Effort to tie North Carolina shipwreck to pirate Blackbeard advances

After examining thousands of artifacts and digging through historical data, maritime archaeologists have a verdict: A ship off North Carolina is all but certainly the Queen Anne's Revenge.

A 3,000-pound anchor from a ship believed to be Blackbeard's Queen Anne's Revenge is recovered from the ocean off the coast of North Carolina in May. (Robert Willett, News & Observer / May 27, 2011)

David Zucchino June 19, 2011

Reporting from Beaufort, N.C. – In the fall of 1996, a private treasure-hunting company discovered a shipwreck in shallow waters a mile off the coast of this colonial fishing harbor.

Divers found a bronze bell dated 1705, an English musketoon gun barrel, and 18th century cannons and cannon balls.

North Carolina's top marine archaeologists were pretty sure the wreck was the Queen Anne's Revenge, the cannon-heavy flagship of the notorious pirate Blackbeard that ran aground here in 1718. But being scientists, they used buzzkill qualifiers such as "believed to be" and "consistent with" to describe the wreck.

Now, after examining thousands of artifacts and digging through historical records, those same archaeologists have finally delivered a verdict:

The ship is very likely, just about dead sure, all but certain, no doubt the Queen
Anne's Revenge. Pretty much.

"It's in the right place, from the right time, with a preponderance of circumstantial evidence that has become overwhelming," said David Moore, a sturdy, bearded nautical archaeologist who has spent 15 years diving the wreck.

No one has found "the smoking blunderbuss," said Jeffrey Crow, a historian with North Carolina's Office of Archives and History. But archaeological detective work has proved that every significant artifact — from swords to gold pieces to silver boot buckles to a diamond-encrusted wine glass — is dated before the 1718 wreck. That and other compelling evidence confirm that the ship can be none other than the Queen Anne's Revenge.

The two marine archaeologists who wrote the scholarly paper that has prompted the state to seal the deal on Blackbeard's 90-foot ship said, "It was the right-sized vessel, in the right place, at the right time, and with artifacts of the right period."

Perfect! But then they had to add this downer: "And often, with archaeology, that's as good as it gets."

Mark Wilde-Ramsing, deputy state archaeologist and head of the Queen Anne's Revenge project, wrote the paper with Charles Ewen of the anthropology faculty at East Carolina University. Although he has long believed the shipwreck is Blackbeard's, Wilde-Ramsing urged caution for years as the wreck was studied.

"Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof," he said.

The shipwreck paper, to be published next spring in the scholarly journal Historical Archaeology, now provides that level of proof, he said.

The Queen Anne's Revenge was originally a French slave ship named La Concorde. Blackbeard captured the vessel in the Caribbean in 1717, renamed it and armed it with fearsome cannons and swivel guns.

Blackbeard, variously known as Edouard or Edward Teach (or Tiche or Thatch), didn't leave many clues. After his flagship ran aground on a sandbar in the spring of 1718 at what is now called Beaufort Inlet, he and his pirate crew took their sweet time unloading the ship, leaving behind virtually nothing personal or proprietary — no diary, no letter, no engraved ring.

(Blackbeard's remains are certainly not available. In November 1718, his corpse was dumped at sea and his severed head mounted on a bowsprit after sailors dispatched by Virginia's governor killed him in a showdown near Ocracoke).
As the paper's authors note: "Short of a bell with La Concorde scratched out and Queen Anne's Revenge crudely chiseled over it, what would constitute proof positive?"

How about these artifacts:
- A brass coin weight bearing the bust of Queen Anne of England, cast during her reign (1702-1714).
- A wine glass decorated with diamonds and tiny embossed crowns, made to commemorate the 1714 coronation of Queen Anne's successor, King George I.
- A French hunting sword fragment featuring a bust that closely resembles King Louis XV, who claimed the French throne in 1715.
- A French-made urethral syringe for treating venereal diseases. A control mark showed that it was made in Paris between 1707 and 1715.

These and other discoveries helped rebut a 2005 International Journal of Nautical Archaeology article that accused the state of prematurely certifying the shipwreck as Blackbeard's. The article suggested "a strong tendency towards Ruling Theory, whereby researchers seem to shape evidence to fit a preconceived identification."

That unpleasantness is long forgotten as overflow crowds have jammed the Queen Anne's Revenge exhibit that opened June 11 at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort, and as media coverage has fanned public fascination with all things pirate. It didn't hurt that Hollywood's latest installment of "Pirates of the Caribbean," featuring the Queen Anne's Revenge, is a summer blockbuster.

Only half the site has been excavated, Moore said. Just last month, a 3,000-pound anchor was brought to the surface.

It'll be a long while before all the wreck's estimated 750,000 artifacts — and perhaps the absolute, definitive, clinching proof of Blackbeard's flagship — are hauled up and carefully examined, Moore said.

How long?

Moore shrugged. "I'd say another 15 years."

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Students leaving means less business

By K.j. Williams
The Daily Reflector
Sunday, June 19, 2011

Summer's exodus of homebound East Carolina University students tends to subdue the sound of cash registers at local businesses and restaurants.

Less business for merchants also can make it more difficult to find work, but that doesn't deter ECU and Pitt Community College students taking summer classes from hunting for jobs. Some have found jobs despite the odds, but for others, it's been a discouraging time. Brooke Quintana, 22, landed a job on June 6. She was hired as a delivery person at the new Jimmy John's restaurant located downtown.

“It took two months to find one because Greenville is so dead in the summer,” she said. “I'm so excited. I was like, thank God.”

Quintana and three of her ECU friends were sitting on the patio of Sup Dogs where Emily Thomas, another of their ECU friends, had been hired. Thomas, 21, said she applied at eight places before she was rehired as a waitress at the student hangout downtown.

“I never heard from a lot of them,” she said of the businesses. “It's tough to get a job.” Another Sup Dogs waitress, ECU student Cate Dahl, 21, also was rehired. “In a college town, hands down, you've got to be on your game to get a job,” Dahl said. “I know so many people who are still looking for jobs.”

One job seeker is Thomas' friend, ECU student Erica Heer, 19. “I'm looking for one; but it's not working,” Heer said, adding she'd submitted 12 applications. “I have to pay for half my rent.”
Sup Dogs owner Derek Oliverio said he's been busier this summer than last summer, but that's not the only reason he hired three more waitresses and was hiring cooks.

“We're also hiring to be ready for whenever they get back in town,” he said, referring to the fall semester's rush of returning students. Buffalo Wild Wings Grill & Bar in Arlington Village shopping center is another local restaurant that's hiring despite the slower season.

“We hire in the summer to train for the peak football season,” operations manager Kenny Gabelmann said. “If you hire a lot of people in August you're in trouble, so we get our staff hired all summer and up to speed for the peak season.”

Kmart is among the businesses that don't hire many people in the summer. “We're slow this time of year,” sales manager Dexter Darden said, adding that the college students who work there are year-round employees.

The job picture for everyone is bleaker this summer than it used to be, said Danny Alston, manager of the local Employment Security Commission office of North Carolina. “Usually, we would see an influx of jobs in the spring and the summer, but the last couple of summers, we just haven't seen it,” he said. “There's just been sort of a lull in hiring.”

One business that gets busier in the hotter months, even with fewer people in town, is Coldstone Creamery in La Promenade shopping center. Owner Loy Ehlers said the ice cream business is booming. He recently hired seven people, doubling his staff.

“We generally hire leading up to the summer to be ready for it because it's the busiest part of the year,” he said. “So we start in early March to staff up so we're fully trained by the time our business picks up in the summer.”

**Students struggle**

Shelly Dawson, a 21-year-old ECU student, said she found a job at The Spa at Merle Norman at Arlington Shoppes after learning of the opening because she was on the business's email list.

“I was really lucky,” she said.

The job hunt has proved fruitless for others, including several PCC students taking classes this summer.

PCC student Charnell Williams, 18, said she's been looking for a job since March. “I've had no luck at all,” she said.

Williams said she needs the money and the lack of a job is a hardship. She readily ticks off a list of the fast-food restaurants and retailers where she's applied.

“They all say they're not hiring,” Williams said.
Dustin Barnes, a 23-year-old former Marine, has been attending PCC for one and a half years.

“So far I've applied to over 20-something places here in Greenville, and I haven't yet gotten a call back,” Barnes said.

He said it's an affront to veterans when they can't find work.
“From a military perspective that I've spent four years protecting the country and now I can't even get a job as a waiter or in retail, it's like a slap in the face to me,” he said.

**Looking for work**
At the ESC office recently, several people sat at computers looking for jobs or updating their resumes.

Anna Barrett, who works part-time through PCC at the JobLink Center at the ESC office, said she was laid off from her full-time job in April 2010, so she can empathize with the people she's helping.

“Whatever it takes to get them a job is what I'm assisting them with, and it's been high-volume lately,” she said.

On that day, she was helping two women polish their resumes.
One of the women, Sherina Barnes, 26, said she had to quit her job two and a half years ago because she didn't have a babysitter. It's been hard to find a job, she said.

“You've got to have school, you really do,” Sherina Barnes said. “You've got to have education.”

Despite the difficulties, Alston said he's seeing a slow thawing of the chilly hiring climate.

“You're seeing some hiring but it's usually two or three positions here and there,” the ESC manager said. “We're not seeing extensive hiring.”

People looking for work at the ESC office keep anticipating it will improve.
“They're hoping the economy gets better and they're hoping to see some hiring on a larger scale,” he said.

Unadjusted unemployment data for the Greenville metropolitan area for May won't be released until June 24, but ESC data for April 2011 shows an improvement over the previous April. The unemployment rate for the Greenville area was 9.6 percent and for Pitt County, it was 9.5 percent. In April 2010, the Greenville area had 10.2 percent unemployment and Pitt County was at 10.1 percent.
At PCC, Leslie Rogers, assistant vice president for student services, said students who graduated last month in certain areas of study, especially the medical fields, appear to be finding jobs more readily than they did last year.

“Business and industry is starting to hire again,” she said. “It's slow, but I feel that employers are kind of easing back in.”

Contact K.J. Williams at kwilliams@reflector.com or 252-329-9588.
County continues preparations for ECU dental learning center

By Darrick Ignasiak
The Dispatch
Published: Friday, June 17, 2011 at 4:06 p.m.

A decision whether East Carolina University will locate a new dental learning center at Davidson County Community College is undetermined, but members of the Davidson County Board of Commissioners are taking steps to make sure the move will become reality.

Commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to provide funding for the site grading and preparation for the dental learning center on DCCC's existing campus near the Felix O. Gee Building. The cost of the work will be approximately $290,000, but the project is contingent on ECU's decision to locate the dental learning center at DCCC. That "major announcement" should be made by the fall, said Mary E. Rittling, president of Davidson County Community College.

Gregory Chadwick, associate dean for planning and extramural affairs for the ECU School of Dental Medicine, Robert Powell, a consultant for ECU, and Rittling updated commissioners on the progress of the joint venture between the institutions during the board's regular monthly meeting Tuesday night. Rittling told commissioners that DCCC identified two sites for the proposed dental learning center.

DCCC officials had previously said ECU may potentially locate the dental learning center on the undeveloped Link Campus. The Link Campus, nestled on 183 acres on the opposite side of Interstate 85 Business Loop from DCCC, was donated to the college in 2009 by siblings Ed Hinkle and Talmadge Hinkle Silversides.

Rittling said the Link Center was ruled out as the location for the dental learning center because of an "access issue." She said DCCC is unsure where the N.C. Department of Transportation would like to put an entrance and exit on the Link Campus.

"After that kind of deliberation, we knew this project had to move forward, so we had to find an alternative site," Rittling said.

Locating the new dental learning center on DCCC's existing campus could likely use the last of the community college's available property on that side.
of Interstate 85 Business Loop. Rittling doesn't mind using the property for the dental learning center.

"We are really stretching ourselves, but it's so important to have this," she said. "We hope that once we really get a sense of what is happening with the road, Business 85, we will really be able to get the Link Campus off the ground."

Powell said ECU has worked for 18 months to identify 10 sites for dental learning centers. The ECU model consists of 10 learning centers located in communities that have been identified as having un-met dental needs.

"If we weren't very interested, we wouldn't be here," Chadwick said.

At the proposed dental learning center, ECU students would complete their fourth year of training while providing dental services to the undeserved population. According to Davidson County officials, the county in October 2010 had 1.55 dentists to 10,000 residents.

Chadwick said ECU would invest approximately $2 million in a building on the DCCC campus and another $1.5 million in dental equipment for the learning center. After being asked by Commissioner Todd Yates whether the dental learning center would compete with the private sector, Chadwick said the university is trying to recruit local dentists to serve as instructors for the university's potential program at DCCC.

"We don't want to compete with the private sector," Chadwick said.

"Actually, we want to be very collaborative with the private sector. We had the opportunity about a year ago to speak with dentists in the community. We hope many of them will become part-time faculty. We want to become a referral source for them and for our patients who cannot afford some of the services."

Rittling said ECU is in agreement to allow DCCC to use the clinic for dental assisting and dental hygiene programs. She said the laboratory site would not be something the college could afford without ECU's assistance.

"It brings a university presence on our campus," Rittling said.

Darrick Ignasiak can be reached at 249-3981, ext. 217, or at darrick.ignasiak@the-dispatch.com.

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A Gaston County Schools senior was selected by East Carolina University to receive the most prestigious merit-based scholarship offered by the school. Dakota Johnson, a senior at Highland School of Technology, was chosen in April as an EC Scholar, and will attend the school on a four-year full-ride scholarship. The award, which includes a stipend for studying abroad, is valued at $45,000 by the school.

“It means a lot to me,” Johnson said. “It’s a huge burden off of my parents, and I just thank God.”

In addition to being one of only 15 incoming ECU freshmen to be named an EC Scholar, Johnson was also one of just four students to be pre-admitted to East Carolina’s Brody School of Medicine.

“I won’t have to take the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test),” Johnson said. “I’m not sure exactly what I want to do (in the medical field), but I’ve got plenty of time to figure it out.”
Johnson, who was also accepted to UNC Chapel Hill and N.C. State, said that, apart from the scholarship, what attracted him to ECU in particular was the feeling that the school genuinely desired him on its campus.

“They made me really feel like I was wanted,” Johnson said.

When asked about his reaction to finding out about his scholarship, the word Johnson used repeatedly was “disbelief”. Johnson also said winning the award gave him a sense of validation for all the work he put in during his high school years.

“I mean, I know I’m not a genius or anything, but I’ve made good grades and played sports all four years, so to win this really makes me feel accomplished.”

You can reach Anderson Phillips at 704-869-1902.

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A pair of East Carolina football players face misdemeanor charges after they were arrested early Saturday morning.

Cornerback Emanuel Davis was charged with being intoxicated and disruptive in public and resisting a public officer — both misdemeanors.

Receiver Michael Bowman also was charged with two misdemeanors — disorderly conduct and resisting a public officer.

An ECU spokesman said Saturday that a decision or announcement on the status of the players wouldn't come until head coach Ruffin McNeill had a chance to discuss the situation with the relevant parties and gather more information.

Davis played in all 13 games for the Pirates last season, racking up 54 tackles and two interceptions.

Bowman also saw action in all 13 games in 2010, and was fourth on the team in receptions (47) and third in receiving yards (434). The rising senior also saw time as a kick returner.
ECU 101: Orientation to the Pirate nation
ECU News Services
Sunday, June 19, 2011

Call it the formal hello — the time each year when the newest Pirates take a measure of their first home away from home and sample what life is like at East Carolina University.

Orientation began on campus June 13 and will continue for eight sessions scheduled through July 14. For incoming students and their parents it's a time of learning, of reassurance and of building relationships.

“I got to meet professors and learn more about what I want to study while I'm here, which made me feel more comfortable with my decision to study political science,” said Terrell Harris of Raleigh, among those visiting for the first orientation session.

Harris said he met his advisor, saw where his classes will be held and made a few friends. Knowing his way around and having familiar faces will make the transition to a new place in August a little easier, he said.

Parents bring similar expectations.
“I attended orientation to find out about extracurricular activities my daughter could become involved in and to see how the school was organized because my daughter has never lived away from home before,” Paul Barker of Hendersonville said.

For years, ECU's orientation sessions have helped students and their families grow accustomed to the campus and to the services the university offers.
“Orientation is a tradition that serves to introduce students and families to the college community and educate them about college resources to ensure them their academic and social success,” said Mary Beth Corbin, director of the Office of Student Transitions and First Year Programs.

First Year Programs.
The majority of students who attend orientation have already made the decision to attend in the fall, she said, so they come to take care of necessary pre-enrollment business.

The two-day event is a little like ECU 101.
On day one students receive a campus bus tour and afterward are welcomed by Chancellor Steve Ballard and Virginia Hardy, vice provost for student affairs, in Wright Auditorium.

In the first orientation session of the summer, Ballard described university life at ECU as “transformative” and talked about its role as a leadership university. Later, the auditorium
filled with alternating chants of “purple” and “gold” as the Student Government Association led new Pirates in football chants. During the day students meet with their orientation assistant, an upper-classman who is there to get their questions answered. Parents have concurrent advisory sessions on topics such as disability support services, the career center and the parent council. They, too, can find answers to their questions.

Students and their families get a lot of information packed into a short time frame.

“All students have the opportunity to hear from the administration on the first day, hear faculty expectations and attend sessions on financial aid, the registrar's office, the cashier's office. … They also meet with their advisors as well as meet with student affairs educators who introduce them to the multitude of opportunities and experiences available to them beyond the classroom,” Corbin said.

The tradition of orientation is the first step in making the new students feel at home and in creating a sense of community, Corbin said.

“Orientation gives students and families the time to learn about and enjoy our campus — to walk around and become familiar with the overall ECU community and what makes this such a special place,” Corbin said.

**Siegel selected for Fulbright project**

A professor at East Carolina University will visit South Africa this summer as a Fulbright specialist to lecture on access and inclusion.

David Siegel, associate professor of higher, adult and counselor education in ECU's College of Education, will give a series of lectures and workshops on the role of access, inclusion and diversity in promoting national and economic development.

Siegel is one of more than 400 U.S. faculty and professionals who will travel abroad this year through the Fulbright specialists program.

“Fulbright encourages not only an exchange of knowledge and understanding but new perspectives. Visiting post-apartheid South Africa is a particularly exciting prospect because the country is seeking to transform itself,” Siegel said.

Siegel visited South Africa in 2010 to deliver a paper to the students of the University of Stellenbosch, just east of Cape Town. His presentation was on a book he wrote that year titled “Organizing for Social Partnership,” on the “cross-sector approaches to addressing issues of diversity and education.”

A representative of the University of Johannesburg, in the audience, later approached him about an extended visit in South Africa and bringing him to his institution.
Siegel's lectures will focus on how the collaboration of academic institutions, businesses, government and nonprofit agencies can facilitate access to higher education, improve employment opportunities and promote social problem solving. This is especially useful in Johannesburg as the people of South Africa are trying to redress the destruction of the pervasive Apartheid regime that ended in 1994.

Siegel's research on the dynamics of cross-sector collaboration has appeared in journals such as Higher Education, Innovative Higher Education, the Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, and the Journal of Further and Higher Education. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.

Recipients of Fulbright Scholar awards are selected on the basis of academic or professional achievement. The Fulbright Program, America's flagship international educational exchange activity, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

**Lifelong Learning program on Kerouac**
East Carolina University's Lifelong Learning Program will present “Satori in Rocky Mount: Jack Kerouac's Carolina Road,” a class on the Beat Generation and Jack Kerouac's role in it, on Tuesday in Braswell Library, Rocky Mount.

ECU English professor Alex Albright will lead the class, focusing particular attention to 1947 through 1956, when Kerouac was in North Carolina. Students will visit houses from Kerouac's novels, “The Dharma Bums,” set partially in Rocky Mount and “On the Road,” in which a fictional town depicts Rocky Mount. Students are encouraged to read both novels in advance to better appreciate the class. A library exhibit on Rocky Mount's history will include samples of Kerouac's correspondence, in his own handwriting or from his typewriter.

Albright is director of creative writing in ECU's English Department, where he has taught since 1981. He has published numerous articles on Kerouac, especially his time spent in North Carolina, and has taught honors courses on the Beat Generation.

Students will depart for the class from the Willis Building at First and Reade streets in Greenville. Class is scheduled from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m. The program fee, including transportation and snacks, is $25 for Lifelong Learning Program members and $45 for non-members. Registrations by June 20 will be accepted on a space-available basis.

The Lifelong Learning Program is an outreach program for adults 50 and older who enjoy learning in a relaxed atmosphere. Additional summer classes include Pilobolus and More, June 30 and an Art Appreciation Tour of the North Carolina Museum of Art, July 20.

For additional details or to register, call the Office of Continuing Studies at 328-9198 or visit http://www.llp.ecu.edu.
Camp offers dads, sons chance to bond
By Tony Castleberry
The Daily Reflector
Sunday, June 19, 2011

When East Carolina men's basketball coach Jeff Lebo said having fun would be the primary focus of the father-son basketball camp at ECU this weekend, he wasn't kidding.

Lebo and his dad, Dave, conducted the two-day camp Friday and Saturday in Minges Coliseum and it was anything but a traditional skills and drills camp experience for the 30 or so men and boys who participated. Some basketball teaching was involved, particularly in the early stages on Friday afternoon, but not long after the fathers got classroom instruction from the Lebos and the sons received on-court shooting tips from assorted camp instructors, the fun, and father-son bonding, began.

“This is about using the game of basketball to spend time with your son; it's about the father-son bond,” Jeff Lebo, who led the Pirates to their first winning record in 14 years last season, said of the camp, which he and his dad started six years ago when Jeff was the coach at Auburn. “We try to do a lot of fun things, and not kill the dads (by overworking them on the court).”

Following a lesson in BEEF — an acronym for balance, eyes, elbow, follow-through that summarizes the most important aspects of proper shooting technique — the dads and their sons reconvened on the Minges hardwood for a meet and greet, question and answer session with the Lebos and several ECU players.

Then, it was time for games, but not scrimmages among the campers. A free throw competition and dribble tag soon caused the gym to become a whirlwind of activity.
Later, the campers also got a taste of what it's like to play for the Pirates as they experienced the same pre-game introduction that ECU's players get, with the full-on lights and music treatment.

After Friday's four-hour session, the camp concluded with a 9-11 a.m. morning session Saturday. Dave Lebo, who was a very successful high school coach in Pennsylvania before joining his son for 13 years as a college assistant, said he's hopeful the campers took away some of the same experiences that he and Jeff had at camps when Jeff was a kid.

“I really thank basketball for providing the tool for us to have the kind of relationship we have as a father and son,” Dave, who is an assistant on Rob Maloney's staff at D.H. Conley, said. “It's pretty neat that these dads come in here and spend time with their sons. When it's all over and they go home, I think we'll do some things that hopefully they'll feel good about and learn a little basketball.”

Dave not only got to work the camp with his son, but also another generation of Lebo as Jeff's son Creighton was in attendance.

Greg Rudolph and his son Grayson had been anticipating the camp since Greg's wife Stephanie paid their entry fee as a Valentine's Day gift. Greg, who has two degrees from East Carolina, said he was in graduate school when the Pirates last had a winning season in 1996-97, making his chance to learn from the Lebos that much sweeter.

“We've been waiting for this for four months,” said Greg Rudolph, who made the trip to Greenville with Grayson from Swansboro. “The first 15 minutes of (Dave Lebo) just talking to us about how to shoot was worth the 75 bucks for me. (Grayson) goes to other basketball camps that are more skill-driven, but this is a nice way to interact with other dads as well and interacting with (Grayson), which is great.”

Contact Tony Castleberry at tcastleberry@reflector.com or 252-329-9591.
Phillip R. Dixon of the Dixon Law Group in Greenville was presented the Dr. I. Beverly Lake Sr. Public Service Award during the Saturday morning general session of the 113th annual meeting of the North Carolina Bar Association at the Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa in Asheville.

Dixon, a native of Wake Forest, serves on the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. He received his undergraduate degree from East Carolina University in 1971 and graduated from the UNC School of Law in 1974.

He has served as chairman of the ECU Board of Trustees and Pitt Community College Board of trustees, and served on the NCBA Board of Governors from 1994-97. He received the NCBA's Citizen Lawyer of the Year Award in 2007, the first year it was presented.

Dixon also has received distinguished service awards from the Greenville Jaycees, Pitt Community College, the Boy Scouts of America, the ECU Alumni Association and the NCBA’s Education Law Section, which he also chaired.

His other honors include being named Citizen of the Year by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce and Outstanding Alumnus of ECU.

The Dr. I Beverly Lake Public Service Award annually recognizes an outstanding lawyer in North Carolina who has performed exemplary public service in his or her community.
The voluntary service of the attorney may have occurred with a non-profit organization or with a number of groups in the community as well as through elective or appointive office. Each year nominations are sought from throughout the legal community including judicial districts and voluntary bars.

Dixon received an award plaque, and the I. Beverly Lake Justice Fund will award an honorarium of up to $4,000 to the nonprofit organization of Dixon's choosing.
Pediatric kidney specialists join Brody School of Medicine

Dr. Guillermo Hidalgo and Dr. Basema Dibas, pediatric kidney specialists, have joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Hidalgo joined the Department of Pediatrics as an associate professor and section head of pediatric nephrology. He comes to East Carolina University from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Hidalgo has a medical degree from the Evangelical University School of Medicine in El Salvador and completed residency training in general surgery and orthopedic surgery in El Salvador. He also completed an internship and residency in pediatrics at State University of New York-Brooklyn, University Hospital.

Hidalgo also completed a fellowship in pediatric nephrology while at State University of New York-Brooklyn, University Hospital.

Hidalgo's research and clinical interests include pediatric renal transplantation and chronic kidney disease.

Dibas joined the Department of Pediatrics as a clinical assistant professor. She has a medical degree from Kuwait University Faculty of Medicine and completed residency training in pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit.

Dibas completed a fellowship in pediatric nephrology at Children's Hospital Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Mo.

Dibas' clinical interests are acute kidney injury, dialysis and kidney transplant.

Hidalgo and Dibas see patients at ECU Pediatric Specialty Care at 2150 Herbert Court in Greenville.

Appointments are available by calling 744-4965.
Bill makes about 3 dozen tweaks to state budget
BY LYNN BONNER - Staff writer

Tryon Palace would get a reprieve, a prison in Bladen County would stay open, and the lieutenant governor would be able to keep his cellphone.

The legislature passed a measure Saturday that makes about three dozen changes to the budget they approved this week. One addition helps one of the five House Democrats who voted with the Republican majority to pass the budget and override Gov. Bev Perdue's veto.

The budget calls for closing four minimum-security prisons. The new bill, which makes "technical corrections" to the budget, specifies that the Bladen Correctional Center cannot be one of them. The Department of Correction would be prohibited from closing it for two years.

Rep. Bill Brisson, a Democrat who represents Bladen, said last month that he voted initially for the GOP-written budget because a House amendment prohibited the state from closing the Bladen prison. That prohibition was not written into the final budget the legislature passed. Now, it's back in writing.

Legislators pass a technical corrections bill after every budget that serves as a kind of clean-up bill. Sometimes the changes are the results of last-minute persuasion.

In the clean-up bill, the requirement that Tryon Palace, an important tourist destination in New Bern, become self-sufficient by mid-2014 would be dropped. The palace also would get an additional $500,000 next year, reducing its state budget cut from $1.5 million to $1 million, Kay Williams, Tryon's director, said.

"The impact is huge," she said. The additional money allows the palace to keep attractions open while working on a strategy to raise more private money.

The palace probably will have to begin charging for attractions that are now free, she said, and step up its outreach to donors.

"Clearly, there's been a sea change, and we recognize that," she said. "In some ways, it was where we were going naturally. We have always viewed ourselves as a public-private partnership."
The clean-up bill also allows Gov. Bev Perdue to keep the 18 jobs in her office that Republican legislators had targeted for elimination. Perdue still has to save $1.4 million, but she gets to decide what to cut. Among those targeted were spokeswoman Chrissy Pearson and Deputy Communications Director Mark Johnson.

The budget, which cut cellphone expenses in various departments by 25 percent to 30 percent, apparently cut too deep in Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton's office: One of the technical provisions adds money so Dalton can keep his phone.

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**Budget Highlights**

Here are the highlights of the $19.7 billion North Carolina state government spending plan for 2011-2012, contained in the two-year budget enacted this week after the House and Senate overrode Gov. Bev Perdue's veto:

**Taxes and fees**
- The budget lets expire a temporary penny sales tax increase and surtax on corporate income and individual income tax originally approved in 2009, losing $1.3 billion in state revenues.
- It generates more than $100 million in fees, of which about one-third would go to counties if separate criminal justice reforms are approved.
- It also creates a tax break on the first $50,000 of net income for small businesses.

**Education**
- The budget spends $10.99 billion on public schools, the UNC system and community colleges - $248 million less than Perdue had proposed.
- It retains state funding for teacher assistant and teaching positions, and provides $62 million to hire 1,124 additional teachers in early grades. Local school districts, however, are required to find $124 million in additional cuts, with reductions made at their discretion.
- It reduces funding for new textbooks by $92 million and instructional supplies by $42 million.
- It reduces the state funding allotment to pay for school janitors, clerical staff and other personnel by 15 percent, for central staff in districts by 16 percent, and for assistant principals by 19 percent.
- It requires the UNC system to find $414 million in savings, with the cuts at administrators' discretion.
- It reduces funding for both the More at Four preschool program and the Smart Start early childhood initiative by 20 percent.
- It increases community college tuition by $10 per credit hour to $66.50 for residents and $258.50 for nonresidents.
Health
– The budget abolishes the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, which receives 25 percent of the state's share of the national tobacco settlement.
– It reduces spending in the agency that oversees Medicaid to a level $222 million less than the governor's proposal, along with cuts to mental health funding.
– It eliminates the remaining $50,000 in the State Abortion Fund designed to help low-income families. The fund has been largely dormant for many years.
– It prevents the Department of Health and Human Services from providing funds to Planned Parenthood.

Environment
– The budget eliminates 30 positions in seven regional offices of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
– It transfers the Forestry Division and the Division of Soil and Water Conservation from the State Department of Environment and Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture.
– It gives the Clean Water Management Trust Fund $11.25 million, and repeals a law that says it should get $100 million a year.

Justice
– The budget eliminates 11 jobs in the Community Corrections Technology Center, and gives responsibility to a contractor for the oversight of people on house arrest with electronic monitoring.
– It reduces chaplains at minimum and medium security prisons.
– It requires the SBI to sell one of its three aircraft.
– It reduces 55 support staff positions for district attorneys.
– It eliminates all state funding for drug treatment court and Sentencing Services programs.
– It eliminates 21 staff psychologists, a housing unit supervisor and youth counselor technicians in the juvenile justice system.
– It closes four minimum security prisons as part of criminal justice reforms.

Culture
– The budget reduces funding for "The Lost Colony," the outdoor drama, and eliminates funding for the High Point Shakespeare Festival and Vagabond School of Drama in Flat Rock.
– It reduces state funding to local libraries by 13 percent.

Miscellaneous
– The budget requires tolls on all state-operated ferries except for two routes: between Hatteras and Ocracoke islands, and between Knotts Island and mainland Currituck County.
– It increases by $248.1 million contributions to public employee retirement.
– It provides no pay increases for state employees and public school teachers, but it directs a merit-pay study.
– It sets aside $185 million more in the state's rainy day reserve fund, and $125 million for government building repairs and renovations.
– It eliminates all funding for the e-NC Authority, which works on expanding broadband service to rural areas.
– It increases prices in the legislative cafeteria and snack bar by 10 percent.

Compiled by The Associated Press and staff writer Lynn Bonner
Source: Report on the Continuation, Expansion, and Capital Budgets for the final budget bill
Queens University of Charlotte MFA faculty member Elizabeth Strout, winner of the 2009 Pulitzer Prize in fiction for "Olive Kitteridge," and Michael Kobre, MFA co-director and professor of English, at a 10th anniversary celebration. T. Ortega Gaines - ogaines@charlotteobserver.com

The MFA: A degree for people with a story to tell

By Pam Kelley

A decade ago, in a bank-centric city full of MBAs, Queens University launched Charlotte's only Master of Fine Arts program in creative writing.

The two-year program cost students nearly $20,000. It didn't pretend to guarantee a job promotion or a pay raise. It was an instant success.

The Queens program joined an explosion of MFA creative writing programs across the nation - from 64 in 1994 to more than 180 today. Queens' program, along with nearly 50 others, are low-residency models, which use long-distance instruction and short campus stays. Only five existed when Queens set up shop.

Why the boom? Maybe it was just good timing. Lots of Americans longed to be writers and the new programs filled a need.

Today, the MFA in creative writing may be the planet's most-written-about graduate degree.

Poets & Writers magazine publishes annual program rankings. The Huffington Post includes blogs about MFAs. And every so often, some
writer disses MFA programs, comparing them to conservative medieval guilds or arguing they produce same-sounding, cookie-cutter fiction.

While writers and critics debate whether MFAs have improved or ruined literature, one thing is certain: The MFA boom has transformed the way America produces many of its best writers.

"If you were graphing it," says Mark McGurl, author of "The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing," "a higher and higher percentage of writers are products of creative writing programs."

**Expanding market**

At Queens, business professor Cathy Anderson had the idea for the MFA program. Anderson realized Charlotte was among the largest U.S. cities without one.

So, in 1999, Queens English professor Michael Kobre asked novelist and professor Fred Leebron to create a low-residency program, which combines distance learning with time on campus, usually one or two weeks twice a year.

Low-res programs, which attract older students, were a growing market. North Carolina had one of the best - Warren Wilson College near Asheville. The 35-year-old program has produced many successful authors, including David Wroblewski, whose novel, "The Story of Edgar Sawtelle," was an Oprah's Book Club selection.

Queens welcomed its first 27 students in May 2001. About 10 instructors taught poetry and fiction.

Today, Queens' 50 part-time instructors include a PEN/Hemingway award finalist, North Carolina's poet laureate, a former New Yorker writer and a National Book Critics Circle Award winner. Also on the faculty: Elizabeth Strout, winner of the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for her novel "Olive Kitteridge," and Jonathan Dee, a finalist for this year's Pulitzer fiction prize for his novel, "The Privileges."

Students work one on one with advisers to produce book-length manuscripts as their graduation theses. And at Queens, like most creative writing programs, the heart of the curriculum is the writing workshop, where classmates critique each other's work. Tuition now tops $25,000, and the school offers creative nonfiction and writing for stage and screen as well as fiction and poetry. Fiction still claims the largest enrollment.
This year, Poets & Writers magazine ranked Queens seventh out of 46 low-res programs. The rankings have been criticized as unscientific, however. They're based partly on prospective students' impressions - a measure described as akin to asking diners to review a restaurant before they've eaten a meal.

'Peculiarly American' pursuit

As concepts go, creative writing is a new one. The term wasn't even coined until the 1920s, at Middlebury College's Bread Loaf Writers Conference. In 1936, the University of Iowa launched its Writers' Workshop, the first program to award MFAs.

It took time for the idea to catch on. "Early creative writing teachers were trivialized as aesthetes," says David Fenza, executive director of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. "Departments of English preferred their writers to be dead."

After World War II, creative writing programs multiplied. Among the first was UNC Greensboro's MFA program, launched in 1965.

But the creative writing MFA remains "peculiarly American," Fenza says. Only a couple dozen programs exist outside the United States.

Today, you could fill a contemporary American fiction syllabus with writers who spent time in writing workshops: Flannery O'Connor, John Irving, Gail Godwin, Rita Dove, Raymond Carver, Michael Chabon, Junot Diaz, David Foster Wallace.

"Out of all the hot young writers, an absurd percentage are coming out of MFA programs," says Leebron, Queens' MFA program director.

Not everyone, however, is bullish on the MFA era. Former New York Times Book Review Editor Charles McGrath wondered in 2009 whether there's a Ponzi element to the whole setup, in which many American writers "make a considerable part of their living not by writing, in fact, but by teaching others how to write and how to teach writing."

Critics have accused some universities of using MFA programs as cash cows. They say the profusion of programs gives false hope to low-talent students. Some even wonder if we should teach creative writing. Aren't great writers born, not made?

Of course, you can't teach people to have great ideas. But most people agree that a good creative writing program, just like MFA programs in art and music, can hone skills.
McGurl, author of "The Program Era," argues that the impact of creative writing programs goes beyond nurturing new writers. They've also made academia the nation's biggest literary patron - by creating teaching jobs that give writers steady incomes.

Our literature has benefited, he believes, because that income gives writers the freedom to write what they want, not necessarily what will sell.

**Pushed to write**

North Carolina has five MFA programs, and competition for slots is fierce. Warren Wilson's acceptance rate is about 10 percent. For its fall class, UNCG recently chose nine students from nearly 300 applicants. Queens' program is the largest, with 80 to 90 students, most from outside the Carolinas. Its acceptance rate is 30 percent to 35 percent. That means it rejects twice as many students as it accepts.

Some people pursue an MFA for the credential, usually required to teach college-level writing. Most simply want to become better writers.

Many graduates say they acquire better writing skills. Some get teaching jobs, and some get published.

Peter Reinhart, a baking instructor at Johnson & Wales University, was an established cookbook author who wanted to become a better writer when he began Queens' program.

"I just inhaled everything they had to offer," he says. "I couldn't wait for the residencies."

Like Reinhart, Queens alumna Susan Woodring says the program gave her what she wanted.

"I don't know any other way," she says, "that I could have learned to read and evaluate my own work."

Woodring, who lives in Drexel, is one of many published alumni. She's the author of a novel and book of short stories, and in 2012, St. Martin's Press will publish "Goliath," a novel about an N.C. town losing its furniture industry.

She had written fiction for years when she attended her first Queens workshop in 2001. She listened nervously as classmates dissected the short story she submitted for critique.

The program, she says, required discipline.
"You knew you had a deadline every other month, and had to turn so many pages in, and you knew people would be talking about it," she says. "So it pushed you to do your best."

Discipline and community are among the most valuable parts of an MFA program, says novelist Jill McCorkle, who teaches in N.C. State University's program.

"It's kind of like the way I say I'm going to do yoga at home," she says. "I don't. I need to go to a class."

**We seek story**

Clearly, the MFA isn't the most practical degree.

Even Poets & Writers magazine describes it as a "nonprofessional, largely unmarketable degree whose value lies in the time it gives one to write."

But consider a recent survey. It found that 81 percent of Americans thought they had a book in them. Lots of people want to be writers.

"We're living in an age when people's desire and ability to express their own personal truth is stronger than it has probably ever been," says Philip Gerard, chair of UNC Wilmington's Creative Writing Department.

Think about blogs and Facebook posts, self-published e-novels and tweets. Think about reality television, where tales of housewives and hoarders become can't-miss viewing.

"The idea of story is so central to the idea of being a human being," Woodring says. "We seek story constantly."

Demand exists. MFA programs are filling it.

"Self-expression," Leebron says, "is a very American thing."

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**Queens MFA Story Collection**

To mark the 10th anniversary of its MFA program in creative writing, Queens has published "Boomtown: Explosive Writing from Ten Years of the Queens University of Charlotte MFA Program" (Press 53; $19.95).

On Oct. 20, a program will feature faculty and alumni readings. It'll be followed by a writing symposium with seminars and master classes on Oct. 21.

**Creative writing MFAs in the Carolinas**
A master of fine arts in creative writing typically requires a student to complete a manuscript-length creative writing work during a two- or three-year program. The oldest program, the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop, celebrates its 75th anniversary this year.

Converse College in Spartanburg, S.C., established 2008. Faculty includes Robert Olmstead ("Coal Black Horse").

N.C. State University, established 2004. Faculty includes Jill McCorkle ("The Cheerleader," "Going Away Shoes"), John Kessel ("The Baum Plan for Financial Independence.")


UNC Greensboro, established 1965. Faculty includes Michael Parker ("The Watery Part of the World.") Notable alumna: Claudia Emerson, winner of the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

UNC Wilmington, established 1996. Faculty includes Clyde Edgerton ("Raney," "Walking Across Egypt.")

University of South Carolina, established 1991. Faculty includes Elise Blackwell ("Hunger").

Warren Wilson College, established 1976. Faculty includes Maurice Manning, a 2011 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry.
Ticket takers

If the problems in the football program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are so insignificant, then why did university officials, public employees, go to such lengths to hide some kinds of information from the public? There's a question taxpayers ought to be asking with the grudging release of data pertaining to football players who demonstrated a flagrant disregard for parking regulations.

Media outlets, including The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer, filed suit to force the university to release documents pertaining to the investigation of the football program (headed by the multimillion-dollar coach, Butch Davis) by the NCAA, the governing body of college athletics. Included in the information sought was data about what turned out to be an astonishing number of parking tickets received by a few players over several years.

But the university fought release of the information, contending the tickets were part of students' educational records, a flimsy excuse for secrecy rejected by two courts. The ticket information has come out, and it's disturbing.

Fewer than 12 players tallied 395 parking tickets between March 2007 and August 2010. Fines totaled more than $13,000. The university says nothing improper has occurred with regard to ownership of the vehicles - something that's been shown to have happened at other schools where boosters in effect provided cars for athletes.

OK, but how can the public have much confidence in that comforting conclusion when the oversight of the program was so lax that hundreds of tickets were rung up and coaches apparently knew nothing, or at least did little or nothing, about it? The players either don't take the rules that apply to ordinary students seriously, or perhaps figure they can make it all go away once they sign big professional contracts.

Why is oversight more important with this group of students? Because players who owe hundreds of dollars in parking tickets are vulnerable, say, to a booster who might volunteer to pay off the fines. Or they might be more susceptible to unethical sports agents who offer to help with the
understanding the student will use that agent when it's time to negotiate a contract.

Have these things actually happened? The NCAA probe presumably will cover that, but let's assume the answer is no. Still the university ought to be aware of the hazards.

Overall, the university hasn't helped its credibility with its penchant for secrecy. Chancellor Holden Thorp knows full well, or should, the obligations of a public institution to the people who support it. High on the list of those obligations is openness.

Nobody is suggesting that student privacy shouldn't be held in proper regard, but neither should privacy become an excuse to conceal matters that the public is entitled to learn about. Openness is the right choice, and for UNC-Chapel Hill it should be the only choice.
FORT WORTH, Texas – Where's the line between serving and exploiting a market?

That's at the heart of the debate over for-profit colleges, a business that has quadrupled in size during the past decade and saddled thousands with crushing debts they can't pay.

In Texas, students at many for-profit schools are defaulting on loans at twice the national average, according to one analysis. Among students who began repayment in 2008, at least three dozen schools in the state had default rates of more than 30 percent, and one topped 50 percent.

That's an indication that many for-profit colleges are failing customers on a grand scale.

Many critics compare the problem to the subprime mortgage crisis that fueled the housing bust and Great Recession. On many levels the analogy fits, starting with taxpayer money making it all possible.

For decades, college students have been steadily borrowing more for public and private schools. But so-called career schools have the most extreme numbers: A lot more borrowers take out more debt, including private loans, and end up defaulting.

The industry attributes the poor results to a student body that has lower incomes, less aptitude and more family demands. The recession exacerbated their financial problems in the same way that it has hurt all college graduates.

Community colleges and public universities cost much less, sometimes one-fifth the price. But career colleges are often easier to navigate, especially for less experienced students. Programs are focused on career training, often with fewer remedial course requirements, and flexible classes can be fitted around work schedules.

Schools with names like Everest, Kaplan, ATI Career Training Center and the Lincoln College of Technology are filling an important need for underserved students, proponents say.

Lawmakers and consumer groups acknowledge some successes in the sector and say it's an important option for some. But they insist that many for-profit colleges are targeting and preying on vulnerable citizens and maximizing profits at taxpayer expense.
That becomes a public policy issue not just because so many students are deep in
debt but also because federal dollars play such a vital role. Federal loans and
grants account for almost 90 percent of revenue for some for-profit education
companies. The GI Bill and private loans reduce the upfront costs even more for
students.

Many don't realize the bills that will come due and don't know that the debt can't be dismissed in bankruptcy.

As one expert said at a Senate hearing last week, the debt can literally follow them to the grave.

An incredible 97 percent of students at two-year for-profit colleges took out federal loans compared with 13 percent at their public counterparts, according to testimony.

At Tarrant County College, where a three-hour course costs $150, just 7 percent of students have loans.

For-profit colleges aren't a niche business. About 12 percent of postsecondary students attend a career school, and they account for a quarter of all federal loans and grants. More than half of those in four-year programs leave with more than $30,000 in debt - almost five times higher than the share at public schools.

Little wonder that career-college students account for almost half of all defaults.

It's "the second coming of the subprime crisis," Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, said at the Senate hearing.

He released internal documents intended to show that for-profit schools manipulated their statistics to continue getting federal money. By having students request loan payment delays, they kept a lid on two-year default rates, which are closely tracked by the government.

But defaults soared in year 3 for many for-profit schools, revealing the true extent of the repayment problem.

The industry, represented by the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, didn't testify at the hearing. Republican members of the committee boycotted it, too, reportedly because they're tired of Harkin and others berating the industry. Consumer groups say the industry has spent heavily on lobbying - about $12 million since 2010, according to news reports.

The industry objects strongly to the subprime analogy. It said the mortgage crisis was caused by speculation by borrowers and lenders, who suffered when home values fell. In its view, an education isn't the same risky bet.

"No one questions the need for more college-educated workers," the group said.

True enough, but cost matters. And too many lose sight of that.
One reason the subprime comparison fits is that both start with a noble goal that's widely embraced: more college choices for more students and homeownership for more people.

Taxpayer money is the foundation for both, with federal underwriting for student loans and grants and almost every mortgage. And each field has plenty of profiteers, including publicly traded companies and investment banks, that make out well even when their customers fail.

And the strongest parallel?

"The industry is pushing people into debt that they can't afford, and the industry doesn't bear the risk," said Lauren Asher, president of the Institute for College Access & Success, a California group that tries to make higher education more available and more affordable.

Some students at traditional colleges borrow too much and don't land the jobs they expect. But data show that that happens to a large proportion of students at for-profit schools, testified Sandy Baum, a policy analyst for the College Board.

"Institutions that leave students worse off than they arrived are the exception" at traditional schools, she said. "Unfortunately, they appear to be the norm in the for-profit sector."

Rules released this month link federal funding to three-year default rates and the ratio of loan payments to income. But no schools will lose eligibility until at least 2015, a delay that sent stock prices soaring for companies in the sector.

Officials defended the time frame, saying the goal is to help for-profit colleges adjust because many students depend on them.

The reason so many for-profit students are overwhelmed by debt is not complicated, Harkin said. A two-year program for $6,000 to $9,000 at a community college will cost $35,000 to $46,000 at career schools. Four-year programs cost two to three times as much as at public colleges, he said.

Guidance counselors always tell students to look for the right fit in a college. They should drive home the value proposition, too. For too many, it's become a ticket to financial disaster, not prosperity.