THE DAILY CLIPS

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Vision on verge of reality
Published 11:36pm Friday, June 10, 2011

AHOSKIE – A shared vision to improve healthcare in rural areas of the nation will be showcased locally.

Construction will begin soon on a dual-purpose facility in Ahoskie. There, Roanoke-Chowan Community Health Center (RCCHC) has a $6.2 million federal grant in hand to construct a state-of-the-art, 40,000 square foot facility off Hertford County High School Road. Meanwhile, the East Carolina University Medical and Dental School will open a service learning center in Ahoskie. That stand-alone center, which will join RCCHC’s new facility, will be staffed full-time by ECU Dental School students (completing their residency obligations) and school faculty.

On Wednesday afternoon, U.S. Congressman G.K. Butterfield visited RCCHC’s corporate office where he was briefed on the status of both new projects.

Jack Justice, CFO of RCCHC, gave the Congressman an overview of the new Ahoskie facility. Justice said due to $6.2 million of funds from the Affordable Care Act, plans are underway to construct the Ahoskie Comprehensive Care Center. That two-story facility will house RCCHC medical and corporate offices.

“On RCCHC’s part, this new facility will eliminate two leased facilities,” Justice said. The bottom floor will become the home of 48 medical exam rooms and offices. The top floor will house the administrative function of RCCHC.
“It will increase our capacity to see more patients,” Justice said. “Plus it adds the dental aspect, which is very much needed in this region.”

Justice said construction bids on the project will hopefully be awarded by June 30. That will also bring about the need for construction jobs.

“I’m very impressed by all of this, especially the dental component; I’m the son of a dentist,” Rep. Butterfield said. “The need for dental care is greater in our rural communities.”

Dr. Robert Chadwick of the ECU School of Dentistry offered more details about the new facility in Ahoskie. He also praised Butterfield for his work, beginning four years ago, to help launch the effort to bring a School of Dentistry to East Carolina University.

“The facility here in Ahoskie is our first clinic,” Dr. Chadwick said, adding that site preparation for the new office is underway and construction bids were scheduled to be awarded on Thursday.

“What we’re looking at here is for this clinic to become not only a model for healthcare in rural areas of this country, but a model for the future of dental education as well,” Dr. Chadwick noted. “This marks the first time we’ve co-located a dental school and a federally qualified healthcare center (RCCHC) together.”

Chadwick said the Ahoskie facility would become a learning/training center for 12 seniors (on three, nine-week rotations) enrolled in the ECU School of Dentistry. Faculty will also be a part of the Ahoskie office.

“What we’re doing is basically stretching the wires and moving the fourth floor of our school in Greenville out to the rural, underserved areas of the state,” he stated. “Hopefully this new facility will be ready in March. Of course it will be three years before our first class of seniors will train here, but we will offer a residency program that starts next summer and we’ll be teaching here next summer. This will be a fully functioning general dentistry office with 16 labs, complete with dental assistants and hygienists. They will know what it feels like to be in dental practice.”

“We share the same vision for rural communities,” Butterfield said.

Kim Schwartz, Chief Executive Officer for RCCHC, said her organization’s new facility will become a “one-stop shop” for primary medical care, pediatrics and behavioral health.

“What this means for us is offering healthcare services to potentially 5,000 to 10,000 new patients, more space and at least 15 new full-time positions in addition to up to 60 new jobs for construction of the facility,” Schwartz noted in an earlier interview. “Additionally, this investment represents an immeasurable amount of tax benefit to our area.”
She also stressed that such a facility could be used as a tool to recruit new doctors and other medical providers.

RCCHC’s new medical center and ECU’s dental facilities will be built on land deeded to RCCHC and the university by Roanoke-Chowan Alliance. That entire property is 27.6 acres and includes the current RCCHC building, Northside Behavioral Health and ViQuest. The buildings will be constructed in the southwest corner of a now empty parcel of land behind those facilities.

In recognition of the Congressman’s ongoing efforts to help improve healthcare in his rural district, Daniel Glaze, Chairman of the RCCHC Board of Directors presented Rep. Butterfield with the Healthcare Visionary Award.

“As your constituents, we realize your plate is full working on our behalf. As such, we appreciate that you have kept as a priority improving the health status and improving the access to quality healthcare for all persons in our area, regardless of skin color or ability to pay,” Glaze said.

“As you well know we’ve been able to build a brand new facility in Colerain, improve our facilities and expand them in Murfreesboro and we’re about to break ground on a new state of the art healthcare clinic with 48 exam rooms here in Ahoskie. With each of these projects, we can draw a direct line to your advocacy and support on our behalf. For all you’ve done, please accept this award of gratitude,” he closed.
Closing the gap

Published in: Letters

According to a recent Pew study and June 6 editorial "Dental care gap," our state has the opportunity and duty to improve children's dental health in the Medicaid population. A major part of that population is in our state's rural communities. That's why this fall's opening of the East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine is so timely for getting North Carolina back on track with oral health care for rural and Medicaid populations.

Our school will help serve the state's oral health care needs and improve access in areas where there are few, if any, dentists. To do so, we will build and operate clinical facilities (community service learning centers) in rural and underserved communities across the state. Faculty and students will provide quality care in these centers. We will also recruit the future dentists from within the state with the expectation they base their careers here and help address the need for dental professionals. All members of the first class are from North Carolina.

We are grateful to the residents of North Carolina and our leaders in Raleigh for having the vision to set this plan in motion.

James R. Hupp, D.M.D., M.D.

Dean, East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine

Greenville

N&O 6/14
Gov. Perdue's weekend veto of the state budget bill might be called futile by some or irrelevant by her Republican adversaries in the General Assembly. But doing anything less would have left the state with a bitter taste, soured by partisan politics and indifference to precedent.

This fundamental conflict has heated the legislative summer, which is not an altogether unhealthy thing. It is right and generally productive to have soul-searching and occasionally pointed debate over these core issues. The problem comes when the longer view — the higher road — becomes obscured by short-term thinking and heavy duty political gamesmanship.

That's where the state finds itself in this final week of legislating.

The governor says the budget sent to her by the GOP-controlled Legislature “blatantly ignores the values of North Carolina's people.” She is worried that it will not only stall the state's progress but also push it backward. This especially rings true in light of some of the programs on the budget bill's chopping block.

For example, the plan now on the table makes significant cuts to education spending, beyond what the governor believes is necessary to ease the state's financial situation.

Among these are substantial ones to two innovative programs — More at Four and Smart Start.

These interventions were designed to get more of this state's youngsters on a path to become graduates rather than dropouts, thus improving the odds of avoiding the unemployment line or worse down the road. With the state's graduation rates improving as recent statistics indicate, it doesn't make sense to pull away from these initiatives.

Other respected programs the state has developed in recent years also would be dismantled, including the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and the Teaching Fellows scholarship program. North Carolina has become identified nationally with efforts like these, not to mention a university system among the nation's very best — another target in the current spending plan.

All this aside, it appears unlikely right now that the governor's veto will change the course of this summer's budget deliberations or the state's blueprint for spending for the next two years. But it was nonetheless the right thing for the governor to stand up so strongly against it.
That is because this veto says to those of little faith in this state's progressive spirit that investing in the future, even in the face of hard times and hard political realities, continues to be the right road for this state to take, the higher road.
Letter: Teaching Fellows invaluable
Tuesday, June 14, 2011

‘Once a Teaching Fellow, always a Teaching Fellow.’ We learned this phrase during our Teaching Fellows Freshmen Orientation; we were instructed to never say, “I was a Teaching Fellow.” Instead, we should say, “I am a Teaching Fellow.” We made the decision as high school seniors to dedicate our life to education in North Carolina, and we joined a dynamic, professional group that would become more like a family than a scholarship program.

As a Fellow, I have been blessed with many amazing opportunities that I would not have received otherwise. The Teaching Fellows program is by no means a free ride to college, but it does make college affordable. For education majors, who will barely make enough money to pay back student loans, making college affordable is essential. This program makes that possible, and that is invaluable to our state.

I believe that in poor economic times, it is imperative that we lift up education. In order to pull ourselves out of a recession, we need to better educate our citizens. They need to be knowledgeable about money, investments, home mortgages, and how our free enterprise system works. We need to instill in them a spirit of entrepreneurship. We need to encourage them to be world-changers and to be leaders within their communities. They should exemplify responsibility, good citizenship, civility and integrity. The only way to accomplish this is to teach them. The best way to teach them all of these things is to give them access to the best and brightest teachers. And it goes without saying that the only way to find the best and the brightest teachers is through the Teaching Fellows Program.

It is my personal belief that by cutting the Teaching Fellows program, we are, as the saying goes, shooting ourselves in the foot.

ASHLEIGH PHILLIPS
Shallotte
How parents can help in the admissions process

BY LEE BIERER
Published in: Family
Published Tue, Jun 14, 2011 05:49 AM

Many parents feel as if they're walking a tightrope as they navigate their way through the college admissions process with their children.

How do you empower your children to take on this new and exciting project and still make sure everything gets done? The college admissions process is chock full of details and deadlines: testing registration, transcript requests, campus visits, essay writing, letters of recommendation, transmitting test scores, etc. Many, if not most, 16- to 17-year-olds enter the process ill-equipped to juggle so many things simultaneously.

There are some areas where it's OK for parents to get involved.

It's just fine for parents to:

Help plan campus visits. Discuss the trip details, especially if it involves multiple colleges. Schedule the visits on the college websites and make flight and hotel arrangements as needed.

Discuss college fit. Help your children understand the kind of college experience they're looking for. Talk about size, distance from home, benefits and drawbacks to an urban, suburban and rural environment, their academic needs, fraternity-sorority life, sports atmosphere, special opportunities such as undergraduate research opportunities, internships, study abroad, interdisciplinary majors, clubs and extracurricular activities.

Read over their essays, only if they want you to. Don't edit too much or the essay will lose the voice of a teenager. College admissions officials have become quite adept at recognizing parental interference. Remember one of the essay's chief objectives is to allow the college to get to know your child beyond grades and test scores. If the essay sounds as if it was written by a middle-aged lawyer, it has lost its flavor.

Contact the Financial Aid Office. Don't wait until your child is accepted to get in touch with the Financial Aid Office. Ask institutional and departmental need-based and merit-based scholarships and work-study options. Make sure you understand each college's need-aware or need-blind policy and how that affects your personal financial situation.

Support, encourage and celebrate. Understand that as stressful as this may be for you as parents, many students freeze up just at the mention of the word "college." They often
feel that they are constantly being judged, compared with their classmates and forced to begin planning the rest of their lives.

Support them by following their lead when talking about college.

Encourage them to dream and apply to one or two "reach," or academically challenging, schools that they have researched. At the same time, make sure that their final list is well-balanced with reach, target and safety schools.

Celebrate all victories large and small. For the small ones such as completing college-related assignments on time or a stronger test grade, a heartfelt congratulations or "I'm proud of you" means a lot. For the bigger ones such as early decision or early action acceptances or big jumps in scores, hang college-color balloons on your mailbox or treat a child to his favorite dinner or write her a note she'll keep forever.

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Kaylie Gibson was driving when her car struck fellow UNC-Chapel Hill student Krista Slough one morning last September - but she says she wasn't talking on the phone.

She has mixed feelings about Slough's campaign to outlaw phoning while driving. "I'm totally for banning cellphone use" while driving, said Gibson, 22, of Apex. "I think it's dangerous. But it wasn't what caused (the) accident. "I don't agree with them using (the) accident for this bill because she wasn't hit by someone using a cellphone."

The accident knocked Slough out of her shoes and down a steep bank covered with poison ivy. She sustained brain injuries that forced her to drop out of school for a year. She suffers fatigue, memory loss and other impairments, and is recovering slowly. Slough was struck from behind. She didn't see what happened and does not remember the accident.

But Joe Capowski, a retired UNC-CH professor and former Town Council member, told police he had seen Gibson talking on her phone before the crash. Now Slough has joined Capowski's 2-year-old campaign to target cellphones as a major traffic hazard. The two addressed a legislative committee in Raleigh this spring. They spoke Monday night at a Chapel Hill Town Council meeting in support of their proposed phone ban for drivers on town streets.

Gibson was charged after the Sept. 16 crash with failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident. She paid the ticket and did not contest the charge. The Chapel Hill police report listed "inattention" as a contributing factor, and cited Gibson's explanation: She said she was trying to clear the windshield of early-morning moisture that obstructed her view.

"I had the defrost on, and I was adjusting it, trying to make it work," Gibson said Monday. "It was taking a while to clear up."

Police crash reports don't always mention whether an accident involved cellphone use. Phoning is illegal in North Carolina only for drivers younger than 18, and for school bus drivers.

A Chapel Hill police spokesman did not respond Monday to requests for comment on the accident. Attempts to reach Slough were unsuccessful.
Gibson became concerned after her name was mentioned last week in a News & Observer story about Slough's accident and recovery. Samuel Piñero of Raleigh, an attorney consulted by Gibson's family, said Gibson and her parents support Capowski's efforts.

"He's been doing this for two years," Piñero said. "It works out well for him that he saw an accident where someone was using their cellphone."

Capowski on Monday reaffirmed his original statement that Gibson had been distracted by her cellphone.
NEW YORK -- Casey Ferguson was sitting in her car on Jan. 19 when she finally got the call she'd waited months to receive.

The voice of Jon Newman, the founder of the Hodges Partnership, a strategic communications firm in Richmond, Va., where she had recently interviewed, was on the line.

He was calling to offer her an entry-level position. Ferguson, a 22-year-old who graduated in December with a bachelor's degree in communications from East Carolina University, began her job search in the summer of 2009, when she worked as a summer intern at Hodges. After the internship was over, she began a protracted courting ritual: Staying in touch with former colleagues through social networks and meeting up with ex-coworkers for lunch or coffee. She even brought homemade cookies by the office on more than one occasion.

But when she heard the word "offer," all of the lessons that had been drilled into her during college career fairs -- namely, that she could and absolutely should negotiate -- went flying out the window. Even before Newman could finish explaining the full terms, Ferguson interrupted him to say that she accepted.

"After I said 'yes,' my boss immediately started laughing. He told me my first task was to enroll in Negotiating 101," recalls Ferguson. It wasn't that she didn't care about the money. The daughter of an elementary school teacher and a South Carolina cable company employee, Ferguson put herself through college by working a series of part-time jobs and taking out student loans, on which she still owes more than $15,000. "Thinking of all my friends who have graduated and still don't have jobs, why would I get greedy?" she says. "It's just not in my nature to nickel and dime."

Ferguson is hardly alone in her discomfort with playing hardball -- especially among other
women, and especially during a recession.

Even during the most robust of economic times, women are less inclined to negotiate. In fact, according to Sara Laschever, co-author of "Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide," 20 percent of women say they never negotiate at all. And in the current recession, which has made many job seekers feel grateful for any work they can find, even a part-time toehold can feel like a victory. Based on several interviews with women under the age of 30, nearly all reported feeling almost guilty about asking for more money than was initially being offered. The problem with this reluctance to ask for more is that women are still paid less than men. And as new research released last month reveals, young women often get the raw end of the deal.

A May study by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University polled nearly 600 young men and women that graduated from college between 2006 and 2010. The authors found that young men are not only out-earning young women, they’re doing so by an average of more than $5,000 per year. Male participants reported first year job earnings averaging $33,150, while young women earned about $28,000.

Another report released in May, this one by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, indicated that new female college graduates are earning 17 percent less than their male counterparts.

The National Partnership for Women & Families reports that, among full-time workers in the population as a whole, women still earn only 77 cents for every dollar their male counterparts make.

"Historically, men out-earn women across all sorts of occupations," says Carl E. Van Horn, a professor of public policy at Rutgers and a co-author of the study. "All of our data confirms that's still going on with young people who have graduated from college in the last five years. I'm just disappointed that the disparity is still so large." The danger of the situation is that, when a woman begins her career by earning less money, it's hard to ever catch up.

WHY THE EARLY WAGE GAP?
In past years, many scholars have blamed the overall gender wage gap on historic pay inequalities still affecting older women making less than their male peers. It was hoped that once those women exited the workforce, the gap might narrow. But last month's findings show that not to be the case.

There are data to suggest that the gender gap in first-year earnings -- and often, as a result, lifelong earnings -- is a consequence of women choosing less lucrative fields than men.

A study released in May by Anthony P. Carnevale, who directs the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University, suggests that women are self-selecting lower-paying professions by choosing college majors that simply don't pay.

Utilizing previously unreported data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 American Community Survey, Carnevale and his co-authors sampled 3 million college graduates...
between the ages of 25 and 64 who supplied their majors and subsequent earnings.

"For women, in only three of the 171 majors -- physiology, information science and visual and performing arts -- did they out-earn their male counterparts," says Carnevale. And though women attend college in greater numbers than men and subsequently out-graduate them, the highest earning majors are dominated by men.

According to the study, petroleum engineering majors, for instance, are 100 percent male-dominated, whereas women account for 97 percent of early childhood education majors. (Carnevale reports a sampling error of 3 percent.)

The average petroleum engineer's yearly salary is around $120,000. The average preschool teacher makes about $35,000.

Even Carnevale, who has studied this issue for decades, was surprised by the degree to which women and men were separated according to fields of interest and subsequent earning potential.

But the wage gap exists even between men and women in the same field, which suggests that women's reluctance to negotiate may be to blame.

In addition to the recent studies by Van Horn and Carnevale, Sara Laschever, who along with Linda Babcock also co-authored "Ask For It: How Women Can Use the Power of Negotiation to Get What They Really Want" found that men not only negotiate for more money out of the gate, but they also ask to be promoted with far greater frequency. In general, men ask for things for themselves four times more frequently than women do.

Some young women may think they don't need to negotiate. All too frequently, says Laschever, they mistakenly believe that gender-based wage inequality is a problem a previous generation already conquered -- and that it couldn't possibly still be an issue.

"Women in their twenties tend to think that the gender wars have been fought and won, and that they go after what they want just as much as their male peers do," she says.

Instead, Laschever finds, young women regularly set lower salary targets for themselves than men do, and there's a direct correlation between what they aim for and what they get. "Because men aim so much higher, they come away with a lot more."

Despite its obvious advantages, many women still fear even the idea of negotiation, says Victoria Pynchon, co-founder of She Negotiates, a company that empowers women to stipulate equal pay. She finds especially infuriating the notion that the economy is preventing many young women from deigning to enter those back rooms and demand equal pay.
"The economy excuse is bullshit," says Pynchon, who isn't one to mince words. "I ask every woman I meet, 'When's the last time you asked for a raise?' The answer is '2007,' or 'never,' or 'because of the economy' -- it's just an excuse."

"DON'T GET OUT UNTIL YOU'RE OUT"

Even in a bad economy, men will still ask for more, says Pynchon. She encourages women to find out what their jobs are worth by going on the web, researching salary sites and talking to anyone they can -- just so long as it's a mixture of women and men.

"Don't just talk to your girl friends," says Hannah Riley Bowles, a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government who studies the psychology of women and work. "Talk to your guy friends."

One big reason Bowles sees women going into different careers from men is that they still assume the overwhelming responsibility of household and childcare duties. She sees a lot of young women falling into the trap of negotiating their first few jobs based on their future selves -- especially when they have yet to meet the partner they'll someday marry.

"They cut themselves out of certain types of jobs, assuming it will be incompatible with a stage of life when they’re assuming larger pressures and responsibilities,” explains Bowles, echoing the message of the oft-cited wisdom of Facebook COO, Sheryl Sandberg.

"Don't get out until you're out," is Sandberg's advice to women.

"Essentially, don't negotiate away your career potential before you've even met the person. Because who knows what's going to happen," cautions Bowles. "And don't assume a traditional division of labor, because -- in the future -- there will likely be different ways of doing things, and your paycheck may to be a vital one."

But underselling one's self can be a difficult habit to break. As Mika Brzezinkski, the co-host of MSNBC's "Morning Joe" and the author of "Knowing Your Value," says that, once a woman becomes accustomed to asking for less -- or, as is more commonly the case, not asking at all -- it can be a difficult, if not impossible, to change course midstream.

"This shows the challenge that I think women all across the board face in wanting to strike the right balance. They don't want to come off as too strong or be perceived as a bitch," especially in a first job, Brzezinkski says to HuffPost while multi-tasking during her daily jog on the treadmill. "Our nature is very different, and we have this weird concept where, maybe if we do the work first, we'll be rewarded later. Unfortunately, it doesn't really work that way."

First job negotiations, Brzezinkski cautions, can be especially difficult to navigate, mostly because a young woman hasn't yet proven herself, thus her bargaining power is low. But she blames the employers rather than the employees for the higher sums they are willing to invest in male workers.
"The question is: How do we break the pattern?" she asks. "We stop to have kids, we get married, we have choices that we make along the way, and within that a pattern establishes itself where feeling grateful starts to seep into your whole being -- the way you carry yourself, the way you articulate what you want and the way you negotiate for yourself."

Brzezinski encourages women to play hardball for everything, but for their "very, very first job," she advises recent graduates to arm themselves with knowledge -- maybe even a copy of the recent Rutgers study that shows they're making $5,000 less than young men.

"Don't go into [the offer negotiation] angry, go into it knowing it's a gap that you'll need to fix in the next few years," she says. "The chips are still stacked against us. You're not getting paid what you're worth. And in the next negotiation, be sure to ask for more."

**NEGOTIATING THE NEXT STEP: A RAISE**

Two weeks after receiving her offer, Ferguson relocated to Richmond, Va., to start work and begin her professional life.

Her choices up to this point reflect much of what the research on young women's career choices has shown. In addition to Ferguson's discomfort negotiating her starting salary, she chose her major and career path based more on her happiness than the size of her future paychecks.

Ferguson may someday make the $59,150 that is the average salary of public relations specialists, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. But that amount that doesn't come close to the $80,000 average for mechanical or chemical engineers -- both fields that skew overwhelmingly male.

And like many of her classmates, Ferguson began her new job with thousands of dollars in loan payments still ahead of her.

While she's only five months in -- following Brzezinski's logic -- Ferguson should be thinking about how she's going to negotiate a salary increase that puts her on par with her male peers.

Yet when it comes to idea of asking for a raise in the future, she bristles at the possibility.

"Negotiating just not on the forefront of my radar right now," says Ferguson, who is careful to avoid appearing too aggressive or too pushy.

"It's honestly just not even something I've thought about."
Rep. Elijah Cummings' Nephew, Christopher Cummings, Killed In Shooting At Old Dominion University

06/12/11 11:51 PM ET

Baltimore — A Maryland congressman says his nephew was killed in a random shooting near Old Dominion University in Virginia.

Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings of Baltimore in a statement Sunday talked about the death of Christopher Cummings in his off-campus apartment. He says his nephew's roommate, Jake Carey, was critically wounded in the attack Friday. Both were students at the university in Norfolk.

The congressman urged the community to cooperate with police.

He says his family remains in shock over the "senseless tragedy."

Cummings says his nephew was an "amazing young man who was loved and admired by so many people who had the honor of knowing him." He had a 3.5 grade-point average and "ambitious plans for his future."
Before scholarship recipients at Barton College receive money for the spring semester, the advancement office attempts something the students' mothers have probably failed at numerous times - getting them to write thank-you notes.

Of course, Barton has a bargaining chip. The scholarship money is withheld until the letters are in the mail. That makes students show up, said Raymond E. Carnley, Barton's director of development.

Colleges and universities often push recipients of endowed scholarships and others who benefit from donations to thank benefactors, but it has rarely been mandatory. Now that budgets are tight and fund-raising is difficult, however, some see compulsory thank-you notes as a tool to help ensure that donors stay connected to the college and see the benefits of their contributions, potentially leading to future donations.

Others see the letters that would come from such a requirement as too formulaic to do any good.

Either way, numerous advancement officers said it can't hurt a college to teach some manners to a generation of students unaccustomed to sending thank-you notes. Advancement officers frame the policy as part fund-raising strategy, part education. Donors who feel connected to the college are more likely to continue to give, these officers say, and they love hearing from students.

"For us it is the first piece of stewardship and starting the next cultivation so people make an additional gift down the road," Carnley said. "Family or whoever is connected to the scholarship can see firsthand the difference their gift is making."

He said the college has long required students to write the notes to benefactors, but only recently made the reception of funds contingent on their doing so. This way the students come to them, instead of the office having to track them down.

Most often the return on such letters comes slowly if it comes at all, advancement officials said, and the notes are only a small component of broader advancement strategies. But occasionally, letters that talk about students' financial position, the benefit of the scholarship, or their experience at college can motivate a person to donate on the spot.
"We've gotten donations after we've sent out thank-you letters," said Saskia DeCaires, director of donor relations for St. John's University, in New York. "People will say, 'I want to increase my gift this year, I was really moved by Tom's letter.'"

Six years ago, DeCaires, along with the financial aid office, instituted a system at St. John's that made students' scholarship funds contingent on a thank-you letter. The university pulls the scholarship money from the student's account if he or she does not write it in a timely manner. Before that, she said, she would solicit letters from the school's more than 1,000 endowed-scholarship recipients and get about 30. Once students started seeing the money they thought they had received disappear, they showed up in droves.

Barton has a similar system, though all students receive scholarship money for the fall semester and then are asked to go by the advancement office to write the notes. If they are not completed by the spring semester, the student is denied the money for that semester. Once the students complete the letters, the spring scholarship money is restored. Unlike St. John's, which can actually pull the scholarship, Barton would not take a away the scholarship of a student who does not to write a letter, and he or she would still receive it the next fall. But that has never been a problem. "We've never had a student not willing to write the note," Carnley said. "It just takes us reminding them."

At La Sierra University, the scholarship application states that, upon accepting the scholarship, a student will be required to write a thank-you note and attend a luncheon for donors and recipients. If a student does not write the note, the university sends him reminder e-mails. Carol Bradfield, associate vice president for advancement, said the college gives endowed scholarship money to about 140 students a year, and has never had to deny a student a scholarship solely on the grounds of not writing a letter.

There is some debate about whether requiring the students to write the letters does any good. Officials at colleges that don't mandate thank-you notes said the best letters are motivated by actual gratitude, not by a requirement. Mandatory letters can come off looking formulaic.

"We believe that these letters are best when asked for rather than mandated," said Julie Martel, stewardship officer at Hampshire College. "The tone of the letters is honest, celebratory, and personal, which would not be the case if they were demanded rather than volunteered."

Martel said Hampshire encourages scholarship recipients to write letters, and sends out e-mails reminding them, but do not demand that they do so. She said most students who are asked to write letters do so.

Officials at St. Johns, Barton, and La Sierra all said they have seen no drawbacks to the mandatory letters, and recommend the strategy to other colleges and universities. In the best-case scenario, a student who didn't actually think of writing a letter learns a little bit and writes a great letter. The worst that happens, they said, is that a donor gets a
formulaic thank-you note that still expresses some gratitude and reminds them of the college.
"I've never had a donor not want a thank-you note because it was required," Bradfield said. "Even if it doesn't mean as much, they're still happy to have them."
In addition to using the letters as a fund-raising tool, administrators often see them as an opportunity to teach students how to write a thank-you note, and to instill a sense of gratitude. Even at many colleges that don't mandate letters, officials have created programs to educate students on writing them.

Some colleges host thank-you-note workshops where they will bring in large groups of students and provide lunch or dinner. Other advancement officers open their offices for one-on-one training. Officials said many students have come into their offices unaware of what should go into such a letter. Most offices suggest that students talk a little bit about themselves, such as what they're studying, their extracurricular activities, and how the scholarship has helped them. Bradfield said La Sierra provides some "simple language" on which students can elaborate.

St. John's sends students to the college's writing center, which DeCaires said serves two missions: the employees there help improve the quality of the students' letters, and the center gets students in the door, making them more likely to return in the future.

Advancement officers hope that students will get a better understanding of philanthropy and possibly donate in the future. "We feel that it's part of the students' education about how to be a good citizen, part of their philanthropic education," Bradfield said.

DeCaires said before she imposed the letter-writing requirement, a lot of students didn't understand that the scholarship money came from an actual person. She said she hopes that, in writing the letters, students come to understand that they, too, could help a student go to college.
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On College Forms, a Question of Race, or Races, Can Perplex
By SUSAN SAULNY and JACQUES STEINBERG

HOUSTON — At the beginning of the college application season last fall, Natasha Scott, a high school senior of mixed racial heritage in Beltsville, Md., vented about a personal dilemma on College Confidential, the go-to electronic bulletin board for anonymous conversation about admissions.

“I just realized that my race is something I have to think about,” she wrote, describing herself as having an Asian mother and a black father. “It pains me to say this, but putting down black might help my admissions chances and putting down Asian might hurt it.”

“My mother urges me to put down black to use AA” — African-American — “to get into the colleges I’m applying to,” added Ms. Scott, who identified herself on the site as Clearbrooke. “I sort of want to do this but I’m wondering if this is morally right.”

Within minutes, a commenter had responded, “You’re black. You should own it.” Someone else agreed, “Put black!!!!!!! Listen to your mom.”

No one advised marking Asian alone. But one commenter weighed in with advice that could just as well come from any college across the country: “You can put both. You can put one. You’re not dishonest either way. Just put how you feel.”

Until this year, questions about race on most college applications were much simpler. A student who was white with a distant American Indian ancestor, for instance, would most likely have identified himself as white.

But students can now choose from a menu of new boxes of racial and ethnic categories — because the Department of Education started requiring universities this past school year to comply with a broad federal edict to collect more information about race and ethnicity. The change has made it easier for students to claim a multiracial identity — highlighting those parts of their backgrounds they might want to bring to the fore and disregarding others, as Ms. Scott considered doing with her Asian heritage.

So the number of applicants who identify themselves as multiracial has mushroomed, adding another layer of anxiety, soul- (and family-tree-) searching and even gamesmanship to the process.

The new options have forced colleges to confront thorny questions, including how to account for various racial mixes in seeking diversity on campus. Is a student applying as black and Latino more desirable in terms of diversity than someone who is white and
black? Or white and Vietnamese? Should the ethnicities of one’s distant relatives be considered fair game, or just parents? And what should be done about students who skip the race question altogether — a sizable number of whom, some studies have shown, are white, and do so either in protest or out of fear that identifying as merely white could hurt rather than help their chances in this new environment?

Some scholars worry that the growth in multiracial applicants could further erode the original intent of affirmative action, which is to help disadvantaged minorities. For example, families with one black parent and one white parent are on average more affluent than families with two black parents. When choosing between two such applicants, some universities might lean toward the multiracial student because he will need less financial aid while still counting toward affirmative-action goals.

“How do we include multiracials in our view of an egalitarian society and not do it in a way that disadvantages other groups?” said Ulli K. Ryder, visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America at Brown University.

In interviews, admissions officers at Rice, Stanford, Emory and Carleton, as well as other highly selective colleges and universities, said they were grappling with the imperative to give students greater freedom to describe their backgrounds while also being on the lookout for manipulation by those seeking to stretch their ties to particular races or ethnicities.

Those applicants well know that for decades, admissions offices have made it a priority to assemble a diverse student body, in part to redress the nation’s long history of discrimination in higher education but also to provide students rich opportunities to learn from peers who bring various backgrounds to campus. The onus of determining racial makeup is almost entirely on the students; the colleges do not typically seek out guidance counselors or other adults in the students’ lives for corroboration.

“You know kids are gaming the system every way they possibly can, from private counselors who write essays to massaging their statistics,” said Scott White, a college counselor at Montclair High School in New Jersey. “It comes up all the time. If one grandparent is of Spanish heritage, should this kid be getting an admissions bump?”

One woman who posted on College Confidential wanted to know if her children’s French great-grandfather, born in Algeria, would qualify her family as African-American. The consensus was no.

A Growing Category
Rice University in Houston might, given its early history, seem an unlikely place to find admissions officers wrestling with questions of race as they size up their applicants. A private and highly selective institution, it was founded in the early 1900s by a wealthy Houston businessman as an exclusively white institution, a designation it maintained through the late 1960s.
And yet these days, white students are now only 43 percent of the student body at Rice, where an applicant’s racial identification can become an admissions game changer. This can be especially true during the “committee round” in early spring, when only a few dozen slots might remain for a freshman class expected to number about 1,000.

At that stage, a core group of five to seven bleary-eyed admissions officers will convene for debate around a rectangular laminate table strewn with coffee cups and half-eaten doughnuts as the applications of those students still under consideration are projected onto a 60-inch plasma TV screen.

For most of the nearly 14,000 who applied this year, the final decision — admit or deny — was a relatively straightforward one resolved early on, based on the admissions officers’ sampling of factors like test scores, grades, extracurricular activities and recommendations.

But there are several thousand applicants whose fate might still be in limbo by the committee round because their qualifications can seem fairly indistinguishable from one another. This is when an applicant’s race — or races — might tip the balance.

“How much of a difference — and whether more or less weight should be given to that student based on how many boxes were checked — is hardly clear, either at Rice or at dozens of other selective institutions.

And yet, at Rice, the chances that a multiracial applicant might be admitted have climbed over the last five years to 23 percent this year. (By contrast, the admission rate for the freshman class as a whole this year was about 19 percent.)

Adding to the confusion in admissions offices is that there is no standard definition, in higher education or elsewhere, of what it means to be mixed race. But the hundreds of colleges, including Rice, that accept the Common Application have allowed students to mark more than one box for several years now.

Over the last five years, the number of applicants to Rice who characterize themselves as of more than one race has skyrocketed to 564 from 8. Multiracial students now account for about 6 percent of the freshman class at Rice, nearly as many as those who identify themselves as “black or African-American.” (Nationally, about 3 percent of Americans identify themselves as mixed-race.)

The new federal requirements have freed some students from having to pay short shrift to some aspects of who they are, and have forced changes in how the colleges see them as well. But like Rice, some colleges had already gotten there on their own.
Before Emory University in Atlanta upgraded its computer system about a decade ago, if an applicant signaled that he or she was African-American and white, or African-American and Asian, someone in the admissions office would make the judgment call that the student was African-American because there were no set guidelines on how to define an applicant’s race.

“We had to pick one,” Jean Jordan, the dean of admission, said. “I’d say it was pretty arbitrary.” Actually, it may not have been so arbitrary. Emory, like other colleges, was acting at least in part to ensure a sizable African-American student population, which the college’s leaders consider an institutional priority.

Now, about 5 percent of its freshman class is considered mixed-race.

At Carleton College in Minnesota, there were, until recently, clear protocols intended to address the issues with which Emory was wrestling: students who signaled on their application that they were black, Hispanic and white, for example, were considered black; American Indian and white, then they were American Indian. Now, such students would be among the nearly 9 percent of the freshman class at Carleton who are multiracial.

**Within the System**

Mr. Muñoz, who is ultimately responsible for Rice’s effort to promote diversity on campus, says he has been guided by the template of his own mixed-race family. He is Mexican-American, the first in his family to go to college, while his wife is of Irish descent. They have three grown children.

“I am honoring, best I can, how the students see themselves,” Mr. Muñoz said. “If they say they’re mixed, I’m not going to say, ‘Oh no, you’re black.’ I’m going to say, ‘You’re mixed.’ Isn’t that O.K.?”

And, he added, “We’re not out to play ‘gotcha.’ In all things there is an element of trust.” Still, he acknowledges, such questions give applicants (and their families) wide latitude.

An applicant’s final determination of what to say about race is often made in consultation with a college counselor. Many counselors will convey to families that a multiracial applicant — like one who is black and Chinese — often has a better chance of being admitted to a highly selective college than those in any other racial or ethnic category.

When asked for advice by an applicant weighing whether to identify as multiracial, Mr. White, the counselor from New Jersey, said, “I just say, ‘Answer the question honestly: What do you consider yourself?’ ”

“If a kid is unsure,” he added, “I say check multiple boxes. If they’re Caucasian and African-American, I’d let them know that it would probably be beneficial to put yourself down as African-American or multiracial.”
“I’d be giving them information, not saying, ‘Do this,’ wink, wink.”
Still, Rice knows that however much it emphasizes that students should be guided by the honor principle in making such calls, some will seek to stretch the new definitions to their own gain.

“There are players out there,” said Julie Browning, the longtime dean of undergraduate admission at Rice.

Mindful of that, Rice admissions officials try to reconcile whatever boxes an applicant may have checked with the rest of the application. For example, in its customized supplement to the Common Application, Rice asks an essay question about “the unique life experiences and cultural traditions” that a student might bring.

“If they care about their cultural heritage, it comes through,” Ms. Browning said. “If they’re lukewarm about it, and they’re trying to make it something they care about, it comes through.”

The subject of affirmative action is a personal one for Tamara Siler, the coordinator of minority recruitment in the Rice admissions office, who is black and who graduated from Rice in 1985.

She said that her grandparents and aunt had wanted to attend Rice, but could not because of its history of segregation. Ms. Siler said she realized that some students being admitted to Rice as multiracial would probably not fit the original definitions of affirmative action, but that students who categorize themselves as multiracial bring a valuable and unique perspective to campus.

“At some point I have to say we can’t fix society’s ills,” she said. “That’s not our job as an institution.”

This past spring, at least four applicants to Rice checked the box for nearly every ethnicity and race.

“For the most part,” Ms. Siler said, “whenever someone does all those boxes, we say, ‘Yeah, yeah, but how do you really live your life?’ “

But in the case of two of those applicants — a young woman from Hawaii who checked the boxes for Native Hawaiian, Asian-American and white, as well as a Californian who said she was white (Irish and German), black and affiliated with two American Indian tribes — Ms. Siler became convinced that the descriptions were accurate.

The Hawaiian student wrote her essay “partly in her native language” and “talked in detail about her other heritages as well,” Ms. Siler said. The Californian “discussed the influence of these various cultures on her family traditions, especially related to holidays.”

“Both students,” Ms. Siler said, “were admitted to Rice.”
When Mr. Muñoz was asked if, within the multiracial pool, there is a hierarchy of sorts for getting an edge in the admissions process, he took a long pause.

“That’s hard,” he said.
“Not in an intentional way, but it’s just the reality. I don’t sit with my group and say, O.K., Japanese-American is going to be treated this way, African-American-Hispanic is going to be treated this way,” he said. “It’s part of, what’s the story? How underrepresented is this group on campus?”
“At any point in time,” he concluded, “the given weights of what you’d consider to be important change.”

At her magnet school in Maryland, Natasha Scott, the student who posted about applying as Asian or black on the Web site College Confidential, typically identified as both races.

On her applications, however, she ultimately chose to mark only one box: black.
“I think that when you’re a stressed out high school senior, you’ll do anything that’s legal to get into college,” said Ms. Scott, 16, who will be attending the University of Virginia.
“I must admit that I felt a little guilty only putting black because I was purposely denying a part of myself in order to look like a more appealing college candidate.”

But, she continued, “In any case, I think it’s up to the individual.”