THE DAILY CLIPS

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In this iconic photo, Orville Wright pilots the plane as Wilbur assists during the historic first powered flight at Kitty Hawk on Dec. 17, 1903. But the world had no proof of the Wrights' feat until 1908, when photographer James Hare took what became the first published photo of the Wrights in flight. To see that photo, turn to Page 6A.

JOHN T. DANIELS, ap file photo

The book is scheduled to be published in late September.

The first published image of the Wright Brothers in flight was taken by James Hare in 1908, five years after the brothers' historic first flight. The tiny plane is just visible in front of the base of the hill in the background.

Courtesy of University of Texas
Journalists had to hide to see Wrights fly

Journalists had to hide to see Wright Bros. in the air

BY JOSH SHAFFER, Staff Writer

On a breezy Thursday in 1908, five big-city reporters hid in a patch of woods, scratched at chiggers biting their sweaty bodies and bore secret witness to the marvel of a new century: the Wright Brothers circling Kill Devil Hill in a gasoline-powered airplane.

The famous pair had been flying for several years, notching the world’s first powered, manned, controlled flight on the Outer Banks in December 1903. But they were secretive, distrustful and obsessed with protecting their own patent from competition, so few had seen them fly. For all the world knew, the Wrights were fakers.

East Carolina University history professor Larry Tise argues in a new book that this 1908 moment of clandestine journalism was the most pivotal for the Wrights and for the history of flight. Once these reporters filed their stories -- shot through though they were with errors and exaggerations -- the world knew for the first time that it was possible to launch a manned machine into the air, keep it going, and steer it.

"In all the swoop of a single day, the world stopped speculating about the possibilities of flight and watched in awe as it was demonstrated to anyone who could read," Tise writes in "Conquering the Sky: The Secret Flights of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk."

The Wrights have ranked as North Carolina heroes for a century, and the state still claims them on its license plate and quarter despite howls of protest from Ohio, the state where the Wrights lived as they developed their flying machine. But Tise’s book paints them in uncommon and not always flattering detail, showing their suspicious natures and contempt for both publicity and business. After 1908, when they were immediate celebrities around the world, flight technology passed them quickly by, and they spent the ensuing years mired in lawsuits, trying to keep rivals out of the sky.

They were tinkerers, Tise says. Though the Wrights craved fame and riches from their invention, they wanted it on their own terms and at their own chosen moment. They were happiest as solitary inventors in Dayton. And they chose the Outer Banks partly because it was so isolated, reachable only by small boats and inhabited by a few hundred people. For
this reason, nobody yet knew of the Wrights’ experiments and breakthroughs on the barrier islands, including the historic 1903 first flight. There were rumors, but no proof. The recognized airmen of 1908, when the Wrights returned to Kitty Hawk for a new round of tests, were often French.

"This really became the impetus to carry their invention and technology to other parts of the world," said Jeffrey Crow, deputy secretary of the N.C. Office of Archives and History. "You could look at these 1908 experimental flights as, not to be too trite, but as a launching pad."

Tall tales from the locals

Tise has long dug into the lives of North Carolina's historic players, and he recently formed a group to reconsider Sir Walter Raleigh -- namesake of the state capital who never set foot in the state. He chose to dig into the Wrights' character at the moment they moved out of obscurity, and his book shows new detail of the characters that surrounded them.

He spends many pages describing the Kitty Hawk locals, coarse seamen who rarely spoke of anything beyond storms, boats and fish. Tise describes them as both hospitable and curious, and prone to tall tales, and the book’s photographs show their broad shoulders and thick moustaches. They manned lifesaving stations on the Outer Banks, helping the Wrights lug planes and gear.

"They probably didn’t fully understand what they were doing," said William Harris, former Kitty Hawk mayor. "Somebody setting up a tent on a sand hill with a barrel of gasoline inside a tent -- that's kind of a little bit weird. I don't know that the local people had seen a tent before."

These same lifesavers, Tise suggests, were the first to tip off reporters to the Wrights' feats on the Outer Banks. Before they even started flying, an account appeared in the Virginian-Pilot of Norfolk describing their trip 10 miles out over the ocean. The newspaper's report was fraught with nautical terms, Tise writes, making the locals a likely source for leaks.

But even when reporters arrived from New York and London, the Wrights refused to demonstrate their flights and threatened to shut off experiments altogether. So each day, the correspondents would bring a picnic basket from the Tranquil House in Manteo and conceal themselves among trees a half-mile away. From this vantage point emerged the first photograph of a Wright plane in flight not taken by the Wrights themselves.

"There were exactly five persons there as witnesses of these magical performances," wrote Byron R. Newton of the New York Herald, "five newspaper correspondents, each of whom regarded the Wright Brothers as little more than theorists, dreamers or fakirs, until they saw the big aeroplane mount into the air, and, clacking like a great sea bird, come circling over their heads."

Fading stars

Nearly all the details they reported were wrong. But the mistakes, Tise notes, melted into history. Before long, both Wilbur and Orville Wright were flying in public, almost daily, shocking American and European crowds.

And almost as soon as the Wrights' secret was out, it was obsolete. In 1911, Tise said, a stunt pilot was turning loops to delighted audiences at the N.C. State Fairgrounds while Orville Wright was back in Kitty Hawk testing gliders. All they had left was their original 1905 flying-machine patent, which they defended so vigorously that in 1912, a weakened Wilbur Wright died of typhoid. Orville Wright, devastated, contributed little or nothing more to the world of flight.

"Instead of getting recognition at that time as people who really taught the world how to
fly," Tise said, "they became these ogres who were trying to stop everybody else from flying."

But in Tise's pages, you can catch the Wright Brothers in their last days as wild-eyed inventors, young men full of ideas, catching the Kitty Hawk wind.

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Medical school Dean speaks to ECU Club

The Daily Reflector

Dr. Paul Cunningham, dean of the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, spoke at the recent quarterly meeting of the ECU Club at Cypress Glen Retirement Community.

Cunningham discussed the founding of ECU’s School of Medicine and its mission to provide access to the under-represented, to train doctors for North Carolina and to improve the health of the region.

“So much of what was established at the inception of the school remains vital and viable today,” he said.

He expressed appreciation for financial and facility support from Cypress Glen for the MSGREAT (Medical Student Geriatric Education and Teaching) grant. This funding allows for providing expanded services on-site in the Skilled Nursing, Assisted Living and Memory Care Cottage at Cypress Glen.

“The grant supports medical-student teaching time and supervision with Dr. Kenneth Steinweg and others who visit Cypress Glen three days a week to provide on-site health care,” he said.

Steinweg is a professor and head of the geriatric division of the Department of Family Medicine at the Brody School of Medicine and he is also the Medical Director at Cypress Glen.

Cunningham said he is proud of the success of the school and its impact on eastern North Carolina, stating the Brody School of Medi-

cine graduates tend to stay in the area.

“Of the close to 1,700 graduates to date, 60 percent of them remain in North Carolina and 20 percent practice primary care in eastern North Carolina,” Cunningham said.

The dean said that as much as he would like to see growth, future plans for the medical school have been hindered by the economy.

“We have been working with consultants to map out a plan to increase the class size of the Brody School of Medicine from the current expanded number of 76, ultimately to 120 students,” he said. “The planning continues, but with the current economic downturn, we have had to hold off on any major expansion.”

The increase in medical students is urgent, he said, “since the physician supply is falling behind the needs of the region.”

“Eastern North Carolina’s premature mortality rate is 22 percent greater than the rest of North Carolina,” he said. “Eastern North Carolina has a higher mortality rate than the rest of the state for almost every major cause of death, but we are beginning to make some progress on some of the racial disparities within the region.”

Cunningham, a native of Jamaica, earned his medical degree from the University of West Indies. He moved to Windsor in Bertie County in 1981 and joined the ECU faculty in 1984. He was appointed dean of the Brody School of Medicine in 2008. He is certified by the American Board of Surgery and is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

Entertainment at the ECU Club meeting was provided by Elliott Frank, an ECU music professor who initiated the guitar studies program for East Carolina University. Frank played several classical guitar selections during the evening. He is a prizewinner in national and international competitions including the Concurso Internacional de la Casa de España in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The Cypress Glen ECU Club is sponsored by the East Carolina Alumni Association and is open to all residents and their guests who have an interest in East Carolina University. Cypress Glen is a Continuing Care Retirement Community located in Greenville at 100 Hickory Street, close to the ECU campus. The next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 16.
PEOPLE IN THE NEWS SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Lindsay Stevenson joins staff of Greenville Women's Clinic

Dr. Lindsay Stevenson has joined the staff at Greenville Women’s Clinic, a division of Physicians East.

He joins Dr. Andrew Haven, Dr. William Brown, Dr. Beverly Harris, Dr. Paige Fisher and Dr. Amy Blumenthal in the practice of obstetrics and gynecology.

“We are pleased to welcome Dr. Stevenson to our medical team,” Harris said in a news release. “His knowledge and individualized approach to women’s care will be greatly valued at our practice. We believe every patient is important, and we strive to provide personalized, one-on-one care.”

Stevenson has 14 years of experience in women’s health care and has a special interest in infertility as well as preventive health care.

A Diplomat of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Stevenson earned a bachelor of music education degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a doctor of medicine degree at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, where he was a Brody scholar.

Stevenson completed his residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Eastern Virginia Graduate School of Medicine in Norfolk, Va.

Prior to joining Greenville Women’s Clinic, Stevenson was a partner at Coastal Women’s Clinic in Elizabeth City. He was chief of the medical staff at Albemarle Hospital and serves on the executive board of the N.C. OB/GYN Society.

Stevenson is a member of the Christian Medical Association.

Greenville Women’s Clinic offers a complete range of gynecologic and obstetric services through all stages of life from adolescence through the menopausal years.

The practice is at 2251 Stantonsburg Road.
Second Century Campaign at ECU receives $50,000 from the little bank

Eastern North Carolina-based the little bank pledged $50,000 to East Carolina University’s Second Century Campaign in support of student scholarships at ECU.

On June 23 at a gathering of bank employees who are also ECU alumni, bank President Rob Jones announced the contribution that will establish at least two new four-year scholarships for the university’s Access Scholarship program.

“East Carolina University and the little bank share the same vision of eastern North Carolina in terms of values, ideals and potential for growth,” Jones, an ECU graduate, said. “East Carolina University has had a huge impact on the little bank and upon my life personally. Many of our associates graduated from ECU with undergraduate and master’s degrees and are leaders within our company as well as their respective communities.”

Among all ECU graduates, approximately 80 percent have college loan debt to repay. On average, ECU students graduate with $19,000 of debt — one of the highest amounts in the UNC system.

The Access Scholarship program awards $5,000 scholarships to full-time North Carolina students with proven financial need and demonstrated academic potential. ECU will provide at least 76 Access Scholarships during the 2009-10 academic year and has the long-term goal of providing 100 scholarships annually.

“We are proud to support the Access Scholarship program,” Jones said. “Helping students attend ECU and become successful leaders in eastern North Carolina is a great fit for us and makes good business sense. We are thankful to be able to invest in ECU and future leaders.”

East Carolina’s Second Century Campaign is providing resources for student scholarships, faculty, academic programs, and athletics support, and campus facility construction and improvement. The campaign is one of the major steps necessary to accomplish the goals of ECU Tomorrow: A Vision for Leadership and Service, the university’s strategic plan adopted in 2007.

ECU has raised more than $142 million toward its $200 million goal.

“We are grateful for the little bank’s support of ECU and its students through the Second Century Campaign,” Mickey Dowdy, ECU vice chancellor for advancement, said. “Contributions such as the little bank’s are especially important now, in these challenging economic times. Private support for scholarships is crucial for the university’s ability to attract and retain talented, hard working students.”

The little bank, founded in November 1998, has branches in Kinston, La Grange, Goldsboro, Jacksonville, Greenville and New Bern.
Darts — To missing documents at N.C. State University that relate to the hiring of former First Lady Mary Easley, the circumstances of which are under investigation. Former Chancellor James Oblinger is missing e-mail that may be important to the U.S. attorney’s office looking into Easley’s firing, raising further questions about the circumstances of her hiring.

Laurels — To high marks awarded to the Greenville Aquatics and Fitness Center for its aquatics programs, which ranked first in the state and 20th in the nation according to the U.S. Water Fitness Association. Supervisor Mike Godwin and his staff work hard to provide excellent programs to patrons, and should be honored for their efforts.

Darts — To attacks by rabid animals in Durham and Orange counties, raising concerns about the disease locally. These incidents, and one involving a cat in Pitt County several weeks ago, serve to remind pet owners to have their animals immunized to prevent infection from the county’s wild animal population. That’s the responsible course of action, for you and your pet.

Darts — To Gov. Beverly Perdue’s use of an aircraft to tour the state in order to drum up support for her proposed tax increase. The state’s chief executive spoke in Wilmington Monday morning before flying to Greenville for a speech, each hoping to rally backing for a $1.5 billion tax hike. Citizens expect thrift, not waste, from Raleigh and Perdue set a poor example with her flights.

Laurels — To Jeffrey Wilson of King’s Mountain, who became North Carolina’s second Powerball winner when the Saturday drawing netted him the $88 million jackpot. Wilson decided to take a lump sum payment of $29 million, which he intends to use for graduate school tuition. It’s nice to see at least some lottery money is still going to pay for education after all.

Compiled by Brian Colligan, editorial page editor of The Daily Reflector. Contact him at 329-9507 or via e-mail at bcolligan@coxnc.com
Science camp gives students chance to see the heavens

By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, June 28, 2009

The heavens moved closer for a group of pre-teens Friday with the completion of a weeklong science camp.

Using tubing made of plastic and fiber, lumber and an optical kit, the six youngsters finished assembling and testing telescopes they built during the East Carolina University Science Camp.

Go-Science, which brings informal science education programs to the public through hands-on exhibits, partnered with the university to present the four-week event, which features six weekly sessions, camp director Tammy Lee said.

Chris Coogan said when he first saw the tubing, which looks like cardboard, he thought about faux telescopes made out of paper towel tubes.

"It worked a lot better than I thought it would," said Coogan, a Winterville resident and rising seventh grader at Washington Montessori, a charter school.

The United Nations declared 2009 the International Year of Astronomy to mark the 400th anniversary of Galileo's discovery of the telescope. Go-Science in the only organization in eastern North Carolina sponsoring activities to mark the event, John Meredith, camp instructor and chairman of Go-Science's board of directors, said.

"They are going to be able to see the same things Galileo saw 400 years ago," Meredith said. "Actually, these telescopes are more powerful than Galileo's."

Blair Driver, a camp counselor and recent ECU graduate, said astronomy and space often do not capture the attention of today's children, who are interested in things they can touch and see up close. They also didn't grow up with the excitement of Apollo program or the first space shuttle flights, she said.

"There isn't anything in astronomy to look forward to since Hubble (the space telescope)," she said.

Meredith said when the kids in his class see the craters and mountain ranges of Earth's moon or the moons of Jupiter their perspective of the world and the universe will change.

Spaces are still open for the science camp's July sessions, Lee said. Visit www.ecu.edu/educ/msed/summersciencecamp for more information.

Meredith said Go-Science is planning to host telescope construction workshops in communities throughout the east later this year. To learn more about the organization visit www.go-science.org.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@coxnnc.com or (252) 329-9570.

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ECU camp helps children achieve a healthy weight

By
ECU News Services

Sunday, June 28, 2009

The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and North Carolina State University are working together to provide a healthy lifestyle camp for overweight youth to be held at the Eastern 4-H Center in Columbia.

The camp, called Take Off 4-Health, will provide a three-week program from July 26 to Aug. 14 for boys and girls ages 12u201318.

"The goal of the camp is for participants to lose weight, build self-esteem and learn the tools to a healthy lifestyle while reducing their risks of developing future chronic disease, and, of course, to have fun while doing it," 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. "Through participation in the camp, we hope to reduce the chance the kids will develop health problems later in life, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and joint disease."

Campers will participate in recreational programs including swimming, boating, hiking, archery and team sports. The camp will also feature interactive and hands-on educational sessions focused on healthy eating, increased activity, self-esteem and body image. These sessions will help campers make the lifestyle changes needed to keep their weight off, Collier said.

Team-building activities include the Eastern 4-H Center's challenge course and climbing wall. The three-week experience will be rounded out by traditional camp activities such as arts and crafts, ecology, talent shows and campfires.

"Kids are much more likely to adopt healthy lifestyle habits if they see them as fun and 'do-able.' The camp is a great way to jump start these new habits," Collier said.

Take Off 4-Health will provide campers with three balanced meals a day plus two snacks. The meals, based on menus and recipes developed by ECU pediatric dietitians, will help participants lose weight and meet their nutrient needs. Throughout the program, ECU physicians will provide medical supervision. At the end of camp, campers will receive materials to help them continue the healthy lifestyle habits they learned at camp.

While many healthy lifestyle programs cost thousands, this program is $2,250 per camper, which includes lodging and meals. ECU chose to work with N.C. State again this year because of the strengths of and potential synergies with State's 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences Department.

"We are pleased to be part of this exciting collaboration to help young people adopt healthy eating and physical activity habits. The combination of medical expertise from ECU, 4-H's experience working with youth and our experience with nutrition education will no doubt be a winning combination and a model for the nation," said Dr. Carolyn Dunn, a professor and nutrition specialist with the N.C. Cooperative Extension service at N.C. State.

The Eastern 4-H Center is on Bulls Bay and the Albemarle Sound near Columbia. The center hosts groups all year with camps in June, July and August. The facility offers lodging and dining accommodations, meeting facilities, environmental education programs, team-building and other recreational programs.

Camp registration packets and more information for Take Off 4-Health are online at http://www.eastern4hcenter.org or available from Nikki Norman at 797-4800 or Yancey Crawford at 744-5061.

ECU ends pilot of Virtual Early High School
The Virtual Early High School program at ECU ended a successful first year June 3 with students having a face-to-face meeting on campus.

The program, a pilot designed to help high school students earn high school and college credit, is unique because courses are synchronously taught through a virtual world called Second Life.

This past semester 18 students (three from each local high school) met online in the virtual environment with two ECU professors four days a week. As in traditional classes, the students and instructors developed a learning community that enabled them to learn the course material and about each other.

While they had interacted with each other virtually since January, the students had met face-to-face only one time before the June event held at the Student Recreation Center. They had the chance to meet Chancellor Steve Ballard and Provost Marilyn Sheerer. Superintendent Dr. Beverly Reep also attended the picnic.

If funding allows, the program will continue in Fall 2009 with additional courses for students. Pilot students will exit the program with 12-18 hours of college credit that can be applied at ECU or transferred to another UNC institution.

Brown elected to leadership role

Michael Brown, professor of psychology at ECU, was elected to a leadership role of the Undergraduate Scholars Program Administrators Association (USPAA) at its third annual meeting held earlier this month at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Brown, who coordinates ECU's EC Scholars Program, will serve a three-year term on the USPAA Board of Directors as a member at large. USPAA develops best practices for the fast-growing number of undergraduate scholars programs at colleges across the country.

"Dr. Brown will bring a unique point of view to developing our best practices, both as faculty and as someone new to his role as a program administrator," said USPAA president Jamie Williams, associate director of the National Scholars Program at Clemson University.

Brody student group receives national award

The Family Medicine Interest Group at the Brody School of Medicine at ECU has been named one of 10 national recipients of a Program of Excellence Award from the American Academy of Family Physicians.

ECU's group also received special mention for retaining third- and fourth-year medical students. ECU's program was selected from among groups at most of the nation's 130 accredited medical schools.

The Family Medicine Interest Group helps students learn about family medicine, residency programs, ways to further their education and more through lectures, seminars, workshops and other means. This year marks the fourth time ECU's group has received the award.

Second-year medical students Jennifer Parker, Jennifer King, Matt Paine and Vanessa Everett are the 2008-09 officers. Dr. Susan Schmidt, a clinical assistant professor of family medicine, has advised the group for three years. Approximately 130 students are members.

ECU College of Business to hold SAT Prep Course

The College of Business at ECU will offer an intensive five-day review course designed to prepare individuals for the SAT Reasoning Test.

The SAT prep course is open to the ECU community as well as the general public; it will be held Aug. 10-14 on the main ECU campus from 1 to 4 p.m.

Ben Worthington, an English teacher at J. H. Rose High School, and Maureen Green, a math teacher at North Pitt High School, will provide the course instruction.

The cost is $140 on or before Aug. 3, and $155 after the Aug. 3 deadline. The cost includes two SAT review books. Course registration is limited to 50 participants.

For more information or to register for the SAT prep course, please call the ECU College of Business Office of Professional Programs at 328-6377, or visit online at http://www.ecu.edu/cs-bus/programsoffered.cfm.

To take the actual SAT exam or to find exam dates and locations, visit www.collegeboard.com.
ECU professor shines light on Michael Jackson’s career

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Friday, June 26, 2009

Pop music phenomenon Michael Jackson’s death Thursday in Los Angeles from what appears to have been a heart attack was the end a legend, but the beginning of a legacy left by the “King of Pop.”

Remembered by some as a cultural and musical genius and by others as a deeply troubled person whose eccentricities and proclivities were more legendary than his artistic contributions, there is no doubt that his life influenced worldwide culture for decades.

Musical scholar and East Carolina University School of Music professor Marc Faris, who stopped short of the genius label and looked inside the legend, shed some light on Jackson’s career and more lasting contributions.

“I would say that the body of his work from the late 1970s through the mid-1980s is essentially unassailable, no matter where you stand,” Faris said.

Faris agreed, for the most part, with many critics’ assessments of Jackson’s albums, Off the Wall and Thriller as “perfect” albums. Even his later work was, at least, culturally important, Faris said.

“While his post-Thriller output became increasingly scattershot, it was always interesting, unpredictable, and something you needed to hear,” he said.

Part of the reason Faris says he is hesitant to place Jackson’s opus on the genius level is the cast of people who worked closely with the artist throughout his career to produce the combined music, video and cultural products he placed into the world’s collective consciousness.

“When you look closely at his catalog, it’s clear that his best work was often a result of careful and smart collaboration — both Off the Wall and Thriller are what they are because of Quincy Jones’s production and careful inclusion of songs written by others (along with his own),” Faris said. “The Jackson 5 were, like most Motown acts, a Berry Gordy construction. Thus, it’s hard to separate out Jackson’s individual talent from the combined brilliance of his ‘teams.’”

What Jackson did bring to the mix, Faris said, was a great deal of talent and, probably more crucially, extreme dedication to “the show-biz thing.”

Many Jackson devotees were not alive when he was an almost equally transfixing pre-teen talent within his Motown Records-produced family combo. Even then, his attention to details, stage presence and connection with his fans were obvious.

Faris saw Motown as Jackson’s training and proving ground.

“There are probably two things he garnered from his days at Motown,” Faris said. “First, we know that Berry Gordy was keen to give all of the artists working under him a full education in show business — and Jackson came to his solo career with a fully-formed visual, musical, and performing identity. Second, Gordy was a well-known micro-manager, and it’s doubtful that the Jackson 5 did anything in public that wasn’t engineered by him.”

The most important thing Jackson brought to the table, Faris said, was forcing critics and the public alike to take black music and black musicians seriously, on both commercial and aesthetic fronts. Jackson broke
the color barrier on MTV with the unstoppable popularity of Thriller, he said. Prior to that, most videos were kind of free-form, non-narrative, purely promotional objects — a catchy video might sell more records.

"Jackson's videos were more like mini-films — especially the one for 'Thriller' by John Landis — and so other artists began to think about using the medium more artistically," Faris said.

There is a lot more that could be said about Jackson's life and music, and fans, musicians and even cultural historians will discuss and debate about him for decades to come, to say nothing of the current frenzy to analyze his unusual life and career, Faris said.

"I do hope that, in the unavoidable media onslaught, people remember that Michael Jackson was an exceptionally gifted performer, without whose contributions the present-day pop-music landscape would be almost unimaginably different," Faris said.

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UNC tuition exemption returns to budget spotlight

The Associated Press

Sunday, June 28, 2009

RALEIGH, N.C. — Whether to give discounts to groups that pay tuition for University of North Carolina students who excel on the field or in the classroom still isn’t settled four years after the practice began.

Arguments over giving in-state rates to out-of-state athletes and scholars on UNC system campuses have returned to the final budget negotiations at the General Assembly because the House spending plan would repeal the 2005 exemption, at a savings of $13.9 million annually.

Opponents of tuition breaks for these full scholarships have tried to label the exemption a handout for wealthy athletic foundations at big UNC schools. This year’s fiscal woes and public education cuts have given them a new method to attempt to persuade.

"We’re proposing to lay off thousands of teachers, we’re cutting vital programs to the neediest," said Rep. Pricey Harrison, D-Guilford, a longtime exemption critic. "It’s hard to rationalize spending (millions) to subsidize booster clubs so that they can bring in out-of-state athletes and academic scholarship programs."

But the Senate, from which the exemption idea first originated a decade ago and got approved in the 2005 budget, isn’t backing down.

Supporters say the subsidy helps recruit a diverse population from around the country to attend UNC campuses, lets smaller campuses compete better in athletics and leaves more money behind at private foundations to pay for more scholarships overall.

"It reduces our per-scholar costs, allowing us to distribute our grants over a greater number of students," said Chuck Lovelace, executive director of the Morehead-Cain Scholars Program, which provided full rides to 60 new students this year at UNC-Chapel Hill. The number would have been 42 otherwise. "If the provision is lost, we would have to reduce our scholarships."

As budget talks resume Monday, Democrats in the two chambers hadn’t agreed on whether the provision affecting about 1,000 students would stay in place.

It allows UNC campuses to treat undergraduates who receive full scholarships as in-state students in the eyes of the UNC system. So outside groups pay for the scholarships at the in-state tuition rate, which can be more than $10,000 cheaper than the out-of-state rate. Taxpayers make up the difference.

Two-thirds of the 992 qualifying scholarships during the 2008-09 school year were for athletes, saving $7.5 million, according to a legislative staff analysis.

And 225 of the athletic scholarships went to UNC-Chapel Hill or N.C. State University. Both have well-funded booster clubs that get a break for out-of-state stars like basketball’s Tyler Hansbrough or football’s Russell Wilson.

That doesn’t sit well with people like Kim Hargett, a physical education teacher at Marsville Elementary School in Union County, who said in-state tuition is designed to benefit longtime residents who helped pay for the university system.

"I think we need to look after our own first," Hargett said. "It just doesn’t seem right that the taxpayers are paying for that."

Exemption supporters argue focusing on headline athletes doesn’t tell the complete story of the benefits. They say it helps several of the 16 campuses with academic scholarships.
More than half of the athletic scholarships go to women, helping campuses fulfill federal Title IX requirements that women get an equal opportunity to participate in intercollegiate sports.

At Western Carolina University, the 32 out-of-state scholarships are for women participating in sports such as basketball, soccer and volleyball, said Chuck Wooten, the school's vice chancellor for administration and finance. The in-state rate saved Western Carolina's athletic program about $623,000 this past school year, Wooten said.

Schools like Western Carolina would curtail out-of-state recruiting, rather than make up the difference from the in-state rate, if the provision is removed, said Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, the Senate's chief proponent to retain the exemption.

"They'd recruit in-state people. They couldn't afford it," Rand said. "It would just be too expensive."

Hargett is a board member of the North Carolina Association of Educators, the state's leading teachers' lobbying group. It has sent more than 1,800 e-mails to legislators since March urging them to eliminate the exemption for athletic scholarships.

And Citizens for Higher Education, a political action committee and lobbying group for UNC-Chapel Hill and other system research campuses, wants lawmakers to preserve the entire exemption.

Citizens for Higher Education gave $479,000 to legislative candidates during the 2007-08 campaign cycle, the highest amount among political action committees in the state, according to the campaign finance reform group Democracy North Carolina. The political committee of the N.C. Association of Educators gave almost $175,000 to candidates during the same period.

Bob Hall, Democracy North Carolina's executive director, hopes lawmaker objectivity on the tuition issue won't be blemished by the donations to dozens of House and Senate members.

"The money obscures the merits — pro and con — on this proposal," Hall said.

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PCMH worker suspected of having H1N1 flu

By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector

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The state health lab is testing to see if a health care worker at Pitt County Memorial Hospital has H1N1 flu, the administration announced Friday.

The worker, whose identity and position are not being released, was tested and sent home on Thursday after exhibiting flu-like symptoms, Beth Anne Atkins, hospital spokeswoman said.

Seven patients were exposed to the worker and all are being treated with Tamiflu, an antiviral medicine, said Dr. Keith M. Ramsey, the hospital’s medical director of infection control.

One patient already has returned home.

Family members of patients who may have encountered the person are being advised to consult with their family doctor about the need for treatment. The individual's co-workers also have been advised to speak with their doctors about preventative treatment and to not report to work if they start experiencing flu symptoms, Atkins said.

Four cases of H1N1 have been confirmed in Pitt County, Pitt County Health Director Dr. John Morrow said. There are 179 cases statewide, according to recent data from the N.C. Division of Public Health. The state reported its first death linked to H1N1, a heart patient at Greensboro's Moses Cone Health System who died June 19.

Flu attacks a person's nose, throat and lungs, according to the Division of Public Health's Web site. Influenza usually comes on suddenly and may include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, nasal congestion and/or body aches. It's usually spread when infected people cough or sneeze.

Most people who get flu recover in a week or two.

Previous flu research shows hot, dry weather ends the spread of the flu, Ramsey said. The research hasn't examined how hot, humid weather affects the virus.

"We're hoping the heat will work in our favor," he said.

The hospital is continuing its policy of asking people with respiratory symptoms to not visit patients or employees. Staff has been reminded to place masks on patients who have flu-like symptoms. Everyone should be diligent about washing their hands and using sanitizer.

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New student loan program may drop payments

BY CANDICE CHOI, The Associated Press

NEW YORK - Repaying a student loan could soon be a little less painful.

Starting this week, anyone with a federal student loan can apply for a program that caps monthly payments based on income and forgives remaining balances after 25 years. Those choosing to work in public service could have their loans forgiven after just 10 years.

Eligibility for income-based repayment is determined by a person's income and loan size.

"It's a way to borrow for college without going to the poor house," said Lauren Asher, president of the Institute for College Access & Success, a California-based nonprofit that runs the Project on Student Debt.

Monthly payments would amount to less than 10 percent of income for most of the estimated 1 million people expected to enroll, experts say. Payments would never exceed 15 percent of any income above about $16,000 a year (or 150 percent of the poverty level).

Those who earn less than $16,000 would not have to make any monthly payments.

The new payment option is intended to provide relief for those who earn modest salaries and struggle under the weight of student loans for years on end. By stretching repayment over a longer period, monthly payments are kept at a reasonable portion of income, though most people would not see any savings on the total cost of the loan.

The program isn't for everyone, however.

In some cases, accruing interest could push the cost of the loan higher. And since loans are likely to be paid off within 25 years, the loan forgiveness aspect of the program won't apply to most people. To save on interest costs, those who could afford to would be better served paying off loans faster, said Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.org, which tracks the college financial aid industry.

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Are you eligible?

A calculator at www.ibrinfo.org can help you determine whether you are eligible for the plan, which becomes available Wednesday.