DONALD DIETZ  Laurey (Rebecca Moyes) and Curly (Kyle Guglielmo) perform "People Will Say We're in Love."

School of the Arts to be broadcast

BY BROOKE CAIN - Staff Writer

A grant from the A.J. Fletcher Foundation is about to turn some UNC School of the Arts students into TV stars.

The Raleigh-based charitable foundation's $500,000 grant will fund the broadcast of several School of the Arts projects on UNC-TV. The arts school, in Winston-Salem, will receive $100,000 a year for five years.

The first program selected for broadcast is one of the school's most impressive: a recent production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic "Oklahoma!" that is distinctive for its faithfulness to the original 1943 production of the musical. That all-school production, which played in Winston-Salem this spring, was directed by Broadway star and School of the Arts alumnus Terrence Mann. The school's chancellor, John Mauceri, was the musical director.

A UNC-TV spokesman says the "Oklahoma!" production will air this fall.

The deal not only delivers locally produced art to the homes of North Carolinians who may not have easy access to it, but it could change the lives of students studying at the arts school.
Rebecca Moyes, a rising junior from Houston who played Laurey in "Oklahoma!" called news of the UNC-TV collaboration "overwhelming."

"It's something you hope for but never think it will happen," she said. "It's so difficult as a young actor to make it in this industry, and you can't pay for this kind of exposure. It's more than I ever dreamed of, to have a whole show broadcast on public television."

Max King of Cary, a rising senior at the school, was the second assistant director for the taping of "Oklahoma!" He thinks the School of the Arts has the best design and production school in the nation, so he's happy it will get more exposure through the collaboration.

King is working with three other School of the Arts students on a documentary about the Winston-Salem Dash, the city's minor league baseball team.

**Second Fletcher grant**

This isn't the first Fletcher Foundation grant to the School of the Arts. In 2000, it committed $10 million to establish an opera institute at the school. Since it was established, the Fletcher Opera Institute has trained and graduated more than two dozen opera singers who have embarked on successful careers.

Could that mean local opera on UNC-TV?

That's possible, said Barbara Goodmon, president and executive director of the Fletcher Foundation, who is also a trustee at the school.

"We haven't gotten there yet," Goodman said of an opera broadcast. "But we very well may. The school will determine what they want to do."

**Exposure welcomed**

Goodmon is excited not only for the exposure and experiences that the students will get from the partnership, but also for the chance North Carolina viewers will have to see exactly what the School of the Arts does.

"So many people don't realize what an unbelievable treasure the school is and what unbelievable talent is there," she said. "I'm amazed every time I go there for a meeting or performance. Just amazed at this tiny school with all this talent and all those ideas. The energy of that - it's very, very invigorating."

Recent School of the Arts graduate Leo Hurley was a senior at the school when he worked on "Oklahoma!" as assistant to Chancellor Mauceri.
"I'm so glad they'll keep doing these kinds of things," he said. "It's an opportunity for students to work with professionals on professional productions. It's an amazing experience."

The students who worked on "Oklahoma!" haven't seen the finished product yet, but Moyes, the actress, said they occasional got sneak peeks during the filming.

"We could run out to the truck and see snippets," she said. "It was incredibly beautiful."

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Panel will review state assets

BY ALAN M. WOLF - Staff Writer

Since announcing a $750 million unsolicited bid to buy rival hospital Rex Healthcare in early May, WakeMed officials have lobbied lawmakers to support the sale by pitching it as a way to generate needed revenue for the state.

The General Assembly wrapped up work last week without addressing the Rex sale but did give WakeMed a consolation prize: House Speaker Thom Tillis has appointed a committee to review state-owned assets.

The committee, to be led by Rep. Harold Brubaker, will consider whether the state's ownership of certain assets is necessary, or if a sale would provide a better return and free money for other uses. Such "disposable" assets could include land, buildings, aircraft, vehicles, railroads and hospitals.

"This is driven by the new Republican leadership and its vision of a business approach to state government," Tillis spokesman Jordan Shaw said. "The purpose of this committee is to study whether the state has gotten into asset management where it shouldn't."

The committee isn't a "WakeMed-led idea," but the state's ownership of Rex through the UNC Health Care System will likely be part of the review, Shaw said.

UNC officials have said they aren't interested in selling Rex, but this week announced a special committee that will review WakeMed's offer.

WakeMed welcomes any discussion about whether state government has a role in owning assets related to the provision of health care, CEO Bill Atkinson said. WakeMed has argued that UNC-Rex is competing unfairly in Wake County by using its state-owned status to get higher reimbursements for medical care and to offer higher rates for affiliated physicians.

"Anytime you can get someone to realistically step back and take a look at options, there's no downside to that type of review," Atkinson said. "That applies to all the things they're looking at, including hospitals."

'Fair market value'
Lawmakers have considered selling assets in years past, but those efforts didn't get very far, said Brubaker, an Asheboro Republican and real-estate appraiser.

"The last time it was set up, it did not end up getting rid of any property," he added. "I would like to think we can do better."

Part of the review will examine how to determine the "fair market value" of assets, and establishing a "transparent and equitable process" for selling assets, according to the committee's plan.

Critics have questioned whether the state should start selling various assets for one-time revenue and where such a process would lead. Other states from California to New York have had the same idea. Across the Atlantic, Britain was planning to sell Sherwood Forest - until the public got wind of the plan.

Here, there are no plans to sell Jockey's Ridge but Republican leaders say they want to find new ways to make government leaner.

"If we can take some burdens off of state government, I don't think it will be a tough sell if it's put to the right uses," Brubaker said. "If you use the money for the rainy day fund, that's a good reason to do it."

Brubaker doesn't expect his committee to meet before August and said he doesn't have a timeline for how long its work might take. "My thinking is we have to be methodical in our approach," he added.

There are no plans for a similar committee on the Senate side, said Ray Martin, spokesman for Senate President Phil Berger.

"But Senator Berger does think it's appropriate to take an inventory of assets to determine whether or not the state is making the best use of its resources," Martin said.

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College entrance exam ACT's validity questioned

By Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed

A new study has found that two of the four main parts of the ACT -- science and reading -- have "little or no" ability to help colleges predict whether applicants will succeed.

The analysis also found that the other two parts -- English and mathematics -- are "highly predictive" of college success. But because most colleges rely on the composite ACT score, rather than individual subject scores, the value of the entire exam is questioned by the study.

"By introducing noise that obscures the predictive validity of the ACT exam, the reading and science tests cause students to be inefficiently matched to schools, admitted to schools that may be too demanding -- or too easy -- for their levels of ability," says the paper released Monday by the National Bureau of Economic Research (abstract available here).

ACT officials said that they were still studying the paper, of which they were unaware until Monday. But they defended the value of all parts of the test.

The authors of the paper are Eric P. Bettinger, associate professor of education at Stanford University; Brent J. Evans, a doctoral student in higher education at Stanford; and Devin G. Pope, an assistant professor at the business school of the University of Chicago. At a time when the ACT has grown in popularity such that it has roughly equal market share to the SAT's, the authors write that misuse of ACT data could hinder efforts to raise college completion rates.

The research is based on a database with information about every student who enrolled at a four-year public university in Ohio in 1999. The authors obtained information about high school and college grades -- and found their results consistent for students of different skill levels and for those who enrolled in colleges with different levels of difficulty in winning admission. (For comparative purposes, the authors also used data on students who
enrolled in a private Western institution, Brigham Young University, and found the same patterns.)

The authors note that because colleges get the score breakdowns and the composite scores, there is nothing to prevent admissions officers from considering only some parts of the ACT, or even of weighting the different parts of the test in different ways. But they found that, overwhelmingly, colleges fail to do so and instead rely on a composite score that the authors find anything but reliable. As part of their study, the researchers compared students who earned the same composite scores but different subscores in different sections, and they found that similar composite scores don't reflect similar chances of college success -- their value depends on the subjects on which students scored well.

So why don't colleges use just parts of the ACT, or pay attention to the parts rather than the composite score? "The answer is not clear," the authors write. "Personal conversations suggest that most admission officers are simply unaware of the difference in predictive validity across the tests and have limited time and resources to analyze the predictive power of its various components at their institution. An alternative explanation is that schools have a strong incentive -- perhaps due to highly publicized external rankings such as those compiled by U.S. News & World Report, which incorporate students' entrance exam scores -- to admit students with a high ACT composite score, even if this score turns out to be unhelpful."

Late Monday, the ACT released a statement on the study: "ACT has decades of research supporting the predictive validity and application of the four ACT subject test scores and the composite score in college enrollment, performance and retention. We were not aware of the study in question until this morning, and we are in the process of reviewing its methodology and findings."

Jon Erickson, interim president of ACT's Education Division, made several points via an e-mail. He noted that the ACT is used "for multiple goals and purposes beyond just admissions or predicting overall student success." For example, it is used in course placement, and he said that the ACT has been "quite accurate" in that function.

Further, he said that "all four subject areas are important in college," so the ACT appropriately includes them.

He also defended the use of composite scores. "We believe the composite score represents the best overall picture of the student and perhaps is most easily accessible and useable by institutions." In addition, he said that
colleges are correct not to weight different parts of the ACT, adding that "prediction models are more reliable at the composite level than the individual scale score level."

Robert Schaeffer, public education director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, a group that questions the use of standardized testing, said that the NBER paper "makes an interesting, technical point about how to weight ACT subscores optimally," but he said that he wished the analysis had gone further.

The scholars should have compared the validity of the ACT scores to the validity of relying on high school grades in college preparatory courses, "as is done at an ever-growing number of institutions," he said. Schaeffer said he would have preferred an analysis that looked "at much more fundamental questions about how to use standardized exams."

Validity questions have also been raised about the SAT. In 2008, after the College Board adopted a series of major changes in the SAT, it conducted studies of whether the new test was any more accurate at predicting college success. The board found no difference in the predictive value, and a continuation of differing confidence levels for predicting the success of different racial and ethnic groups.
By Tony Hartawan for USA TODAY

Cost, distance and fears about visa denials in the post-9/11 era have helped make U.S. colleges less attractive to foreign students.

U.S. colleges' appeal fading for foreign students
By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY
June 23, 2011

JAKARTA, Indonesia — The bang of a ceremonial gong opens festivities in a cavernous downtown office building here, where representatives from 56 U.S. colleges stand ready to peddle their wares.

The University of Cincinnati passes out pennants. At a booth for Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, three young Indonesians talk up their alma mater. And U.S. Embassy officials tout the 95% approval rate in Indonesia for student visas.

"I'm literally almost out on the streets, grabbing people as they walk by, saying, 'Hey, we'll give you a visa if you go study in America,'" Scot Marciel, the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia, says at a news conference promoting this college fair. The event is the first major effort by the government toward achieving a goal set last year by President Obama and Indonesian officials to double the number of Indonesians studying at U.S. institutions.

The United States used to be the destination of choice for young Indonesians and other foreign students seeking a college degree outside their home country.

During the past decade, however, the USA has become a harder sell.

Cost, distance and lingering fears about visa denials in the post-9/11 era have helped make the USA less attractive to foreign students, threatening a lucrative market that is a source of brain power and diversity for U.S. colleges.

The number of Indonesian students enrolled in a U.S. college for at least a year has dropped from a high of 13,282 in 1997-98 to 6,943 in 2009-10, local organizers say, citing data from the New York-based Institute of International Education.
U.S. colleges are facing increasing competition from other countries — among them, Australia, which attracted more than 10,000 full-time Indonesian students studying abroad in 2008, about one-third of the total.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country and third-largest democracy, is an extreme case.

U.S. higher education has climbed out of its post-9/11 international enrollment dip and attracts more foreign students than any other country — a record 691,000 in 2010, up from 475,000 in 2000, with the increase driven by an upsurge in Chinese undergraduates.

But as more countries seek to cash in on the growing market for international students, the USA is losing ground. From 2000 to 2008, the number of students enrolled in a college outside their home country soared 85% to 3.3 million. During that time the U.S. share shrank, from 24% to 19%, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operative Development.

"We have a great product. Our offering is still the best in the world. But we don't want to rest on our laurels," says U.S. Commerce Undersecretary Francisco Sánchez, who hosted the Jakarta event, the agency's largest-ever higher education trade mission overseas.

The State Department has primary responsibility for promoting U.S. higher education abroad as part of its mission to strengthen international ties and mutual understanding. While highly selective U.S. colleges vie with top colleges in other countries for the best and brightest students, many less selective colleges are trying to build an international reputation as a way to increase diversity on their campuses — and boost revenue. Foreign students typically pay a higher non-resident tuition at public universities.

The Commerce Department's embrace is a reminder that foreign students bring more than talent and diverse perspectives to U.S. campuses.

Between tuition and living expenses, they contributed $20 billion to the U.S. economy last year, making higher education among the nation's top service exports. Those who return home after graduating help build a better business environment for U.S. companies, says Sánchez, whose office also has organized recent international missions for the aerospace, water technology and beauty and cosmetics industries.

**Complaints about agents who ‘double-dip’**

By day's end, more than 6,000 students, many with parents in tow, have braved Jakarta's urban traffic to get to the downtown exhibition hall, which has taken on a carnival-like air.

The event, co-hosted by a Jakarta-based non-profit Access Education Beyond, looks like most college fairs. There's an essay-writing workshop for students, tours to local high schools for U.S. colleges and opportunities for networking.
But the Commerce Department's presence signals a distinction — barely perceptible — that underscores a philosophical divide about how U.S. colleges should go about recruiting foreign students in an increasingly competitive environment.

At issue is a controversial but growing practice overseas in which U.S. colleges pay local recruiters based on how many students they bring to a campus. Typically, the recruiters, often called commercial agents, are paid a commission or bonus and offer the service free to students and families.

The practice is common in Asian countries, along with the United Kingdom and Canada. One survey by an association of Indonesian agents estimates that 55% of Indonesians who study overseas use agents, who can help families navigate the sometimes complicated process of applying for visas and managing unfamiliar application procedures.

"It's really confusing," says Lina Sarmili of Jakarta, who is working with an agent for her son, Jonathan Wiliputra, who translates her remarks into English. "You have to do things step by step. They guide us."

For the Commerce Department, the concept makes sense. "When we're promoting a product, generally we match up a business with a potential buyer or a distributor — someone to represent them (the U.S. product) in a particular market," Sánchez says.

One session here is set up to help U.S. colleges meet such agents. Because the profession is largely unregulated, organizers here urge colleges to vet them carefully.

Other U.S. agencies involved in recruiting foreign students aren't as sold on the agent system, a reflection of various complaints here about unscrupulous agents who steer students to certain schools or who "double-dip" — charging families for their services while also being paid by a college.

The State Department won't allow agents at its functions, which include 400 international college advising centers scattered across 170 countries. Domestically, the Education Department bars colleges that accept federal assistance such as Pell grants and federal student loans, from paying commissions to recruiters.

Education officials recently closed a loophole that enabled for-profit colleges to do so. And the National Association for College Admission Counseling, whose members include 1,400 colleges, says it plans to more aggressively enforce its ban on the practice as overseas recruitment becomes more common.

Worries about scams
In Indonesia, a big concern among students considering foreign colleges is the potential for fraud and deceit among agents.
"Some agents are biased, probably because of the commission they get from the universities," says Davin William Marta, 17, who is here with his mom, Cherry Frederica Lioe. "They really push us to go to that school."

Marta, who has visited booths of eight schools this afternoon, says he prefers the fair because "I can contact the school directly" and "get a lot of choices."

Even so, agents have been embraced by more than 125 U.S. institutions, who have joined an association founded in 2008 that aims to discourage flim-flammers by setting standards for agents' conduct. Several of those colleges are at this fair.

Frank Merendino, senior admissions officer for the University of Cincinnati, says the market will take care of itself because colleges will stop using agents whose students ultimately aren't happy and drop out. "It's in their best interest to send students who make a good fit," he says.

Gregory Barattini of Foothill-De Anza Colleges in California, says that compared with international students who discover his institutions on their own, students who are referred by reputable agents "know far better what to expect, have a much greater support system in place, and altogether are better prepared to succeed. Period."

Not all schools here buy that concept. The State University of New York-Buffalo prefers to deal with students directly, associate vice president Joseph Hindrawan says.

Indiana University-Purdue-University-Indianapolis won't pay agents but will enroll qualified students who work with agents. "I do recognize that it is very helpful to parents to have a person locally that they can turn to for information," says Patricia Bidding, director of international recruitment.

And information may be what foreign students seek most about U.S. higher education. Indonesia native Ade Hastuti, an alum of the Indiana campus who greeted families on behalf of her alma mater, says tuition fees and living costs "are seen to be the biggest challenge," she says. That, along with "the long distance" and "the difficulty getting a visa."

During the news conference, a reporter asks whether Muslims, who make up the majority religion in Indonesia, face special restrictions. "The U.S. government welcomes all students," says Marciel, the ambassador.

A 2009 Commerce Department report notes that rising tuition costs "may harm U.S. competitiveness in the long run," which is one reason organizers here are looking for ways to make U.S. education more affordable, through local scholarships or partnerships with U.S. universities.

The U.S. Embassy says visa processing has become more efficient since 9/11 and that lingering concerns about visa problems are outdated. The average approval rate for all visas is nearing 90%. 
Marciel, who says delivering Indonesian students to U.S. colleges is his top priority, acknowledges the dueling philosophies within the U.S. government about overseas recruiting.

The State Department is stepping up recruitment efforts; its newest advising center is located in the Embassy's innovative new high-tech cultural center, which opened in a downtown shopping mall.

The center, which offers free advising that emphasizes the diversity of U.S. higher education, is "a great way around" concerns about unscrupulous recruiters, Marciel says.

But, he adds, "We're not out telling people don't use agents. We need to get back in the game in a big way, aggressively marketing the quality of U.S. education."
Councilman Derek Fink of Pasadena, Md., collects signatures to repeal a law allowing in-state tuition for students who are illegal immigrants. (Amy Davis, Baltimore Sun / June 14, 2011)

Petitioners in Maryland protest in-state tuition for illegal immigrants
The Republican-led effort aims to stop a new law from taking effect, and to put the measure before voters.
By Julie Bykowicz, Baltimore Sun
June 24, 2011
Reporting from Frederick, Md.

The red and white placards outside the Motor Vehicle Administration office strike some as an invitation: "Sign petition here. No in-state tuition for illegal immigrants."

One after another, supporters walk up. Over the course of the morning, Carol Geisbert welcomes, among others, a mother of three college-bound teens, a truck driver named Dewey Sayers and a 28-year-old Frederick Community College student wearing a Beastie Boys T-shirt.

Two sisters in their 60s practically skip to the table, one of them whistling. "Just tell me where to sign," Pat Baumgardner said. "I got better things to use my tax money for."

Over the last two months, volunteers like Geisbert have fanned out across the state to gather signatures for the petition to give voters the final say on the new law that extends in-state tuition discounts to illegal immigrants.

The Republican-led effort will come to a head next week. If the petitioners can collect 55,736 valid signatures by June 30, implementation of the law would be suspended and the measure would be put on the 2012 ballot.
That appears likely, as the state Board of Elections has certified more than 47,000 names from a preliminary round of submissions last month, and organizers plan to submit many more before the deadline.

They have relied heavily on a website linked to the state's voter registration database — a new method that advocates for immigrants say they will challenge in court.

But the petitioners say they have gathered tens of thousands of signatures the old-fashioned way: by knocking on doors, setting up tables at festivals and community meetings, and approaching people as they go about their lives.

In recent weeks, the ground operation has attracted the attention of Casa de Maryland, an immigrant advocacy group. Volunteers and paid workers for the group have gone to petition sites to intercept would-be signers and make the case for the new law.

To qualify for the tuition break, an illegal immigrant would have to attend high school in Maryland for three years and show that his or her family had filed state tax returns. The student could then attend a community college at the in-state rate. After completing 60 credits, he or she could transfer to a four-year college, again at the residential discount.

The legislation would save eligible students $4,000 to $6,000 a year at community college, according to a legislative analysis. At a four-year institution, the savings would increase: In-state tuition at the University of Maryland this year is $8,655; nonresidents pay $25,795.

Legislative analysts estimate that the measure would cost the state about $800,000 the first year, rising to $3.5 million annually by 2016. Opponents say the cost could be far higher.

Illegal immigrants are eligible for in-state tuition in 13 states, including border states such as California, New Mexico and Texas. In Alabama, legislators passed a law last week not only denying in-state tuition to illegal immigrants but also barring their enrollment in colleges and universities;

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