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A large tree lies across the path leading to the front of the East Carolina University chancellor’s house after heavy rain and wind swept through the Greenville area on Wednesday.
Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector

The tree at the ECU chancellor’s home fell shortly before 4:30 p.m. “We’re just thankful no one was hurt and there was no serious damage,” Chancellor Steve Ballard said.
Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector

**Storm knocks out power, fells tree by chancellor's residence**

By Ginger Livingston

The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, June 16, 2010

Lightning strikes during a Wednesday afternoon thunderstorm caused two power outages in and around Greenville, officials with the Greenville Utilities Commission reported.
The storm also knocked down a tree in the front yard of East Carolina University Chancellor Steve Ballard’s residence. The home was not damaged, a university spokesman said.
Thirty customers on Canterbury Road were without electricity for at least an hour after a lightning strike damaged an underground cable about 4:30 p.m., GUC systems dispatcher Russ Carson said. The lightning struck a utility pole, traveled downward, hit a fuse and damaged the cable, he said. The Canterbury subdivision is across from Minges Coliseum off Charles Boulevard.
At 4:07 p.m., a lightning strike along Stokes Elementary School Road left 15 customers without electricity for 30 minutes, Carson said.
“We had about three or four poles hit, but fortunately not a lot of customers were without power because of it,” he said.
The tree at the chancellor’s home fell shortly before 4:30 p.m.
“We’re just thankful no one was hurt and there was no serious damage,” Ballard said.
The tree grazed the front porch and “made a lot of racket,” he said.
It's the second time in about a year a tree in the yard of the chancellor's Fifth Street residence has fallen during a storm.

Fire and police officials with the towns of Ayden, Grifton and Winterville said they received no reports of storm damage or street flooding. Noel Lee, Pitt County emergency manager director, said no damage reports had been called in to the county's emergency communications center as of 5 p.m.

Between 1-2 inches of rain fell in Pitt and Lenoir counties, said John Elardo, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Newport, with the heaviest amounts falling just south of Greenville.

The weather service received reports of wind gusts reaching 72 mph in northern Onslow County and 60 mph in Jones County, Elardo said.

It was reported that the roof of a mobile home seven miles south of Kinston on N.C. 11 was ripped off, he said. No one was injured.

Downed trees and power lines were reported throughout the region along with minor flooding in Craven, Duplin and Jones counties.

The weather service reported there is a 50 percent chance of storms today, mainly before 2 p.m.

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Holland: Pac-10 swung for the fences
By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, June 16, 2010

Although Terry Holland has made a career of aggressive decisions in the world of college athletics, the East Carolina University director of athletics thinks the Pac-10 came on a little too strong in its recent courtship with the Big 12. Colorado announced a week ago it was parting company with the Big 12 to become what appeared to be the first of many schools to serve as building blocks for a jumbo-sized mutation of the Pac-10.
But when Texas announced Monday it was staying in the Big 12 in order to cash in on a television contract, the impending mass mutiny which could have doomed the conference was suddenly halted.
The rest of the Big 12 — and virtually every other Division I institution in the country — was waiting to see what the Longhorns would do before worrying about how the domino effect might change the faces of the rest of the NCAA’s leagues.
Holland and ECU might have felt the effect regardless had the Big 12 been mostly vacated. For one, conferences like the Big East, the Atlantic Coast Conference and the Southeastern Conference — all possible future destinations for the Pirates — may well have followed suit with their own expansions or been forced to fill their own new vacancies. Had it remained in Conference USA, it might have been part of an expansion in its own league to take on Big 12 castaways.
But Texas slammed on the brakes with its announcement.
“I respect the fact that the Pac-10 swung for the fences by being aggressive but they can not be happy,” Holland said on Tuesday. “I believe the aggressive proactive approach for the Pac-10 ended up hurting them.”
In Holland’s eyes, it comes down to value. He thinks if the Pac-10 takes on new members in a quest for 16 teams, it must do so with programs valuable enough to the league to make the effort worthwhile.
Mostly for Holland, though, it comes down to protecting rivalries, and in many cases splitting leagues into two divisions can squash those rivalries.
“Two eight-team divisions with the old Pac-8 in one division and the newcomers including Arizona and Arizona State (in the other) would have made an easy split without such problems,” Holland said of the Pac-10.
When it comes to Boise State’s seemingly curious leap last week from the non-BCS Western Athletic Conference to the equally non-BCS Mountain West, Holland thinks it was an unfair trade.
“The Mountain West has traded Utah for Boise State so they lost a very good overall program in a larger population base for a really good football program with the blue field that is hard to get to,” he said.

Although most signs point to a continued hush instead of a storm of realignment, there is no timetable for when the madness might resume or how drastically different college sports will look in its aftermath.

By staying put, the Longhorns issued a statement of power. In a different way, Holland knows ECU can make its own statement by continuing to dominate C-USA football, thereby continuing to polish an already solid profile.

“Conference expansion has not impacted ECU or C-USA at this time other than trying to anticipate the various configurations that might provide an opportunity for C-USA to end up with BCS automatic qualification and/or for ECU to consider moving to a conference that does have automatic qualification,” Holland said.

A proponent of expanding Conference USA to 16 teams in order to cut down on the near nationwide travel that C-USA presents, Holland is quick to point out that a 16-team league is uncharted territory for all involved, from C-USA to the Pac-10.

Entering his sixth year at the helm of ECU athletics, Holland still wonders how much the ACC’s expansion earlier in the decade has really helped.

“It would be interesting to hear an honest assessment of how many of the nine ACC institutions who voted for expansion to 12 believe their athletic programs are better now at 12 than those same programs were with nine conference members,” Holland said. “The Big Ten has talked openly about the possibility of 16 teams and the SEC seems willing to move beyond 12 as well. Of course, getting the right members to join is always the key.”

When it comes to protecting rivalries, whether new or old, Holland is much more of a traditionalist.

While two divisions in C-USA might have helped to foster new rivalries, Holland says he feels the league still isn’t getting it right when it comes to the league’s football scheduling, which requires a steady rotation of long road trips for all C-USA teams.

“Regardless of the number of teams in a conference, I believe it is important to play the same teams every year, once in football and twice in basketball, in order to develop rivalries,” Holland said. “I do not like the C-USA football scheduling format of playing three West Division teams two years and then the other three West Division schools the next two years.”

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Editorial: ECU must be ready with support if conferences shift
Thursday, June 17, 2010

In the big-money world of college athletics, each move toward conference realignment sends college officials, players and fans watching the developments like scientists monitor seismic events near volcanoes. They pay close attention to each tremor, forever wary that a massive eruption draws closer with each passing day. The decision by the University of Texas at Austin to stay in the Big XII may have halted momentum toward a massive change in the landscape for now. That should not mean East Carolina University should remain idle, however, and should best use this opportunity to rally support for ensuring a healthy and prosperous future in collegiate athletics.

With so many monumental issues facing this nation, it might appear quaint or misguided to focus on the how colleges and universities operate their athletic programs. And in some measure, it is. Winning and losing on a given Saturday may seem to matter only to those on the field, in the stands and watching on television, without larger ramifications. Dive deeper, however, and one might find an entire region that prospers through success on the gridiron or basketball court. So it is in eastern North Carolina, where each Pirates home football game pours millions into the local economy, through the commerce of food, lodging, merchandise and entertainment. A stronger football team draws national attention and, with it, more applications from would-be students. A more selective admissions policy raises the level of scholarship and research at the school which, in turn, improves the economic outlook of the region and the state.

That may seem far-fetched, but it has been proven time and again across the country. What’s more, conference alignment affords the opportunity for stronger academic partnerships between member institutions, assuming they share some reasonable proximity to one another. That is the case in the Atlantic Coast Conference, which has long touted itself as a conference focused on both academics and athletics.

For these reasons, East Carolina cannot be left behind should the plates of the conference landscape begin a tectonic shift. It will have the active efforts of university officials to manage the situation, but may require political clout to assure a place that is both appropriate and prosperous. The immediacy of that need may have eroded following the decision in Austin to avoid the dissolution of its conference, which would have forced other conferences to act. But when the time comes, East Carolina should be ready, and will expect others to be similarly prepared.
Vying for funds, educators defend their claims

Behind-the-scenes criticism of UNC-system spending burst into the open this week, with the president of the state teachers organization telling UNC President Erskine Bowles that universities had money to spare before they started cutting faculty.

The university is protecting its "questionable spending," said Sheri Strickland, president of the N.C. Association of Educators, while teachers in local public schools are losing their jobs.

The public criticism of spending for the state universities comes as legislative budget writers work out how to allocate an additional $75 million between the universities and public schools - money pulled from the proposed budgets of other state agencies to beef up education spending.

In the past year, tight budgets have heightened the competition between the teachers group and the state university system, with the NCAE claiming that Senate leaders protect the universities. NCAE stepped up its criticism of university spending this year, referring repeatedly to the $9 million in tuition breaks that legislators give UNC athletes and to a consultant's report that UNC-Chapel Hill has too many administrators.

Bowles defends system

In an e-mail message, Bowles said the system has already cut 930 jobs, including 900 administrative positions. A strong case has been made that the system went too far with administrative cuts, Bowles wrote, "but that's what we felt we must do to protect our academic core."

But the NCAE sent its members another news article about UNC salaries this week. Bowles is not firing back.

Through spokeswoman Joni Worthington, Bowles said, "I have no qualms whatsoever with K-12 fighting as hard as they can for every dollar they need to educate their students. In fact, I'm glad they are. It's important that the K-12 system be properly funded."

Advocates for local schools have been more visible overall this year, with the NCAE joining forces with the state Department of Public Instruction and school board and school administrators to highlight the consequences of budget cuts on K-12 public schools. The latest was this week, when superintendents from across the state talked of budget cuts leading to more children in classrooms and fewer foreign language and advanced courses.

Strickland said she sent Bowles a letter to respond to his comments last week that the House version of the budget would force faculty out of jobs and deny financial aid to poor students. The university system has money it can redirect, she said, including salaries from administrative jobs.
Budget writers said the additional $75 million they have to spend on education will help them get close to meeting the requirements of K-12 public schools and the university system.

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Mentors for doctors

The June 15 article "ECU med school scores well in 'social mission' " calls attention to not only the success at East Carolina University, but also highlights North Carolina's struggle to identify enough primary care physicians to serve our state. The N.C. Academy of Family Physicians proudly works with the state's four medical schools to best understand the challenges and opportunities of producing the physicians our state needs.

This collaboration continues with a program we recently launched in partnership with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. Our goal is increase the number of North Carolina-trained doctors who choose family medicine and ultimately practice in our state.

The program's key component is mentorship, pairing promising students from our medical schools with leading family physicians. Mentors help train and guide students, and in return, more of the students will have the opportunity and incentive to pursue family medicine. The first class of participants and mentors were paired this month.

By 2020 we expect our state to need as many as 2,000 more family physicians. We commend the efforts of North Carolina's four unique medical schools and are proud to partner with each of them as we work together to address this growing need.

J. Carson Rounds, M.D.

President, N.C. Academy of Family Physicians Foundation

Wake Forest

The writer is a 1988 graduate of ECU's Brody School of Medicine.
San Francisco college won't take California cuts lying down

By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY

SAN FRANCISCO — There's no particularly pleasant way to talk about California's budget crisis, but it has inspired some positive thinking at City College of San Francisco.

Make no mistake: The two-year commuter campus, saddled with an $18 million cut in state funds last year and an expected shortfall as high as $12 million next year, faces an uphill climb. Salaries have been frozen or cut. Academic counseling hours were trimmed. About 1,500 classes were canceled for the 2009-10 academic year.

And yet, like the little engine that could, the campus community — including faculty, staff, students, trustees and administrators — has not given up.

A garage sale last fall reaped $5,000. At one point, the school offered naming rights to donors who pay $6,000, the estimated cost to keep one course off the chopping block. Now, prizes are being offered for the best cost-saving or moneymaking idea.

The campus also has brought in a few six-figure corporate contributions, but it's fighting for survival. And some campus officials say the struggle has unified a population whose disparate goals are sometimes at odds.

"Everybody felt the pain. Everybody has pulled together to make it through this year," says Martha Lucey, dean of marketing and public information.

It's about ideas, not prizes

Over the summer, organizers plan to quantify the cash value of more than 1,000 ideas submitted for the contest. Prizes, to be awarded in the fall, are modest — free admission to the Exploratorium, $100 bookstore gift certificate — but that seems almost irrelevant. Mostly, "people wanted to make their ideas heard," says earth sciences department chair Katryn Wiese, who is spearheading the project.

One popular suggestion from students, who submitted 78% of the ideas, was to make it easier to get rid of "bad" or "bitter" teachers. That would require union negotiations and is beyond the scope of the contest, Wiese says.

On the other hand, the plumbing in Batmale Hall, where tap water came out scalding hot, was fixed immediately. And spring graduation was moved from an off-campus site to the football stadium, which saved $20,000.

One idea, to install windmills, had been tried before and abandoned — too noisy. Several people suggested the school halt construction on a new building to house classrooms, labs and student services. But that's not part of the operating budget; funding comes from bonds approved by city and county voters, and a delay would actually increase the cost, Wiese says.

Despite a 30% increase in tuition last year, some students said they would be willing to pay even more. At $26 per credit, or $390 a semester for a typical full-time load of 15 credits, the fee remains one of the lowest in the nation. But it's set by the state, and the college can't change it. The school can, however, accept cash. That's what led to the donation boxes that sat near checkout counters at the bookstore and cafeteria in the spring. The goal: $500,000, which is less than $5 for each of the 105,000 students served each year.

So far, the drive has raised $19,568, including $500 from a waltz party hosted by a faculty member. But "the state needs to step up," says student trustee Jeffrey Fang, 28, a philosophy major. "We have already tried very hard to solve the problem."

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has vowed to veto any budget that does not keep his proposed increased funding intact, including 2.2% enrollment growth spending, or $126 million, for community colleges. Budget deliberations began Wednesday, but colleges are preparing for an interruption of state money July 1 if a deal is not reached. They hope to know final numbers before fall but are bracing for the possibility of more cuts.
VIDEO: Calif. student struggles to complete degree
Either way, resources would be stretched. Jack Scott, chancellor of California Community Colleges, estimates that about 140,000 students were turned away from the system's 112 campuses this academic year, and he expects the trend to continue. Thousands of students are on waiting lists for summer school, he noted at a news conference this month.

'Harsh' measures
That's not the case at City College of San Francisco. Except for a few small programs, summer session was canceled. Chancellor Don Griffin says the decision was "harsh" but preferable to the alternative: layoffs and furloughs.
For students hoping to make up for classes canceled during the fall and spring, it was "demoralizing," Fang says.
But this month, about 165 students and faculty gathered on campus for the first of three day-long events called Open College. There were classes on the environment, Mandarin and yoga, to name a few. A class called "California Dreamin': the Budget Nightmare" is set for July.
Courses are non-credit, and teachers are not paid. But that's not the point, organizers say.
Open College "is a statement. It shows that students don't just go to school to get credits," says history and education major Felix Cabrera, 25. "It shows students are interested in learning."