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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Not slowing down

ECU’s Holland has no plans to retire any time soon

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

Terry Holland and his innovative thinking about college athletics aren't going anywhere just yet.

At 66, the man who has never hesitated since he arrived as East Carolina's athletic director in 2004 to speak his mind about which direction he'd like to see ECU and the rest of the NCAA take is far from bored.

Likewise, he seems far from finished. Whether it's hammering out sometimes frightening football schedules for head coach Skip Holtz and his players to tackle, suggesting Conference USA expansion sooner rather than later or discussing the reality of needing to move or raze a gigantic building in the interest of more seats for fans in his football stadium, Holland says he won't stop until he ceases to make a difference.

"This is what I've known. I don't really have any desire to retire," Holland said. "I do know that at some point I'll have to retire because I won't be effective, whether it's physical reasons or whatever, but I'd like to continue working."

Following memorable basketball coaching and administrative stints at alma mater Davidson College and later Virginia, Holland brought his vision to ECU, where his first order of business was making Holtz the leader of the football program.

Since then, the face of the school's athletic programs has transformed from lovable loser back into winner, exemplified by the football team's consecutive bowl appearances in 2006 and 2007.

For Holland, inspiration still comes from his past and his present, sometimes in unexpected jolts. On one hand, his ties to his old fraternity at Davidson recently brought the news of the passing of one of his former frat brothers, who went on to become a judge in Vir-

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HOLLAND
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Virginia. On Tuesday, Holland received word from the man's widow that their son will be heading to Beijing this summer as a member of the U.S. rowing team.

"They had a little YouTube video of it," Holland said. "And I'm sitting there crying like a baby watching a video of these kids who had gotten themselves to the Olympics."

On the other hand, inspiration often comes in a more here-and-now sort of way: After the Pirates pulled off one of the football bowl post-season's memorable stunners by beating Boise State at the Hawaii Bowl last December, Holland said he was moved by the command performance of ECU senior running back Chris Johnson.

"I believe that is really what you're in it for. And it can be something like Chris Johnson finally recognizing his potential on the national stage, and what that meant to him and to his family financially," Holland said of Johnson, whose masterful game vaulted him into first-round draft status in the NFL. "We get to see that close up."

Not long after Hawaii, Holland began talking about the need to stretch C-USA into a 16- or even 18-team league in order to become more travel efficient and realistic about its rivalries. While handfuls of his counterparts continue to scoff at the notion, Holland — who was raised on long work days, balancing school by day with playing sports and toiling in his parents' North Carolina restaurant by night — simply shrugs and presses on.

"They have their own agendas," Holland said of his fellow C-USA athletic directors.

The competitive spirit which has always driven Holland is now geared toward ECU. Before he's done, Holland hopes to have cultivated not only a perfect game day atmosphere for football in a state-of-the-art Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, but also a completely modernized athletic environment on the grounds beyond. That, he said would include new facilities for softball, track, soccer, tennis and every sport in between.

His dedication to hard work hasn't ceased yet, and seemingly never has since his days sweating it out in the family restaurant. Holland said when he was a kid, he could have been jealous of all the time his father spent away from home running that restaurant, but said he wasn't because he was a daily part of it. He likened the experience to a family farm, where each member is a regular contributor.

Perhaps Holland is still drawing inspiration from that time in his life. It certainly seems to have helped in maintaining the connection between business and family, which he said is a cornerstone of ECU sports.

"East Carolina University welcomes families, so that has been a big part of it for me," Holland said. "Over the years, we've always been very lucky to live close to the campus and the athletic facilities. At Davidson, obviously, you'd have to move out of town to get very far away. The same thing was true in Charlottesville at Virginia, I was able to walk to all of the games, and the football stadium.

"I don't think kids and families have a hard time with people who spend a lot of time with their business as long as they're included in that business."

Nathan Summers can be reached at nsummers@coxnc.com, or at (252)329-9595.
General Assembly unlikely to vote on budget this week

Legislative leaders say a compromise could be reached today, but voting may not happen until after the holiday.

BY GARY D. ROBERTSON
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — The General Assembly won't vote on a final state budget bill before the holiday weekend, legislative leaders said late Wednesday, as negotiations eliminated most House and Senate differences but uncertainty remained on whether Gov. Mike Easley would accept it.

House Speaker Joe Hackney and Senate leader Marc Basnight met several times to work out conflicts in competing budget bills to adjust the second year of a two-year budget that began Tuesday. But they broke off talks about 9 p.m.

Not everything is settled, Hackney said. The legislative rules for voting on the plan in the face of the July 4 weekend make sticking around unrealistic.

"I think the goal now is to get an agreement (Thursday) ... and vote on it next week," Hackney, D-Orange, said in an interview. Basnight also said it was safe to say votes would not happen this week.

The governor also urged them to look for $45 million in additional savings for the current fiscal year and said he wouldn't sign an unbalanced budget. Easley, who is leaving office in January, has never vetoed a budget bill.

Democratic leaders in the two chambers chafed under his criticism, but they ultimately agreed to look for cost-cutting measures after their own analysts earlier in the week showed a drop-off in some revenues.

"It's a great problem and it's something we have to address," said Basnight, D-Dare.

About 40 or 50 items between the House and Senate remained unresolved Wednesday afternoon, but by the evening Hackney said the major differences between the chambers on education spending and construction projects had been settled. Hackney declined to discuss details.

The two sides are also considering whether to adjust proposed tax breaks.

Lawmakers had sought to finish their work by late Wednesday night, setting up a scenario where the House and Senate would cast two required votes Thursday and early Friday morning before sending it along to Easley.

But another goal to finish came and went. And with many lawmakers anxious to go home to barbecues or participate in July 4 parades during an election year, the target shifted to next week.

The General Assembly earlier this week approved an abbreviated stopgap spending measure that runs through July 15.

See BUDGET, B3
State health plan chief fired after missing financial goal

Lawmaker says the state health plan's poor fiscal performance led to the official's firing.

BY GARY D. ROBERTSON
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — The chief executive of North Carolina's health insurance plan was fired abruptly after legislative leaders said Wednesday that the plan fell far short of fiscal goals.

Insurance Commissioner Jim Long fired George Stokes, the plan's executive administrator since 2005, on Tuesday night after legislators ordered him to do so, Long spokeswoman Chrissy Pearson said.

The North Carolina State Health Plan was supposed to have a $50 million surplus at the end of the fiscal year, but instead it registered a $65 million shortfall that lawmakers didn't learn about until last week, said House Majority Leader Hugh Holliman, D-Davidson.

"We had some financial setbacks in the plan," Holliman told reporters.

"This was a surprise and we just didn't feel like we were kept informed like the way we should and things weren't going in the right direction."

State health plan employees were told of Stokes' firing Wednesday afternoon, said spokeswoman Linda McCrudden, who had no immediate further information.

Stokes didn't return a phone call Wednesday. A health plan official later referred a call to Stokes' attorney, James Ferguson of Charlotte, who didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

"The information being given to us did not reflect our expectations. There's no indication that anything criminal was done." Tony Rand
Senate majority leader

Rand said it was ultimately the commissioner's decision.

State law says the executive administrator "may be removed from office by the Commissioner of Insurance, upon the advice of an executive committee" of the legislative panel that sets premium rates and other coverage rules for the insurance plan, namely Holliman and Rand.

During his tenure, Stokes initiated new, less expensive managed-care insurance options starting in late 2006 that became quite popular with employees.

Rand said he was still trying to figure out what caused the shortfall.

He said lawmakers were told the plan was working toward an 8 percent cost savings with a preferred-provider network, but the plan saved less than 4 percent.

"The information being given to us did not reflect our expectations," Rand said. "There's no indication that anything criminal was done."

The plan already faced several long-term challenges, including the cost of future health care for retired state employees, which has been estimated to exceed $10 billion.
University gives salary boost
to N.C. first lady

N.C. State nearly doubles the pay of Mary Easley as she will assume new responsibilities at the university.

The Associated Press

RALEIGH — North Carolina's first lady, already under fire for taking expensive overseas trips at taxpayer expense, has a new set of responsibilities at North Carolina State University that comes with a raise that will nearly double her salary.

Mary Easley, wife of Gov. Mike Easley and a lawyer, is an executive in residence and senior lecturer at NCSU in Raleigh.

School personnel records show her salary jumped to $170,000 from $90,300, effective July 1, an 88 percent increase.

Her husband makes $135,854 annually as governor.

The school's top academic officer defended the raise for Mary Easley, who has worked at NCSU for the past three years.

"Her salary is within the range of similar management and law faculty and administrators at N.C. State and other universities," said Larry Nielsen, provost and executive vice chancellor, in a statement.

He added that the changes include a five-year commitment from Mary Easley.

Separately, Mary Easley countered criticism of her new salary in comments with WRAL-TV in Raleigh.

"Negative stories and exaggerations and partial stories go with the territory" of public life, she said.

Her husband blamed the criticism on sexism, saying "if she were a man, it wouldn't be an issue."

"It's not a raise. She's taking a new position," he told WRAL.

"She could go out with a law firm and make a lot more money, but she's decided to stay with public service."

The Carolina Journal first reported the raise, which follows news this week of expensive trips she took to France in May 2007 and Russia and Estonia this May.

Those cultural exchange trips cost taxpayers $109,000.

Gov. Easley defended the trips, saying such visits can reap exponentially larger monetary rewards for the state with art exhibits.

Larry Wheeler, director of the state Museum of Art who accompanied Mary Easley to Russia and Estonia, has said the trip could lead to a loan of exhibits from those two countries sometime in the future, including The Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

"If we can get a show from
The Hermitage, that would be worth a lot of money," Easley said this week.

He said similar cultural exchanges and networks have helped bring famed art to the state museum, including works by Auguste Rodin.

A Claude Monet exhibit at the museum in late 2006 — several months before Mary Easley's visit to France — reaped $24 million for Wake County alone, he noted.

A taxpayer-funded trip to Italy taken by the Easleys, state commerce officials and others in April cost more than $170,000.

For the past three years, Mary Easley's job involved developing a speakers program and teaching a graduate course in public administration and courses in the Administrative Officers Management Program, which provides leadership training to law enforcement officers.

"Under her direction, the university's Millennium Seminar Series has been extraordinarily successful in hosting nationally known speakers on campus four times each year," Nielsen said.

Her new duties involve expansion of the Public Safety Leadership Initiative to include first responders and security professionals.

The initiative includes the Administrative Officers Management Program and the Law Enforcement Executive Program, which offers management training to top law enforcement officers.

She also will co-direct prelaw services at N.C. State and become the university's liaison with area law firms and law schools at other universities as she develops a dual degree program.

She previously taught law at North Carolina Central University in Durham.
Researchers in Texas work toward making a pill for diabetics

BY MARY ANN ROSER
Cox News Service

For many diabetics who inject insulin several times a day to survive, swapping needles for pills is a long-held fantasy. But an insulin pill could be edging closer to the real world. New research at the University of Texas shows that a way to deliver an insulin pill to the bloodstream has worked in the lab, clearing the way for tests on animals and, ultimately, humans.

Nicholas Peppas, a professor of chemical engineering, biomedical engineering and pharmaceutics, has spearheaded the discovery of a gel-like material that protects the insulin as it enters the harsh, acidic stomach — the place where most pills break down.

The insulin loaded into Peppas' gel stays intact on its way to the small intestine so it can be absorbed into the bloodstream, according to a paper Peppas and two UT researchers published recently in Biomacromolecules, an American Chemical Society journal. "We are talking to companies right now and are close to closing a deal with a company that would do the animal studies," Peppas said recently. He declined to name the companies because no contracts have been signed.

After an article about the work appeared in an Australian magazine in May, Peppas said patients in Australia started calling to find out when the pill would be available. Drug development takes a long time, Peppas said, adding that his work with Kristy Wood and Gregory Stone, UT doctoral students who graduated last year, is about halfway there. If everything goes well, Peppas said, the pill could be on the market in seven years. Other researchers around the world also are competing to develop the first insulin pill.

Peppas envisions the drug being used initially by adults with type 1 diabetes, which occurs when the body can't make insulin, a hormone that converts sugar, starches and other food to energy. Eventually, the pill could be used on any diabetic who injects insulin, he said.

"I like this idea a lot," said Dr. Tom Blevins, an Austin, Texas, endocrinologist. "It's a fascinating technology. As a clinician, I love to see people making drug delivery more easy for people with diabetes. It's tough enough for them."

See INSULIN, D2

INSULIN

Continued from D1

Producing a pill is a challenge, he said, because tiny changes in dosing, regulated easily by injection, are needed to keep blood sugar levels from teeter-tottering dangerously throughout the day.

Dr. Craig Spellman, a Texas Tech University official who leads the Texas Diabetes Council's Health Care Professionals Advisory Committee, said the research sounds interesting but agrees that a lot of work remains.

Alternatives to injections have proved elusive. Inhalable insulin was not the boon that drug manufacturers thought it would be, and some patients had negative reactions, said Spellman, associate dean of research and professor of medicine at the Department of Internal Medicine at Tech's Permian Basin school at Odessa, Texas. Most companies have discontinued investing in that work.

Spellman's research is aimed at regenerating cells in the pancreas so they can work again to produce insulin. "That's the holy grail," he said.

Diabetes is a growing problem in the United States. Data from the Texas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System shows that 7.9 percent of Texas adults had diabetes in 2005, compared with 7.3 percent of adults nationally.

A year later, 8 percent of Texas adults were diabetics, compared with 7.5 percent of U.S. adults. Blacks and Hispanics had the highest rates.

"Anything that can offer an alternative to patients who have to take insulin so they wouldn't have to inject it, we support it," said Carlde Lieber, a spokeswoman for the American Diabetes Association's Houston office. "People just don't like shots."
Gator blood touted as potential source of lifesaving drugs

BY BOB KEEFE
Cox News Service

Washington

Someday an alligator might save your life. Researchers in Louisiana say they've discovered unique antibiotic proteins in the blood of American alligators that can kill a wide variety of deadly bacteria, halt the spread of common infections and perhaps even stop HIV. If they're right and they're able to sequence the genetics of gator blood, the researchers say super drugs based on their findings might be available within 10 years.

"It's pretty exciting," said Lancia Darville, a Louisiana State University researcher who presented the findings at a meeting of the American Chemical Society in New Orleans in early April.

IN LAB experiments, proteins extracted from alligators destroyed the bacteria behind deadly staph infections, fungi behind yeast infections and, in at least one study, most of a sample of HIV.

The alligator has developed a special immune system during its long evolution, Darville said.

"If you think about alligators, they usually get into a lot of fights and get cuts and bruises and torn limbs, and they live in swamps that have a whole lot of bacteria," she said. "But even in the presence of all that bacteria, they (almost) never get any infections."

The reason is that gators have unusually strong immune systems, Darville said. Unlike humans, they have systems that can fight off different types of bacteria, viruses and fungi without having been exposed to them previously.

Darville and study co-author Mark Merchant, a longtime alligator researcher at McNeese State University in Louisiana, have been doing gator blood research for years. Previous studies by Merchant and other scientists, including some at the University of Georgia and the University of Florida, have produced similar findings.

Technology, however, is taking research to new levels. Darville and Merchant are sequencing the genetic makeup of alligator blood to figure out how to make chemicals based on it, the next step in developing new drugs.

Possible drugs include creams that could be used to treat ulcers of diabetes patients or prevent infections in amputees, and pills to fight internal infections and bacteria.

Researchers say they've determined that the proteins found in alligator blood can fight 23 types of bacteria, nearly three times as many as the proteins found in human blood.

At least in lab experiments, proteins extracted from gator blood destroyed the bacteria behind deadly staph infections, different fungi behind yeast infections and, in at least one study, most of a sample of HIV, Darville and Merchant said.

For researchers, getting blood from alligators is

SEE GATOR D2

Continued from D1

GATOR

easier than it may seem. As part of his work at McNeese State, Merchant runs an alligator farm. To get samples, researchers simply catch and tie up gators, extract some of their blood and carefully release them.

Swamp voodoo practitioners might already know about the wonders of alligator blood, but researchers caution that people shouldn't ingest it or handle it directly. Raw, unprocessed blood from alligators — just like that of any other animal — could sicken or kill humans.
Mary Easley's NCSU pay soars

The first lady, an executive-in-residence at the school, gets an 88 percent raise to $170,000 a year.

BY BENJAMIN NOLET
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — First lady Mary Easley got a $79,700 pay raise from N.C. State University this week.

Her salary as an executive-in-residence and senior lecturer — a job created for her in 2005 — went from $90,300 to $170,000.

Her job title has not changed, but university officials said they have greatly expanded the duties for Easley, a former prosecutor and lawyer who has taught law courses. Her new duties include directing public safety training and co-directing the pre-law services program.

The Tuesday pay increase for Easley, 56, would dramatically raise her state retirement benefits, based on an average of an employee's four highest-earning years.

The raise comes as Easley, wife of Gov. Mike Easley, has been a hot topic among state residents because news reports revealed she was among the state's delegation on two trips to Europe that cost taxpayers more than $109,000.

Meanwhile, lawmakers are trying to hammer out a budget, and a contentious point between the governor and the legislature has been raises for state employees and teachers.

Dana Cope, executive director of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, said Easley's raise is way out of line compared with what state employees might expect.

"It looks like there is obviously preferential treatment going on," said Cope, whose organization represents 55,000 state employees and retirees. "That seems to be ridiculous. When state employees get additional job duties, very oftentimes they will get at best a 5 percent pay increase of what they were making."

SEE EASLEY, PAGE 8A

MARY PIPINES EASLEY

AGE: 58

OCCUPATION: Lawyer.

She was an assistant district attorney in New Hanover and Pender counties for 10 years. From 1984 to 1992, she had her own civil and criminal law practice. She has taught law courses at N.C. Central University and N.C. State University. She is an executive-in-residence and senior lecturer at N.C. State University.

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in politics from Wake Forest University, 1972; law degree from Wake Forest School of Law in 1975.
MARY EASLEY'S DUTIES

Mary Easley is the executive-in-residence and a senior lecturer in the Office of the Provost at N.C. State University. Here's a look at her duties:

- Develop and direct the university's speakers program, the Millennium Seminars.
- Present a master's of public administration course entitled "Public Law for Public Administrators."
- Teach "Legal Aspects of Police Supervision."
- Direct "Public Safety Leadership Initiative," which trains public safety leaders, first responders and other security professionals.
- Co-direct the pre-law services program.
- Build partnerships with legal professionals and law schools.

experience to our students at N.C. State, and we are fortunate to have her as a member of our faculty," Nielsen said.

‘Uniquely qualified’

Easley was hired by the university in 2005. She graduated from Wake Forest University and its law school, said Sherri Johnson, Gov. Mike Easley’s communications director. She was a prosecutor for 10 years and in private practice for eight. She also taught law at N.C. Central University.

When NCSU hired her, her duties included teaching and running a university seminar series. Under her direction, the series has attracted speakers including former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala and South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Easley has previously taught legal aspects of police supervision. In her new job with NCSU, she will direct a training program for public safety leaders, first responders and other security professionals. Her new duties also will include co-directing the pre-law services program and building partnerships with the legal profession and area law schools, according to the university.

"Mrs. Easley's experience in the legal profession and commitment to public service make her uniquely qualified to direct these efforts at N.C. State," Nielsen said.

News researcher David Raynor contributed to this report.
Legislative leaders fire health plan chief

BY DAN KANE
STAFF WRITER

George C. Stokes — who oversaw the health plan for nearly 650,000 state employees, teachers, retirees and their dependents — has been abruptly fired after legislative leaders said the plan’s finances dropped $115 million.

The N.C. State Health Plan swung from $50 million in the black to $65 million in the red.

Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand and his counterpart in the House, Rep. Hugh Holliman, said they sought the firing because they should have been told months ago of the plan’s change in fortunes. They said they did not learn about it until last week.

“We feel we should have been informed in January, February or March, so we could work on it,” said Holliman, a Lexington Democrat.

Rand said he was unaware of any misconduct with the plan’s operation. But he said the revenue gap was serious enough that, if it is not corrected, premiums will have to increase by 23 percent next year to cover the loss.

Stokes, 61, took the job in 2005.

Stokes took the job in 2005.

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attorney, James E. Ferguson II, of Charlotte, who could not be reached for comment.

Rand and Holliman said the shortfall does not affect the plan’s ability to provide coverage. They said reserves will make up for the nonexistent surplus in the fiscal year that began Tuesday. Rand said lawmakers will also postpone moving the health plan from operating on a state fiscal year — July 1 to June 30 — to a calendar year. That will save roughly $20 million.

Rand and Holliman said Stokes’ predecessor, Jack Walker, would serve as interim executive administrator until a successor is hired.

Stokes’ firing drew suspicion from Dana Cope, executive director of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, who praised Stokes’ leadership. Cope said the shortfall was a typical “cash flow” fluctuation in health plan finances that would have been corrected in later months.

He suspected that Rand did not get along with Stokes and wanted to put Walker back in charge. SEANC had a rocky relationship with Walker.

“They never asked for George Stokes’ side of the story,” Cope said. “He was totally surprised by this. We think this is retribution and retaliation to George because he was not a ‘yes’ man.”

Cope said Rand and Holliman told state Insurance Commissioner Jim Long to fire Stokes before calling a meeting of a legislative joint committee that oversees the health plan. Rand said he and Holliman ran the firing by the committee Wednesday, “They concurred with our decision,” Rand said.

Stokes received notice of his firing from Long late Tuesday. Long is responsible for making recommendations to the legislative committee about hiring an executive administrator, said a spokeswoman for his department, Chrissy Pearson. But she said that the insurance department has little involvement with the health plan and that Long had no idea there was an issue with Stokes.

“They said, ‘You have to fire him.’” Pearson said. “He basically just did the dirty work.”

Rand, a Fayetteville Democrat, said the shortfall is a serious problem that would not correct itself. He said the plan had underestimated the savings for a preferred provider organization plan, helping lead to the shortfall. Rand also said legislative staff members were having difficulty getting information about the plan’s fortunes.

Stokes had run two health maintenance organizations in the Triangle before becoming the health plan’s leader. He was Kaiser Permanente’s top man in the state and later worked as chief executive of Doctors Health Plan in Durham. Both companies’ HMOS are now defunct.

The state health plan is one of the largest in North Carolina. Like many plans, it has struggled to keep premiums from escalating dramatically as health-care costs increase.

dan.kane@newsobserver.com
or (919) 829-4861
Unwise change for pension fund

BY EDMUND P. REGAN AND PAM DEARDORFF

Raleigh

The current economic downturn has caused many of us to worry about our budgets, our savings and our investments. Fortunately, 820,000 North Carolinians can rest assured that their pensions are secure, even in times of economic trouble.

Our teachers, law enforcement officers, firefighters and state and local government employees are members of the second-best pension fund in the country, and they can count on their benefits to be there for them. North Carolina's state pension fund is the envy of many across the country, and it is grounded in the principle of "slow and steady wins the race." This is an investment strategy that has served our state pension fund well through bull and bear markets.

That is why changes being advocated by the State Employees Association of N.C. should be of great concern to the state, city, county, town and school system retirees we represent who are counting on North Carolina's tradition of a rock solid pension fund.

The bottom line is that House Bill 2756 would increase risk for the pension fund, for its members and for the state.

The bill represents a fundamental change in the investment strategy that has served the state and its workers well for decades. It would mean abandoning the strong tradition of state Treasurers Edwin Gill and Harlan Boyles, in which the pension fund has been carefully managed to safeguard workers' retirement.

Our current system gives the popularly elected state treasurer the sole authority to direct the investment of pension funds. The treasurer is assisted by a qualified staff in the office's Investment Division, as well as by a group of experts who serve on the Investment Advisory Committee.

Moving the authority to manage investments from the treasurer to a 22-member Board of Trustees would result in a system where the final decisions on the investment of our pension funds would rest with an appointed body that does not necessarily possess the expertise to carry out this responsibility.

The statutory criteria for selection of members of the Board of Trustees do not require any expertise in finance or investments.

Changing that philosophy and adding risk would leave our workers and retirees extremely vulnerable to economic downturns.

For the first quarter of 2008, when the stock market and the economy were hit the hardest since the 2001-2002 recession, North Carolina's pension fund performed better than its peers. Returns for the first quarter were almost a full percentage point higher than the median return for public pension funds with more than $1 billion in assets, according to Wilshire, the most widely accepted benchmark for the performance of institutional assets. North Carolina's fund performed far better than board-run pension funds in California, Florida, Wisconsin, Oregon and others throughout the country. For the three months ending April 30, the pension fund's stocks posted gains, and the overall return of the fund has remained steady.

During this challenging economic environment, North Carolina can expect its pension fund to remain one of the best in the country. The careful management of the fund, the General Assembly's commitment to retirement, and continued modernization of investments will protect our members' investments.

When considering a change to a system that has served us so well, we have a responsibility to separate fact from fiction. North Carolina has been ranked as one of the strongest pension funds in the country for six years running, including being ranked as the second-best fund for three years in a row by Standard & Poor's. In 2000, state pension funds had, on average, all of the resources needed to fund future payments. By 2006, that average nationwide dropped to 81 percent, while North Carolina's remained at 106 percent.

When all the facts are on the table, we all agree that North Carolina's pension fund has served our teachers, our firefighters, our law enforcement officers, our rescue personnel, our EMS personnel and our state well. There is no reason to expect that a board that is not accountable to the people of North Carolina would be better managers of the fund. Slow, steady, conservative performance is exactly what we ought to be doing.

Edmund P. Regan is executive director of the N.C. Retired Governmental Employees' Association. Pam Deardorff is executive director of the N.C. Retired School Personnel.
HEALTH, MONEY & EDUCATION

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

Getting Double the Credit
Students try 'dual enrollment' to stand out on applications

By Eddy Ramirez

Beginning with college algebra in the seventh grade, Ankit Gandhi took 16 classes at the University of South Florida before he even graduated from Leon King High School in Tampa. He did it in part to challenge himself academically, but he also thought it might help when the time came to pursue his bachelor's degree in earnest. "Everyone takes AP classes," the 18-year-old says, "so you always have to do a little more to distinguish yourself." Gandhi, who was admitted to 14 schools, including Duke and MIT, will attend Penn State in the fall.

What Gandhi did—earning high school and college credits (usually from a community college) at the same time—is called dual enrollment and has long been an option for students who want more rigorous work than their high school offers. It can also help students cut down on the cost of college by transferring credits. But increasingly, more students are enrolling in dual-credit courses because they think it will help them get into a selective college. Admissions officers and guidance counselors are growing concerned about the trend.

Bruce Jones, assistant director of admission at Whittman College, a small liberal arts school in Walla Walla, Wash., doesn't think it's generally a good idea for students from top high schools to take off-campus classes. "We're looking for community members who will take and add value to our school," Jones says. "I'm concerned if a high school kid is abandoning their own community in their final high school year to go to a community college." Sally Rubenstein, a senior college adviser for College Confidential.com, notes that "admission folks are aware that some community college classes are actually less rigorous than their [Advanced Placement course] or [International Baccalaureate] counterparts."

School officials in Florida and other states say dual enrollment programs motivate a cross section of students to pursue college. They also can help guard against "the "senior slump." As an incentive for students to challenge themselves all four years, Hillsborough County, where Gandhi went to high school, awards extra points for college classes and does not cap student grade-point averages.

Guaranteed. College advisers say high school students considering dual enrollment should always find out if the schools they're ultimately considering applying to will accept the dual enrollment credits toward a degree. As a general rule, selective schools don't, especially in New England. But in Texas, where college-level enrollment has almost doubled over five years to 60,583 students in the last school year, every school district must now offer dual-credit opportunities and those credits are mostly guaranteed to be accepted by in-state public colleges.

For some students, dual enrollment can level the admissions playing field. Nicki Patel, of Cedar Falls, Iowa, signed up for two calculus classes at the University of Northern Iowa when he was a senior last year. His high school offered only six AP classes, and he had already taken them. Patel, who earned A's in both classes and will start in biochemistry at the University of Pennsylvania this fall, says, "It was definitely worth it."

At Penn State, Gandhi will start as a junior and, two years later, transition into the medical school. He says the time spent in dual enrollment while in high school will help him make the most of his time in higher education. "I will have the opportunity to focus on the activities and subjects in which I truly have an interest," he says.

A Big SAT Policy Change
Students can pick which scores a school sees

Attention, high school juniors: Starting next spring, you can determine which of your SAT scores a college gets to see. The College Board's current policy is that if you send one score to a school, that college also sees the scores from every time you took the test. But starting in March 2009, students will be able to hide SAT-taking blemishes.

Some counselors worry that the new policy will give a boost to kids who can afford to take the $45 test multiple times and sign up for tutoring sessions. The College Board says the average score gain on the first SAT retake is 40 points and "there's no advantage to taking the SAT more than twice, and our fee waivers let low-income students take the test [free] twice." Admissions offices will have to figure out how to handle the new policy. The University of Southern California, for example, opposes the new option because it obscures the context in which a score was earned, and may still require applicants to submit all SAT attempts. —Lucia Graves
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The ’60s Begin to Fade as Liberal Professors Retire

By PATRICIA COHEN

MADISON, Wis. — When Michael Olneck was standing, arms linked with other protesters, singing “We Shall Not Be Moved” in front of Columbia University’s library in 1968, Sara Goldrick-Rab had not yet been born.

When he won tenure at the University of Wisconsin here in 1980, she was 3. And in January, when he retires at 62, Ms. Goldrick-Rab will be just across the hall, working to earn a permanent spot on the same faculty from which he is departing.

Together, these Midwestern academics, one leaving the professoriate and another working her way up, are part of a vast generational change that is likely to profoundly alter the culture at American universities and colleges over the next decade.

Baby boomers, hired in large numbers during a huge expansion in higher education that continued into the ’70s, are being replaced by younger professors who many of the nearly 50 academics interviewed by The New York Times believe are different from their predecessors — less ideologically polarized and more politically moderate.

“There’s definitely something happening,” said Peter W. Wood, executive director of the National Association of Scholars, which was created in 1987 to counter attacks on Western culture and values. “I hear from quite a few faculty members and graduate students from around the country. They are not really interested in fighting the battles that have been fought over the last 20 years.”

Individual colleges and organizations like the American Association of University Professors are already bracing for what has been labeled the graying of the faculty. More than 54 percent of full-time faculty members in the United States were older than 50 in 2005, compared with 22.5 percent in 1969. How many will actually retire in the next decade or so depends on personal preferences and health, as well as how their pensions fare in the financial markets.

Yet already there are signs that the intense passions and polemics that roiled campuses during the past couple of decades have begun to fade. At Stanford a divided anthropology department reunited last year after a bitter split in 1998 broke it into two entities, one focusing on culture, the other on biology. At Amherst, where military recruiters were kicked out in 1987, students crammed into a lecture hall this year to listen as alumni
who served in Iraq urged them to join the military.

In general, information on professors’ political and ideological leanings tends to be scarce. But a new study of the social and political views of American professors by Neil Gross at the University of British Columbia and Solon Simmons at George Mason University found that the notion of a generational divide is more than a glancing impression. “Self-described liberals are most common within the ranks of those professors aged 50-64, who were teenagers or young adults in the 1960s,” they wrote, making up just under 50 percent. At the same time, the youngest group, ages 26 to 35, contains the highest percentage of moderates, some 60 percent, and the lowest percentage of liberals, just under a third.

When it comes to those who consider themselves “liberal activists,” 17.2 percent of the 50-64 age group take up the banner compared with only 1.3 percent of professors 35 and younger:

“These findings with regard to age provide further support for the idea that, in recent years, the trend has been toward increasing moderatism,” the study says.

The authors are not talking about a political realignment. Democrats continue to overwhelmingly outnumber Republicans among faculty, young and old. But as educators have noted, the generation coming up appears less interested in ideological confrontations, summoning Barack Obama’s statement about the elections of 2000 and 2004: “I sometimes felt as if I were watching the psychodrama of the Baby Boom generation — a tale rooted in old grudges and revenge plots hatched on a handful of college campuses long ago — played out on the national stage.”

With more than 675,000 professors at the nation’s more than 4,100 four-year and two-year institutions, it is easy to find faculty members, young and old, who defy any mold. Still, this move to the middle is “certainly the conventional wisdom,” said Jack H. Schuster, who along with Martin J. Finkelstein, wrote “The American Faculty,” a comprehensive analysis of existing data on the profession. “The agenda is different now than what it had been.”

With previous battles already settled, like the creation of women’s and ethnic studies departments, moderation can be found at both ends of the political spectrum. David DesRosiers, executive director of the Veritas Fund for Higher Education Reform, which contributes to conservative activities on campuses, said impending retirements present an opportunity. However, he added, “we’re not looking for fights,” but rather “a civil dialogue.” His model? A seminar on great books at Princeton jointly taught by two philosophers, the left-wing Cornel West and the right-wing Robert P. George.

Changes in institutions of higher education themselves are reinforcing the generational shuffle. Health sciences, computer science, engineering and business — fields that have tended to attract a somewhat greater proportion of moderates and conservatives — have grown in importance and size compared with the more
liberal social sciences and humanities, where many of the bitterest fights over curriculum and theory occurred.

At the same time, shrinking public resources overall and fewer tenure-track jobs in the humanities have pushed younger professors in those fields to concentrate more single-mindedly on their careers. Academia, once somewhat insulated from market pressures, is today treated like a business. This switch is a “major ideological and philosophical shift in how society views higher education,” Mr. Schuster and Mr. Finkelstein write in “The American Faculty.”

And with more women in the ranks (nearly 40 percent of the total in 2005 compared with 17.3 percent in 1969), different sorts of issues like family-friendly benefits have been brought to the table.

One way to understand the sense that a new mood is emerging on American campuses is to look at the difference between the world that existed when Mr. Olneck was making his way and the one in which Ms. Goldrick-Rab is coming up.

The ’60s Generation

Michael Olneck slides into a booth at Kabul Restaurant on State Street, a few steps from the sprawling Madison campus and its 41,000 students. “I was a pink-diaper baby,” he said pushing his bicycle helmet aside and smoothing the unruly strands of gray hair on his head.

His father was a Socialist. Right out of high school, in 1964, Mr. Olneck organized support for the Mississippi Project’s black voter-registration drives. Later, he took a bus to Washington to protest the war in Vietnam, served on the strike coordinating committee at Harvard during the American invasion of Cambodia in 1970 and demonstrated at President Nixon’s inauguration in 1973.

Similar events embedded themselves in the minds of many students at the time. A few blocks from the restaurant is a plaque commemorating protests that rattled the university in the 1960s and ’70s: the seizure of the student movement by radicals, the deadly bombing of a campus research lab, the clubbing of antiwar demonstrators.

Those sorts of experiences are alien to younger professors, Mr. Olneck explained, so “they may not be as instinctively anti-authoritarian; they just don’t have that in their background.”

The protests ultimately died down here and elsewhere. Mr. Olneck ended up in front of the class, and like many academics from his generation, he brought the same spirited questioning and conscience that had animated his student years to his job as an education and sociology professor.

Yet to some traditionalists, preoccupations like Mr. Olneck’s grated. The conservative philosopher Allan...
Bloom captured the bitter splits — better known as the culture wars — in his influential best seller "The Closing of the American Mind" in 1987. He detailed fights over the scarcity of women and people of color in the curriculum, the proliferation of pop-culture courses, doubts about the existence of any eternal truths and new theories that declared moral values to be merely an expression of power. These rancorous disputes often spilled into the nation's political discourse.

When Mr. Olneck earned his degree, traditional views of American education were also being upended. Radical revisionists ridiculed the view of public education as a beneficent democratic project. They raised questions about equal access, how schools reinforced class differences, and whether social science should, or even could be free of ideology.

At the start of his career, Mr. Olneck traced the links between where someone's family came from and where they ended up on the economic and social ladder. Although he has done quantitative research, 20 years ago he jettisoned number-centric studies for historical narrative, exploring how schools throughout the 20th century responded to immigrants and diversity. In his work one can detect some of the era's preoccupations when he argues, for instance, that fights over bilingualism and standard English were about power.

The same goes for his extracurricular activities. In 1989 he worked to kick the R.O.T.C. off campus because of the Defense Department's ban on homosexuals. (The effort failed.) More recently, his neighborhood was riled by a Walgreens plan to open a drugstore. "All these people who had protested the war and civil rights," Mr. Olneck said, laughing; Walgreens "didn't know what hit 'em."

Last fall, he taught Race, Ethnicity and Inequality in American Education, which he introduces in the syllabus: "Schools in the United States promise equal opportunity. They have not kept that promise. In this course, we will try to find out why." Like many sociologists and education researchers, Mr. Olneck said that today both the kinds of analyses and the theories that prevailed when he was in college have changed. Overarching narratives, societal critiques and clarion calls for change — of the capitalist system or the social structure — have gone out of style. Today, with advances in statistical methods, many sociologists have moved to model themselves on clinical researchers with large, randomized experiments as their gold standard. In their eyes, this more scientific approach is less explicitly ideological than other kinds of research.

Ms. Goldrick-Rab has embraced such experiments. A graduate course she created — partly based on her research of community colleges — focused on "educational opportunity and inequality" at community colleges, with an "emphasis on the critical evaluation and assessment of current up-to-date research."

Another Wisconsin professor, Erik Olin Wright, a 61-year-old sociologist and a Marxist theorist, described it this way: "There has been some shift away from grand frameworks to more focused empirical questions."

As for his own approach, Mr. Wright said, "in the late '60s and '70s, the Marxist impulse was central for those
interested in social justice.” Now it resides at the margins.

A New Generation

“I was part of a new wave of hires,” Sara Goldrick-Rab said, peering over the top of her laptop at her favorite off-campus work site, the Espresso Royale cafe. She came to the University of Wisconsin in 2004 and, like Mr. Olneck, has a joint appointment in educational policy studies and sociology, both departments considered among the best in the country.

Now 31, she grew up in a Washington suburb, Fairfax, Va., when Ronald Reagan was in the White House and corporate mergers were the rage. At George Washington University she was active in a campaign to end the death penalty, but for most of her classmates the late 1990s were marked by economic growth, peace and student apathy.

“My generation is not so ideologically driven,” she said.

That doesn’t mean she doesn’t want to engage a larger audience and influence policy. She considers herself the “intellectual heir” of her senior colleagues — “It’s like working with your grandparents,” she said fondly — and she cares deeply about educational inequality, often writing about the subject on a blog she created with her husband.

But she also is aware of differences between the generations.

A Sensibility Gap

“Senior people evaluate us for tenure and the standards they use and what we think is important are different,” she said. They want to question values and norms; “we are more driven by data.”

Her newest project is collaborating on what she calls the “first rigorous test in the country” to measure whether needs-based financial aid increases the chances that low-income students will graduate from college. It involves 42 colleges and 6,000 students, and will combine statistics with more in-depth interviews.

As for partisan politics, when she wrote an article in May for Pajamasmedia.com about welfare reform cutting off poor people’s access to higher education, some friends and co-workers were surprised by its appearance on that conservative blog. She said she didn’t know; she had not paid attention to its political bent.

When Ms. Goldrick-Rab speaks of added pressures on her generation, she talks about being pregnant or taking care of her 17-month-old while trying to earn tenure. The lack of paid leave for mothers is high on her list of complaints about university life.
At a conference titled “Generational Shockwaves,” sponsored in November by the TIAA-CREF Institute, Joan Girgus, a special assistant to the dean of faculty at Princeton, underscored how these sorts of concerns were increasingly on the minds of younger faculty members. Universities need to focus more on the “life” side of the work-life balance “because faculties historically were almost entirely male and the wives took care of the family side,” Ms. Girgus said. “I don’t think we can do that anymore.” Ask Ms. Goldrick-Rab if she believes there is a gap between her generation and the boomers, and she immediately answers yes.

Mr. Olneck and Mr. Wright are more cautious. “Some of my closest colleagues are 25 years younger than I am and I feel absolutely no barrier of sensibility,” Mr. Wright said.

For him, the institutional shifts outweigh any others: “I don’t think the big things have anything to do with generational change, but with financial pressures on education,” he said.

Wisconsin is part of the state’s university’s system, for example, but it receives only 18 percent of its total budget from the Legislature. The rest comes from donations, foundations, federal research grants and corporations. Mr. Wright and Mr. Olneck worry how constantly having a hand out — particularly to corporations — may affect attitudes and policies. Mr. Olneck mentioned the long list of labs and classrooms named after companies like Halliburton, Pillsbury and Ford Motor Company.

The market sensibility may account for what Mr. Olneck and others call an increasing careerism among junior faculty members. Jackson Lears, 62, a historian at Rutgers University in New Jersey, said, “I don’t think that necessarily means a move to the right, but a less overt stance of political engagement.”

Gerald Graff, president of the Modern Language Association and author of the 1992 book “Beyond the Culture Wars,” is more skeptical, saying he hasn’t seen evidence of change at the University of Illinois in Chicago, where he teaches English. “You’d think that the further we get away from the ’60s, where a lot of our political attitudes are nurtured, there would be,” he said, “but I have to say it doesn’t seem to be happening.”

Certainly some disciplines, like literary studies, seem more resistant to change. Elsewhere, senior faculty members are more likely to hire young scholars in their own mold, while some baby boomers have adopted the attitudes and styles of their younger peers.

But as scholars across fields argue, the historical era in which a generation develops — the Depression, wartime or peaceful affluence — is a defining moment for its members. “My generational paradigm is the end of the cold war,” said Matthew Woessner, a 35-year-old conservative and political scientist at Penn State Harrisburg. He and his wife, April Kelly-Woessner, a political scientist at nearby Elizabethtown College who is a year younger and a moderate, have been analyzing faculty survey responses for a new book. The notion that campuses are naturally radical or the birthplace of social movements, Ms. Kelly-Woessner said, was specific to the 1960s and ’70s. “I think the younger generation does look at it differently.”