THE DAILY CLIPS

June 25, 2007

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
    The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
    USA Today
    The Charlotte Observer
    The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
    Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
    Business Week
    Time

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
ECU faculty member to investigate N.C. rural care

The Daily Reflector

An East Carolina University nurse faculty member has received federal funding to increase the number and diversity of nurse practitioners in underserved rural areas of North Carolina.

Dr. Linda Steele, associate professor and director of the adult and family nurse practitioner concentrations in the ECU School of Nursing, is principal investigator. Steele was awarded $322,330 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration.

The grant is renewable for $227,506 in the second year and $207,565 in the third year.

"The funding will provide unique opportunities for the School of Nursing and nurse practitioner students to make a great contribution to health care needs in eastern North Carolina," said Steele, who cares for indigent patients at the James D. Bernstein Community Health Center north of Greenville.

Objectives include insuring that family and adult nurse practitioner students have the knowledge and skill to provide culturally competent care to diverse groups of patients, particularly those with chronic illness, and collaborating with health care providers, educators, researchers and policy makers to insure that graduates contribute to improving the infrastructure for accessible, high quality health care in the region.

Eastern North Carolina is characterized as poor, unhealthy and rural.

Weight camp

East Carolina University's new summer camp to help girls lose weight and learn to keep it off was slated to start Sunday.

Called Camp Golden Treasures, the six-week program ends Aug. 3. Most girls will spend all six weeks at camp, but some will camp for three weeks. The goal is to help girls age 10 to 18 get a jump-start on losing weight and improving their long-term health, said Dr. David Collier, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Brody School of Medicine and director of the ECU Pediatric Healthy Weight Research and Treatment Center.

A total of 58 girls are attending camp. They are from Pitt, Jones, Guilford, Lenoir, Onslow and Yancey counties, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, New York, South Carolina, Virginia and the Bahamas.

ECU physicians and others experienced in working with overweight and obese children are leading the camp. Camp director is Ira Green, who has led similar camps in the past.

While the goal of the camp is to lose weight and help campers learn to keep it off, broader goals are to reduce the chances the girls will develop health problems later, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and joint disease, Collier said.

"We're much more interested in the long-term success than the six-week success," Collier said. "This is a disease-prevention effort through intensive lifestyle intervention."

Campers will stay in ECU dormitories, and ECU students will serve as counselors. Whereas some camps are in rural settings, having the camp at ECU will provide a more realistic setting where campers can practice making healthful choices, Collier said. Campers will eat in a dining hall where cheeseburgers, ice cream and soft drinks are available.

More information about the camp is online at www.ecu.edu/campgoldentreasures.
Our Views

An anchor

PCMH, UHS show economic muscle

Long-time residents of this community may have trouble believing news that Pitt County Memorial Hospital serves as the anchor of a $1 billion company. But financial projections indicate that University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, which owns the hospital, will collect $1.03 billion in the 2007-08 fiscal year.

As a leading area employer and an exceptional organization, PCMH is a towering presence here. This latest development is an indication the hospital will retain that role for the foreseeable future and is another example of its remarkable growth.

The ever-growing medical complex in west Greenville serves as an inspiring sight to those entering the city from that direction. Pitt County Memorial and its surrounding facilities dominate the landscape, and those who do not pass the site regularly will be startled to see how it evolves. It seems a new building springs forth on a daily basis.

The hospital and East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine are two of eastern North Carolina's most valuable resources. In a region that struggled for decades with inadequate and inequitable access to health care, PCMH and UHS have worked to address that shortcoming, bringing physicians to rural communities and extending the reach of medicine across the coastal plain.

Such a massive impact could lead to complacency, or a feeling that the present level of care is adequate. But that is not the case here, where aspirations for future growth and innovation run rampant.

The East Carolina Heart Institute is taking form and aims to address the high instances of heart disease and stroke in this region. The recently complete Health Sciences Building is a handsome structure with the laudable purpose of bringing together students in a multidisciplinary setting. And, depending on the current legislative session, East Carolina may win approval for a dentistry school as well.

The beating heart of that complex is Pitt County Memorial, which remains one of the premier health care facilities in the state. This week, the PCMH Board of Trustees approved a $780 million budget for the 2007-08 fiscal year, meaning that it represents roughly three-fourths of the UHS budget. Though UHS owns six hospitals and other health care agencies, PCMH dominates its fiscal footprint.

Though those figures appear rosy, Pitt Memorial struggled during a fiscal year which ends in about three months. Income is exceeding expenses by 1.7 percent or about four times less than budget projections for the fiscal year. PCMH has trimmed some of its capital spending and made other staff adjustments to compensate, and will increase rates for some services.

But some of that budget inequity comes from treating patients without the means to afford care. And that stems from serving a region with high levels of poverty and unemployment. That is the landscape of eastern North Carolina, and adjustments will be made to reflect that reality.

But as the anchor of a billion-dollar organization, PCMH remains a powerful presence here. Its growth should be cheered just as the care it provides should be valued.
12 medical school employees receive service awards

Twelve employees of the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University recently received Spotlight on Service awards.

Recipients were Martina Christie of ECU Physicians group practice administration; Brigitte Daniels and Linda Schadler of the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center; Pat Davis of the Department of Internal Medicine’s Coumadin Clinic; Toni Gaines and Katie E. Teel of housekeeping; Dr. David Hannon, a pediatric cardiologist; Brandi Holland of the Department of Radiation Oncology; Melissa Lewis of Bethel Family Medicine; Melissa Reason of the Division of Cardiology; Dr. Paul Walker of the Division of Hematology/Oncology; and Janine Williams of patient access services in the Brody Outpatient Center.
Brody to run cancer center

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

Beginning July 1, a reorganization will put East Carolina University in charge of operations at the Leo Jenkins Cancer Center.

ECU and Pitt County Memorial Hospital officials, who have jointly run the center since it opened in the mid-1980s, recently agreed to make the Brody School of Medicine the managing entity at Jenkins. The move gives order to a muddled management structure and should increase research there, PCMH and ECU officials said.

Under the previous structure, the center administrator reported to PCMH authorities, while the medical director and clinical faculty reported to the university. Support staff were split between the hospital and the university.

There was also a cancer center board, recently dissolved. It had limited authority, said Chris Collins, interim executive director of ECU Physicians.

The goal of the reorganization was to "have one staff under one management structure," Collins said.

The reorganization will not eliminate any jobs, said Collins and PCMH Vice President of Operations Scott Jones. Some PCMH employees have been moved into other positions at the hospital, including Administrator Phyllis DeAntonio.

Three people are sharing DeAntonio's duties until a new administrator is hired. Collins said there's no hard timeline for filling the position.

The cancer center treated about 5,700 patients in 2006, according to PCMH spokeswoman Beth Anne Atkins. Of the center's 142 employees, 130 work for ECU.

Collins and Jones emphasized that the university and the hospital are still partners in the cancer center.

"This has all been done together," Collins said. "This wasn't ECU approaching the hospital, asking to take over the cancer center... or the hospital saying, 'Let's change the relationship.' It was a mutual decision that was studied to death, and many options were looked at."

Pitt Memorial's cancer care will improve with ECU overseeing Jenkins, which acts as the hospital's outpatient oncology facility, Jones said.

"I think there are nothing but benefits to this change for our patients," he said.

The move also acknowledges the center's status as an academic cancer center, Collins said. Research is a defining trait of an academic cancer center, he said.

Increasing research output is an endeavor the medical school has to drive, he added.

"We need to make sure that this (center) is robust with academics and research," he said. "Research is key. If you look across the country, what differentiates a good cancer center is research."

Key to expanding research is a developing partnership with the Lineberger Cancer Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Collins said. Talks between Jenkins and Lineberger officials are still in their infancy, but Collins said he hopes to see cooperation on clinical trials, faculty recruitment and patient care, among other areas.

Working together, the two schools could balance one another's strengths and weaknesses, Collins said at a June 13 meeting of a committee overseeing reorganization at the medical school.

"They're predominantly known for research, and they're now ramping up patient care," he said. "We're just the opposite."

Jimmy Ryals can be contacted at jryals@coxnc.com and 329-9568.
Former ECU standout makes strong return from injury for Arizona

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

BALTIMORE — Hitting has always been happiness for Chad Tracy, so when he talked about a month away from it, he sounded like a guy who’d been homesick for a trip around the bases.

Never before injured in his professional baseball career, Tracy seemed a bit disquieted about being out of the batter’s box so long, like a teacher forced to leave the classroom unattended for a trip down the hall.

“The last couple of years, I’ve had some success, and this year before I got hurt, I was off to a good start,” said Tracy, rubbing the fringes of red hair on the back of his neck while sizing up his return to the Arizona Diamondbacks lineup June 15 in Baltimore. “I’ve just got to try to get back to that place.”

But Tracy’s confidence seemed to return quickly as he peered around the visitor’s clubhouse at Camden Yards, his D-Backs poised to uncork a three-game sweep of the Orioles.

“We’ve got a long time left and a lot of ball games to play. I’m looking forward to it,” he said.

Even as Tracy might struggle to meet his own expectations as he completes his return from a strained rib cage, his impact was immediate and necessary for the D-Backs and manager Bob Melvin, trying to keep pace in the National League West.

Entering Saturday’s games, Arizona was in a dead heat for the division lead with San Diego and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

After playing a couple of rehab games at Class AAA Tucson in early June, Tracy is back to being Arizona’s mainstay at third base. The former East Carolina star is batting .285 and has four home runs, 14 doubles and 22 RBIs in 42 games.

See TRACY, C10

TRACY
Continued from C1

“I feel great. I’m not getting as many hits as I’d like, but I’m having some good at bats, going deep in the count, seeing some pitches and eventually everything will start to fall into place,” said Tracy, 27. “The hits will start coming.”

Even since speaking those words, they’ve been coming.

The Charlotte native was the only D-Backs factor in a rematch with the O’s in interleague play, cranking an RBI double in Friday’s night’s 7-1 loss.

Tracy, who made a name for himself at ECU under late coach Keith LeClair before being selected by Arizona in the seventh round of the 2001 draft, admits he wasn’t fully prepared for life on the disabled list.

“It’s deflating at times. That was my first time being hurt, first time on the DL,” he said. “You never even think about it, you just go out there and play. But when you miss a month, and you have to watch for a while and

have to work your way back, you realize how tough it is going through an injury. There’s nothing fun about it.”

Tracy hopes there is enough time for him to duplicate his success from last season, when he erupted for career highs in RBIs (80), doubles (41) and hits (168) in his third full season in the majors.

His .281 average from a season ago was actually a career low after hitting .265 and then .308 his first two seasons. As he slowly regains momentum, so do his numbers, and now he hopes that will help to translate into crucial Arizona wins.

“It’s making adjustments,” Tracy said of his hitting approach, which vaulted him through Arizona’s minor league system in just three seasons before he debuted with the major league club April 14, 2004. “It’s figuring out how guys are going to try to get you out. For now, you try not to do too much and you take what they give you. Then, when you start feeling really good, maybe you lengthen out your swing a little bit and try to hit some home runs.”

That, of course, is easier said than done for Tracy and everyone else. But he’s no stranger either, with 59 career long balls to his credit.

After getting married in the offseason to a fellow ECU alum, Tracy said he’s started to feel much more comfortable in Arizona, living in the Phoenix suburb of Chandler.

Still, there seems to be no taking North Carolina out of Tracy, and vice versa.
"Arizona is a great place to play, for sure, but home is always going to be North Carolina," said Tracy, who had a .339 career average at ECU from 1999-2001. "I go back there until January every year in the offseason. Arizona has definitely grown on me, and is a great place to raise a family.

"As long as I'm playing, I would love to be in Arizona, but you know how this game works. You never know what's going to happen."

_Nathan Summers can be reached at nsummers@coxnc.com, or at (252)329-9595._
Public Forum

Columnist should read authors closely

Strangely, I woke up June 17 and found myself agreeing with something Cal Thomas had written ("Brit curriculum heralds demise"), but only to a degree. As a professor of English literature at ECU, I share his concern over what appears to be a gradual disappearance of literary classics from our schools, authors such as "John Milton, Edmund Spenser, Byron, Shelley and Keats." Should students choose ECU for their education, rest assured that the English Department requires both standard survey courses (pre-ca. 1700 and post-ca. 1700) and Shakespeare for its major. The American classics are also well represented.

"We should celebrate these authors as a rich and essential part of our culture, most of all for their sophisticated artistic accomplishment. What Thomas may not be so happy to hear is that, rather than blindly encouraging "fidelity and virtue" and "the national will to resist an invading enemy," as he states, these authors strongly question moralistic jingoism and military and religious conformity. Shakespeare, for example, wrote damning anti-militaristic plays (including Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida) and the majority of his sonnets, considered among the best love poetry ever written, are addressed from one man to another (including No. 18, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"). Milton supported divorce based on incompatibility centuries before it was popular to do so and was extremely unorthodox in his religious views. Spenser, the "poet's poet," was unusual in his celebration of loving marital fidelity but also advocated near-genocidal measures against the Catholic Irish, whose land he and his wife eagerly occupied as Protestant newcomers. Shelley was a radical socialist, and the less said about Byron's personal life the better.

All of these authors wrote superbly and, at times, to our discomfort and radical joy. I don't think Mr. Thomas would have approved.

THOMAS HERRON
Greenville
ECU taps Sheerer as interim provost

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

In one of a series of organizational changes announced Friday, Marilyn Sheerer will take on the number-two post at East Carolina University.

Sheerer, vice chancellor for student life, will be interim provost for at least the next two years. ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard announced Friday. Sheerer will oversee a larger department than previous provosts have, as the divisions of student life and academic affairs will merge.

"For three years, we’ve been moving toward more cooperation, more partnerships, more absolute integration of those aspects of student affairs and academic affairs that relate to student success... This opening that Marilyn’s filling presents us with a great opportunity to do it in a very direct fashion," Ballard said.

Sheerer replaces former Provost Jim Smith, who gave up his administrative duties June 6 to return to teaching. The university will launch a national search for a permanent provost in 2008.

Ballard called Sheerer “one of the ablest higher education leaders in the country.” Sheerer credited her experience working on the academic and student life sides of the university for bringing her to the provost’s job. Before becoming vice chancellor for student life last summer, Sheerer spent eight years as dean of the College of Education...

“I suppose what I present is a knowledge of both sides of the house,” Sheerer said.

When she becomes interim provost on July 1, Sheerer’s annual salary will rise from $193,048 to $235,481. A yet-unnamed vice provost for student life will oversee day-to-day student life operations.

Merging student life, which includes housing, dining, recreation and other services, with the university’s academic operation, which encompasses ECU’s 11 colleges, will help offer a more seamless experience for students, Ballard and Sheerer said Friday. They also hope the move will help increase student retention.

For example, Sheerer cited a living learning community program being tested among on-campus music and engineering programs. The communities bring professors and dorm staff members to work with students in their residence halls.

The program is “a good example where, if the units are working together, they can make things happen,” Sheerer said. “And that leads to the sort of sense of belonging that the student has and, over the four years, retention.”

Some academic affairs activities — admissions, financial aid, the registrar’s office and the first-year student center — will move into a new division. Judith Bailey, former president of Western Michigan University and Northern Michigan University, will lead that division for one year. She will not be a candidate for the permanent provost’s position, Ballard said. Bailey will begin work July 1 and earn $160,000 per year.

Ballard also announced the Office of Institutional Planning, Research and Effectiveness will report directly to him, rather than the provost. Claudia McCarn, currently director of institutional research and testing, will be interim director of the office.

With Smith’s departure as provost, all of ECU’s vice chancellor positions have turned over since Ballard’s 2004 arrival. The chancellor said he hopes hiring a permanent provost in 2009 and a dean for the Brody School of Medicine this fall will stabilize the university’s leadership.

“Universities, being the way they are, we know we’ll lose some people... but I really hope we’ve reached a level now where, by and large, we’re as stable as we can be,” Ballard said.

Jimmy Ryals can be contacted at jryals@coxnc.com and 329-9568.
NCCU a beacon of hope

The Herald-Sun, Durham

Charlie Nelms, the chancellor-elect at N.C. Central University, hails from the Arkansas delta region where he grew up on a sharecroppers' farm picking cotton. Nelms, the vice president for student development and diversity at Indiana University, even keeps a jar of Arkansas cotton bolls in his office. He says it helps to keep him grounded.

It's tough to visualize the polished, well-spoken academician bent over a row of cotton, toiling away under the torturous delta sun. And one can only wonder what might have become of the poor, but bright young boy had he not been rescued from the cotton fields by an opportunity to attend the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, a historically black college from which he earned an undergraduate degree.

His growing up poor in rural Arkansas and greatly appreciating the opportunities afforded him as a result of attending college provides insight into Nelms' response to a question about the declining academic qualifications of incoming freshmen at NCCU.

While acknowledging that he wasn't prepared to answer specific questions about NCCU's enrollment, Nelms told reporter BriAnne Dopart that he would work to strike a balance "between broad access and enhanced access."

The flip side, as Nelms recognizes, is that students who are advanced academically must be adequately challenged. And NCCU must continue to reach out to the nation's best and brightest students.

It is vitally important that NCCU remains the beacon of hope, as it has for many generations, for students, many of whom through no fault of their own, graduate high school ill-equipped for the rigors of college. Improving North Carolina's high schools, particularly as it relates to the performance of African-American students, will require much work.

Until then, we must be careful to not overlook diamonds in the rough who could someday grow up to become the next Charlie Nelms.
Pay raises may take toll in state jobs

House’s budget plan would shave about 2,300 positions; Senate’s plan would save some of them.

By Dan Kane
STAFF WRITER

State employees appear to be in line for one of their best pay raises in the past decade. But it could come with a bitter pill — more work heaped upon them.

Legislators want to pay for raises of 4 percent or more by eliminating roughly 2,300 vacant positions in state government that have sat empty for at least six months. The House’s budget proposal would trim nearly all of them, while the Senate’s plan would allow the UNC system to hold onto its long unfilled jobs.

Depending on how the House and Senate resolve the differences in their budget plans, the moves could generate as much as $100 million for raises that could be as much as 4.25 percent.

But Gov. Mike Easley and state agency heads say the public could suffer as a result. They say many of these jobs are for needed services such as making prisons safe and escape-free and providing care for the mentally ill.

They say these jobs are not getting filled be-

SEE SALARY, PAGE 6A

SALARY
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

cause the pay lags compared to other employers, the jobs are difficult and the state’s hiring practices include a lot of red tape.

A chunk of the salary money often goes to paying overtime to other workers or to contract temporary employees so that critical services are provided.

"Just because you have a vacant position doesn’t mean that the services you provide for a patient or a client go away," said Jim Slate, the budget analysis director for the Department of Health and Human Services. Easley told lawmakers much the same thing in a letter this month.

But some lawmakers have become skeptical of all the money some agencies have accrued through unfilled jobs. They’ve begun looking at positions that state agencies have added in recent years to see if those jobs are being filled or if the salary money is being spent somewhere else.

As budget talks progress, it’s unclear whether the taking of salary money for pay raises will survive. Slate and other agency officials are lobbying lawmakers to reconsider.

They also say they have been filling many vacant jobs since the date of the report, so the money left over may be far less than originally projected. "If you ran that report today," said Andy Willis, the UNC system’s lobbyist, "it’s probably under $15 million."

Rep. Dan Blue, a Raleigh Democrat, started the movement to use vacant salary money for the pay raises. He amended the House budget to take about $100 million generated by vacant salaries so the pay raises for most state employees could be boosted from the 2.5 percent Easley proposed to 4.25 percent.

The State Employees Association of North Carolina, which represents more than half of the state’s 95,000 workers, supports the House’s efforts to raise pay. Over the past 15 years, state employees have received meager raises or bonuses, though last year lawmakers gave them a 5.5 percent raise.

But Dana Cope, the association’s executive director, said the state should not cut nearly 2,300 jobs because they have not been filled within six months.

"We think they are absolutely vital to keep state government functioning well," he said.

But he added that the agencies need to do a better job laying out their needs instead of using lapsed salary money to cover them.

The Senate plan would allow universities to escape the knife. The UNC system has the largest amount of unspent salary money for unfilled jobs of six months or longer.

A legislative research report noted that as of March 31, the universities had nearly $70 million unspent on salaries in the current fiscal year. Most of the positions are for professors and administrators. Universities had the largest number of long-unfilled jobs — 1,102 — in state government.

Willis said the way the academic year works often leads to longer periods before positions can be filled. Universities may get money from the legislature to hire professors in August, but most professors don’t change jobs until the end of an academic year in May.

Staff writer Dan Kane can be reached at 829-8681 or dan.kane@newsobserver.com.
### STATE PAY RAISES

Legislators are considering taking money accruing from positions that have not been filled for at least six months to provide a pay raise of at least 4 percent for most state employees. Here's a breakdown of where those positions are by state agency, and how much money is involved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGENCY POSITIONS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF Positions</th>
<th>COST OF RAISES IN MILLIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>1,102</td>
<td>$68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General government</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>$4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction Department</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>$11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Justice Department</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>$4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Human Services Department</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>$14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Natural Resources Department</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>$3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>$6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Vacant positions as of March 31, 2007. General government includes several council of state offices, such as the governor, auditor, treasurer and secretary of state.

SOURCE: N.C. GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New faces take up NCCU dorm debate

THE REPORT

By Eric Ferreri

DURHAM - N.C. Central University is taking a fresh look at the financial feasibility of purchasing a private dormitory that state officials say is ripe with mold, moisture and fire-alarm problems.

For months, NCCU officials have wanted to buy Eagle Landing, a residence hall on Brant Street - just across from campus - that was built by a university real estate foundation. A recent state construction report claims the 35-year-old building is saddled with design deficiencies that would cost about $9 million to fix.

Now, the real estate foundation's three original officers - Chancellor James Ammons, his assistant, Rosalind Fuse-Hall, and finance chief Charles O'Duor - all have resigned. Ammons becomes president of Florida A&M University next month and is taking Fuse-Hall, O'Duor, budget director Teresa Tate, public relations chief Sharon Saunders and chancellor's assistant Patricia Woodard with him. O'Duor's temporary successor, NCCU business school dean Bijoy Sahoo, will study the feasibility of the university's proposed purchase of Eagle Landing from the real estate foundation and Wake Forest, which loaned more than $20 million to build it.

"There has to be a very methodical, thorough analysis to see that it does make financial sense," Sahoo said Friday. "There's no doubt in my mind [Eagle Landing] is a strategic asset. It will serve the university in a time of growth."

While NCCU and state construction officials disagree over how safe the 408-bed building is, students continue to live there.

In the departures of Ammons, O'Duor and Fuse-Hall, NCCU is losing much of its expertise on the Eagle Landing issue. Fuse-Hall, in particular, has played the lead role, dealing most directly with state and city officials on various construction problems. Even when she begins her new job in Florida, Fuse-Hall, a lawyer, will continue advising NCCU officials on Eagle Landing until the matter is resolved, said Cressie Thigpen, head of NCCU's Board of Trustees.

"She's got a file on it, and she knows what's in the file," Thigpen said. "She'll be able to answer any questions that come up."

There have been no discussions of paying Fuse-Hall for her counsel, she added. She could not be reached this week.

Thigpen and fellow trustees Ed Stewart and George Miller have been added to the real estate foundation's board, as have Sahoo and interim Chancellor Beverly Washington Jones. Thigpen and Sahoo confirmed.

With enrollment rising rapidly, NCCU officials created the real estate foundation in 2003 to build Eagle Landing without going through the state's usual, slower construction process.

It is a formula used with success by 14 of 16 UNC system campuses since 2000. Historically, universities have built traditional two-to-a-room dormitories. Using private foundations, universities are able to more easily design nontraditional, suite-style housing that is more appealing to students. And by leasing beds back to a university, a private foundation creates a continuous revenue stream, lowering financial risk and getting a better interest rate.

"We've purchased residence halls over the years," said Rob Nelson, the UNC system's vice president for finance. "From where I sit, it makes a lot of sense to get residence life in there and have control over it."

The building has a certificate of occupancy because Durham city officials have deemed it safe. But before NCCU could take ownership of Eagle Landing, the state construction office would have to sign off on the building. And those two sides are still far apart.

An early May state report was the second such report on the building; the first, issued in September, found deficiencies totaling about $4.7 million. The May report acknowledged that NCCU remedied some earlier deficiencies but cited new problems, including one whopper: a deteriorating, malfunctioning heating and air conditioning system that will need to be replaced within six years at an estimated cost of at least $3.7 million.

NCCU officials have disputed some of the findings and say they've already addressed some others. They say the building is safe, even though the May report from state construction claims the building's exit stairwells don't meet minimum code requirements, and only the first floor of the five-story building should be occupied.

Staff writer Eric Ferreri can be reached at 919-241-0015 or eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com.
UNC diabetes doctor lands at center of stage

BY SABINE VOLLMER
STAFF WRITER

Coaxing numbers to reveal hidden messages is intricate work, time-consuming work, bang-your-head-against-the-wall work.

Dr. John Buse, 48, revels in it.

His efforts have led the UNC diabetes doctor to several discoveries and earned him the respect of his peers. But none gave Buse star power — until he was thrust into the center of the national debate about drug safety.

For the past month, Buse (it rhymes with "juice") has fielded calls from members of Congress, scientists and the media — all wanting to know about research he did eight years ago on Avandia, the GlaxoSmithKline diabetes pill that, according to data published in the New England Journal of Medicine, can increase the risk of heart attack.

Two weeks ago, Buse testified at a congressional hearing about his research — he had detected faint warning signals that suggested Avandia caused 50 percent more heart trouble than other frequently prescribed treatments — and the intimidation that followed when he presented his findings at two medical conferences.

Though Buse said he took the threat of a lawsuit seriously, he downplayed the incident in a statement released before the recent congressional hearing, saying: "The story is an old story and not at all important now. I do believe that any inappropriate communication from the company in 1999 came out of anger. ... Afterwards, an apology was provided and accepted. It was upsetting, but not life-altering."

Still, the revelation upset diabetes researchers who know Buse.

"John is viewed as one of the leaders in the field," said Dr. Ronald Kahn, former president of the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston. "He's considered very thoughtful and conscientious."

Avandia is hot topic

Last week was a little calmer for Buse.

He is back to jogging patient visits in the Triangle and the Triad with his duties as the director of the UNC Diabetes Care Center and a teacher of aspiring doctors.

But he is not getting away from the Avandia questions. Without conclusive data to settle whether Avandia lowers blood sugar at the expense of the heart, the debate about regulatory intervention to warn patients and doctors continues to simmer.

It is a hot topic for about 13,000 scientists and researchers at the American Diabetes Association's annual scientific meeting, which started Friday in Chicago.

"The pressure will be on him," Kahn said.

SEE BUSE, PAGE 3D

His father, John Buse Jr., was the first endocrinologist at the Medical University of South Carolina and part of the team that performed the state's first kidney replacement. When he died June 17, 2001, he was said to have taught as many as three-quarters of the state's doctors.

Maria Buse is a renowned researcher whose career spans more than 50 years. A native of Budapest who studied medicine in Switzerland, Argentina and the United States, she's an MUSC professor of biochemistry. She still works in the lab at least five days a week.

Pills that lower blood sugar were fast-forwarding diabetes treatment in the mid-1950s, when Buse's parents started their careers. But the disease remained difficult to control.

BUSE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

Short of a cure, nothing in diabetes treatment is black or white. Few know that better than Buse.

None of his 1,000 patients at the UNC Diabetes Care Center currently take Avandia, but he thinks the drug has a place in treating the disease. He prescribes it for refills and clinical studies, and because it is cheaper than the competing treatment that he prefers, Actos. He warns patients against stopping Avandia unless a doctor changes their prescription.

His is a stance rooted in the knowledge that diabetes can eat the body alive. An estimated 21 million Americans have the disease and can suffer complications that include kidney failure, blindness, heart attack, stroke, numbness, digestive problems and skin infections.

"To know diabetes is to know medicine," Buse said, citing an adage popular among diabetes doctors.

A budding doctor

Buse learned early the damage diabetes can cause — knowledge picked up from his parents, two pioneers in the treatment of the disease.
Buse; his brother Paul, a gastroenterologist in St. Louis; and their younger sister Elizabeth, a fundraiser at a school for children with learning disabilities in Atlanta, were born and reared in Charleston, S.C., their father's hometown.

Weekends were spent in their mother's research lab and attending medical conferences. They listened to stories their father told, such as the one about a patient dying from diabetes who was convinced that a voodoo curse had been put on him.

To get the patient to take his medicine, Buse said his father and a colleague dressed in sheets and lampshades and conducted a mock exorcism. "That's when characters were still allowed," Buse said.

The prospect of living up to larger-than-life expectations kept Buse away from diabetes — even from the field of medicine — when he first contemplated his career choices.

"I thought it would be awful to be the not-so-good son of the great doctors Buse," he said.

After graduating from high school in 1976, he signed up to study political science. The Watergate scandal had brought down President Nixon two years earlier. Then Jimmy Carter was elected president during Buse's first semester at Dartmouth College, an Ivy League school in Hanover, N.H. "I thought the world was safe, so I switched to comparative literature," Buse said.

He switched to biochemistry in his third semester, finished the degree in three years and went on to medical school at Duke University. There, he dabbled in oncology and immunology.

The rats hooked him

The wandering came to an end when a few hundred rats at the Joslin Diabetes Center helped Buse find his calling. The rats were part of research that Buse conducted under Dr. George Eisenbarth, a diabetes expert who now heads the Barbara Davis Center for Childhood Diabetes in Denver.

Buse spent as many as 15 hours, seven days a week, in the lab, setting up experiments, taking samples and analyzing data, Eisenbarth recalled. "He had a tiny apartment with a built-in bed, but he didn't need a house. He was in the lab all the time."

About two hours a day were dedicated to feeding, watering and keeping track of the rats, which were bred to develop diabetes. Buse monitored their sugar levels, but usually he could tell which ones were getting sick just by looking at them.

Within a day or two of developing diabetes, the rats were scrawny and emaciated, their fur matted, and they became lethargic. But an insulin shot turned them around overnight.

"The next day, they would just look beautiful: plump and energetic," Buse said. "That's what turned me on to being a diabetes doctor."

The hard work resulted in two important discoveries that increased understanding of the disease and triggered the development of experimental therapies. "There's intellectual beauty in solving a problem; it's very rewarding," Eisenbarth said. But it requires skill and patience. "You have to be driven to do research," he said. "John is."

Once Buse channeled his attention to endocrinology, he combined his parents' careers, becoming a consummate researcher with a straightforward bedside manner. In many ways, he's like his father, Maria Buse said.

Research for GSK

At the beginning of the 1990s, another wave of innovation rolled around in diabetes treatment. Buse was a young doctor who better drug-delivery methods, blood-sugar monitoring and understanding of drug dosing finally allowed patients to gain control of their diabetes.

Buse was involved in some of that research. He received $73,288 in grants from Smith-Kline Beecham and Glaxo-SmithKline between 1998 and 2000, UNC records show.

He still has a consulting contract with the company but has not worked for it since 2000. The response to his early concerns about Avandia cast a pall over the relationship with GSK.

Buse says now that the hints of cardiovascular problems that he saw were small and in many ways balanced by other evidence that he was — and still is — comfortable waiting for more data.

"By their very nature, the analyses that I made and the much more sophisticated analysis by Dr. Nissen are only useful to generate questions, not to produce answers," he has said.

Though he presented his findings to the company and later to the FDA, Buse did not submit his data, as Nissen did, to the New England Journal of Medicine, which is where scientists usually only send their best studies.

Buse called Nissen "bold" for doing so. "He's quite a showman," Buse said. "I bet he never worried about what his parents thought of him."

Staff writer Sabine Vollmer can be reached at 829-8992 or sabine.vollmer@newsobserver.com.
Victims' families, Virginia Tech at odds over fund payout

By MATTHEW BOWERS, The Virginian-Pilot
© June 22, 2007
Last updated: 12:15 AM

"Any money that came in because of that tragedy, that shouldn't come under the control of anybody but those relatives," said Thomas Fadoul, a Northern Virginia lawyer who says he represents relatives of 20 of the victims. Lawrence Jackson | AP

The calls about where to send money began the day of the Virginia Tech shootings. The donations started arriving soon after: about 20,000 gifts so far.

More than $7 million has poured into the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund, set up to help victims of the April 16 shooting rampage in Blacksburg.

Some families of victims, however, are unhappy with the way officials are handling the fund.

"Any money that came in because of that tragedy, that shouldn't come under the control of anybody but those relatives," said Thomas Fadoul, a Northern Virginia lawyer who says he represents relatives of 20 of the victims.

To Fadoul, the fund is an example of how officials have excluded victims' families from a rightful role in the wake of the tragedy.

Although Virginia Tech officials say they welcome suggestions on how the Hokie Spirit fund should be used, there are no plans to turn over control of it.
“What we’re hoping from the families, if they have needs, they’ll communicate them with us,” said Elizabeth Flanagan, vice president for development and university relations.

The university as of Thursday had distributed about $100,000 to families for funerals, cemetery plots, transportation and medical expenses for the 25 wounded or injured, she said.

In addition, 32 endowed $100,000 funds - one in the name of each of the people killed by gunman Seung-Hui Cho - have been set up with about half the money.

The individual funds are described as permanent tributes because many gifts were designated "in memory of" individuals. Officials said they would decide in conjunction with the families what the proceeds of each fund would be used for, such as scholarships.

But some families have complained that Virginia Tech is using the victims’ names and likenesses to raise money.

"They’re being cast aside," Fadoul said. One of the slain Tech students, freshman Reema Samaha of Centreville, was the daughter of one of Fadoul’s cousins.

The gifts funneled into the Hokie Spirit fund have ranged from $2 - sent in by children who emptied piggybanks or forwarded lemonade-stand profits - to $1 million from the New York Yankees baseball team, Flanagan said.

"We had not sought these gifts," she said. "These have just come in because people care."

The money was turned over to the Virginia Tech Foundation, a nonprofit group that handles private gifts to the university.

Flanagan said she and two other officials - Raymond Smoot Jr., the foundation’s chief operating officer, and James Hyatt, chief operating officer of Virginia Tech - created the Hokie Spirit fund as a repository for gifts the day after the shootings. Decisions on its use have been made by the three - all of whom are officers of the foundation - in consultation with other university leaders, Flanagan said.

Other plans are pending, but the officers have tried to think of future needs, such as grief counseling and long-term medical bills, Flanagan said. Already announced are the payment of college expenses for students injured in the shootings and for children of the slain faculty, plus a general scholarship and ongoing memorials.

A "We Remember" memorial page on Virginia Tech’s Web site includes the names of victims. Separate links take visitors to a page of victim photos and family-approved biographies, as well as the Hokie Spirit fund page and a page listing separate, private funds set up by or for families. There has been no public accounting of how much money has been donated to those private funds.

Additionally, about 50 families have applied for compensation under the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund. It reimburses crime victims for lost wages or for documented expenses, such as medical bills, that aren’t covered by insurance or other means. The limit is $15,000 over a lifetime.

To be eligible, victims must cooperate with police and be innocent of complicity, said Mary Vail Ware, the fund’s director.

“That doesn’t apply here because we already know what happened,” she said. "The whole world knows what happened."

Potentially, she said, everyone trapped April 16 in West Ambler Johnston Hall or Norris Hall, the two shooting sites, is eligible for reimbursement. All, even those who were physically uninjured, would be considered abduction victims, she said.

“So it could be hundreds” of people, Ware said.