans, which are provided to students who demonstrate financial need, the government will pay the interest on the loans during deferment. Interest on unsubsidized Stafford loans will accrue during deferment.

If you don’t qualify for deferment, you

Cont.
may still be eligible for forbearance, which allows you to put off payments for up to three years. The requirements aren't as stringent as those for deferment, but interest will accrue during the forbearance period.

These programs can provide temporary relief from loan payments, and requests are usually processed more quickly than applications for income-based repayment, Asher says.

However, deferment and forbearance "shouldn't be used as long-term solutions," she says. "If you're looking at more than a few months of problems making payments, you should look at" income-based repayment.

> **Extend your payment term.**

Many lenders will allow borrowers who owe more than $30,000 in principal and interest to extend the term beyond the standard 10 years, thus reducing monthly payments. The amount of interest you pay will increase, though, particularly if you extend payments over the maximum term of 25 years.

Borrowers who are struggling to repay private student loans have fewer options. Private education lenders don't participate in the income-based repayment program, and they're not required to allow you to defer payments, even if you're out of work.

If you're having trouble with your private loans, read your loan agreement. It may require the lender to grant you forbearance under certain conditions.

Even if your contract doesn't include an economic hardship provision, your lender may be willing to provide relief, says Deanne Loonin, staff attorney with the National Consumer Law Center.

Loonin says some lenders have become more flexible in recent months. Your lender may allow you to make interest-only payments for a few months, or may even agree to change the terms of the loan, she says.

For more information, go to the NCLC's website for student borrowers, www.studentloanborrowerassistance.org.

To suggest columns, e-mail: sblock@usatoday.com. Follow on Twitter: www.twitter.com/sandyblock

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Find links to previous Your Money columns at money.usatoday.com.
May 25, 2010

Yale Patron Held in Scheme That Benefited the University and Its Baseball Team

By JOHN ELIGON

The news release called John D. Mazzuto one of the “greatest supporters” of the Yale University baseball team.

Mr. Mazzuto, a 1970 Yale graduate who played shortstop for the team, had donated to the baseball program about $1.5 million worth of shares in a company he owned. The university rewarded him by naming a new practice facility after him and his wife — the John and Theresa Mazzuto Field — and by adding his family name to the baseball coach’s official title: the Mazzuto Family Head Coach of Baseball.

“John has bestowed upon Yale baseball an incredible gift,” John Stuper, the baseball coach at Yale, said in the release, dated April 17, 2009. “His support of our program has been absolutely phenomenal.”

Manhattan prosecutors said Tuesday that Mr. Mazzuto’s support of his alma mater was illegal.

Mr. Mazzuto, 61, was indicted on charges of fraudulently inflating the value of a company he owned to mislead investors into buying worthless shares. He gave shares of the company, Industrial Enterprises of America, to family and friends and to companies he controlled, and they sold them on the open market, giving some of the profits to Industrial Enterprises, prosecutors said.

Those profits made Industrial Enterprises seem as though it was in better financial health than it actually was, raising its stock’s value, prosecutors said.

“It’s a new twist on a pump-and-dump,” said Garrett A. Lynch, the assistant district attorney handling the case.
Mr. Mazzuto also gave shares of the stock to Yale, prosecutors said. The university sold its shares before their value plummeted and earned about $1.5 million, prosecutors said.

Yale officials did not know that Mr. Mazzuto was issuing stocks illegally, prosecutors said, although some of the recipients of the shares did conspire with him.

A spokesman for the university, Thomas Conroy, declined to comment on how Mr. Mazzuto’s donation was vetted or on the future of the field and coaching job that bear his name. Mr. Conroy said in an e-mail message that Yale was “holding the donation aside” but declined to say what that meant.

Mr. Mazzuto and a colleague, James W. Margulies, 45, who served as outside counsel and briefly as chief executive for Industrial Enterprises, were each charged with various counts, including first-degree grand larceny. Both men pleaded not guilty in State Supreme Court.

Mr. Mazzuto’s lawyer, Richard M. Asche, denied the accusations against his client.

Prosecutors said that investors lost about $60 million in the scheme and that Mr. Mazzuto earned about $15 million. He bought a house in Southampton, N.Y., for $3 million and one in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., for $2.5 million, prosecutors said, and spent more than half a million dollars on private jets. Mr. Margulies’s spending included a $350,000 Harry Winston diamond ring for his wife, they said.

In the 2009 news release, Mr. Mazzuto said: “I learned many life lessons as a Yale baseball player. Most importantly, I learned that if you lose, there will be another game tomorrow.”