THE DAILY CLIPS

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Veteran educators retire

Teaching pair served generations of students

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Two Pitt County educators with more than 95 years of service combined retired this year.

Isabelle Wicker and Mary Rose Stocks were honored along with other Pitt County Schools retirees at a recent dinner.

Wicker retired this year after 41 years at Pitt County Schools.

"My philosophy and what I tell students is to reach for the stars," she said.

Wicker started her education career at H.B. Sugg Elementary teaching second grade. She taught both first and second grade at several locations until she became the assistant principal at Sadie Sauter Elementary in 1989.

"I will miss it," Wicker said. "I've had good years. I've enjoyed all of my experiences in Pitt County. I could not have asked for any better experiences than working with the staff and students and parents. They have all been wonderful."

Wicker said working with children and watching them grow up is her favorite part of working in education.

She plans to travel, volunteer locally and take care of her mother, who is in her 90s.

"I plan to do some reading and catching up on some things that I haven't done in a long time," she said.

Sadie Sauter has a great future, Wicker said.

The school has been the center of controversy since recent student re-assignments left the school well under its population capacity. The Pitt County Board of Education has created several programs at the school to increase enrollment, including a music program and the county's only elementary foreign language program.

STOCKS  WICKER

RETIREES: More than 60 teachers, administrators and school workers are leaving the system this year.

Sadie Sauter has always been a great school," Wicker said. "We have always had a positive atmosphere here and we have always pushed academics."

Wicker said after 41 years, she had students with parents who also were in her classes. She said former students come to see her all the time.

"I love them," Wicker said.

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TEACHERS

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about the students she has touched over the years. "I will keep in contact with them and I want to know that they are doing OK. I will encourage them to continue doing their best."

Stocks retired near the beginning of the school year when her husband became ill. She had worked at Wahl-Coates Elementary School for most of her 54-year career.

Stocks spent her first four years at Chicod School until she became pregnant with her daughter.

After she had the baby, Julius H. Rose (the late school superintendent) called her and basically ordered her to go to work at Wahl-Coates, she said.

"He called me and said 'I've done all the paperwork and I know everything about you. I need you and I want you and I am going to have you,'" Stocks said.

"I went to Wahl-Coates, and it was the best decision I ever made," she said.

Stocks taught the sixth grade and worked as a volunteer coordinator for the next 50 years at the school.

Even after more than 50 years in the classroom, the 76-year-old said she misses teaching.

"I miss making a difference in the children's lives," she said. "I've taught lawyers, judges, doctors and college professors. I was a walking teacher. I was everywhere with the kids."

In 2005, Stocks was honored along with several other teachers from across the state with more than 50 years of service, with a special ceremony and luncheon at the State Board of Education in Raleigh with Gov. Mike Easley.

"I've enjoyed every moment making a difference in the lives of children," Stocks said.

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Local students getting taste of higher education at ECU

The Daily Reflector

The college experience is a few years away, but numerous high school and middle school students from Pitt and surrounding counties are getting a taste of higher education in the coming weeks.

Programs and camps featuring technology, health and the legislative process are going on this week at East Carolina University. All have the goal of introducing area children and teenagers to fields of study and career possibilities.

The College of Technology and Computer Science is opening its doors today to several Pitt County high school students and their teachers to introduce them to the education and career opportunities available to them.

Rising 10th graders will tour facilities in the Department of Technology Systems through the Business and Technology Academy Summer Institute.

They will also visit multiple laboratories for demonstrations and interactive projects. "Kids always say 'what will I need math and science for later in life,' and this is a great way for us to show them exactly what is available," said Andrew E. Jackson, chairman of the Department of Technology Systems.

In the labs, the students will be exposed to three-dimensional scanners, a robot and a new fabrication shop. They also get firsthand experiences with network architecture and computer security.

On Tuesday the group will visit Pitt Community College's Business Division, and on Wednesday it will travel to Research Triangle Park in Raleigh for a tour of CISCO Systems.

By 2014, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that jobs for computer programmers, software engineers and other professionals will be among the fastest growing occupations.

The region’s future political leaders are also on campus.

The 21st Annual Legislators’ School for Youth Leadership Development started Saturday and will run through Friday for high school students. The middle school session is planned for June 23-29.

The College of Education is hosting this year’s events.

Funded through the General Assembly, the school gives students in rural areas of eastern North Carolina an opportunity to become better communicators and develop conflict-resolution and problem-solving strategies. The goal of the program is not only to grow future leaders but also encourage students to give back to their communi-

ECU
Continued from B1

ties through service learning, ECU officials said.

Two hundred public school students from the 51 counties served by ECU were selected for this year’s program. The schools were asked to nominate a boy and a girl.

Finally, 30 rising 10th graders were selected to participate in the 14th annual Ventures Into Health Careers Institute at East Carolina University which begins today and last through June 29.

The two-week program, sponsored by the Eastern Area Health Education Center, gives students an opportunity to explore medicine, nursing, physical therapy, medical laboratory work and other health-related careers at the university, Pitt County Memorial Hospital, PCC and elsewhere. The program includes observation of health professionals at work, seminars and workshops on academic preparation for health careers, and personal development and self-awareness activities.

Pitt County participants include Kofi Monney, Ahmad Quran and Natasha Tyson, all of Greenville, and Jennifer Zhu of Winterville.

See ECU, B3
The Metabolic Institute at East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine began two years ago as a place for scientists to work together to tackle diabetes, a great concern in eastern North Carolina. Now, thanks to the Golden LEAF Foundation, the facility will have additional funds to attack that ambitious goal.

The institute recently received a $1 million grant to study diabetes and obesity, giving researchers the resources they need and drawing greater attention to this growing problem. It is yet another example of cutting-edge work in this community, one that serves to fulfill the university's dedication to public service.

With 21.8 million Americans diagnosed with diabetes — 7 percent of the population — the need to devote greater resources to research is clear. Dr. Walter J. Pories, a professor of surgery and biochemistry and the director of the Metabolic Institute, believes the grant will create additional research opportunities to improve health care in the east and help scientists understand the disease.

Pories' group received a $491,000 grant from Johnson & Johnson last year for research. The Golden LEAF Foundation grant will provide for continuing the search for better ways to treat the disease and hopefully to find a cure. And those who are working on it know that millions of patients are looking to research projects like the Metabolic Institute's to find ways to control or cure diabetes.

Of course, the Golden LEAF Foundation does not intend its grants will only serve noble causes such as diabetes research. The fund was started to help communities formerly dependent on tobacco to wean their economies from the cash crop. There is hope that the local economy will be served because of the medicines and technology which will need new companies to produce them.

This grant is part of $5 million in grants made by the foundation to several North Carolina counties for an assortment of projects designed to help communities formerly dependent on tobacco for economic health. Gov. Mike Easley had urged more economic development help for rural communities, and the foundation delivered with funds headed to Beaufort, Roberson, Gates, Anson and Scotland counties.

But the grant to ECU could have far reaching impact on better health for diabetics in a setting where extensive research is underway. The institute promotes cooperation among scientists here, and Pories, who pioneered in a form of gastric bypass surgery, believes the funds will provide the tools to compete on the world stage.

Those who do the research at the school of medicine well know the urgency in finding a cure. But they also know that medical research is a painstaking process which must be done step-by-step.

One day there will be a cure and the Metabolic Institute may play an important role in its identification and development. That will be important to Pitt County, North Carolina and the world.
Willson presented distinguished service award at UNC-CH

Dr. Charles F. Willson received the Distinguished Service Award from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The award, conferred on April 20, is in recognition of outstanding achievement and service to the UNC school of medicine and the people of North Carolina.

According to an award narrative, Willson “is one of the most respected and influential physician leaders in North Carolina ... and has been a strong and highly effective advocate for children’s health as a pediatrician in private practice, in academic medicine, in statewide professional organizations and in health advisory and policy-shaping roles for the state.”

A New Jersey native, Willson received his bachelor’s degree at Princeton University and his medical degree from the University of Virginia. He came to UNC Chapel Hill for his internship and residency and was chief resident in pediatrics in 1979-1980.

He was in private practice with Greenville Pediatrics Services for 19 years then joined the medical school faculty at East Carolina University in 1999 as clinical associate professor of pediatrics and associate dean for physician affairs.

In 1997, Willson became the medical director and chairman of the steering committee of the Community Care Plan of Eastern North Carolina, a plan designed to see that every child had a designated primary care physician.

That program was chosen as the model for the statewide program called Community Care of North Carolina.

Willson is a member of the board of directors of the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, serves on the substance abuse and neglect subcommittee of the Governor’s Crime Commission and and the Physicians’ Leadership Council on Substance Abuse.

Willson, now a clinical professor of pediatrics, is co-director of the Center for Children with Complex and Chronic Conditions and director for Health Promotion and Policy Development for the Health Sciences Division at ECU.

President of the North Carolina Medical Society in 2005, Willson’s honors and awards include the North Carolina Pediatric Society’s Distinguished Service Award, the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Citation for Outstanding Service and Special Achievement Award and the GlaxoSmithKline child Health Award.
Clock is ticking for state budget

As the deadline nears, differences remain on Medicaid, the sales tax and a real estate transfer tax.

By Dan Kane and Michael Biesecker
Staff Writers

As North Carolina nears the start of the fiscal year without a state budget in place, lawmakers are wrangling over what to do about taxes and efforts to provide some relief to counties struggling to pay rising Medicaid bills.

There is so much divergence of opinion about what to do that lawmakers may find themselves unable to bring up a spending plan for a vote by July 1. The danger is that’s when a temporary, quarter-penny sales tax increase will expire, leaving lawmakers and Gov. Mike Easley without $260 million in revenue.

“We understand that the clock is ticking,” said Speaker Pro Tem William Wainwright, a Craven County Democrat. “We’d like to come up with something, but whatever it is, we want it to be a good, sound plan.”

There’s not much difference in how much lawmakers and Easley want to spend. All have put forward $20 billion budget proposals. The logjam is what to do about counties struggling with Medicaid bills. The House proposal included $100 million in temporary relief, while the Senate provided no money in its plan but pledged to find a permanent solution.

Many of North Carolina’s rural counties, particularly those with high percentages of Medicaid recipients, are struggling to keep up with rising Medicaid bills. North Carolina requires counties to pay roughly 5 percent of their Medicaid costs, and rural counties say that makes it hard for them to provide other services.

There are a number of ideas being thrown out to solve the counties’ Medicaid crunch, but the ones most talked about involve the state taking a portion of the counties’ share of sales tax revenue in exchange for the state’s taking over their Medicaid bills. Lawmakers would give counties the opportunity to make up for the lost revenue by raising other taxes. The two most talked about are allowing counties to raise the local piece of the sales tax and a real estate transfer tax.

Most North Carolina residents pay a sales tax of 6.75 cents on the dollar, with 2.5 cents going to the counties and the rest back to the state.

Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, a Fayetteville Democrat, and Senate Finance co-chairman David Hoyle, a Gaston County Democrat, are pushing the sales tax option. But some lawmakers are seeking to give counties the transfer tax option — so long as voters have their say in a referendum — to help pay for schools, sewers and other infrastructure needs.

“The reason is that the poor counties need Medicaid relief, and the growing urban and suburban counties need dollars for school construction,” said Rep. Paul Luebke, a Durham Democrat and House Finance co-chairman. “So this is a marriage of convenience.”

The transfer tax

The transfer tax has drawn opposition from the real estate industry, which fears it could depress property sales.

But Wake County officials would like the option, either in a stand-alone bill or as part of the Medicaid solution. A sales tax swap hurts the county because it gives up far more in sales tax revenues than it pays for its share of the Medicaid bill. This fiscal year, Medicaid cost the county $20 million, while a half-cent of sales tax brings in $32.5 million.

“We will have to raise taxes just to stay even,” said Wake County Manager David Cooke.

The state takes our money and then forces us to raise taxes to make up the difference. We have coiled that one ‘steal a billion, tax a billion,’ and the people taking the money aren’t the same ones having to tax the citizens. We don’t like it.”

Not every lawmaker thinks these issues need to be tied up with the budget debate. State Sen. Dan Clodfelter, a Charlotte Democrat and a Finance co-chairman, is working on legislation that would swap other revenues so that neither state nor county taxes would have to be raised. What revenues? Clodfelter won’t say at this point, but it could simplify an increasingly complex issue.

“The bottom line is if you can find a way for the state to take over the county’s share of Medicaid without the state or the counties having to raise taxes, that seems to be something that folks can understand,” Clodfelter said.

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Money matters still up in the air

To have a budget in place before the start of the fiscal year, legislators and Gov. Mike Easley have to resolve some tax options by June 30:

TEMPORARY TAXES
The House and Easley want to extend temporary sales and income tax increases for another two years so they have enough money for expanding services and the state’s rainy day fund. The Senate wants to drop the increases, saying they have been extended too many times — they were first enacted in 2001 — that it’s starting to sound like a joke to call them temporary. The quarter-penny increase in the sales tax brings in $260 million a year, while the quarter-percentage point increase in the top income tax bracket raises another $40 million a year.

THE SKINNY: The Senate may have the upper hand, because the temporary increase in the sales tax will expire July 1 if a budget is not in place.

COURT FEES
The Senate plan would raise several court fees to generate $37 million to pay for more prosecutors, judges, investigators and court staff. The House budget did not include the increases, though there was money to add fewer new positions. Fees that would be increased include doubling the $50 fee for failure to appear in court and adding $5 to the $10 fee for a criminal record search.

THE SKINNY: This proposal has quickly gained the House’s support, though members may want to select different fees for increases.

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT
The House has proposed this credit for the working poor and expects it would cost the state about $70 million when filers start using it in the 2008-09 fiscal year. Easley has offered a different proposal that would either eliminate the income tax or cut it in half for those with incomes of $25,000 or less, at a cost of $63 million. The Senate offered no specific relief for low-income residents, though getting rid of the quarter-penny sales tax increase certainly helps.

THE SKINNY: Some senators are concerned about the House measure because the working poor could get more back in a credit than they paid in income taxes. Easley’s proposal has been criticized by the N.C. Budget & Tax Center, a well-known advocate for the poor, for not helping as many people as the governor first advertised.

GAS TAX CAP
The Senate would permanently cap the gas tax at 29.9 cents per gallon, a proposal that Republicans quickly praised. A temporary cap on the tax expires June 30.

THE SKINNY: While this has popular appeal as gas prices surge, House Democrats are concerned about how it could affect future road building. Transportation officials are already saying they are about $65 billion short when it comes to funding priority projects over the next 20 years.

MEDICAID RELIEF FOR COUNTIES
Proposals so far do not call for an increase in state taxes, but they could lead to an increase in the sales tax at the county level or the adoption of other local taxes, such as a real estate transfer tax.

THE SKINNY: This is shaping up as a debate over giving counties the means to raise sales taxes or to adopt the transfer tax. The half-cent sales tax increase option some Senate leaders are pushing carries some irony, since it would more than eat up the quarter-penny sales tax cut proposed in the Senate budget.
N.C. State master plan to quadruple vet school

Biomedical campus includes research space for private firms

BY JOSH SHAFFER
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — In a few months, N.C. State University will start a massive 20-year, $500 million experiment that will quadruple the size of its veterinary school, draw top medical researchers and bring new attention to Raleigh’s west side.

Oh, and the cows get to stay.

The College of Veterinary Medicine is nearly set to break ground on a 47,500-square-foot “flex” building meant to draw private and government researchers hungry for space. But those plans are a big step toward adding more than 20 new research buildings along Blue Ridge Road, where a mix of N.C. State and private scientists can team up to create drugs, therapies and treatment for animals and humans.

Just past that bend, the Vet School hopes to start its new Randall B. Terry Companion Animal Hospital as early as the spring, depending on whether $38 million in state funding arrives on time.

When finished, the Hillsborough Street intersection at the State Fairgrounds will mirror the Centennial Campus south of Western Boulevard, a village that makes a joint home for NCSU colleges, such as textiles, with top firms such as software company Red Hat.

But as the world of animal treatment gets more complex, vet school research moves closer to human medicine, and industry researchers get cozier with academics, NCSU is being careful to keep its roots intact. The barn, pastures and working farm that define the Hillsborough Street vet school — and for many, the university — will remain alongside the bustling buildings full of scientists in white lab coats.

“For our students from a more urban background who perhaps never put a halter on a horse, they’ll still get that experience.” — vet school Dean Warwick Arden said. “The whole eastern half of campus is kept very rural.”

Mostly, the school needs space. The vet school still has to lease space off-campus for researchers to work.

The new Biomedical Centennial Campus eventually would cover about 1.5 million square feet, though the changes will roll out slowly. The $500 million figure is a guess.

SEE VET SCHOOL PAGE 7C
and the 20-odd research buildings are a vision that will develop based on demand. The whole idea behind the new campus is to put up buildings as "place holders," built entirely on spec, Associate Dean Mike Davidson said. Developers consistently name flexible research space as a top need, he said.

The first of those "flex" buildings will go up in late fall, probably November, Davidson said. Private money is already in hand for the $12 million building, and NCSU will take about a quarter of the space for its own research. The Triangle, though, is the country's third-largest biomedical cluster, so the rest is expected to be snapped up quickly. As the demand grows, the new "place-holder" buildings will be added.

"We are fairly optimistic it will be totally leased out by the time the building is finished," said Neil Olson, associate dean.

The Terry teaching hospital will go up later next spring, named for the philanthropist and publisher of the High Point Enterprise whose golden retrievers got treatment at NCSU. The hospital will meet a need for space fed by the roughly 22,000 animals already getting treatment each year, most of them dogs and cats. The only remaining piece is state funding, hoped for this year.

"That's really the crown jewel," said Dave Green, vet school spokesman.

New space provides more room to treat animals, but it also builds on the connection between human and animal medicine. Cancers that strike dogs are similar to those afflicting humans, Arden said, and NCSU researchers have helped discover clues to human skin cancer and neurological disorders inside genes of the opossum.

Animal treatment has grown more complex as pet owners are willing to spend thousands on their animals. Two years ago, the vet school fashioned a prosthetic leg for a cat born with a pair of stumps in the back, drilling the artificial limb into the bone. Space will accommodate this research, too.

"We don't look at this as buildings for the sake of buildings," Arden said. "Buildings are only important because of what they allow people to do."

Having researchers close together can't be overrated, said Gregg Dean, professor of immunopathology.

An academic can make basic observations in a laboratory, he said, but the larger goal is to apply research to making new drugs and treatments.

"There's nothing like having a corporate partner right next door that you can meet in the hallway and exchange ideas," Dean said.

Neighbors support the expanded campus, though they want more discussion about on-campus housing for students, said Elizabeth Byrd, head of the West Raleigh Citizens Advisory Council. They don't expect much trouble with traffic. Blue Ridge Road is already a medical corridor, and NCSU will build parking garages to serve its new research space.

Housing isn't a specific goal for the vet school. "It's been bounced around," Olson said. "But it's not something that has very much flesh on it."

The most promising news for neighbors is the chance for quality housing, Byrd said. Most often, developers on the west side want to build for students.

"It's going to be slow coming," she said, "but overall I think it's going to be a positive thing for our area."

Without moving any cows.

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BIOTECH CAMPUS MET WITH DOUBT

Planners envision research facility as antidote to Kannapolis’ job losses

BY TIM SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

KANNAPOLIS — People like to talk big about the North Carolina Research Campus taking shape in Kannapolis.

Planners say the campus, which is recruiting scientists from Triangle universities, will profoundly change what we know about nutrition. They say it could remake the crops and fortunes of Eastern North Carolina. They say it will prove a region’s economy can be resurrected with the right idea.

But before that can happen, they must persuade this decidedly blue-collar town — an area hit hard by textile and manufacturing layoffs — to embrace biotech.

It has been a tough sell so far.

“I don’t think of myself as a researcher,” said Tiffany Morrow, who was among 1,200 workers laid off in March from Freightliner. “If that campus is going to offer jobs, I need to see some hard-core proof. I need to see people working there.”

About a year into the construction of the 350-acre campus, buildings are taking shape and university labs will begin opening in the spring. Some private businesses, including the software company Red Hat, have also signed on. That means support staff will be needed in less than a year.

But Morrow’s comments, a familiar refrain around town, make Kannapolis leaders wonder how long it will take before workers are ready to cut their ties with manufacturing.

Jeanie Moore, vice president of continuing education programs for the local community college, said residents still call the research campus offices wanting to know where the new Pillowtex plant will be. The giant textile mill, known by different names over the years, defined Kannapolis for almost a century before it closed in 2003.

“It’s like if you travel a block away from the research campus, it doesn’t exist in the hearts and minds of the people,” Moore said.

A $1.5 billion project, the campus is being developed by billionaire David H. Murdock, the owner of Dole Food Co.

Murdock, 84, preaches the value of good nutrition at every opportunity. He plans to spend more than $1 billion to transform the former mill town into an international magnet for nutrition research.

SUSAN BLYTHE, LEFT, AND KIM COOPER WORK ON A SOLUTION TO USE IN DNA EXTRACTION DURING A BIOTECH CLASS AT ROWAN-CABARRUS COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

STAFF PHOTO BY TIM SIMMONS

CAMPUS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

The state has promised almost $30 million a year, mostly to hire research teams. Local governments could spend more than $150 million to improve things such as roads and sewers.

Seven of the state’s universities will send research teams. A separate development company owned by Murdock is also recruiting private businesses. The campus will be a small town in its own right with housing, retail shopping, a municipal center and other amenities. Thousands of spinoff jobs are predicted.

The first lab, which should be complete this year, looms over the nearby homes of former mill workers. The scope of the construction is jarringly out of proportion with nearby businesses along Dale Earnhardt Boulevard.

Murdock knows it will take time for people to adjust. This is a town where pay is by the hour and billionaires never swoop in to create good jobs.

“When you go from being a lint head in a cotton mill to a community college student where you study things you never dreamed of, it gets confusing for people,” he said at a spring ceremony marking construction progress.

“But it will sink in.”

Given the gap between Murdock’s vision and today’s realities, that could take some time.

More than 4,800 people lost their jobs when Pillowtex closed. But in the first quarter of 2006, the most recent period from which state data is available, only 60 percent reported wages. About half of them earned less than
$5,000 during that time.

The March layoffs at Freightliner, about 30 minutes away, has tightened the market. That company is expected to cut at least 1,500 more jobs in July.

**Vision catches on**

But there are places where the vision is catching on.

At the north campus of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, a few adults gather around beakers, test tubes and other lab paraphernalia for a Biowork course.

Their backgrounds vary: a laid-off sales representative, a painter, a substitute teacher.

But they take to the class quickly, partly because they were screened to make sure they could handle the required high school math and science.

Dubbed Biotech 101 by the community college, the class is designed to give students a feel for the kind of jobs on the horizon. This is the fourth group to take the course since it was first offered in the summer of 2006. That’s partly a reflection of how surprised leaders were to be told by Murdock that he wanted to turn the area into a biotech hub.

“I recall county commissioners discussing economic development in 2003, and biotech came up,” Moore said. “But at that time, people didn’t think there was a chance — not even the sliver of a hair of a chance — that biotech would be a part of Kannapolis.”

But that is precisely what is happening in the bright, airy lab of instructor Jody Lublazeki. Near the center of the room, Roy Hanschu and Barbara McKinney make biodiesel fuel from vegetable oil.

Hanschu, who was among those laid off from Freightliner, offers a common response when asked why he took the class: “I was tired of moving from job to job to job. I want something that is going to be around for awhile.”

Kim Cooper and Susan Blythe quickly agree. They are working nearby on extracting DNA from cells they have taken from inside the linings of their mouths.

The experiments sound harder than they are, which is one of the points Lublazeki wants to impress upon students.

The other point she wants to make is clear that what they are doing — manipulating organisms — is the foundation of biotechnology.

It is understood this could be the foundation for new careers.

Ed Otto, dean of the biotechnology programs at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, gives much the same spiel every day. It is one of his two jobs.

His priority is writing a curriculum from scratch for students who want to earn associate’s degrees in biotechnology. Some of the classes will be held in a new 60,000-square-foot building on the research campus.

But barely a day goes by that he isn’t speaking to local groups — civic clubs, chamber gatherings, school assemblies.

“I don’t try to sell them on biotech as much as try to educate them,” Otto said.

Sometimes, he said, the group gets it. Other times people sort of just stare at him.

He works in a small, spartan cubicle where fluorescent lights hang above partial walls. The building also houses the community college program where students are screened before taking harder classes.

It’s called R3, for Refocus, Re-train and Re-employ.

“There is a mystique about biotech that is not deserved,” Otto said. “It’s not that hard to grasp.
Once people see that, Kannapolis will be a whole different place.”

But today, Kannapolis is a place where many people face hard choices every day.

**Wants vs. needs**

At the front of R3, Tammy Layton, 36, explains her options.
She is the kind of worker planners have in mind. Hardworking and enthusiastic, she was an assistant supervisor at Pillowtex and had a good job at Freightliner.
But every company she has worked for has gone out of business or has laid her off.
“‘I’m just a laborer,” she said.
So she came to R3 Center, starting further ahead than most. If things go well, she will be able to work in a pharmacy within six months, she said.
In a general sense, the worlds of a pharmacy and a biotech lab are not that far apart. With 18 more months of study, Layton could earn the degree she needs to work at the new research campus.
The reminders are everywhere. Otto, the man designing the class, works in the R3 building where she takes classes. The campus itself is just across the street.
But Layton has three children, and her husband is also unemployed. She needs a paycheck and benefits now, not in 18 months.
“‘There is what you want to do and what you need to do,” she said.
So maybe she will get one of those new biotech jobs one day.
But it won’t be soon.
It’s just not a part of her plans.

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**College laptops are in The Bag**

How do you get college students to use your laptop bag? Give them one that's specifically made for them — for free.

That's what Meredith College did for this year's crop of first-year students.

The college made a deal with Wake Forest-based Penelope Bags to provide 600 Go Girl Laptop Messenger Bags to new students.

Penelope Mancuso came up with the bag last year after realizing many female college students wanted the same thing professional women did — a bag that was functional as well as fashionable. Mancuso, a former researcher and vice president at GlaxoSmithKline and founder of a technology company called PharmaVigilant, said throughout her career she would constantly hear women complaining about bulky computer bags without style.

The Go Girl Messenger Bag is the second bag for the company. It's a canvas bag with a padded compartment for a laptop, extra room for books and zippered pockets designed for cellphones, iPods and PDAs.

Bill Legge, laptop project manager at Meredith, said the school picked the bag after transfer students in January tested them — and then actually used them.

"We wanted a bag that our students would like, and most importantly, would use," Legge said.

Each student can choose from four different color schemes — two colors with polka dots or brown with pink or blue trim. Each bag will have a Meredith College monogram.

The bags are sold without the Meredith logo for $59 at stores such as Luggage & Leather at Crabtree Valley Mall, Globetrotter at Cameron Village and bookstores at UNC-Chapel Hill and Duke University. You can also find the bags at www.penelopebags.com.
Just call it ‘a nice, peaceful place’

UNC unit’s grassy yard off Franklin Street is nameless but not unloved

BY CAROLINA ASTIGARRAGA
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — Many know Franklin Street’s secluded lunch hangout, but nobody seems to know its name. Some call it the 440 Park, the terrace or the garden. Others have their own names for it.

“I call it the front door, because it’s where you go through to get into the building,” said Joe Ward, a computer operations manager for the UNC-Chapel Hill Information Technology Services office building, to which the grassy area technically belongs.

The secluded spot certainly seems like it deserves its own name.

It has overhanging elms, a grassy sitting circle a few steps below street level, ivy creeping up old brick walls and those mandatory park denizens: squirrels, birds and a hefty supply of ants.

Five wooden park benches line its bottom, and university groundskeepers have taken care to plant azaleas and Japanese maples and watch after the native elms that predate the red brick building itself.

It is not a park, however. It’s just a grassy area Blue Cross and Blue Shield employees requested, back before the university bought the property in 1974.

For ITS workers and community members, it has become more than just a place to escape for lunch or cigarette breaks.

“I come out to use it more as a meditation space,” said architect Matt Luck, 30, who has been using the space since he began work in Chapel Hill in 2002. “When you work, it’s always nice to take a break and find a nice, peaceful place in town.”

For ITS employees, the area has become a hot spot for meetings because of its Wi-Fi access. Workers also requested three more wooden lunch tables a few years ago in addition to its original two, because of the popularity of the spot for meals.

“We eat lunch out here almost every day during the summer,” network engineer Justin Church said.

The secluded spot’s location, across the street from a McDonald’s and next to the technology building, could even serve as a subtle reminder to Franklin Street’s busy passers-by:

“Slow down. Stop and sniff the roses. Or the azaleas, in this case. Without slowing down, you might miss it.”

The area is slightly sunken, from the site’s previous incarnation as a 1930s one-pump gas station off Rosemary Street. Whatever you call it, the area’s frequenters seem to agree on one thing.

“It’s just a pleasant place,” said Kirk Pelland, ground services director.

Staff writer Carolina Astigarraga can be reached at 932-2025 or carolina.astigarraga@newsobserver.com.
Graduates: Ideas for managing your debt

Much news recently has focused on the problems of selecting a student loan provider. Blame allegations that some lenders and financial aid offices have been in cahoots.

But for many students graduating this spring, the larger issue isn’t that scandal but how to pay back all that debt.

It’s no small matter. The median debt load for graduates of a four-year private college is $19,500, according to the College Board, a nonprofit association of colleges and education groups. For students at public schools, the figure is $15,500.

Then there’s credit-card debt: More than half of undergraduates carry a balance, an average of $2,864 by their fourth year, according to the latest data available from Nellie Mae, a student loan originator.

Faced with that level of debt, you might feel overwhelmed, especially if you’re also trying to scrape together an apartment deposit or buy a work wardrobe.

“You have to suddenly learn rules about budgeting and debt that you probably didn’t learn in school, because no one ever teaches you this stuff,” said Lynnette Khalfani, author of “Zero Debt for College Grads: From Student Loans to Financial Freedom.”

These steps can help make it more manageable.

**GETTING STARTED**

Carolyn Bigda

**FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU OWE.** First, face the ugly truth and add up exactly what your debt is. You can track down your federal student loans at www.nsids.ed.gov. For any private student loans and credit-card debt, go straight to the lender for balance and interest-rate information.

This exercise is important: Your student loans might have been sold to another lender, and that lender should have your updated contact information. Otherwise, if the lender has an old address, you could miss a payment.

“You don’t want to miss any payments, because otherwise you’ll ding your credit,” said Robert Shireman, executive director of the Project on Student Debt. A missed payment also could ruin your chances of snagging rate discounts, which depend on pristine repayment behavior.

**LOWER YOUR RATE.** Most student loans, both federal and private, do not go into repayment until six months after you graduate.

Credit-card bills, of course, come due every month.

If you are worried about making those payments in addition to your student loan bill, call your credit card’s customer service number and ask for help. Start with trying to lower the interest rate. On average, interest rates on student credit cards are 1 to 2 percentage points higher than traditional cards.

“Let them know that you’re no longer a student and now should get a preferred rate,” said Ed Mierzwinski, the federal consumer program director of the Illinois Public Interest Research Group. Bolster your case by mentioning any low-rate offers you have received.

According to a 2002 Massachusetts PRG report, 56 percent of consumers who call their card company succeed in reducing their rate.

**CONSIDER REPAYMENT OPTIONS.** If you’re still worried about making your monthly debt payments, consider an alternative repayment plan for your student loans.

Federal loans offer the most flexibility with repayment options: You can make so-called graduated repayments, in which your first payments are lower and then increase over time. You also can extend the repayment term from the typical 10 years to as much as 25 years, or set the payment amount to a percentage of your monthly income.

Some of the same repayment alternatives are available for private loans. Keep in mind, though, that the longer you take to pay off the loan, the more you will pay in interest. And private loans tend to carry higher interest rates: the prime rate (8.25 percent), plus an additional percentage.

The maximum rate on Stafford loans is a fixed 6.8 percent. On Graduate PLUS loans, a federal loan available to graduate and professional students, it’s a fixed 8.5 percent or lower.

As a result, “If you need to extend payments out, do that on the lowest-rate loans, which are likely to be the federal loans,” said Shireman of the Project on Student Debt.

You can see how changes to your monthly payment will affect the total interest you pay at www.finaid.org/calculators.

**THINK BEFORE CONSOLIDATING.** One other way to potentially lower your monthly payments is to consolidate your debt. Consolidation combines your loans (generally only the federal ones) into one big loan at a new, fixed rate. It also extends the repayment period, helping lower your monthly bill.

Before you consolidate, though, check whether you’ll save on interest at www.salliemae.com/content/tools/calculators/consolidation.

And make sure to compare any principal or rate discounts between the federal and consolidation loans.

“There tend to be slightly better discounts on unconsolidated loans,” said Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.

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Brodhead issues statement on Nifong

Richard H. Brodhead, president of Duke University, drew criticism for his decision to cancel the 2006 Duke men's lacrosse season and force the resignation of the team's longtime coach, Mike Pressler.

Brodhead was also criticized for not showing greater support for the players when they came under fire from Durham District Attorney Mike Nifong.

On Saturday, as more than a year of turmoil took another turn with Nifong's disbarment, Brodhead issued the following statement:

"The judgment of Mr. Nifong by his professional colleagues is a stinging rebuke.

"At the end of the Attorney General's review in April and now the bar's proceeding, one fact stares us in the face: The ordeal of the last 15 months was wholly unnecessary. It was not the result of reasonable differences of legal opinion or honest errors of judgment. Our students were accused by the community's senior law enforcement officer with no credible basis in fact.

"Evidence that could have helped establish their innocence was systematically ignored. Meanwhile, the DA continued to make inflammatory statements expressing confidence that the crimes had occurred. Repeated around the world, these statements established a "certainty" it took months to dispel.

"A heavy responsibility flows from this abuse of power. The harshest and most direct harm was done to the three students and their families, who suffered from the very place we look to for justice. Other members of their team were also harmed when they were included in Mr. Nifong's blanket accusations. Duke University was also included in the harm in having to respond to the Durham district attorney's assurances that a crime had been committed and the unprecedented crisis those assurances unleashed. The actions Duke took caused consternation to many in the university family, which I profoundly regret.

"Finally, harm was done to the criminal justice system itself. In our society, we rely on the criminal justice system to settle disputes of fact and value. But our system only works when the public has faith in the system's integrity and justice; and this requires that those entrusted with the law act in a way that assures us of their fairness and uprightness. We applaud the actions of the bar today — and of Attorney General Cooper in April — in helping to restore that elemental trust. The appointment of a new district attorney will be another positive step.

"As Duke University's president, I resolve to do my part to repair the harm unleashed by Mr. Nifong's actions and to move forward from this painful episode."
Concussion expert's warning gets NFL's ear

BY LUCIANA CHAVEZ
STAFF WRITER.

CHAPEL HILL - When you're recognized as a national authority on sports-related concussions, you're more than a dad on the sidelines of a Pop Warner football game in Orange County. That's life for Kevin M. Gusiewicz. The same man who has studied sports-related concussions since 1994 also had three young sons playing tackle football in Orange County last fall. Parents regularly approached Gusiewicz, 41, to ask how he could know what he knows about concussions and still feel OK letting 10-year-old Jacob, 9-year old Nathan and 7-year-old Adam play a sport that sees its share of the injuries. "A lot of friends of ours will talk to me and say, 'Oh, you're letting your kids play football. Maybe we'll think about it,'" Gusiewicz says. "I'm very care-
ful. My fear is encouraging them to do it and then the child ends up with an injury. I try to tell them why I encourage my own kids to do it and let them follow that lead or not."

Gusiewicz handles those queries the same way he has handled skepticism from National Football League circles about his concussions research as director for the Sports Medicine Research Laboratory and the Center for Retired Athletes in the UNC Department of Exercise and Sport Science. Science is his weapon. Gusiewicz's latest study of 2,552 retired NFL players found that the 595 players with a history of three or more concussions were 20 percent more likely to develop clinical depression than players who hadn't suffered a concussion.

Kevin Gusiewicz, director of the Sports Medicine Research Laboratory at UNC, studies the effects of concussions.

STAFF PHOTO BY HARRY LYNCH

SEE TAR HEEL, PAGE 4B
TAR HEEL
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

The NFL criticized the size of the research sample — 69 percent of players who received a survey responded to it — and the fact that retirees were relying on their memory of their concussions to complete the surveys.

Henry Feuer, a member of the NFL’s mild traumatic brain injury committee who also consults for the Indianapolis Colts, called the findings “virtually worthless.”

Guskiewicz has stood by his findings and he’s starting to get heard. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell has invited Guskiewicz to Chicago on Tuesday to speak to the league’s mild traumatic brain injury committee, team doctors and team athletic trainers.

“We are interested in Dr. Guskiewicz’s work and look forward to hearing from him at our player health and safety meeting on Tuesday in Chicago,” said NFL spokesman Greg Aiello.

Guskiewicz expects to be put on the spot because of his long history of contradicting how the NFL’s MTBI committee interprets its own findings.

“They’re trying to promote football,” he says. “It is a safe sport, but we can do better.”

Guskiewicz realizes his findings will be disputed, but he thinks it’s crucial for the long-term effects of concussions to be debated.

“I can’t imagine ignoring it,” he says. “It would be irresponsible to ignore it.”

Views may start to change

Guskiewicz is too much of a pragmatist to call the NFL commissioner’s olive branch vindication. He does think change is near, with Goodell leading the way.

“The fact that the NFL has seemed to take a step back instead of looking the other way [is exciting],” Guskiewicz says.

KEVIN MICHAEL GUSKIEWICZ
FAMILY: Wife, the former Amy Mergelenh, 39; children, Jacob, 10, Nathan, 9, Adam, 7, and Tessa, 3 months.
EDUCATION: West Chester University, West Chester, Pa., B.S. in exercise physiology and sports medicine, 1989; University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa., M.S. in exercise physiology and sports medicine, 1992; University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va., Ph.D. in sports medicine, 1995.
HOBBIES: Running, occasional triathlete competition, coaching his sons’ baseball teams in the Carrboro Recreation League.
TRAINER’S TIP: “Don’t neglect what your body is telling you.”

Guskiewicz has been ruffling NFL feathers for years. David Perrin, Guskiewicz’s mentor, says Guskiewicz’s work is on the front lines challenging the NFL’s long-held beliefs about concussions.

“I don’t think he’ll receive complimentary Super Bowl tickets from the NFL this year, but that’s OK,” Perrin says.

Guskiewicz, a native of Latrobe, Pa., became interested in the affects of concussions while working as a graduate assistant athletic trainer for his beloved Pittsburgh Steelers from 1990 to 1992. He saw NFL players take nasty hits to the head.

Guskiewicz got a chance to do something about it while working on his doctorate under Perrin at the University of Virginia.

His research eventually showed that postural stability tests — such as balancing oneself, eyes closed, on one foot — were often more effective in identifying concussions than neurocognitive tests such as asking someone to repeat a series of numbers in reverse order.

Perrin said Guskiewicz’s work led to new sideline testing guidelines for athletic trainers.

Refuting the NFL refrain

“The work Kevin is doing is not only seminal work but important,” Perrin said, “because it is essentially refuting [the NFL’s] findings for intercollegiate and interscholastic athletes who had been hearing differently from the NFL for years.”

As an authority on the subject, Guskiewicz travels up to 10 weekends each year away from his wife, Amy, and their four children — three sons and a 3-month old daughter, Tessa, whom they have adopted and will pick up in Vietnam in July.

He is self-conscious about the time he spends away from their Chapel Hill home, but his wife admires and respects his passion for his work. Even when coaching his kids’ baseball team or volunteering as an athletic trainer at Pop Warner games, he’s following his passion.

“He says that before he met me, he told anyone he dated that his priorities were school, friends and whoever he dated, in that order,” said Amy Guskiewicz. They met as undergrads at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. “I laugh,” she said, “because even then he was driven by work and his studies.”

Kevin Guskiewicz isn’t so focused that he doesn’t chuckle at his good fortune. An avid runner and former high school football and tennis player, he gets to work in sports with one of the top-rated sports medicine research staffs in the country. A former high school and college newspaper editor, he also gets to write.

“What I love most about it is the feeling that we’re making a difference [for generations of all levels of athletes] every day,” Guskiewicz said.

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Aides rewrote entry for history

BY RYAN TEAGUE BECKWITH
STAFF WRITER

Most politicians would love a chance to edit their page in the history books.
Gov. Mike Easley's staff did it.

Last year, members of Easley's press office heavily rewrote an entry on him in a book by state-employed historians on North Carolina's governors.

Over several drafts, they deleted a reference to a failed U.S. Senate bid, speculation that he dislikes campaigning and a note that he had a boyhood reputation "for making mischief."

They added a quote from Easley about patriotism, a line about how he "successfully led" the state to a "new global economy" and the fact that USA Today once named him one of the country's top drugbusters.

In the end, more than two-thirds of the final draft came from the Governor's Office.

Harry Watson, a history professor at UNC-Chapel Hill and an Easley appointee on an advisory commission for the state Department of Cultural Resources, said he was disappointed by the tone of the governor's entry.

"It sounds like a campaign press release," Watson said.

Representatives of Easley and Cultural Resources said the press office was asked to review and edit "The Governors of North Carolina" before publication by the department's secretary, Libba Evans, an Easley appointee.

"We did what we were asked to do, and that was to review and edit the book," said Sherri Johnson, a spokeswoman for Easley. She said Easley did not know about the book until after it was published and said then that he should have been left out until he had finished his second term.

Michael Hill, the book's editor — and author of the entry on Easley — works for Evans' department. He said in an interview that Easley's section was the only entry that was reviewed by its subject. Still, he said, "everyone was happy" with the final version.

"It all came to a good resolution," he said.

But a review of e-mail correspondence between Hill, his bosses and the Governor's Office — released under a public records request by The News & Observer — indicates that the revisions were a contentious subject with the historians at Cultural Resources.

First published in 1958, "The Governors of North Carolina" gives an overview of every governor since the Colonial era. In 600- to 1,000-word entries, the book explains how each came to office and lists their accomplishments.

The book had not been updated since 1974, and in 1998, the historical publications office of the Department of Cultural Resources began working on a new edition.

In an interview, Hill, who has a master's degree in history from UNC-Chapel Hill, said it was a challenge to cover recent governors such as Jim Martin and Jim Hunt because there were not as many historical works available.

"You try to fix a politician's place in history," he said. "Trying to do that with Govs. Martin, Hunt and Easley is a little more difficult."

In August 2005, Hill turned in a draft of the entry on Easley that referenced articles from North Carolina newspapers. In 749 words, it covered Easley's life from childhood through his first year in office.

The Governor's Office learned about the book when the historical publications office requested a photo of Easley, according to an e-mail message to Hill from Susan Lagana, then a spokeswoman for Cultural Resources.

Johnson said that message is incorrect. She said the Governor's Office learned about the book a week or two earlier when Evans asked them to review it and make suggestions.

When he learned about the involvement of the Governor's Office, Hill wrote by e-mail to Lagana that he did not want to see a press office member rewrite it "to suit imagined needs."

"After all, he ain't running again," Hill wrote.

Still, he wrote that he hoped the Governor's Office would like the book, perhaps even getting Easley to promote it publicly. He said he would be open to Easley, a Democrat, writing a preface to the book as well.

In October, the Governor's Office sent an expanded version of the entry to Cultural Resources. At 1,149 words, the new draft was more positive about Easley's achievements.
It also included a few digs at his political peers.

The new draft removed a reference to Easley taking office "in the long shadow of James B. Hunt Jr." It added that Easley "inherited from the previous administration" a budget shortfall.

Over the following five months, the Governor's Office and Hill traded at least four more drafts. Each time, Easley's office added detail on his achievements, which Hill then rewrote, often opting to keep the suggested wording.

One conflict was over length. Two drafts from the governor's office were close to 1,300 words — a third longer than the entry on Hunt, who served four terms, compared with Easley's two.

Hill trimmed the entry to the standard 1,000-word length for two-term governors. He kept most of the suggestions from the Governor's Office about Easley's accomplishments, though he sometimes reworded them.

He also deleted wording from his original draft that the Governor's Office disapproved of, such as a sentence about Easley's "mild reading disability" as a student.

"Strict comparisons of all versions, including this one, will show that all requests of the Governor's press office are honored, but, importantly, the sketch is in my words," Hill wrote to his boss.

In March, another department spokeswoman, Maryanne Friend, sent Hill a message noting that "the famous press office" had called, wanting to know why the final draft was shorter. She said an unnamed governor's staffer — Johnson said it was spokesman Seth Effron — had made a "comment that a certain person would want to know why what he sent in was different."

Hill and other employees of Cultural Resources stressed that they had final say.

At Hill's request, the introduction to the book noted that the Easley sketch "was written after consultation with his Press Office." Easley did not write a preface, but his press office sent a news release when it was published in March. In it, Easley called the book "an informative trip through North Carolina history" and a "valuable research tool for historians."

Donna Kelly, director of the historical publications section, said in an interview that it would not include sitting governors in future editions, but not because of concerns over Easley's staff editing the entry.

"We learned a lesson from this," she said. "We think it's probably better to wait until a governor finishes the term so that we can put as complete a sketch as possible in."

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**Before and after**

Staffers for Gov. Mike Easley heavily rewrote an entry on him in a state-published history book. Below, changes between the first draft, written entirely by historian Mike Hill, and the final version, which includes wording suggested by the Governor's Office:

**FIRST DRAFT**

"The first chief executive inaugurated in the twenty-first century and the first born after World War II, Michael Francis Easley (1950- ) advocated early childhood initiatives, reduced class size, and increased teacher pay, proposing a state lottery to fund his education goals. Within weeks of assuming the office, the 'Baby Boomer Governor' found his efforts to craft and fund new programs impeded by a national economic downturn and state budget shortfall. Taking the reins of government in the long shadow of James B. Hunt Jr., Easley brought to the office a tested record of bringing parties to a consensus, an easygoing personality, an unorthodox managerial style, and an independent approach to problem-solving."

**FINAL VERSION**

"In the weeks that followed, he instituted cuts and freezes to cope with the state budget shortfall. The governor proposed a tax increase as the solution for the budget problems."

**FIRST DRAFT**

"In the weeks that followed, he instituted cuts and freezes to cope with a $2.5 billion state budget shortfall inherited from the previous administration. The governor closed numerous tax loopholes and called for a temporary half-cent sales tax increase to provide resources to fund education, including reducing class size and establishing a statewide academic pre-K program, 'More at Four.'"

**FINAL VERSION**

"In the 2000 elections Easley defeated Lieutenant Governor Dennis A. Wicker for the Democratic nomination and former Charlotte Mayor Richard Vinroot in the fall returns. In his campaign Easley maintained an independent stance, choosing not to seek the backing of traditional support groups. The atypical style led to a perception that he disliked campaigning. The candidate, like his Republican opponent, engaged in a limited number of large public events preferring one-on-one exchanges."

**FIRST DRAFT**

"Easley was elected governor in 2000."

**FINAL VERSION**

"Easley was elected governor in 2000."

SOURCE: DRAFTS OF "MICHAEL F. EASLEY" ENTRY IN "THE GOVERNORS OF NORTH CAROLINA," BY MICHAEL HILL.

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Colleges ask for help in covering nursing training

BY TIM SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

Demand for registered nurses is exceeding supply in North Carolina, and it's bringing attention to a basic business problem at the state's community colleges.

It costs more to graduate nurses than the campuses receive in tuition and funding.

The gap is especially important in Durham and Wake counties, where community colleges have some of the state's largest health-care enrollments.

"It's like selling gasoline for $1 a gallon and hoping to make it back on volume," said Wake Technical Community College's president, Stephen Scott. "The gap gets bigger with every student we enroll in health services."

Community colleges provide about half the registered nurses and more than 80 percent of the practical nurses in the state.

Figures vary depending on programs and campuses, but community colleges receive about $3,500 per student. The requirements for a degree in health-care can cost more than twice that much to provide.

Nursing degrees are the most expensive because

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of lab equipment, small class sizes and higher standards for instructors.

Lawmakers began to address the problem this week, with a recommendation that the colleges get $5.6 million to help cover costs. Community college leaders peg the need at about $30 million.

In the past, the costs were covered by shifting money from classes that are less expensive. With demand for health-care workers increasing, that approach has its limits.

Not all of the money requested by the schools would be used to enroll more students. Some would be used to improve graduation rates with better student support.

In a field where some schools lose half of those who enroll, support can be as simple as offering better academic counseling and dependable child care.

Richard Stevens, a Cary Republican and co-chairman of the Senate's education appropriations committee, called the $5.6 million proposal "a significant recognition" of the extra program costs. He said he knows the money won't cover all the difference.

Marian McLawhorn, a Democrat from Pitt County and chairwoman of the House education appropriations committee, said lawmakers know that the problem won't go away.

The N.C. Center for Nursing estimates that demand for registered nurses exceeded supply sometime in the past 18 months. The center predicts that the gap will grow rapidly, with the shortage rising to about 18,000 nurses in 2020.

Such numbers, which are echoed throughout other health-care fields, are the reason that Wake Tech hopes to expand its health-sciences campus near WakeMed.

Scott, Wake Tech's president, said school leaders have no choice but to assume that funding will increase as enrollments grow.

In addition to equipment costs, additional money will be needed to recruit faculty. Many nursing instructors are approaching retirement age, and there aren't enough new recruits to replace them, Scott said.

Bill Atkinson, president and CEO of WakeMed, said he thinks that the shortage of faculty boils down to pay.

As many as eight WakeMed employees teach in Wake Tech's classrooms each year. They are paid the same for teaching as they are for their job duties at WakeMed.

"There is no problem getting people to go teach there if they are compensated at an appropriate level," Atkinson said.

Similar partnerships between hospitals and community colleges are fairly common in the state, but Atkinson said he doesn't think that approach can be used to fill the entire gap.

A.B. Swindell, a Democrat from Nash County and chairman of the Senate education appropriations committee, agreed.

"Partnerships are just a part of the answer," he said. "This issue is only going to get bigger in coming years. We'll need to get pretty creative to meet the demand."

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Campers are creators of video games

Wake Tech course targets youngsters

BY SAM LAGRONE
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — You won’t find any video games with a koala named Rhi-Rhi yet. But the character is a victory for a Wake Technical Community College effort to staff the growing video game industry.

The star of “Curse of the Koala,” Rhi-Rhi was created by a quartet of teenage girls as a summer camp offshoot of Wake Tech’s fledgling video game development curriculum. The camp was in part educational and in part recruiting tool for Wake Tech.

Since last year, Wake Tech has aggressively pushed inexpensive game development education for community colleges.

This week, the N.C. Community College System president, Martin Lancaster, is expected to sign an agreement between Wake Tech and four other Piedmont community colleges.

The Instructional Service Agreements would allow students at Surry, Wayne, Pitt and Nash community colleges to earn credit through Wake Tech’s video game education program at their home schools.

Wake Tech’s program began with an $850,000 National Science Foundation grant. The money funded a $93,000, 24-station high-end Alienware computer lab. And it created enough positions to teach the 123 students enrolled.

The program has been aided by the local video game development community.

Walter Rotenberry, a computer science instructor at Wake Tech, asked advice from the Triangle chapter of the International Game Developers Association.

Wake Tech designed a curriculum to teach the fundamentals developers seek. Organizers tapped local game developers, including Epic Games in Cary and Red Storm Entertainment in Morrisville, for advice.

The industry is growing rapidly, and the staff needed to create a game is getting larger.

So it’s getting harder for game producers to find talent.

That void led to the creation of the Wake Tech program and the four other programs.

As for the kids at the summer camp, most of them between ages 13 and 15, they took quickly to the task of creating a working game in one week, said Brad Swearingen, an instructor for the game development program.

The first try was part of Applied Technologies Exploration Camp, run by the school’s engineering department head, Susan Meardon.

The first run included four girls among 20 students, a much higher percentage of females than in the actual game industry.

The genders played up to stereotypes.

“The boys are all interested in shooting games,” Swearingen said. “The girls want to make a game about a koala.”

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Rise in border graft feared
Some think 6,000 additional patrol agents will make corruption problem worse

By JAMES PINKERTON
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Border Sheriff Sigifredo Gonzalez first noticed the curious behavior of a longtime deputy last spring.

The Zapata County lawman wasn’t coming to work very often.

Then, he began wearing expensive clothing. More strangely, the deputy was spotted a few times in his unmarked car in border areas where narcotics traffickers were under surveillance.

On Tuesday, the sheriff’s suspicions seemed to be confirmed when ex-deputy Manuel Martinez, 43, was arrested by FBI agents on charges of extorting more than $20,000 in bribes from drug traffickers. Martinez, who took office in January as a justice of the peace, is also charged with passing on bribes to a county official and a building code inspector.

A spate of recent high-profile arrests not only have given border law officers a black eye, they are worried that corruption of lawmen is on the rise. Heightening that concern is the looming arrival — and potentially more corruption — of thousands of new law enforcement personnel on the border.

"You see a lot more of (the corruption) than before," said Gonzalez, whose office assisted in the FBI investigation of the three officials. "If you look at it real closely, as time goes by, I guess everybody’s morals and ethics are eroding away."

The arrests of the former deputy and two other Zapata County officials came a day after three Texas National Guardsmen — assigned to help Border Patrol agents with immigration control — were charged with smuggling 24 illegal immigrants in a van leased to the guard.

Also on Monday, a veteran Border Patrol agent was sentenced to 16 months in jail for transporting 11 illegal immigrants he picked up outside Laredo last July. In March, a U.S.
Customs inspector was sentenced to 14 years in prison for taking bribes to allow drugs across a border bridge.

These recent cases were not isolated.

The inspector general's office of the Homeland Security Department reported last week that 282 employees of Customs and Border Protection stationed on the Southwest border have been investigated for corruption since fiscal year 2004. And 52 of those cases were investigated so far this year, compared with 66 in all of last year. There were 151 cases in Texas in that time.

The Bush administration last year stepped up recruitment efforts to boost the U.S. Border Patrol to 18,000 agents by December 2008, an increase of nearly 6,000 agents. On Thursday, President Bush called for $4.4 billion in immediate funding for border security proposed in the pending immigration bill.

"The graft and corruption will increase," said Robert Lee Maril, a sociologist who spent two years researching a book on Border Patrol operations in South Texas.

DHS spokesman Russ Knocke, though declining to comment on the Texas Guard and Border Patrol cases, said corruption in federal agencies is "really quite rare."

"Even the finest law enforcement agency in the world is not immune to the potential bad apple," he said.

A fast-growing agency

Experts say that heightened border security has allowed human trafficking organizations to greatly increase their smuggling fees. The criminal cartels that control narcotics and human smuggling have "astronomical" amounts of money to use on bribes, Maril said.

"They're tightening up the border, so the criminal organizations are finding it a little bit more difficult to get across," said Maril, who chairs the sociology department at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. "So they're spending a little more to buy off Border Patrol agents and managers. It's just part of the overhead."

Maril said the quick buildup in the agency may lead to further corruption.

"In this rush to graduate so many agents I think they have considerably lowered their standards, and I think that's coming back to bite them," Maril said.

T.J. Bonner, head of the 11,000-member National Border Patrol union, predicts that stepped-up recruitment could result in less time to conduct thorough background investigations of new recruits.

"It's inevitable that we will see more of these cases, because the shortcuts are creating the perfect storm for corruption to flourish," said Bonner, a Border Patrol agent in San Diego. "And from the standpoint of the men and women on the front lines — the overwhelming majority who are honest — it's a disaster because these corrupt individuals are our backup."

The impact of bribery

Knocke, the DHS spokesman, said the agency is on track to expand the current 13,500-agent Border Patrol force up to the 18,000 goal by late 2008.

"I can tell you we go to great lengths to ensure we are recruiting, hiring and training law enforcement professionals with the integrity and morality that Americans expect," Knocke said.

Don Clark, a security consultant who headed the Houston FBI office until 2000, said if the corruption isn’t addressed now the problem will become more widespread.

"Let's face it, these soldiers and Border Patrol agents, none of them get paid high-priced salaries," Clark said. "Plus, they are waving money in their faces right and left."

As an example, the U.S. Customs inspector who was sentenced in March pocketed $1 million in bribes.

Martinez, the ex-deputy, was jailed without bail until a June 20 detention hearing, U.S. court officials said. Attempts to contact his defense attorney were unsuccessful.

Zapata County Judge Rosalva Guerra said Martinez was known in the small border community as a dedicated family man, as well as a veteran deputy before taking office as a justice of the peace.

"It was a sudden shock to all of us — we never expected this to happen," Guerra said.

Laredo defense lawyer Marcel Notzon, who is representing one of the Texas National Guard members charged with immigrant smuggling, said the chronic poverty along the border engenders corruption.

"In general, maybe it’s because of the amount of money that’s being offered, or that the economy is not as vibrant as it could be," he said.

**New fear: infiltration**

Notzon said his client, decorated Iraq war veteran Sgt. Julio Cesar Pacheco, will plead not guilty to federal charges that he was part of a ring that smuggled undocumented migrants from the border to San Antonio.

"I think the case was hastily put together," Notzon said.

Watching out for corruption is now part of the job description for federal law agencies, several officials said.

"We need to be ever vigilant on how smugglers will try and defeat any weakness in our defenses, including attempting to compromise law enforcement," said Alonzo Pena, who heads the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations in Arizona.

The Zapata County sheriff fears cartel leaders are grooming members to join police agencies.

"The information we have is some of these cartels are trying to infiltrate local, state and federal law agencies on the border," Gonzalez said. "They’re trying to get some of their people to apply for jobs, so they will have control of operations on the border."

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**VOICES OF HOUSTON**

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xheliosx wrote:
Corruption...it's why Mexico is so relatively lawless.
ECU team dives down to business

Group searching Neuse River for shipwrecks, potential artifacts

By Charlie Hall
Sun Journal Staff

Nothing magical emerged from Monday’s first day of an archaeological dive in the Neuse River near Bridge
ton. But, in the sometimes tedious world of underwater exploration, today could bring nuggets from Monday’s sonar discoveries.

An East Carolina University maritime history team planned to spend Monday evening reviewing and evaluating more than two dozen contact hits.

“That is not to say there are 28 culturally significant items,” noted staff archaeologist Calvin Mires, who was manning the sonar computer aboard the survey boat. He said the list would likely be whittled to a half dozen points for today’s dives.

The team went out early to begin a remote-sensing survey in the Neuse between Union Point and Bridge
ton, north to the railroad trestle.

Students used side scan sonar and magnetometer equipment in the search for shipwrecks and other potential artifacts.

The data gathered this week will be used in graduate student Jeremy Eam
drick’s thesis project. He also plans a fall survey of historical New Bern maritime sites. He said the project will focus on how maritime trade affected New Bern’s cultural evolution.

In another part of the river Monday, a 28-foot dive barge marked the spot of a previously charted wreck. Student divers Adam Friedman and Melissa Ashmore went down in the 10-foot water. Again, the dive work is detailed — a circular search from the end of a rope attached to a stationary point.

The project continues all week, with the team expected to make its way into the Lawson Creek area by Thursday.

The ECU team is being hosted by Swiss Bear Downtown Development Corp. as a project toward the city’s 300th birthday in 2010.

Professor David Stewart said the team’s mission was gathering data. Any new shipwrecks located could become the focus of future projects.

The ECU summer field school’s work in New Bern is the third river site visited this year.

One was the Washington Park vessel, a continuation of a Pamlico River exploration in the fall of 2006 near Washington, N.C. The team moved then to North Creek, a tributary of the Pamlico River between Bath and the

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ECU

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Pungo River. ECU first surveyed the area in 1994, with several return visits. Surveys indicated the remains of more than 40 vessels and numerous magnetic anomalies.

The ECU program is featured on the Web site “The Museum of Underwater Archaeology,” where students write project journals. Student postings of the New Bern project will be available later this week at www.uri.edu/mua.

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ECU to conduct impact study on U.S. 17 improvements

Advocacy group touts successful fiscal year

By EUGENE L. TINKLEPAUGH
Staff Writer

There’s one question Marc Finlayson can’t answer definitively: Will an upgraded U.S. Highway 17 improve eastern North Carolina or just send travelers — and the economic benefits they carry — zipping past faster than before?

Finlayson, the executive director of an advocacy group promoting improvements to the Ocean Highway, says right now he can only answer that question based on experience.

“We think that a controlled access would drive economic development along the new roads,” Finlayson said. “We want to know that.”

A new partnership with a research institute is going to provide that knowledge, Finlayson hopes.

East Carolina University is researching and producing an impact study on the highway to understand how an improved highway would benefit eastern North Carolina, according to a June newsletter from the U.S. 17 Association.

The study will look at safety, economic progress and quality of life for area residents.

The advocacy group’s newsletter states a scope of work is expected to be agreed upon by July.

Professor Mulatu Wubneh, chairman of ECU’s planning department, is conducting the impact study.

Preliminary efforts are under way, Wubneh said Monday.

“We haven’t gotten all the information together, but we will look at the overall economic impact of the projects to the region,” he said. “We may look at some of the environmental impacts, which is a critical piece for the Department of Transportation.”

Wubneh said he was hoping to be finished with the study by the end of the summer.

“The preliminary analysis is not going to include detailed information, because we still do not have complete information on how much the improvements are going to cost,” Wubneh said.

The study is made possible through ECU’s Regional Development Institute, which has been providing outreach services and conducting applied research in eastern North Carolina since its founding in 1964. RDI draws upon the expertise of faculty, students and professional staff to assist in the economic development of the state’s 40 easternmost counties.

With this study, Finlayson said, “we can say absolutely what the economic benefits a fully four-laned 17 will bring.”

The association’s office in New Bern has been open and staffed since October. That same month, Finlayson was hired as the association’s first full-time executive director with the singular charge of realizing a fully improved north-to-south highway in eastern North Carolina. Since October, momentum has picked up, advocates say.

Robert Cayton, a Beaufort County commissioner and a U.S. 17 Association board representative, said the group’s mission is farther along today than it’s been in its 30 years of existence because of the good leadership Finlayson has brought to the project.

“We will see it in our lifetime,” Cayton said of a fully controlled access to eastern North Carolina.

The organization devoted to four-laning U.S. 17 has been around since 1975. But only recently has the group garnered regional support.

That support has snowballed into congressional backing and with the state Department of Transportation finding funding to keep U.S. 17 projects going, which has given way to all the dirt and cranes and construction crews on the west side of Washington and the east side of Chocowinity.

The very visible fruits of the group’s highway-improvement efforts are a big piece to the “fully controlled access” puzzle.

But Finlayson and association advocates stress it’s one piece of an incomplete vision. So while the Washington bypass is going up, the association is on the campaign trail for the remaining projects on the needs-improvement list.

Zoph Potts, a central figure and past president of the lobbying group, said the 55 miles of highway needing improvement is estimated to carry a $550 million price tag.

The mission statement of the lobbying group is to “assure, through collective action and constancy of purpose,” that the inclusion and funding of all unfunded portions of the U.S. 17 corridor shall be part of the state DOT’s 2009 Transportation Improvement Plan.

The TIP is a six-year program to generally improve the state’s transportation network. It is operated by the state DOT and includes all public transportation from bicycle paths to railroads, ferries and highways. The highway must be funded.

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and on the TIP for its construction to move forward.

The 55 miles Potts cited is on the TIP but is currently unfunded.

The unfunded sections of the highway are between Williamston and Washington, between Chocowinity and New Bern, and from New Bern to Pollocksville. The road has already been enhanced from Elizabeth City, where there is a new bypass, to the Virginia border and from South Carolina, north through Wilmington and Jacksonville.

U.S. 17 crosses 13 North Carolina county lines.

The association wants U.S. 17 to be four lanes from one border of North Carolina to the other.

The group receives financial support from 15 county and municipal governments along the highway's corridor as well as three economic boosters or partnerships.

The group expects to build on that support in the upcoming fiscal year, its newsletter reports, with three new local government partnerships.

The bypass around Washington and Chocowinity, which was started in February, is expected to cost $192 million.