NCSU gives Mary Easley no severance

BY JAY PRICE, Staff Writer

Mary Easley won't be getting a fat buyout from N.C. State University, nor even the minimum severance that university policy apparently allows.

"It's zero," interim Chancellor Jim Woodward said during a news conference Thursday. "It was my decision there will be no additional pay."

Her job and pay ended Wednesday, he said.

Easley apparently has not vacated her office, but the university isn't going to box up her stuff and drop it on the curb. Woodward said that as a matter of courtesy, Easley will be given a reasonable amount of time to pack.

University policy seems open to interpretation as to how much notice Easley was entitled.

The policy bases the severance on total years of service rather than the years worked under the contract in question. It sets the minimum at 30 days and maximum at 90.

Woodward, though, determined that even the 30 days wouldn't be proper. "Certainly Mrs. Easley has the right to dispute that," he said.

Easley's attorney, Marvin Schiller of Raleigh, declined to comment.

University officials held the news conference minutes after releasing her termination letter, which Easley received Wednesday. Easley responded by releasing an open farewell letter.

Was job cut inevitable?

Woodward elaborated on the reason for firing Easley that the trustees cited Monday when they voted to end her five-year, $850,000 contract: massive budget cuts.

The university is facing a potential double-digit cut from the state. It decided last week to end the largest part of Easley's work, developing an academic center.
A state House committee, meanwhile, has voted to end the $105,000 funding for another part of her work, running a major speakers series.

The university has to protect its core teaching mission as much as it can, Woodward said, adding that Easley's work didn't fit that goal, especially at a time when entire degree programs may be slashed.

"There is no question but that the programs Mary Easley has been working on will be eliminated or severely reduced," Woodward said.

About four years remained in her contract.

Many will be lost

Provost Larry Nielsen, Chancellor James Oblinger and board of trustees Chairman McQueen Campbell have all resigned amid revelations about the machinations that led them to hire her in 2005 and then give her an 88 percent raise and new contract last summer.

Woodward, who replaced Oblinger on Tuesday after being asked by UNC system President Erskine Bowles, said the politics and controversy had nothing to do with his decision to follow the trustees' wishes and fire Easley.

"By all measures she is a highly, highly capable person, but the budget cuts mean we will lose many, many capable people," he said.

"She was hired for appropriate purposes. I don't want to argue that the process was right, but she was hired for appropriate purposes."

Asked whether budget plans likely would have resulted in Easley's losing her job even if there hadn't been a change in chancellor, Woodward said yes.

About Nielsen's deal ...

The university also is taking a second look at the deal that Nielsen got when he stepped down. When Nielsen was hired, that arrangement was set at six months of leave at full provost pay, $298,700, before reverting to a lower salary for teaching, $156,000.

The day before Nielsen resigned, though, Oblinger modified it so that the former provost would get a total of $310,255 above his eventual teaching salary, spread over three years.

Woodward said he had made a recommendation about that deal to the board of trustees. If it changes Nielsen's package, the details would be made public after Nielsen is told, he said.

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ECU Theater presents 'Big River'

By Kelley Kirk
The Daily Reflector

Friday, June 12, 2009

The recession has caused budget cuts in just about every aspect of business, and the ECU/Loessin Summer Theatre hasn't been immune. The school will produce only one musical this summer, "Big River," instead of the traditional three.

"We looked at things and said, 'Let's do a big show, something with broad appeal,'" said Jeff Woodruff, managing director of the School of Theatre and Dance.

Since "Big River" is the only offering for the summer, the production will run for two weeks. Shows are at 8 p.m. Tuesday through June 20 and June 23-27. There will be 2 p.m. matinees on June 20 and 27.

The story is based on Mark Twain's tale of Huck Finn traveling down the Mississippi with his friend Jim, a slave. The two are on a mission to get Jim to freedom at the mouth of the Ohio River.

"This is Mark Twain and Huckleberry Finn," Woodruff said. "And people need to be aware that the 'n' word is used often. The use is intentional and I think nothing short of brilliant."

Woodruff said Twain used such language to draw attention to the irony that the country was founded on freedom, yet denying that to a certain population.

Based on Twain's classic 1884 novel, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "Big River" is a musical with a score and lyrics by Roger Miller.

"This is not like other musicals, it's so different than everything else. There are spirituals, there's gospel, there's country, and some of the songs are extremely moving," Woodruff said.

The Broadway production ran for more than 1,000 performances, and it remained a truly American voice in an emerging chorus of British musicals of the late 1980s.

There are 33 cast members, including five children, in the ECU production. And as with previous summer-theater productions, the cast is a mix of students, faculty and professional actors.

"Huck is being played by a student (Von Lewis), which is huge," said managing Woodruff.

Lewis also played a lead in ECU's production of "Of Thee I Sing," a musical spoof of presidential politics.

Contact Kelley Kirk at kkirkswindell@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9596.

WANT TO GO?
- **What:** "Big River"
- **When:** 8 p.m. Tuesday through June 20 and June 23-27. In addition there will be matinee performances at 2 p.m. June 20 and 27
- **Where:** McGinnis Theatre
- **Cost:** $20-$30
- **Call:** 328-6829
- **Online:** [www.ecuarts.com](http://www.ecuarts.com

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From Cairo to Capetown

By Kristin Day
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, June 14, 2009

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would it be? What would you do?

What will you claim as your life’s great adventure?

Would you visit Paris? Thailand? Australia or the Netherlands? Or would you, say, pedal through Africa for four months on a bicycle?

That may be a bit too extreme for some, but it’s how East Carolina University graduate John Stowe spent the first part of the year in the 2009 Tour d’Afrique.

It’s an annual event that originated in 2003, years after founder Henry Gold began plotting its inception in the early ’90s. Terrorist attacks and lost business partners delayed his dream.

But Gold had determination and a benevolent vision for the tour. By bringing attention to the riders, he believed he could also help set a different perception of Africa, promote bikes as an environmentally friendly form of transportation and champion humanitarianism. In several major cities, the tour holds a celebration and donates bicycles to local health-care workers. Many of the cyclists also ride to raise money for their own favorite charities.

"It's an adventure, but it has hidden meanings," Gold said. "We thought by doing this, we'd make a statement."

Stowe, the 30-year-old son of a military man, has a history of international travel and cycling — his father was coach to the West Point Cycling Team. He ended up at ECU and graduated with bachelor’s degrees in English and International Studies while studying abroad in England and Belize. Afterward, he led backpacking trips and bike tours for underprivileged youth with organizations like Outward Bound and Princeton University. He also took on his own cross-country bike trips from Seattle to New York, up the Atlantic Coast, and through Scotland and England.

"I love the pace (of cycling)," he said after his return to Greenville. "It's a great way to see the world because you're immersed. It's better than driving a car."

Before he heads back into ECU classrooms this August for a graduate degree in Counselor Education — and possibly an MBA — Stowe said he wanted one more great adventure.

"I'm very, very big on personal challenge," he said. "... So I needed to do one big trip before I kind of settled down."

Stowe said the first day of Tour d'Afrique was like a mid-point to the entire trip. Beforehand, he was applying to graduate school, training, finding a place to store his furniture, finding sponsors, getting vaccinations and insurance coverage, and basically preparing to put his life on hold for one-third of a year. Then, in early January, he flew to Cairo, Egypt, where he attended group meetings for days until riders approached the starting line by the world-famous Egyptian pyramids and Great Sphinx.

"I was pretty nervous," he said. "I don't know why. You just don’t know what's about to happen."
They started east out of Cairo, and bicycled for about 70 miles into the wind, uphill, that first day. It was probably the most difficult day, Stowe said, and some riders wanted to quit.

By the end of their journey, most of them would agree that Egypt was actually one of the easier countries to bike.

"There's not a way to prepare for it, except mentally," Stowe said. "At a certain level I think we were all unprepared."

Then, there was camping. Some people had inadequate equipment, or didn't know how to assemble it all at first. After a hard day of riding, these poor souls would have to spend up to 30 minutes preparing a place to lie down.

On Day 2, the journey continued.

A typical riding day, Stowe said, began around 5:30 a.m. Canadian cook James would prepare and serve breakfast, and shortly after the riders would pack their belongings into the two support vehicles and leave. Some days, they would ride on paved roads for the approximately 80 miles. On other days, they could be on sand, dirt and rocks as they rode toward the equator. The 21-day trek through Ethiopia was the hardest. And in northern Kenya, the roads were horrible.

Sometimes, they would ride in groups. Other times, Stowe rode alone, listening to his iPod when it was safe to, or just daydreaming as he rode past the Nile, the Simian Mountains, Mount Kilimanjaro, Victoria Falls — where Stowe went bungee jumping — and along the Kalahari and Namib deserts.
ECU's Roller selected by Oakland in 47th round

The Daily Reflector

Thursday, June 11, 2009

Kyle Roller was a pure slugger in his first two college baseball seasons, but he metamorphosed into a more complete player in his junior year, and the big league scouts took notice.

The Oakland Athletics selected the East Carolina junior designated hitter in the 47th round (1,413 overall) in the amateur draft on Thursday.

Roller was the fifth player selected from the Pirate team which won the Conference USA regular season title and the Greenville Regional before bowing out in last weekend's Chapel Hill Super Regional. Outfielders Devin Harris (8th round/Baltimore) and Stephen Batts (19th/Philadelphia), second baseman Ryan Wood (11th/Kansas City) and right-handed pitcher Chris Heston (12th/San Francisco) were picked on Wednesday.

Roller, a first-team All C-USA selection, smashed 16 home runs and rung up 75 RBIs, both team highs, in his third season with the Pirates. He also had 12 doubles and 86 total hits.

After four ECU commits were named in the draft Wednesday, three more were chosen Thursday.

Joseph Hughes (40th/Washington), Chris Gosik (49th/Philadelphia) and Tyler Joyner (50th/Cleveland) brought the number of Pirate signees taken in the draft to seven.

Brandt lauded again

East Carolina left-hander Kevin Brandt was named an All-American for the second time this season Thursday when he was named to PingBaseball's freshman third team.

It was Brandt's fourth post-season honor. He was selected to the Louisville Slugger freshman All-America team, the Conference USA All-Freshman team and the 2009 NCAA Greenville Regional All-Tournament team.

The Fuquay Varina native made 28 appearances this season, logging six starts, and posted a 9-2 record. Brandt finished his freshman season with a 3.64 ERA with 72 strikeouts, while walking 24 batters in 81.2 innings pitched.

On April 27, he was named Conference USA Pitcher of the Week after leading ECU to a shutout victory over then-No. 1 North Carolina.
Public invited to see Mars Bluff Naval Yard site

Christopher Amer, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology state underwater archaeologist head and maritime research division associate director, talks about some of the Confederate rifle shells recovered at the Mars Bluff Naval Yard site June 5 in Florence.

FROM LOCAL REPORTS
Published: June 11, 2009

East Carolina University is inviting the public to visit the Mars Bluff Naval Yard site on the east side of the Great Pee Dee River in Marion County from 10 a.m. to noon Friday.

The public can look at the site and have questions about the artifacts recovered answered by students from the ECU Program in Maritime Studies. The project of the S.C. Institute for Archeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina is in collaboration with the East Carolina University Program in Maritime Studies and Francis Marion University, which is conducting a field school at the site through June 19.

To get to the site from Florence, take East Palmetto Street, cross the Great Pee Dee River into Marion County, then turn left at Hassie Road. Cross the railroad tracks and turn left onto Mossy Point Court and continue until it curves to the right. Just past the curve will be a fence on the left with iron gates. Go through the security gates and park near the white mobile home.
Archeologists find sunken Confederate gunship - Science Fair - US...

An experiment in science, space and discovery

Archeologists find sunken Confederate gunship

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Gone with the Wind -- archaeologists have located the sunken site of the Confederate gunship C.S.S. Pee Dee, scuttled to save its cannons from Union soldiers in 1865. The Pee Dee was a 150-foot-long gunboat equipped with three cannons, two of which have been located by University of South Carolina and East Carolina University researchers. "The artifacts recovered to date provide us with a tantalizing glimpse into past lifeways at the site," said South Carolina state archaeologist Christopher Amer, in a statement. The team has also mapped the remains of the Mars Bluff shipyard where the boat was built.

As General William T. Sherman's troops overran the state in 1865, the Confederates sank the C.S.S. Pee Dee to save it from capture. "Confederate officers, sailors and workmen at the only inland Confederate naval shipyard in South Carolina, along with the local community, gave it their best shot," Amer said. The team hopes to recover the five-ton cannons from the Pee Dee River later this year.

By Dan Vergano

Top Photo: University of South Carolina underwater archaeologist Christopher Amer and archaeological assistant Joe Beatty carry an artillery shell from a Confederate Brooke rifled cannon recovered from the Pee Dee River.

Bottom Photo: A close-up of the shell. (Both University of South Carolina)

Posted at 06:21 PM/ET, June 05, 2009 | Permalink
Duke grad's grade suit fails

BY ANNE BLYTHE, Staff writer

DURHAM - A Duke University graduate still smarting from a failing grade her senior year failed to win top marks with a Durham County judge this week.

Superior Court Judge J.B. Allen, at the request of Duke lawyers, dismissed a case that Tiffany Lynette Locus, an honor student from Fayetteville, brought last year against her alma mater.

During a hearing Monday, attorney James H. Locus tried to persuade Allen that Duke had violated contractual obligations with his daughter when she received an F for a project in her Social Activism and Its Motivations class and then was sent to the campus honor court to fight allegations of academic dishonesty.

Duke attorneys took a different stand, making an argument about the student handbook that could be echoed in federal cases brought by some of the 2006 Duke lacrosse players and by Andrew Giuliani, son of the former New York mayor who sued his alma mater for kicking him off the golf team.

In all three cases, lawyers for the students have argued that Duke's student handbook represents a contract between the university and students that guarantees certain standards of treatment.

Duke lawyers, though, say the handbook represents no such binding agreement and can be changed at any time without an agreement by both parties.

Although Allen ruled Wednesday to dismiss the case, he would not say which of the arguments made by Duke lawyers had swayed him. An order documenting his decision had not been entered late Thursday.

Efforts to reach Locus were unsuccessful.

Duke is not the only university at which students have taken their grievances from the classroom to the courtroom.

Colleges and universities find themselves in court more frequently to fight student challenges of grades and punitive decisions.

Locus and her mother, Bessie Carpenter Locus, filed their lawsuit in February against the teacher of the class, Charles Thompson, and his assistant, Tennessee Watson. The suit also named Duke, President Richard Brodhead, Provost Peter Lange, Vice President of Student Affairs Larry Moneta and Duke judicial affairs officer Stephen Bryan.

The complaint outlined the difficulties that Locus had doing a semester-long project that required interviewing a social activist and then developing a narrative of that interview.

Locus, according to the complaint, developed a narrative on the words and life of a woman at the Family Center of Northern Durham, a place that offers a bilingual preschool, family
literacy programs and English as a Second Language classes.

There were problems with the paper that Locus turned in for an end-of-year grade, according to the complaint, that not only pushed the honor student before the campus judicial system but also kept her from her graduation ceremony. She was accused of not accurately portraying the woman's words.

Locus claimed the accusations of academic dishonesty that landed her before honor court officials were unfounded, in part, because the woman she interviewed gave her inaccurate information.

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Democrats urge new taxes

House members could vote today on a budget that includes $780 million in additional revenue. Republicans denounce the plan.

BY BENJAMIN NIOLET AND LYNN BONNER, STAFF WRITERS

RALEIGH - House Democrats say $780 million in new taxes would save thousands of teaching jobs, preserve programs for at-risk students, and avoid painful cuts to child care and health insurance for poor children.

The House budget could receive its first vote today and could be sent to the Senate by the weekend. Republicans and Democrats debated the tax increases, sometimes bitterly, Thursday. Democrats said they were necessary to avoid the worst cuts in the budget. Republicans said the Democrats had exaggerated the severity of the budget deficit in an effort to scare up support for a tax increase.

The House budget proposal cuts state spending dramatically, particularly in education and human services, which are the largest categories of expenditures in state government.

Democrats said tax increases would save 2,500 teaching jobs and 700 school counselor and assistant principal positions. The new revenue would restore funding for early childhood programs, child-care subsidies, in-home care services and a host of Medicaid benefits.

"I don't think there is anybody in this room that feels like we don't need teachers in the classroom, who feels like we don't need to help our elderly, who feels like we don't have to help our developmentally disabled," said Rep. Hugh Holliman, a Lexington Democrat and the House majority leader.
House budget writers originally proposed $4.2 billion in cuts from the current $21.4 billion state budget.

The tax package would create a higher income tax rate for the state's wealthiest residents. It would increase the sales tax and apply sales tax to new items and services, and increase the tax on liquor. Corporations would have to follow new filing rules, and limited liability companies would be subject to a new tax. The package would raise about $780 million, bringing the cuts from the current budget down to $3.5 billion.

The restored funding is directed toward many of the types of services that require more funding when the economy is in a recession.

That's why Rob Thompson, executive director of the Covenant with North Carolina's Children, was pleased that the House restored money that will allow the state to continue to add children to the rolls of government-subsidized health insurance.

"By not freezing North Carolina Health Choice, we're going to ensure that more children receive health care when they are sick," Thompson said.

Republicans said they didn't favor cutting vital services.

Rep. Thom Tillis, a Cornelius Republican, said Democrats had created a false choice between taxes and severe cuts. "The proposition that if you're against these taxes you're for our cuts is absurd," Tillis said.

Scott Anderson, executive director of the N.C. Association of Educators, said it was too early for relief. The budget is far from finished. The House budget will have to then go to the Senate for further negotiations.

"We're glad things are moving in the right direction," he said. "We've got a ways to go."

The House restored most of the money it had talked about cutting from Smart Start, the state's early childhood program.

"We're delighted that the House has considered the work with young children to be an important investment," said Stephanie Fanjul, president of the N.C. Partnership for Children, the nonprofit that oversees the program. "I think we can manage a cut that is a $5 million cut. The $26 million was going to be extra challenging."

Local boards run Smart Start for their counties or regions. Some of the small, rural Smart Start partnerships could have been in danger of shutting down if the $26 million cut had gone through, Fanjul said.

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