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E-mail to durhamj@.ecu.edu Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
Mike Wright's baseball dreams very likely came true on Tuesday.

Just a couple of days removed from his team's loss to Virginia in the NCAA Charlottesville Regional, the junior East Carolina right-handed pitcher became the fourth-highest ECU player ever selected in the Major League Baseball first-year player draft.

Wright, a Laurinburg native, was selected by the Baltimore Orioles with the 94th overall pick in the third round.

The only Pirates to have been drafted higher in terms of overall pick were Pat Watkins (32nd pick, Cincinnati, 1993), James Snyder (38th, Pittsburgh, 1968) and Richard “Rooster” Narron (88th, Washington, 1967).

Wright wasn't the only ECU player to get a call from a major league club. In fact, four other ECU players and six players committed to the Pirates were also drafted. Junior catcher and 2011 ECU home run leader Zach Wright was taken by the Philadelphia Phillies in the sixth round, while senior right-hander Seth Maness, the Pirates' all-time strikeout leader, was taken by the St. Louis Cardinals in the 11th round. Sophomore right-hander Shawn Armstrong was nabbed by Cleveland in the 18th round and senior pitcher Brad Mincey rounded out the ECU draftees on Tuesday when he was selected by the Florida Marlins in the 28th round.

Also of local interest, former J.H. Rose High School and current UNC Wilmington standout Andrew Cain was selected in the 12th round by the Milwaukee Brewers.

Mike Wright became a full-time starter for the Pirates this season. He made a team-high 16 starts and finished 6-4 with a 2.79 earned run average. Most likely, his last start came in a loss last Friday to St. John's in the opening round of the regional.

Zach Wright started every game this season behind the plate for ECU, and he led the club for the second consecutive season in homers with 13.

Maness, the ace of the ECU staff, finished his final season with a 10-3 record, a 1.71 ERA and a team-high 80 strikeouts. He moved into the Pirates' top spot in Ks during his final start in Charlottesville, a win against Navy that marked his second straight shutout and his fifth complete game of the season.
Six of Armstrong's 19 appearances were starts this season, and he turned in a record of 3-1.

Mincey became one of the most valuable ECU arms in his career as both a starter and a reliever, recording 22 career wins and 191 Ks.

At UNCW, Cain finished his junior campaign with a team-high 10 home runs, and drove in 48 while batting .302.

Also selected were previous ECU commitments Cam Gallagher (Kansas City Royals, 2nd round, 65th overall pick), Deshorn Lake (Boston Red Sox, 12th round, 382th), Rookie Davis (New York Yankees, 14th round, 449th), Shawn Morimando (Cleveland Indians, 19th round, 578th), Jharel Cotton (New York Mets, 28th round, 852nd) and David Lucroy (Milwaukee Brewers, 29th round, 881st).
NCAA plans to finish UNC football probe this month

BY KEN TYSIAC - Staff Writer

North Carolina has received a formal notice of inquiry from the NCAA regarding the ongoing investigation of the school's athletics program. The letter states that the NCAA enforcement staff intends to complete the investigation this month.

Signed by vice president of enforcement Julie Roe Lach, the letter says the possible violations primarily involve the football program but says new information often is developed during an investigation that leads to expanded inquiries.

Dated June 7, the letter was delivered overnight to UNC chancellor Holden Thorp. The university released the letter to the media.

Since last June, the NCAA has been investigating impermissible benefits and academic misconduct in the UNC athletics program. Fourteen players missed at least one game and seven missed the entire season in 2010 as a result of the investigation.

"The notice of inquiry is a formal notification from the NCAA that they have been reviewing our football program," athletic director Dick Baddour said in a statement released by the school. "We have been working with the NCAA and cooperating with them on this investigation. We are committed to the process and will continue to cooperate."

A letter of inquiry is largely a procedural step for the NCAA that now often is sent to schools near the end of an investigation rather than at the beginning. In UNC's case, NCAA officials contacted the school by telephone on June 21 and first conducted on-campus interviews of football players July 12.

The NCAA's process for informing schools of actual infractions involves a notice of allegation that describes what the enforcement staff is alleging. The school has 90 days to respond to a letter of allegation, and the Committee on Infractions rules on whether violations occurred and hands out penalties.

A year ago, the NCAA's investigation of North Carolina began with word that players had received impermissible benefits on trips to Miami, Washington, D.C., and California. Associate head coach John Blake
resigned Sept. 5 as reports emerged about his relationship with the late sports agent Gary Wichard.

On Aug. 26, UNC announced that the investigation had expanded to include suspicions of academic misconduct related to the work of a former university tutor. The tutor, later identified as Jennifer Wiley, also had worked for Tar Heels coach Butch Davis.

In the fall, UNC officials sent letters to Wiley and a former player, Chris Hawkins, disassociating them from the program for their participation in alleged violations of NCAA rules.

Davis has said he was unaware of the violations when they were occurring, and UNC administrators have supported him. Baddour has said repeatedly that UNC officials have done their best to cooperate with NCAA investigators, who have made multiple trips to campus.

ktysiac@charlotteobserver.com or 919-829-8942
CHRIS SEWARD - cseward@newsobserver.com

Historic interpreter Lisa Green, dressed in 1770s clothing, leads a tour of Tryon Palace in New Bern. The site relies on state funding to help pay for staffing at the palace, three historic homes and the N.C. History Center.

**Budget would cut state museum staff**

BY MARTHA QUILLIN - Staff Writer

The state budget now before Gov. Bev Perdue would force staffing cuts at some state historic sites and museums, likely resulting in shorter hours, reduced programming and increased reliance on donations and admission fees.

Three sites - Tryon Palace in New Bern, the N.C. Transportation Museum in Spencer, and the Roanoke Island Festival Park in Manteo - would eventually have to become self-supporting, or close some or all of their exhibits.

Tryon Palace, which just opened the new $60 million N.C. History Center in October, would see a 36 percent cut in state funding in the coming budget year, a 57 percent cut in the next year and loss of all state funding by the 2014 budget year.

The attraction is regarded as a major economic engine in New Bern and the surrounding area, drawing people from every state and from abroad. The palace, which got about $4.1 million in state money for budget year ending
June 30 and raised more than $1 million more from ticket sales and private sources, is said to generate $41 million in spending in Eastern North Carolina each year.

But Tryon Palace's value as an educational tool for the more than 35,000 school children who tour it each year, and as a touchstone for North Carolinians interested in their past, is beyond measure, director Kay Williams said.

"We have a stewardship obligation to use objects to make history come alive and be exciting for the generation that is coming to visit now," Williams said. "But we also have to be about preserving North Carolina's history for unborn generations of North Carolinians to come. A hundred years from now, children should still be able to look at George Washington's letter."

**Other states cut back**

Hard economic times have prompted many states to cut support for institutions and programs that promote arts and recreation. In California, Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown has announced plans to close 70 of the state's 278 state parks, while Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, a Republican, recently vetoed funding for the Kansas Arts Commission, ending 45 years of state support for the arts in favor of a promise to develop a privately financed arts foundation.

And the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs this year gave about $2.3 million to local museums, orchestras, theater groups and historical societies, less than 10 percent what it gave a decade ago.

Over the past two years, the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, which oversees 27 state historic sites and seven museums, among other institutions, has seen its operations budget cut by 61 percent, to the point that it's rationing gas for lawn mowers, said Dr. Jeffrey J. Crow, deputy secretary of the department's Division of Archives and History.

"So when the legislature comes and says, 'You've got to take another $200,000 out of the operational budget of the Museum of History,' and it has only $79,000 in its operational budget, how do you do that?"

"All we've got left to give is positions with people in them."

The overall cultural resources budget would be cut by 12.5 percent in the coming year, a level that many legislators find defendable. During negotiations late last month, Sen. Jim Davis, a Republican from Franklin, said that cuts would be necessary because the state's budget shortfall is so
deep it can't be bridged simply by cutting waste, fraud and abuse. Republican Sen. Andrew Brock, who represents Davie and Rowan counties, said then that lawmakers were trying to treat every state agency equally.

But Rep. John Torbett, a Republican of Gaston County, said he was sorry to see the legislature go beyond the cuts to Cultural Resources proposed by the governor. Torbett said the cuts were out of proportion with those proposed for other segments of government, and would have forced some attractions to close right away.

"These sites provide that tangible place where people can go and stand in the place where our forefathers have stood," he said, "and leave us with the thought that if a mistake was made, let's learn from it so we don't make that same mistake again."

**Making the trains run**

No historic sites or museums would close immediately as a result of cuts proposed in the 2011-2012 budget. But the budget lays out additional cuts at several sites in the coming years as well, and says several sites would receive no state funding at all starting in two to three years.

That might be possible at one site, Crow said: the N.C. Transportation Museum, built on the site of the former Southern Railway Company's steam locomotive repair shop in Spencer, near Salisbury. Since it opened in 1983, the site has developed a devoted support group and a niche in the tourism market, drawing more than 100,000 people a year.

The attraction charges for a short train ride and other activities. But like most other state historic sites, the Transportation Museum has never charged an admission, until now. If the proposed budget goes into effect, it would begin charging admission July 1.

"While it would suffer a decline in visitation if we have to go to an admission fee, in the long run, it could probably still go on," Crow said.

**Buildings could close**

Tryon Palace, on the other hand, already charges up to $20 admission. But it relies on state funding to help pay for staffing at the reconstructed palace, three historic homes and the N.C. History Center. The state contributed about $42 million to establish the center.

Williams, the director, says that if Tryon Palace gets no more state money beginning with the 2014 budget, she would almost certainly have to close
some of the buildings, at a time when attendance is up 40 percent because of the History Center addition.

Once buildings begin to close, Williams says, revenue spirals downward. "If we can't keep our attractions open, then attendance drops, and we lose earned income," she said. "We also lose member support. People are less willing to donate if you don't look successful."

Tryon Palace has been a bargain to the state in many ways. Built entirely with private funds on the footprint of the original Colonial-era governor's palace, the site also is a repository of tens of millions of dollars worth of historical artifacts, nearly all of them donated or bought with private money.

The History Center, adjacent to the palace, is as up-to-date in its exhibits as the palace is authentically 18th-century in its interpretation. Putting either building into mothballs would be problematic; the history center is full of interactive electronics that require constant upkeep, and the palace and grounds hold artifacts that must be preserved under specific conditions.

Williams mentioned a letter in the palace's collection from George Washington to Richard Dobbs Spaight, a New Bern man who represented North Carolina in the Constitutional Convention following the American Revolution. Paper items need to be kept in a stable environment to prevent deterioration.

"We can't just cut off the lights," Williams said.

**Out-of-the-way places**

Given time, Crow said, many state historic sites might be able to raise more money from their donors, but most would never be able to support themselves, even if they charged admission.

"We have strong public-private partnerships in many places," Crow said. "But you can't do that across the board. Many of these sites are in small, remote, rural counties, and while they may have a very enthusiastic support group, they're not in a position to raise thousands and thousands of dollars.

"And certainly you can't expect them to provide the same level of service, depending on volunteers and fundraising from support groups, that our millions in travelers have come to expect."

Staff writer Richard Stradling contributed to this report.

martha.quillin@newsobserver.com or 919-829-8989
Big U.S. employers, worried about replacing retiring baby boomers, are wading deeper into education and growing bolder about telling educators how to run their business.

Several initiatives have focused on manufacturing and engineering, fields where technical know-how and math and science skills are needed and where companies worry about recruiting new talent.

Their concerns are borne out by the math and science test scores of 15-year-old students in the U.S., which continue to lag behind China, Japan, South Korea and Germany, for example.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a report in May that said higher education had failed to "tap the potential of digital technology" in ways that would "transform learning, dramatically lower costs or improve overall institutional productivity."

The Chamber report praised Internet educational institutions like Khan Academy, which built its reputation on YouTube.com math lessons.
The National Association of Manufacturers is leading a drive, partly funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to establish standardized curricula at community colleges across the U.S. with the goal of preparing students to qualify for certification in industrial skills ranging from welding to cutting metal and plastics.

The association isn't pushing for an end to liberal-arts education, but has said bright students should be encouraged to consider alternatives that lead directly to jobs.

"We need to move aggressively to competency-based education" based on mastery of skills at the student's own pace, rather than on an accumulation of credit hours, said Emily DeRocco, president of the Manufacturing Institute, a research arm of the group.

One such employer effort is the National Math and Science Initiative, launched in 2007. The program, with $163 million of funding commitments from companies including Exxon Mobil Corp. as well as foundations and the federal government, trains math and science teachers and gives more high school students a chance to enroll in college-level courses.

Other projects are smaller and more local. The James Dyson Foundation, funded by the founder of the Dyson vacuum-cleaner company, recently announced plans to sponsor after-school engineering clubs at 20 public middle schools in Chicago.
Among other things, students will take apart a Dyson vacuum cleaner and might turn it into some other contraption. "Learning from failure gives you a far deeper learning experience," Mr. Dyson said.

Employers have long scolded schools for their failings. But with the looming retirement of baby boomers, companies are about to lose a large number of experienced hands and, therefore, are growing attuned to education issues. An estimated 2.7 million U.S. manufacturing employees, for example, nearly a quarter of the total, are 55 or older.

The solutions are neither simple nor easy. Jack Jennings, chief executive officer of the Center on Education Policy, a Washington, D.C., research organization, said employers were right to be worried the U.S. was falling behind.

But, he noted, U.S. education policy is mostly decided locally, compared to countries that can impose national changes quickly. Employers, he said, needed to be patient with the political process. Nor does the problem lie entirely with educators, he said, arguing that students and their parents should take school more seriously.

"This is not a business where you can go out and tell everybody to sell widgets tomorrow," Mr. Jennings said.

Much of the emphasis is on community colleges and vocational schools because they are affordable and can quickly turn out job candidates. Employers increasingly are asking community colleges to create custom training programs for specific jobs. In Ohio, Lorain County Community College's Nord Advanced Technology Center has provided 41 courses tailored for individual employers in the latest school year, up from 32 a year earlier.

Even as employers clamor for more, states, the main supporters of community colleges, are setting limits. The proposed California budget for the fiscal year beginning in July calls for cutting community college funds by about 5%. The colleges may have to turn away about 140,000 students, said Dan Troy, a vice chancellor of the state's 112 community colleges. The system enrolls more than 2.7 million students.

Despite the budget squeezes, some states promote their willingness to train workers. Since the 1960s, South Carolina has offered customized training at its technical colleges for companies making large investments and creating jobs. That program figured in the decision by BMW AG to begin making cars in South Carolina in the 1990s and to expand production there in recent years, said Kenn Sparks, a spokesman for the German auto maker.

Businesses that get deeply involved in public education sometimes encounter frustrations. The Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council, composed of people from industry, unions and city government, four years ago set up a school called Austin Polytechnical Academy in a poor neighborhood on the city's West Side. One goal was to give high
school students skills needed for metalworking and other manufacturing jobs. Dozens of companies have provided internships and money to help the school.

The sponsors have complained about low test scores and breakdowns in communication with Chicago Public Schools, which manages Austin Polytech. "We knew it was going to be tough," said Dan Swinney, chairman of the manufacturing council and a founder of the school.

But cooperation is improving, he said, and some of the students are enhancing their career prospects by earning credentials from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills.

Write to James R. Hagerty at bob.hagerty@wsj.com
For-profit colleges get rules tied to federal aid
By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY

Wall Street responded favorably to for-profit colleges Thursday after the Obama administration released controversial rules that would cut federal aid to schools where students graduate with too much debt and worthless degrees.

Under the plan, schools will have to show that short-term vocational programs, such as those for careers in the culinary arts or automotive technology, prepare students for "gainful employment in a recognized occupation." Schools would lose access to billions of dollars of federal student aid if they fail to meet minimum requirements three times in a four-year period. The first year that a program could become ineligible would be 2015.

Critics of for-profit colleges raised concerns that the regulations released Thursday were far weaker than a draft version, which would have cut aid the first time a college failed to meet requirements.

On Wall Street, the news triggered a strong rally in publicly traded shares of for-profit college operators. Corinthian Colleges jumped $1.07 (27%) to $5.06, Education Management shot up $4.46 (22%) to $24.76, Devry climbed $7.87 (15%) to $61.86, University of Phoenix parent Apollo gained $4.71 (11%) to $46.90 and Washington Post Co., which owns the Kaplan school chain, rose $20.46 (5%) to $426.42.

House and Senate education committees have been investigating the potential for waste and fraud by for-profit colleges, which the Education Department said account for 12% of enrollments, represent more than 40% of student loan defaulters and receive nearly $9 billion in federal Pell Grants.

"We're giving career colleges every opportunity to reform themselves, but we're not letting them off the hook," Education Secretary Arne Duncan said in a call with reporters. "The plain fact is that millions of low-income students are borrowing heavily to attend for-profit (colleges), and too many of them are dropping out, failing to get a job … and leaving taxpayers with the bill."

Release of the gainful employment rule was delayed after the Education Department received an unprecedented 90,000 comments on a draft proposal published last summer. Thirteen other regulations, scheduled to take effect next month, include a ban on compensating admissions officers based on how many students they recruit.

Contributing: The Associated Press