THE DAILY CLIPS

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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
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Missing e-mails? Surely not at N.C. State. All the facts surrounding Mary Easley's job must be on the table.

Looking for a computer whiz? Try N.C. State University. As its Web site proudly asserts, "With more than 1,100 undergraduate and graduate students, we are among the nation's top producers of computer science talent, fueling the economic development of North Carolina and beyond." Several dozen professors shepherd those students and explore the frontiers of information technology.

Surely somewhere among all those experts, there is someone who is ingenious enough to find some missing e-mails.

It's true that the e-mails in question might prove embarrassing. But by now, in the continuing fallout over former first lady Mary Easley's university job, embarrassment has to be sort of taken for granted. Especially when a federal grand jury is on the case, what matters is full, accurate disclosure of all potentially relevant evidence.

James Oblinger, NCSU chancellor when Gov. Mike Easley's office in 2005 began a behind-the-scenes effort to help Mrs. Easley find a position at the university, resigned when it recently became clear that he had been involved in the hiring process despite previous accounts to the contrary.

The actual sequence of events was disclosed in e-mails among Easley's office, former NCSU trustees' chairman McQueen Campbell (an Easley political ally), Oblinger and former provost Larry Nielsen. Campbell and Nielsen also have quit their posts, and Mary Easley has been let go. Those e-mails were handed over to federal authorities in response to a subpoena and then made public. The News & Observer had been seeking the material under the state's public records law.

Into cyberspace?

Now, however, it turns out that e-mails from Oblinger's "high-priority" account were deleted, as the university has acknowledged to the U.S. attorney's office. Some of the material was recovered through the work of technical staff, but some apparently is still missing.

If it's true, as most e-mail users assume, that simply deleting messages from a file typically does not erase every record of their existence, then it's time for the university to summon all of its computer wizards on deck and solve this puzzle. And if the e-mail has indeed vanished, the public is owed a thorough explanation of how that could have occurred.

Interim chancellor James Woodward says deletion of the e-mails did not involve an attempt to conceal them. Of course any such attempt would have amounted to defiance of laws meant to preserve official communications for public scrutiny, and it's to be hoped that Woodward is correct in asserting that no one has acted in bad faith. That assertion would be easier to credit if the university had been more forthcoming in response to The N&O's original
records request. But it must have been plain to university officials that the potential for embarrassment was high.

No heads-up

Consider one e-mail that has been released in the latest batch: Oblinger wonders when his boss at the time, UNC system president Molly Broad, should be informed that Mary Easley had been hired a month prior. The timing suggests that the chancellor wasn't eager to share the news -- for what reason? Probably because the job had been created and the hire made after influence was brought to bear by the governor's office.

A decision to hire the state's first lady, who had been working as a law professor at N.C. Central University, could have been defensible if regular procedures had been followed, but they weren't. Broad likely would have wanted an explanation. What she got was a fait accompli.

There remain unanswered questions as to how it happened that when Mrs. Easley's first contract expired last year, she was given another one that enlarged her duties and nearly doubled her annual pay to $170,000. Whose idea was that?

As with other key facts in this episode, e-mails could tell the tale. North Carolina's public records law is broad, but penalties for non-compliance are weak. The university's duty nevertheless is to be totally forthcoming with the release of messages and other documents that would explain every aspect of its dealings with Mary Easley and her husband, the governor. If state law isn't adequate to ensure that cooperation, then federal prosecutors who now are overseeing an investigation into several aspects of the Easleys' affairs will have to do the heavy lifting.

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Some Oblinger e-mail is missing

Messages from the former NCSU leader have been subpoenaed but cannot be found.

BY JOSEPH NEFF, Staff Writer

N.C. State University told prosecutors Wednesday that it can't locate high-priority e-mail messages from former Chancellor James Oblinger, raising questions about the university's response to public records requests involving the hiring of former first lady Mary Easley.

The loss of the e-mail, covering the period in 2005 when Oblinger helped create a job for Easley, was revealed in documents the university gave to federal prosecutors. In July 2008 and again in February, The News & Observer had requested all documents related to the creation of Easley's job and her hiring. Most of the critical documents were not released until after investigators gave the university a subpoena for the documents in May.

The documents released Wednesday show Oblinger wondering when he should break the news to his boss, then-UNC system President Molly Broad, that the university had hired Mary Easley a month prior. Documents also show the university staff working closely with Gov. Mike Easley's office to keep the new job quiet until an official announcement was made two months after she was hired.

Interim Chancellor James Woodward said the reason the Oblinger messages were deleted was technical, not an attempt at concealment.

"I believe the deletions were routine business," Woodward said Wednesday. "At that time, in 2005 and 2004, most organizations had no concept of the role e-mailing would play in today's world. There were simply not rational policies for how one maintained e-mails."

Oblinger had two e-mail accounts: One accessible to any member of his staff, and the other Oblinger used exclusively for high-priority correspondence.

After lawyers for N.C. State discovered that six months of Oblinger's high-priority e-mail was
missing, they instructed the university's technology staff to reconstruct the missing records. A substantial number of messages were recovered, but periods remain for which the staff has been unable to recover anything.

Hugh Stevens, a Raleigh lawyer who specializes in public records law, said he found such technological excuses doubtful, especially coming from a university whose strengths are science and engineering.

"I've been really appalled to see how little was turned over in response to The News & Observer's public records request compared to what was turned over in response to the federal subpoena," said Stevens, who has worked for The N&O and the N.C. Press Association.

'No one can claim surprise'

Both the state public records law and a federal subpoena require documents to be handed over. The difference is in the consequences of not complying, Stevens said. Officials who break the public records law may be sued and may have to pay attorneys' fees; flouting a federal subpoena can bring contempt of court or criminal charges.

"No one can claim surprise that they were supposed to keep this stuff," Stevens said. "The law has said for many years there is no difference between e-mail [and] a letter."

Press Millen, Oblinger's attorney, said that the deletion of the messages was not intentional.

"Dr. Oblinger never engaged in any purposeful deletion of e-mails regarding Mary Easley's hiring," Millen said.

The federal grand jury is investigating several aspects of Mike Easley's tenure as governor, including a coastal land development where the Easleys bought a lot for a good price, the first family's use of vehicles, free flights the governor took on private jets, and a deal in which the state gave long-term control of a state-owned marina in Southport to a group that included financial supporters of Easley's campaign.

Federal investigators have focused on N.C. State because of Mary Easley's job running a university speakers series. Last year, her role was expanded, and her pay was increased 88 percent, to $170,000 a year.

Until very recently, the NCSU leadership had insisted that Mary Easley's job was created solely by Larry Nielsen, who in early 2005 was acting as the university's interim provost. After he hired Mary Easley, he became permanent provost.

But records show that many N.C. State leaders and Gov. Easley were involved in early discussions. Documents released earlier this month indicated that Oblinger, Board of Trustees member McQueen Campbell and Nielsen worked with high-ranking representatives of Gov. Easley to create the job, and that the governor was kept informed.

A News & Observer series in early May, "Executive Privilege," reported that Campbell was a confidant of the Easleys who often flew them on his private plane. Campbell had bragged of his political influence in getting a key development permit from the Easley administration.

Easley appointed him to the NCSU Board of Trustees, and Campbell rose to become the chairman. In an interview for The N&O series, Campbell insisted he had nothing to do with Mary Easley's job.

Campbell resigned shortly after the newspaper series was published, admitting that he had played a role in Mary Easley's hiring.

Nielsen resigned as provost in mid-May, citing overwhelming media scrutiny. Oblinger resigned June 8 after documents surfaced showing that he had misrepresented how Mary
Easley was hired. The university's Board of Trustees fired Mary Easley the same day. Both Nielsen and Oblinger have been allowed to keep their higher administrative pay for six months as they make the transition to teaching at the university.

Release well planned

In one e-mail message released Wednesday, Oblinger wrote to Andy Willis, the university's lobbyist, for advice on when to approach President Broad. He referred to the Office of the President: "so when should we tell OP -- about Mary Easley..........???????????????? please advise.........."

Oblinger sent the message June 27, 2005; the university had hired Mary Easley on May 26.

Willis suggested not saying anything until N.C. State had a plan for a formal announcement, out of concern that news of the hire would leak.

In mid-July 2005, e-mails and a draft news release passed back and forth between the university and the Governor's Office.

On Friday, July 22, Willis sent the finished news release to colleagues: "We received clearance of this release from the Office of the Governor yesterday. Per their directions, they would like it released Monday."

joseph.neff@newsobserver.com or 919-820-4516

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Oblinger and Nielsen's status

Interim Chancellor James Woodward said it is fair to ask why the university continues to employ former Chancellor James Oblinger and former Provost Larry Nielsen, given that they repeatedly misled the public about how Mary Easley's job was created.

Standards for removing tenured personnel are high, Woodward said: There must be proof of incompetence, neglect of duty, or grievous misconduct.

"The wrongs that they have done, or might have done, that we have identified to date do not meet the standards that would have to be met," Woodward said.

Related Content

• N.C. State's letter to the feds about Oblinger's e-mail (PDF)
• Read the series about perks of Mike Easley's power.

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**Accord reached on Carolina North**

**Chapel Hill, UNC-CH in agreement**

**BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO, Staff Writer**

CHAPEL HILL - The UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees unanimously approved an agreement with the town Thursday that will regulate the development of the Carolina North satellite campus over the next 20 years. It was an agreement 20 years in coming.

With half its members participating by phone, Thursday's special board meeting had a tone of celebration, not deliberation.

"On behalf of all the chancellors who have participated in this, I'm pleased to be the one sitting here," Chancellor Holden Thorp said.

This week, the Town Council approved the same development agreement, which conserves about 700 acres in Chapel Hill and Carrboro for the next 50 years.

Such an agreement allows a town and a developer to set terms that might not fit into a typical permit review process. The trustees and the council spent the past 10 months negotiating.

With previous plans initiated in 1995, 2000 and 2004, Carolina North Executive Director Jack Evans said the project was on its "third mulligan."

Carolina North was initially pitched as a place to turn university research into marketable products, but campus plans now include a new law school and various university research centers and institutes. The university plans to build about 8 million square feet on 228 acres over the next 50 years, but state law allows a development agreement to cover only as long as 20 years.

Lack of funding has kept the project from moving forward in the past, and it will keep the project moving slowly over the next few years. Construction may not begin for another two years. The development agreement allows for 3 million square feet of buildings over 20 years, giving the university flexibility beyond its near-term plans, Evans said.

"Our researchers will tell us what we need to build," he said. "Now we have the space where we can develop those buildings."

The size of the project, and its potential impact on traffic and on land that's popular with runners and mountain-bikers, drew opposition over the years. Before giving its blessing, the Town Council persuaded the university to protect more than 300 acres permanently from development.

After they voted, the trustees joined Mayor Kevin Foy and town and university staff in a standing ovation for Evans.

"I'm trusting that all the trustees listening by phone stood for that part," trustees Chairman
Pandemic flu kills N.C. heart patient

BY SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer

A Guilford County man with heart problems contracted the H1N1 virus and died, becoming North Carolina’s first fatality from the pandemic flu, state health officials said Wednesday.

The man, whose identity and age were not disclosed, had undergone a heart procedure at Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro, hospital officials reported. He was discharged and several days later appeared at a neighboring hospital in critical condition with severe pneumonia. He died Friday.

Lab results confirmed Tuesday night that he was infected with the new influenza virus.

"We do not know where he contracted the virus," said Doug Allred, spokesman for Moses Cone Health System. "He left the hospital doing better and did not have any signs or symptoms of influenza."

Allred said the man's exposure was separate from an earlier scare at the hospital in which 33 infants were potentially exposed to the virus by a respiratory therapist. The worker had tended a patient who was later confirmed to have the H1N1 flu, and she tested positive after growing sick. None of the babies have developed flu, Allred said.

The state has confirmed at least 179 cases of the new flu strain, which erupted in Mexico this year and has spread to more than 100 countries as the first pandemic flu in 40 years.

Typically, the virus causes mild to moderate symptoms, and most people recover without medical care. But it is much more dangerous to people with certain medical conditions, including heart problems, diabetes, asthma and pregnancy.

Then, the virus can exacerbate the existing condition, or the body's weakened immune system can succumb to infection.

The risk to young people

Dr. Jeffrey Engel, state health director, said young people also appear to be more vulnerable to the H1N1 strain than people older than 50 -- an oddity that defies the typical pattern of seasonal flu, which disproportionately hits older people.

In 2007 in North Carolina, 1,644 people died of flu and pneumonia, 1,536 of them adults older than 55.

Scientists speculate that people born before 1957 may have some residual immunity to the H1N1 strain, because they were exposed to a distant relative of the current pandemic virus. After 1957, when another virus caused a pandemic and became dominant, people no longer built immunity to the earlier strain.

As a result, a young person's immune response to the current virus could be fatally aggressive.

"A young, otherwise healthy individual could have a vigorous immune system that over
responds and literally drowns the patient in secretions in the lungs," Engel said.

He said people should be aware of worsening flu symptoms and go to the doctor if they develop breathing difficulties, chest pain, or severe stomach upset. In addition, he said, antiviral medicines reduce symptoms if they're taken within three days of getting sick.

Despite the state's first pandemic flu death, Engel said, the virus continues to have a low mortality rate. Across the globe, where it has infected about 56,000 people, it has killed 238.

Health leaders are sure they have undercounted the number of people who have contracted the virus but never sought medical care. They estimate that half a million people have been infected.

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**H1N1 influenza**

- The H1N1 virus readily spreads between people in droplets from sneezes and coughs.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school.
- Symptoms include fever, aches, headache, cough, lethargy, sore throat.
- Get to a doctor for chest pains, difficulty breathing and other unusual distress symptoms.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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NCCU scouts for extra housing

BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer

DURHAM - N.C. Central University housing officials are scurrying to find spaces for several hundred more freshmen than the university anticipated.

With applications up a whopping 40 percent this year, officials expect more than 1,500 new students in the freshman class. NCCU originally projected about 1,100 new freshmen.

"There are always problems, but they're manageable," NCCU Chancellor Charlie Nelms said. Housing officials expect to squeeze some of those unanticipated students into on-campus rooms.

But campus trustees Wednesday also gave the go-ahead to seek bids for off-campus housing. NCCU is looking for 300 beds in the community and may end up in a situation similar to that of several years ago when it had to relocate hundreds of students because of the discovery of toxic mold in residence halls.

Earlier this year, NCCU dissolved its relationship with Campus Crossing, an off-campus apartment complex it had contracted with in 2005. The deal was a money-loser for NCCU; under the terms of the contract with Campus Crossing, NCCU had to pay the rent on each of 564 units, regardless of whether they were occupied by NCCU students.

Across U.S. higher education, enrollment is booming, likely the effect of the weak economy and a desire by people to seek more education and job retraining.

But Nelms, the NCCU chancellor, credits the enrollment spike on his campus to a more aggressive recruitment strategy that emphasizes in-person interaction with prospective students.

"We have completely restructured our approach to the recruitment of students," he said. "We're becoming more personal and responsive."

Also Wednesday, trustees took a large step toward resolving the long-running problem with Eagle Landing, a privately owned residence hall just off campus that, when built, was riddled with deficiencies. A 2006 state analysis found violations and needed fixes totaling $9 million. Those deficiencies prevented NCCU from taking ownership of the facility then; but NCCU has completed all the required improvements and is entering into a lease agreement with the NCCU Real Estate Foundation, a nonprofit group that bought the building.

Once NCCU begins running the dormitory as it does its others, officials expect to reap $200,000 in annual savings through insurance, waste disposal, utilities and other services that were previously outsourced.

"It will be exactly like all our other residence halls," said Alan Robertson, NCCU's vice chancellor for finance.

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008
Easing a College Financial Aid Headache

By TAMAR LEWIN

The Obama administration is moving to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or Fafsa, a notoriously complicated form that asks students seeking financial aid for college as many as 153 questions.

The administration’s proposal, to be announced Wednesday, comes in several stages.

In January, when next year’s form goes online, about 20 percent of the questions will be eliminated, mostly by avoiding redundancies. For example, students who are at least 24, or married, will automatically be able to skip the 11 questions about their parents’ financial information, and low-income students will be able to skip the questions about assets, which are not used to determine their aid eligibility.

The administration will also seek legislation to simplify the form further.

“The Fafsa improvements will reduce the burden on the 16 million students and families who apply for federal financial aid every year,” Arne Duncan, the secretary of education, said, “and are designed to help increase college enrollment among low-income and middle-income students by making it easier to apply for financial aid.”

Every year, millions of students and families must fill out the Fafsa form to apply for Pell grants, Stafford loans, Perkins loans, work-study programs and much state aid. But many are scared off by the form. Federal authorities estimate that 1.5 million students eligible for Pell grants did not apply.

And because the form is so complicated, a growing industry of paid consultants has sprung up to help families complete it.

Secretary Duncan plans to create an easy process for families to click on their online application to automatically fill in the financial data they have already filed with the Internal Revenue Service as part of their tax returns.

That process, which has long been under discussion, had been expected to take several years. But in recent months, when Education Department officials discussed it with I.R.S. officials, it seemed to be something that could be started in January, for students going into the spring or summer college semester.

Those applying for aid to start college next fall will not be able to have the I.R.S. import their information, because the tax returns that determine their eligibility will not be filed in time.

While the Education Department can proceed with some of the changes, Congressional approval will be required for Mr. Duncan’s plan to eliminate more than half of the form’s financial questions, which often seek data not on the federal tax form.
The department said most of the questions to be eliminated, like one regarding untaxed income earned by members of the clergy, would affect applications.

Indeed, officials say, the six questions about assets affect aid to only 3 percent of Pell grant recipients, while penalizing families saving for college and opening loopholes for sophisticated applicants to game the system.

Margaret Spellings, the secretary of education in the Bush administration, had proposed bigger changes, seeking to eliminate all financial data except adjusted gross income and the number of tax exemptions. Department officials say the Obama administration’s more moderate proposal may be more palatable to Congress.

“Confusing paperwork shouldn’t stand between qualified students and a college degree,” said Representative George Miller, Democrat of California and chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. “Secretary Duncan has put forth common-sense proposals for streamlining the Fafsa.”

The Higher Education Opportunity Act, passed in the last Congress, made some progress toward simplifying the Fafsa form, by, among other things, creating a two-page EZ form for some low-income families, and streamlining the reapplication process.

But some critics argue that the proposed simplification does not go far enough. “The whole form should be able to fit on the back of a postcard,” said Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid, an online guide to student aid. “And they need to simplify not just the form but the formula for determining aid.”

Others, meanwhile, argue that the form does not get enough information to measure financial worth adequately because it excludes assets like cars, homes and some family businesses and does not factor in the high cost of living in areas like New York.
Enlightenment

Some state community college officials see the wisdom in admitting illegal immigrants, an overdue step.

Last August, North Carolina's Board of Community Colleges hired a consultant to study how other states handle the issue of admitting illegal immigrants (or the children of people who are not legal U.S. residents) to their schools. Only one other state, South Carolina, bars prospective community college students who do not have the documentation entitled them to be present in this country.

Now, after much delay, some officials with the colleges are rightly speaking out to advocate admitting illegal immigrants under a policy similar to one used by the University of North Carolina system: Students must be graduates of U.S. high schools, and they must pay out-of-state tuition rates. The consultant found that by charging such rates, the state holds taxpayers harmless.

These students typically are in the United States because their parents brought them here. They had no say in the matter. They are attending public schools. Their parents work. In seeking higher education, they are trying to better themselves and their prospects. And what good is accomplished by denying them access to community colleges? None.

"Without this option," said Dr. Stuart Fountain, a retired Asheboro dentist who heads the board's policy committee, "we are creating a second-class citizenry, a group of people who have no option but to go ahead and join a gang." Even if the alternate path does not lead to gang membership and a descent into crime, it certainly involves a lowering of horizons and a potential waste of human capital.

Opponents of the idea have long declared that those in the country illegally should not enjoy the benefits of living in the United States, when others follow the arduous conventional route to citizenship. But young students are not in the same category as adults who made a conscious decision to cross the border illegally or to overstay their visas. And federal officials have long dodged addressing the issue of what to do about the 12 to 14 million illegal immigrants already in the country, many of whom are employed by American companies. (Former President Bush did try to come to grips with it, but met resistance in Congress.)

It is inevitable, however, that some sort of guest-worker program or path to citizenship will have to be established. There are simply too many illegal immigrants in the country to order them all home. Would it therefore not be wise to allow the children of those immigrants to gain an education to prepare them for the day when they will have access to legal employment?

Congress has avoided this hot potato in disgraceful fashion, given that immigration policy should be set at the federal level. Local politicians have used the issue to shameful advantage, playing on public fears. In the meantime, the innocent bystanders in all this, the children of those illegal immigrants, have suffered. Those in the community colleges who have displayed the courage to stand up for what is right are showing real leadership. It
happens they also are displaying a healthy measure of common sense.

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New exhibit displays Governor Aycock’s commitment to special-needs education

By Matthew Esterline
NL Staff Writer

11 June 2009 — As a result of Governor Aycock’s support, institutions devoted to the education of the blind and deaf in the state had increased capacity and increased efficiency. With such defining actions toward North Carolina education, a recent addition to the Governor Charles B. Aycock Historic Birthplace offers a glimpse of what the Governor was able to contribute to the education of the blind and deaf children of the state.

Governor Charles B. Aycock strived during his time in office to enhance the lives of the children of this great state. Studying theoretical problems in education was a passion of the Governor during his time and the University of North Carolina. This passion for studying and understanding the role of education in the lives of people would follow Aycock as he became Governor in 1901.

While in office, annual appropriations for education in North Carolina doubled. Special attention was given to institutions like schools for the blind and schools for the deaf. This caring attention would serve as one of the Governor’s greatest legacies, as the continued support had an incredibly positive impact on the lives of blind and deaf children in North Carolina.

The exhibit, “Education of the Blind and Deaf in North Carolina”, is now a cornerstone of the Visitor’s Center of the Charles B. Aycock Birthplace. The recent arrival is the now the main attention grabber at the visitor’s center thanks to a joint effort by the East Carolina University Public History Program and the North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites.

The exhibit offers a multitude of historic items that document Governor Charles B. Aycock’s role efforts to improve educational opportunities for the blind and the deaf. Dr. John A. Tilley of East Carolina University put considerable effort into making the exhibit a memorable addition to the visitors of the historic birthplace.

John A. Tilley is an Associate Professor of History and a respected member of the East Carolina University Public History Program. In addition to his responsibilities as an Associate Professor of History, Tilley also serves as the advisor to those students enrolled in the undergraduate public history program.

Some of the courses Tilley uses for those students in the Public History Program include Historic Preservation Planning, Field and Laboratory Studies in Museum and Historic Site Development, Techniques of Museum and Historic Site Development, and various American History and American Military History courses.

Tilley earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University. John A. Tilley has served in the past as an assistant curator at the Mariners’ Museum in Newport News, Virginia. It is in these specialized museum studies courses that Tilley teaches so well, and in his own experience, that the genesis of the “Education of the Blind and Deaf in North Carolina” exhibit was born.

The recent donated exhibit, which will be a cornerstone of the historic birthplace until the end of the year, offers many special exhibits for those interested in learning about Governor Aycock’s contributions to the education of the blind and deaf.

A special feature of the exhibit is an interactive element that allows those visiting the historic site an opportunity to write their names in Braille. Once seated at the school-like desk, each visitor uses specially provided tools to write in Braille.

Using a Braille alphabet card that is provided to each visitor, each participant in the...
interactive exhibit figures out the proper sign for the letters in their names. The letters typically use a combination of the six-dot system, arranged in two columns and three rows. From there, the participants use a slate and pointers provided at the desk to punch out their name in Braille. As an added bonus, each and every alphabet card has a sentence written in Braille that visitors can figure out at home, making the interactive exhibit that much more interactive.

This Braille exhibit is just one of several exhibits at the Charles B. Aycock Birthplace that was generously provided by East Carolina University, the North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites, the Governor Morehead School for the Blind, the North Carolina School for the Deaf, and the Eastern Carolina School for the Deaf. The joint effort took to create this unique exhibit has allowed attention to be focused on the Birthplace.

A three-dimensional puzzle map of North Carolina is also a heavily visited feature of the "Education of the Blind and Deaf in North Carolina" exhibit. This large puzzle is notable in the fact that each county of North Carolina represents a puzzle piece. On each piece, the name of the county is written in Braille. This large puzzle served as a valuable tool for teaching the blind about the names and locations of the counties of the state of North Carolina.

According to Leigh V. Strickland, Manager of the Governor Charles B. Aycock Birthplace, the puzzle was a useful educational tool. "By assembling this puzzle, students were able to learn the locations, shapes, and sizes of the counties of North Carolina." The three-dimensional teaching aid was one of several in the exhibit, including a three-dimensional eyeball model that effectively teaches students.

The brochure for the historic birthplace are also available at the exhibit in Braille, making the exhibit that much more interactive.

Several awards serve as display pieces at the exhibit, including awards from the North Carolina Agriculture Society to students at the Institution/School for the Deaf and Blind. A "Largest and Best General Exhibit" medal and a "Best General Exhibit by Any Public School" medal from the early 1900s demonstrate that incredible talent and abilities of students at institutions for the blind and deaf in the state.

Several Annual Reports are featured in the exhibit. The bound reports would serve as a main source of information on the progress on institutions for the blind and deaf in the state. These early 1900s reports from the President's of said institutions would go directly to Governor Aycock, and were often dedicated, "To His Excellency, Charles B. Aycock, Governor of North Carolina."

In addition to this unique material, the "Education of the Blind and Deaf in North Carolina" exhibit features vintage photos from the time period when Charles B. Aycock served as Governor, as well as a timeline of the methods of education used for the blind and deaf at the time. A "Perkins Braille," also serves as a centerpiece of the exhibit. The Braille machine, designed by the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts, allowed a student to write in Braille. The machine, created in 1951, acts as a kind of typewriter, with a key corresponding to each dot of the Braille code. Those using the machine can create any of the characters in the Braille code. The machine also serves as a natural progression of the timeline of the exhibit, as the methods and tools of education for the blind and deaf evolved over time.

The exhibit is, in its own way, a work of art. This art piece is, without question, and educational opportunity for those interested in both the Charles B. Aycock Historic Birthplace and the personal interests of Governor Aycock himself. In addition to the recent Deaf-Blind Awareness Days celebrated by the historic birthplace in the past, the efforts of Governor Aycock are on display and serve as a constant reminder of the Governor's dedication to the education of the blind and deaf.

The exhibit itself also serves as a reminder that the efforts of Governor Charles B. Aycock have not been forgotten, especially by the dedicated members of East Carolina University who worked so hard to make this exhibit a reality. The Department of History at East Carolina University in Greenville offers various degrees in Public History that help provide students with skills prepare students for careers at museums, archives, nonprofit organizations, and historic sites like the historic birthplace.

The "Education of the Blind and Deaf in North Carolina" exhibit will be on display at the State Capitol in Raleigh beginning in January of next year.