Mike Wright headed to the majors
By Nathan Summers
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When Mike Wright brought his family and friends to Tie Breakers Sports Bar and Grill to follow the Major League Baseball first-year player draft on Tuesday, he was armed with a luxury.

As the junior East Carolina pitcher and his entourage set up laptops to follow the picks, they did so already knowing for certain Wright was going to be picked. It was just a matter of when and by what team, and he didn't have to wait long to have his named aligned with a major league club.

“I just jumped up and hugged everybody around me, and my whole family was there and it was better than anything I could have ever imagined,” said Wright of his reaction to being drafted in the third round by the Baltimore Orioles, just days after he finished his season and collegiate career with ECU in a regional loss to St. John's.

Scenes comparable to the delight inside Tie Breakers unfolded for a handful of local baseball stars this week, as six ECU players, two Pitt Community College standouts and one former local high school star all heard their names called by big league teams. Wright confirmed on Wednesday he would pursue his dream of playing professionally, forgoing his senior season.

“I knew that I was going to get drafted pretty high, but the third round caught me by surprise,” said Wright, who was told by the Philadelphia Phillies they might pick him as early as the second round, and who admits he didn't know Baltimore was all that interested in him. “We were huddled around a couple of computers and my sister's computer happened to be a little bit quicker than mine, so I didn't even get to hear my name called. All I heard was her jump up and scream, and I was like, ‘Wow, I just got drafted.’”
On the final day of the draft on Wednesday, ECU closer and all-time saves leader Seth Simmons was claimed by the Arizona Diamondbacks in the 40th round (1,204th overall), becoming the sixth Pirate taken. On Tuesday, PCC outfielder Tyler Molinaro was selected by the New York Yankees (15th round, 479th overall) and former Bulldog outfielder Brett Williams was taken by the D'Backs (25th round, 754th).

They joined five ECU regulars who were drafted earlier Tuesday, including the Pirates' other Wright, Zach. The ECU catcher was taken in the sixth round by the Philadelphia Phillies. On Wednesday, he was soaking in the sun on the beach in Wilmington, admitting he's been dealt a tough decision.

“I still don't know at this point,” Zach Wright said. “The sixth round, there's a lot of money that comes with that. But I love this school, I love my coaches and I love this team.”
The ECU catcher said he had not set a deadline for himself to make a decision.

Also for ECU, right-handed pitchers Seth Maness (11th round, St. Louis), Shawn Armstrong (18th round, Cleveland) and Brad Mincey (28th round, Florida) were drafted on Tuesday. Former J.H. Rose star Andrew Cain was picked out of UNC Wilmington in the 12th round by Milwaukee.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or 252-329-9595.
New York University, well on its way to becoming the first truly global university, is starting a new partnership with the University of the People, an unusual nonprofit online school offering free classes to students around the world.

With the collaboration, students who show exceptional promise after at least a year of studies with the University of the People could apply to N.Y.U.’s Abu Dhabi campus and be eligible for financial aid.

The University of the People, created two years ago by Shai Reshef, an Israeli entrepreneur, offers programs in business administration and computer science, using mostly volunteer professors and course materials available free online; it is not yet accredited. The programs have attracted 1,000 English-speaking students from 115 countries, including Haitians who have been living in tent cities since the earthquake in January 2010, Sudanese refugees, and a considerable number of students from China, Indonesia, Nigeria and Vietnam, university officials said.

“When I met Shai last year, I told him that we are so committed to his agenda that we have to be partners,” John Sexton, the president of N.Y.U. said in an interview. “Our mission is spreading our education and knowledge, and if we can find some amazing kids from sub-Saharan Africa or Haiti through this wonderful vehicle of the University of the People and set an example among elite schools with resources, so much the better.”

Mr. Sexton said there were no specific promises of slots for University of the People students, but he expected a few might be admitted to the Abu Dhabi campus in the entering class of 2012.

N.Y.U.’s highly selective campus there, paid for by Abu Dhabi, the richest of the United Arab Emirates, has just finished its first year of operations, with 150 students from 39 countries, including some from wealthy Emirati families and others who were raised in poverty. The university uses outside groups to scout for top students and flies hundreds of likely candidates to Abu Dhabi for weekend visits.
For next year’s entering class, Mr. Sexton said, N.Y.U. Abu Dhabi received 5,854 applications and offered admission to 196 students, or 3.3 percent. (By comparison, Harvard admitted 6 percent of its applicants this year, and 7 percent last year.) Although the cost of attending N.Y.U., whether in Washington Square or Abu Dhabi, is among the highest in the United States, at about $53,000 a year, the Persian Gulf campus offers generous financial aid.

“In Abu Dhabi, we’re able to give financial aid at the same level as places like Harvard and Princeton,” said Mr. Sexton, who announced this year that N.Y.U. planned to open a campus in Shanghai in 2013.

Several N.Y.U. faculty members and administrators have been working with the University of the People on a volunteer basis since it began. Russell Winer, chairman of the marketing department at N.Y.U.’s Stern School of Business, is chairman of the University of the People business administration department; Alexander Tuzhilin, a professor of information systems at the Stern School, serves as chairman of the University of the People computer science department; and Paul Affuso, an associate dean at the Stern School, is the University of the People’s chief financial officer.

Mr. Sexton said he hoped the collaboration would encourage more N.Y.U. faculty and graduate students to work with the online institution.

“It’s almost unbelievable,” Mr. Reshef said. “Most of our students had no alternative for higher education before we opened the gates for them, and now the most successful may be able to further pursue their dreams by attending one of the best universities in the world.”
Columbia Takes a Lesson From Shakespeare
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Columbia Business School's Executive Education program is taking a dramatic turn, as the school introduces a course on leadership through Shakespeare.

The course, "Realizing Leadership Potential: Applying Leadership Lessons from Shakespeare's Greatest Characters," will run the last weekend of July, coinciding with a New York visit from England's Royal Shakespeare Company. The program costs $5,550, including materials and some meals.

Business executives are expected to gain insight on issues such as persuasion, self-awareness and women in power by studying the foibles of fallen, fictional monarchs.

They'll see three performances at the Park Avenue Armory in New York, and spend time acting out crucial scenes from "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet."

By adopting the characters' lines, "people get an insight that you don't get reading the play," says Paul Ingram, a management professor co-teaching the class with English professor and Shakespeare scholar James Shapiro.

The elective grew out of a similar, but shorter, offering in the biennial Columbia Senior Executive Program. Mr. Ingram says the class is appropriate for "leaders of all kinds."