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ECU specialists get more room

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University's heart and lung specialists have a little more room to breathe.

This week's partial opening of Moye Medical Center, a new ECU Physicians clinic, nearly triples clinical space for ECU pulmonary specialists and cardiologists. Located at 521 Moye Blvd., the new facility is the first of three new ones set to open over the next two years.

There are 19 exam rooms on the first floor, nine for pulmonary care and 10 for cardiology. At more than 12,000 square feet, the first-floor space nearly triples the size of the Medical Pavilion facility where the departments were located, said Dr. Ralph Whatley, chairman of the Brody School of Medicine's internal medicine department.

Beyond being smaller, the Medical Pavilion exam rooms were ill-suited for pulmonology, Whatley said. Other problems at the old site included a confusing parking lot and uninviting waiting rooms, he added.

"It's difficult to describe how difficult the previous clinic site was," Whatley said.

With the new space come some new capabilities. Pulmonary patients will be able to get bronchoscopies and, eventually, X-rays at the office, procedures that have been done at Pitt County Memorial Hospital or private radiology clinics, Whatley said.

The new space offers a shared station for pulmonology and cardiology nurses, a move that should encourage more teamwork, clinic manager Sandy Wynn said. It's common for patients to suffer from both heart and lung conditions, he added.

"The accessibility of having all the staff here together has certainly made things a lot easier," Wynn said.

More than 7,000 patients are likely to come through the pulmonary and cardiology clinic per year, according to ECU spokesman Doug Boyd.

The two upper floors of the 43,000-square-foot building are still under construction. Eventually, ECU Physicians' general internal medicine doctors will move into the second story, which ECU officials hope to open in October. ECU and Pitt Memorial officials are planning a joint digestive diseases center that could be housed on the third floor.

Half of the first-floor space will be vacant again next summer, when the Brody cardiology department moves into the East Carolina Heart Institute. The pulmonary and critical care divisions could expand to fill the open area, Whatley said.

Moye Medical is part of a building boom in ECU's Health Sciences Division. Last year, the schools of nursing and allied health sciences joined the Laupus Health Sciences Library in a new building on N.C. 43 West. Over the next two years, the heart institute and a new family medicine center should open.

Brody officials are looking for other leasing or building opportunities to upgrade their facilities, which have consistently gotten poor reviews from patients, Whatley said. Patient response to the new clinic has been good, Whatley said.

Waiting for a prescription to be written Wednesday, patient Kim Patton of Winterville said he was impressed.

The new building offers easier parking and a "soft" feeling that was lacking at the Medical Pavilion offices, Patton said.

"Something else that's important to me is the fact that, when you're sitting here in the waiting room, you're not jammed up tight next to other customers," he said.

"I like it much better here, much better," Patton added.
Benefit concert to feature harpsichordist

By Emily Stephenson
The Daily Reflector

A concert to raise money for an animal advocacy group will be held at the East Carolina University School of Music on Saturday.

Dubbed the "Benefit Concert for the Animals," the show begins at 3 p.m. in A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall and will feature ECU School of music students and faculty, as well as guest harpsichordist Elizabeth Etter.

"The purpose of the benefit concert is to raise money for the Friends of the Pitt County Animal Shelter," said Dr. John Holter, a Greenville physician and pianist linked to animal advocacy issues through his wife, Betty Williams, a veterinarian at Spay Today Spay/Neuter Clinic. The clinic provides low-cost spay/neuter services to low-income cat and dog owners.

Admission will be a donation to the animal shelter support group, which assists with the medical expenses of adopting animals from the shelter.

Holter, who has taken piano lessons at the School of Music and played piano accompaniments with string students for years, began planning the event after Elizabeth Devereux suggested he organize a concert to benefit animal advocacy. Devereux recently completed graduate work in violin performance at ECU and has played with Holter several times.

Devereux also recruited students and faculty to play in the concert for free.

Holter then contacted Etter, whom he said has been a friend since his college days, and asked her to play in the concert. Etter, who has performed with the Chicago Chamber Orchestra, the Cleveland Camerata and the Erie Philharmonic, agreed to perform. She also spent five years as the artistic and executive director of the summer music festival at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania.

She will perform J.S. Bach’s Harpsichord Concerto in D minor and music of Italian composer Giuseppe Domenico Scarlatti.

"It’s really a privilege and terribly exciting to be able to do this harpsichord concerto because it is really a terrific piece of music," Etter said.

In addition to Etter's performance, ECU students and faculty will give ensemble and solo performances, including three Brazilian pieces by various composers.

Holter said he could not have planned the concert without the help of Devereux and the ECU School of Music.
Board tells students: Do the math

High school will include fourth math course; plan for two units of 2nd language nixed.

BY PEGGY LIM
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — Starting with 2009-10 freshmen, North Carolina high school students will have to take more math to graduate — the latest step by the state Board of Education intended to make graduates more competitive globally. The board on Thursday approved a new requirement that high school students complete four math courses instead of three. The latest change follows a requirement, starting with 2006-07 freshmen, that students complete a senior project, and Board Chairman Howard Lee eventually hopes it will go further. He said high school students should take more foreign languages.

"It's arrogant on our part that everybody else should learn English," he said. "... Going to college should not be a prerequisite to learning a foreign language."

Leslie Baldwin, president of the Foreign Language Association of North Carolina, agreed. She pointed to the demand from businesses for multilingual employees.

"The construction community really needs students who have skills in Spanish," she said.

"There are companies here from Germany and Japan, and they want people at any level that can communicate in those languages."

Seniors this year and last year seeking to get into any four-year University of North Carolina school already had to complete four math courses. About 65 percent of the 2005-06 class did so. The new plan would raise the bar for the rest.

Students are now required to take at least three math courses, including Algebra I. Under the new plan, the vast majority of students — some will be allowed to opt out — will have to take Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II or three equivalent integrated math courses that cover the same material in a different order. Students also must take a fourth

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INSIDE: Check out our special section for the 2007 valedictorians in today's N&O.

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class, such as statistics, calculus or vocational math, based on their goals after graduation.

"People are feeling the math expected of college-bound students in the past is the level all students will need if they're to have desirable career paths," said Randy Harter, president of the N.C. Council of Teachers of Mathematics. "Low-wage jobs are drying up."

For the time being, though, the state board backed away from earlier plans to require two units of a second language, because some superintendents had argued they would need more time to hire language teachers. Others said foreign language instruction needed to be taught in kindergarten through eighth to be effective.

Advocates for arts and vocational courses voiced fears that too many requirements in other disciplines could harm their programs. They lobbied for requirements in arts and vocational courses, officially known as career and technical education.

The new plan represents a compromise: Two of a student's six required electives in high school must be some combination of arts, foreign language or vocational courses. Board members said they wanted to promote those areas while offering flexibility to students.

Karen Wells, executive director of Arts North Carolina, said that keeping arts optional would leave programs vulnerable to budget cuts. She cited a recent study by Americans for the Arts showing that the nonprofit arts and culture industry is Wake County's 10th-largest employer.

"My question is what required core course are we providing our students that prepares them for this economic engine in North Carolina?" Wells said as she left the board meeting.

The new plan encourages — but does not mandate — four electives courses in a particular "concentration." Advocates have argued that a more focused direction in electives would persuade more students to stay in school.

A concentration could be in the arts, Junior ROTC, a second language, vocational education or another customized area such as communications. A performing arts concentration, for example, could include marching band, concert band, orchestra and theater as electives.

"Savvy students are probably doing that already," said Vanessa Jeter, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Instruction.

"But it's to make sure all students are doing that. It's to have a plan, versus a hodge-podge."

June Atkinson, the state superintendent, said research has shown that requiring a concentration enhances student achievement.

She hopes the board will one day make concentrations a requirement, similar to how the senior graduation projects have become mandatory for all students.

In the past decade, the state board had strongly recommended senior projects, but only about 100 out of 380 high schools required them — until this year's freshman class, she said.

Spencer Blalock, a senior at West Johnston High School, said concentrations could be a great idea as long as schools give students enough freedom to find what they're passionate about.

In some schools, senior projects are more tied to English classes. For his senior project, Blalock said, he produced a two-act play, "Into the Woods," drawing from the school's choral, dance and band programs. The play netted $4,000 for the fine arts department to use to present future musicals.

"The sky's the limit," said Blalock, who plans to study musical theater at Elon University. "I'm just worried people will see it as something they have to have to graduate, versus something that could be fun."

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**Spending gap**

The UNC Board of Governors promised a full court press in the weeks ahead to try to win over House members as budget talks proceed.

A wide gulf in spending exists between the House and Senate versions of the budget for higher education. UNC leaders prefer the Senate version, with 5 percent faculty raises, $8 million for a research fund and $16.5 million next year for the Kannapolis research campus. It also includes money for UNC Online and summer programs to help prepare incoming freshmen for college. There are items the UNC system didn’t ask for, including big bucks for cancer research.

The House version, on the other hand, mandates sizable cuts, including an $18.6 million “middle management” reduction and another $68 million cut that would eliminate 1,000 vacant positions.

Board Chairman Jim Phillips suggested Thursday that board members remind legislators that UNC has cut its own budget and forged new relationships with the community colleges.

“This is an opportunity not to just say, ‘Can you give us $2 million for this?’ but to give them a reason to want to do that,” Phillips said.
IT'S 'A REAL UNIVERSITY' ONLINE, BOWLES SAYS

UNC officials unveiled a one-stop Web site Thursday that offers students 130 online-degree, certificate and licensure programs in the 16-campus system.

UNC President Erskine Bowles called University of North Carolina Online "a gigantic deal" for the university and the state.

The collection of online academic programs is one of the largest in the United States. It means UNC will compete directly with the for-profit University of Phoenix.

"I ask you, if you were a customer, if you were a student, and you wanted to get a master's degree in nursing, would you rather get it from a real university like the University of North Carolina, or would you rather get it from some virtual university?" Bowles asked. "And if you were going to hire that person, would you rather hire somebody who had been taught by the University of North Carolina or somebody who had been taught by a virtual university? I think this is a great opportunity for us."

THE SITE
http://online.northcarolina.edu

THE TARGET AUDIENCE
Students, especially working adults, who want to finish bachelor's degrees, earn master's degrees or get professional licenses. UNC plans eventually to market programs nationally and internationally.

OTHER AUDIENCES
Community college students who want more education, and military personnel and their dependents based in North Carolina.

HOW IT WORKS
The site, which will be open for business July 1, lists more than 1,000 online courses available this fall. Students can choose from among 90 degree programs and 40 licensure and certificate programs. The programs are offered through the individual campuses, but students can shop for them all in one place.

WHY NOW
UNC wants to establish itself as an online leader and use online programs as a way to serve a projected 80,000 additional students who will enroll in the UNC system by the end of the next decade.

THE QUALITY
UNC officials say the programs are fully accredited and taught by the same faculty who teach face-to-face on the state's campuses. They will be of comparable quality and tuition cost, though online students won't have to pay some campus fees and, of course, won't have bills for room and board.

THE SLOGAN
"The University of North Carolina Online. 16 Universities. One Link. Unlimited Possibilities."

— Jane Stancill
UNC gets $5 million for autism projects

Early diagnosis is aim of research

BY LISA HOPPENJANS
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — Researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill's FPG Child Development Institute have been tapped by the U.S. Department of Education to lead two major autism research projects.

The department has awarded the institute $5 million to create a national autism professional development center to work with 12 states to promote early diagnosis of children with autism and to increase the number of professionals prepared to teach children with autism.

The institute also received a $3 million grant to compare two commonly used, but previously un-evaluated, classroom approaches to teaching children with autism.

Samuel Odom, the institute's director and a leading autism researcher, and senior scientist Deborah Hatton will head the professional development center research. Hatton said a major part of the center's work will be promoting evidence-based practices for treatment and early diagnosis of autism through training sessions and Web-based resources.

Early intervention is important because the sooner a child with autism is diagnosed, the more effective treatment can be. Hatton said the earliest a child can be reliably diagnosed with autism right now is at age 2, but parents and others need to know what signs to look for.

"There is evidence that the earlier you begin intervention, the more effective it can be," Hatton said.

The number of children diagnosed with autism continues to rise sharply, Hatton said, but many teachers and other professionals still lack the knowledge on specific techniques to help autistic children.

"There's a shortage of special educators in general," Hatton said. "And very often special educators are trained across a wide range of disabilities."

The grants further boost UNC-CH's profile as one of the nation's leaders in autism research and treatment.

The university was an early pioneer in autism treatment, with the development of the TEACCH — Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children — program at the university by child psychologist Eric Schopler. The treatment program was the first state-supported, university-based program serving individuals with autism and their families and now operates 10 regional centers throughout the state.

In 2002, the university was one of the first in the country to receive money for a federal autism research center. Researchers there examine the genetic and neurological basis of autism, using techniques like brain imaging studies and DNA studies.

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Senators ask how colleges invest

U.S. lawmakers want more info about universities' big endowments and investment in overseas hedge funds.

BY TIM SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

Plenty of universities would be thrilled to claim an endowment fund of $1 billion — but they would not crack the top 50 in a ranking of U.S. schools.

With $2 billion, a university doesn’t make the top 25. With an endowment of $4.5 billion, Duke University leads the list of Triangle schools; it ranks 16th.

Such huge sums have attracted the attention of federal lawmakers, who are asking a lot of questions about how such funds are invested, spent and reported.

They are especially interested in tax implications of overseas hedge fund investments, why endowments aren’t used to hold down tuition costs and a general lack of detailed information.

“At this point, it’s clear the IRS needs to get a better picture on a wide range of issues involving tax-exempt organizations,” Republican Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa said last week in urging the secretary of the U.S. Treasury to make changes.

Grassley is the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee led by Democrat Max Baucus of Montana.

The two lawmakers attracted the attention of university money managers in early May when they questioned whether some overseas hedge fund investments are designed to avoid federal taxes. Committee members have also discussed taxing the value of tuition provided free to university employees and family members — a prized perk on some campuses. And they talked about requiring schools to dip into

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WHOSE ARE BIGGEST?

Five largest U.S. university endowments:

1. HARVARD UNIVERSITY $28.9 billion
2. YALE UNIVERSITY $18 billion
3. STANFORD UNIVERSITY $14.1 billion
4. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM $13.2 billion
5. PRINCETON UNIVERSITY $13 billion
endowments to dampen rapid tuition increases.

None of the proposals would deplete university accounts, though no figures were offered. The debate is really about control.

At its core, an endowment fund offers universities some degree of financial independence and flexibility. Among public schools, it buffers the university from the declining percentage of state budgets spent on higher education. It allows private schools to offer facilities or programs that might provide an edge in the competition for students.

Efforts to limit that flexibility are not particularly welcome.

"This is about our government wanting to micromanage our institutions," said Chris Simmons, an associate vice president in Duke's office of federal relations.

Hope Williams, president of N.C. Independent College and Universities, described it as "an attempt at price controls."

Within the debate, international hedge funds are a lightning rod because many are seen as risky investments using companies incorporated in Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and other places where the reach of U.S. tax laws is limited.

But hedge funds are hardly exotic among university money managers. According to a 2006 study by the National Association of College and University Business Officers, hedge funds make up more than 20 percent of large university endowments. Many are based overseas.

At Duke University, which has a total nonprofit investment pool of $6.3 billion, more than 40 percent is placed in hedged funds, according to the university's 2006 annual report. The bulk of that total — about $4.5 billion — is considered the school's endowment fund.

Despite the reputation of hedge funds, they are often part of the portfolio of nonprofit groups because they bring stability and good returns, said Matt Hamill, a senior vice president at the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

The "hedge" is actually conservative investments designed to counter the more aggressive and risky holdings in a portfolio. But such funds, especially those overseas, require less detailed reporting — a sticking point for some federal lawmakers.

"Universities would be hard-pressed to see the kind of returns they have reported without hedged funds," Hamill said. "They don't want to lose that flexibility."

That sentiment also applies to discussions about requiring universities to use endowments to hold down tuition.

Using endowment money to defray tuition would be popular among parents and students, but it would be far more difficult to manage endowments effectively, said Richard Mann, vice chancellor for finance and administration at UNC-Chapel Hill. UNC's endowment was about $1.1 billion as of June 2006.

Because endowment donations often come with specific instructions about how the money can be spent, Mann said a university might not have enough unencumbered money to significantly reduce tuition. It would also be risky to spend money on recurring costs, because endowment earnings are not consistent from year to year.

"You would like the rules not to limit your ability to be successful," Mann said.

Williams said the problem at smaller schools could be more acute, because many are still trying to build an endowment that will provide a meaningful return on investments each year.

Hiller, of the business officers association, said it is possible that some sort of compromise could be reached through an expected overhaul of a document called Form 990. Though Form 990 requires nonprofit groups to report key information about their organizations, they are often criticized for being too general and not consistent with other tax forms.

New 990s, Hiller said, would still require the same basic information from all groups but would be supplemented with more detail that differs depending on a group's purpose. Hospitals, universities and charities, for example, would provide different, specific details.

Providing that kind of detail could delay the push for new endowment rules while allowing for more scrutiny of how universities spend that money, he said.

"Anytime you start talking about the way endowments are handled, people are going to take a lot of interest," Hiller said.

HOW THEY INVESTED

A recent study shows, on average, how universities with certain size endowments invested their money.

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<th></th>
<th>Equity</th>
<th>Fixed Income</th>
<th>Real Estate</th>
<th>Cash</th>
<th>Hedge</th>
<th>Private Funds</th>
<th>Venture Equity</th>
<th>Natural Resources</th>
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<tr>
<td>Those greater than $1 billion:</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$500 million to $1 billion:</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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SOURCE: 2006 ENDOWMENT STUDY BY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY BUSINESS OFFICERS

ENDOWMENTS

Among Triangle universities, two schools have endowments of more than a $1 billion and all invest in hedge funds, which have caught the attention of federal lawmakers.

Duke University

Endowment $6.3 billion

Hedge funds 42%

N.C. State University

Endowment $4.2 billion

Hedge funds 16%

UNC-Chapel Hill

Endowment $1.1 billion

Hedge funds 25%

* Duke's total investment pool

Source: Individual universities; 2006 Endowment Study by National Association of College and University Business Officers The News & Observer

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Golden LEAF steps up grant-giving

$5 million may help rural counties thrive

BY VICKI LEE PARKER
STAFF WRITER

The Golden LEAF Foundation, which oversees more than $700 million in public money, pledged more than $5 million Thursday to aid economic development in the state's rural areas.

The awards came three months after Gov. Mike Easley called on the nonprofit group to be more aggressive in helping to win jobs for those communities.

Part of that effort has been a community assistance program that the group started in March, said Valeria Lee, president of the Golden LEAF Foundation. Under that program, members of the board meet with leaders in rural counties to assess their needs and help them draft grant proposals to submit to the foundation.

Lee said that the initiative was well under way before the governor's comments.

"What he said was totally in line with what we were already planning," Lee said. She said the foundation's board had noticed that it wasn't getting proposals that reflected the needs across the state.

"We decided it was best to go out and work with different communities and not wait for the proposals to come to us," she said.

The Rocky Mount-based foundation was set up in 1999 to manage half of the money the state received from a settlement with cigarette manufacturers. Its primary mission is to help tobacco-dependent counties build new economic foundations for their communities.

The foundation has awarded about 572 grants totaling more than $210 million since 2000.

On Thursday, three counties received a total of $1.76 million as a result of their work with the community assistance program. They were:

- Scotland County: received $1.2 million to acquire a building that will serve as a satellite campus for Richmond Community College. According to the grant proposal, the site will benefit local health-care and elder care by creating a place to help train and meet the demand for nurses.
- Gates County: received $60,000 to conduct a wastewater feasibility study. The county has no wastewater collection and treatment facilities.
- Robeson County: received

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Cont...


LEAF
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

$504,850 to convert a vacant building in Fairmont into a recreational and education facility to be used for training, community activities and other events.

The foundation approved nine other grants, including:

- $1 million to East Carolina University to establish a Metabolic Institute to pursue diabetes and obesity treatment and research.
- $300,000 to Anson County to upgrade a 10,000-foot sewer line to accommodate increased production planned at Hornwood, a textile manufacturer. The sewer line will accommodate a recent expansion that will add 30 employees to the workforce of 288.
- $1,588,000 to the Beaufort County Committee of 100. The group will use the money for two projects: The bulk of the funds will be used to purchase and upfit a 387,000-square-foot manufacturing facility that is being leased by Impressions Marketing Group. The project will allow the marketing company to retain 162 jobs, create an additional 120 jobs, and invest $3.2 million in equipment over the next three years. The rest of the money, $460,000, will be used to build a 50,000-square-foot manufacturing facility for Carver Machine Works at its current seven-acre site. The expansion will create 50 new jobs over the next three years.

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The numbers don't lie

UNC system President Erskine Bowles had this to say about how state universities are performing on a critical assignment: training more teachers. "There is no way to get around the alarming fact that some of our campuses must have considerable improvement in future years ...," he wrote.

That's straight talk, and it's welcome. Here is what he also promised: "I assure you that future budgets will reward ... campuses for their successful efforts to produce teachers."

In other words, increase the number of teachers that enter the profession, and you get more money. Fail and you don't.

We hope Mr. Bowles means what he says. That's the right way to make sure tax dollars go where they are most effective (there's evidence they do not when it comes to teacher education.) It's also the right way to make sure the state's 16 campuses provide an adequate supply of quality teachers for the state's public schools.

Some 10,000 teachers leave the state's classrooms each year. Some 3,000-4,000 new teachers graduate from UNC universities. Mr. Bowles has made filling that void the top priority.

The latest report card covers the past two years. Here is what it found:

• Five campuses have had little or no increase in traditional teachers since 2003 (Elizabeth City State, N.C. A&T, North Carolina Central, UNC-Chapel Hill and UNC-Wilmington).

• Seven campuses saw traditional teacher enrollment drop (Appalachian State, Fayetteville State, N.C. A&T, N.C. Central, UNC-Greensboro, UNC Asheville and Western Carolina).

• Seven universities graduated fewer than 10 math teachers, a high-need area (ECSU, N.C. A&T, NCCU, UNCA, UNC Pembroke, WCU and Winston-Salem State University).

• Nine campuses graduated fewer than 10 science teachers, also a high-need area (ECSU, FSU, N.C. A&T, NCCU, UNCA, UNCG, UNCP and WSSU).

Mr. Bowles cited six universities for success: East Carolina University, ASU, UNC Charlotte, UNCG, UNCW and N.C. State. He said additional funding would follow.

Good. Four of those campuses (UNCW, UNCC, ECU and ASU, in that order) rank at the bottom of the system in state funding by almost every measure, from per student appropriation to building space per student.

Yet in 2005-2006 they produced 2,148 of 3,969 teaching graduates (in order: ECU, ASU, UNCC and UNCW) -- a role Mr. Bowles repeatedly has said is the most important thing the state's universities do.

North Carolina needs all its teacher training programs to succeed. But two things are apparent. Funding decisions don't match the university system's state priorities. And Mr. Bowles needs to keep his promise.

Want to read the UNC report?

Go to www.charlotte.com/opinion for the link to the report on teacher education.