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ECU med school scores well in 'social mission'

The medical school at East Carolina University ranks in the top 10 nationally for its efforts to train primary-care doctors and place them in the rural and poverty-stricken communities where they are needed most.

The same ranking, conducted by scientists at George Washington University and published today in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine, places Duke University's medical school in the bottom 20.

UNC-Chapel Hill was in the middle of the ranking of what the researchers defined as a social mission, while Wake Forest University lagged in the lower third.

The findings add fuel to the debate about the nation's growing need for primary-care physicians, who are expected to be in short supply in coming years as health care reforms unfold. An estimated 32 million more Americans are expected to be covered by insurance and likely will need care from general practice doctors who are already straining to meet demand.

Medical schools are under pressure to graduate more primary-care doctors, but the practitioners are typically paid less than surgeons and other specialists. Plus, many medical students are steered to other more lucrative fields.

What's more, federal funding for medical schools is widely skewed toward research and specialty training, with billions of dollars allocated to universities conducting cutting-edge science. By contrast, programs to bolster primary care receive about $200 million, said Dr. Candice Chen, a pediatrician at George Washington and one of the study's authors.

"Medical schools are important producers of research, but they are the only institutions that produce physicians," Chen said. "It doesn't have to be either or - you can do both. You can do high-level research and on top of it do primary care and put out physicians who want to go into primary-care practice."

The study examined three criteria to define social mission and rank the nation's 141 medical schools:

How many primary care doctors the schools produced.

How many of those doctors served rural or poor communities that have trouble attracting caregivers.

How many ethnic minorities the schools trained.

Broadly, the higher-ranked schools tended to be state-funded, community-based and less likely to be big winners in federal research funding sweepstakes. Conversely, prestigious private schools known for their research acumen landed at the bottom of the George Washington list.
That was certainly the case in North Carolina, with the two schools that fit those descriptions most tightly - ECU's Brody School of Medicine and the Duke University School of Medicine - serving as prime examples.

ECU's medical school, formed in the 1970s specifically to train more primary-care doctors for the state's rural and poor regions, was ranked seventh in the nation for its overall social mission. It was second in the national rankings for producing primary-care doctors.

"It's a mission that was given to us from the General Assembly now 35 years ago, and it's as strong today," said Dr. Nicholas Benson, vice dean of the Brody School of Medicine. He said all the school's students are recruited from North Carolina and are grilled about why they want to practice medicine and how they envision their careers unfolding.

An effort is made to make sure newly minted doctors "understand the benefits and liabilities of a primary medicine career," Benson said. "They won't be bringing down the big money of specialists, and they have to have strong ties to local communities."

ECU could use more money

Benson said the school is poised to produce even more primary-care doctors, but the troubled state economy has put expansion plans on hold. Currently, ECU graduates 78 doctors a year. More than half stay in North Carolina, often in the rural regions of the state's eastern and western flanks.

But there are tradeoffs. Last year, ECU won $8 million in research grants from the National Institutes of Health, the primary government funder of medical science.

Duke's mission, by comparison, has long been to train academic researchers and specialists. Annually, its faculty reaps upward of $350 million in research grants from the NIH. That generally ranks Duke in the top 10 in research grants.

But in the overall social mission ranking from George Washington University, Duke came in 124th.

Dr. Victor Dzau, chancellor of Health Affairs, said the ranking is an important assessment, particularly as health care reforms add demand for primary-care doctors.

But he noted that the study was based on the career tracks of graduates from medical schools 10 years ago - a factor study authors said was necessary to determine where doctors were actually practicing, not where recent graduates were intending to practice. That often changes, said study author Chen, particularly when young doctors face massive medical school loans that they can pay off quicker if they switch to a more lucrative specialty field.

Duke aims for innovation

Dzau said Duke has just revamped its family practice program, with the goal of setting a national model for its curriculum and for training leaders. Students will spend a year in a primary-care setting, following patients through care from start to finish. About eight to 10 students will be enrolled annually, with plans to eventually double that.
"This is an important subject, because this country needs primary care," Dzau said. "We have made a lot of changes, and more importantly, we're making changes for the future."

Dzau said Duke could never rival ECU in the number of doctors it graduates who go into primary care, so its strategy must be different: "Create a cadre of people who are going to be change agents in primary care and medical curriculum."

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ECU loses its Rock
By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector
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During what was arguably the most successful era of football in East Carolina University history, Thomas “Rock” Roggeman typified head coach Skip Holtz’s blue collar mentality.
Roggeman, who was raised in South Bend, Ind., in the shadow of Notre Dame, became a close friend of the Holtz family, and when Holtz made his big splash as a head coach with the Pirates beginning in 2005, he did so with Roggeman as one of his defensive coaches and one of his most trusted allies. Roggeman lost his battle with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma on Monday at the age of 47, but the veteran coach will be remembered much more for a life of winning.

“It’s a tough day, a very tough day,” said Holtz, now the head coach at South Florida, while conducting a coaching camp on Monday. “Rock made an impact on everybody he touched. He was such a good person with such a great spirit. It’s a sad day for a lot of people.”
While with Holtz at ECU, Roggeman helped defensive coordinator Greg Hudson piece together a ferocious front four which helped to pave the Pirates’ path to four straight bowl games and two consecutive Conference USA championships.
Linemen Linval Joseph (drafted by the New York Giants in April) and Jay Ross (signed by New Orleans as a free agent) saw their roads to the NFL made easier with the constant tutelage of Roggeman. The coach’s relentless personality will be felt forever in the lives of the players that he oversaw.

“It was all about how I was doing and never about him because he didn’t want anybody to worry about him,” senior defensive tackle Josh Smith said of his recent contact with Roggeman.
Smith said he spent upwards of two hours a day in the film room with Roggeman, who guided Smith through a remarkable yet difficult transition from linebacker to defensive tackle.

“Just the way he talked and what he did inspired a lot of us,” Smith said. “His voice was one of a kind and the things he said were one of a kind. When you see someone like that going through something like he was, you can’t help but be inspired.”

Smith said Roggeman was very much a father figure to the defensive players on the team. Last September, Roggeman’s illness forced him to take an indefinite leave from the team. Holtz and his players said Roggeman never stopped coaching, even from his hospital room where he broke down game film and stayed in constant phone and text message contact with his players and fellow coaches.

Often, the messages were not about football but simply means of staying in touch.

“Rock was a fun guy to be around, but he was definitely the most intense coach I’ve ever been around,” senior cornerback Travis Simmons said. “Everyone on the team loved Rock. He was a great man and we learned a lot from coach Rock. He taught us how to be better men. Seeing him in his battle with cancer reminded all of us that life is short and you can’t take it for granted.”
According to Holtz, the e-mails and texts became a way of following Roggeman’s fight.
The USF coach said there was no match for Roggeman’s intensity on the practice field, but also noted that he left Roggeman in charge of academics with great success.

“I used to joke, ‘If we could get this guy to be just a little more intense, we’re really going to have a quality coach on our hands,’” Holtz said. “You walk out on the practice field, you didn’t have to ask where coach Rock was.”

In all, Roggeman coached eight All-Conference USA selections and three league all-freshmen at ECU.

The former Notre Dame linebacker was already well-traveled in the coaching business when Holtz brought him to Greenville. His other stops included Alabama State, Alabama A&M, Eastern Michigan, Louisville and Murray State.

“Rock was such a fighter. You didn’t want for one second to let your guard down and feel sorry for him,” Smith said. “If you did that, you knew he was going to find out about it and he was going to get on you about it.

“Jay Ross said to me today, ‘I won’t ever forget that man’s voice,’ and we won’t,” Smith said.

Funeral arrangements were pending and will be announced when completed.

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Panel: Oil spill's effects on N.C. unclear
By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector
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There are potential problems for North Carolina created by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but it is difficult to say what the affects on the state’s coast might be, a panel of experts said Monday evening.

J.P. Walsh, geology professor at East Carolina University, led a panel discussion at the Tipsy Teapot on the oil spill. The discussion, attended by about 65 people, was part of Go-Science’s Science Café series.

Walsh said the oil spill most likely will affect North Carolina as the oil slick circles in the loop current and joins the Gulf Stream, which runs along the East Coast.

Walsh presented a model that shows oil from the spill dispersing into the Atlantic Ocean.

“We don’t really know what the affects will be,” he said.
Louisiana and North Carolina have similar coasts with marshes and potentially vulnerable beaches, he said. As the oil moves through the ocean, it is difficult to project how much of it will be dispersed and diluted by the time it reaches North Carolina’s coast.

The oil spill is having a major impact on wildlife in the Gulf. A majority of birds and sea turtles that have been collected since the oil spill in April have been dead.

Oil has a dangerous makeup that not only suffocates animals but can cause long-term issues like cancer, ECU geology professor Sid Mitra said.

Mitra just returned from a 24-hour research trip off the North Carolina coastline, where he and his team collected water and sediment that will be analyzed for baseline levels of hydrocarbons and compared to samples of oil from the spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

“Residents of North Carolina are concerned about oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill eventually entering the Gulf Stream and coastal North Carolina — the question on their minds is, ‘when, and if so, how much?’” Mitra said. “Interestingly, the same hydrocarbons that are the toxic components of oil pollution can be used as fingerprints for the source of pollution.”

Mitra is collaborating with scientists at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington to determine background levels of hydrocarbons in water samples from coastal North Carolina under the assumption that oil from the spill has not reached North Carolina’s water.

Mitra’s research will help determine if oil from the spill reaches North Carolina and what some of its affects are.

Sue McRae, a biology professor at ECU, studies migratory birds. She said the oil spill will have a long-term effect on birds in Gulf of Mexico, an important staging area for many species. Birds are a top predator in the area and will bioaccumulate oil from other animals in the region, she said.

“We will be measuring the affects of this spill for a long time,” McRae said.

ECU geology professor David Kimmel also spoke to the audience Monday evening. He was awarded a $44,284 National Science Foundation RAPID Grant last week to study the impact of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The grant will fund a seven-day research cruise allowing Kimmel, graduate student Benjamin McGlaughon and his collaborators to repeat high-resolution mapping of plankton and fish in the northern Gulf and access the chemical and biological impacts of the spill.

Kimmel will use data collected in previous years to determine if the spill has altered the distribution of plankton in the Gulf. Alteration of plankton distribution or abundance could dramatically impact fisheries production in the Gulf, Kimmel said.

The panel addressed the vast network of oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. Walsh said there are more than 3,000 oil rigs in the Gulf, more than 50,000 wells have been drilled, and 1.6 million barrels of oil come from the Gulf every day, accounting for about one-third of the United States’ oil production.

Estimates show that the Deepwater Horizon rig is leaking 40,000 barrels of oil per day into the ocean. A similar leak in 1979, the Ixtoc 1, leaked 3 million barrels of oil into the southern part of the Gulf of Mexico.

The panel said scientists and the government are working to determine the best ways to reduce the impact of the spill on all the areas that may be threatened, but there are no exact answers because the effects cannot be measured yet.

“My hope is that Mother Nature will help weather the oil and disperse it,” Walsh said.

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‘Rock’ loses battle
ECU coach dies of lymphoma

Thomas “Rock” Roggerman, a former assistant football coach at East Carolina, died Monday afternoon in Chapel Hill after a year-long bout with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma.

He was 47.
Roggerman joined the staff in December 2004 and was in his fifth season as an assistant with the Pirates when he officially departed the program on Sept. 28 and took medical leave. Before joining the ECU staff, Roggerman served as the defensive line coach for one of the top defenses at the NCAA Division I-AA level at Alabama State in 2002. In 2004, the Hornets posted a 10-2 record and won the Southwestern Athletic Conference title.

Roggerman graduated with a degree in history from Notre Dame in 1985. He was a member of Fighting Irish teams that played in the 1983 Liberty Bowl and 1984 Aloha Bowl. It was after graduation that his coaching career started. He took a graduate assistant position under Notre Dame head coaches Gerry Faust and Lou Holtz.

FROM COLLEGE NEWS RELEASE
More Employers to Require Some College, Report Says

BY JACQUES STEINBERG

The number of jobs requiring at least a two-year associate's degree will outpace the number of people qualified to fill those positions by at least three million in 2018, according to a report scheduled to be released Tuesday by the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University.

The report makes clear that some education after high school is an increasing prerequisite for entry into the middle class. In 1970, for example, nearly three-quarters of workers considered to be middle class had not gone beyond high school in their education; in 2007, that figure had dropped below 40 percent, according to the report.

“High school graduates and dropouts will find themselves largely left behind in the coming decade as employer demand for workers with postsecondary degrees continues to surge,” write the report's authors, led by Anthony P. Carnevale, the center's director.

And yet the report further underscores a trend evident in recent years in reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: sometimes a certificate in a particular trade, a two-year associate's degree or just a few years of college may be as valuable to one's career (and income) as a traditional bachelor's degree. JACQUES STEINBERG