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Morris Patrick, left, and Dermot McElhennon take a break from the extreme temperatures at the clubhouse at the Bradford Creek Golf Course on Wednesday. The golfers were competing in the Coastal Plains Junior Amateur Golf Tournament.
Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector

The heat is on: Regional temps hit triple digits
By Kim Grizzard
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, July 7, 2010

Summer temperatures are kind of like summer television — a lot of reruns.
Two weeks after unseasonable heat made headlines in eastern North Carolina, temperatures on Wednesday were just two degrees shy of the record set nearly a quarter century ago.
“Greenville did hit 100 degrees today,” said meteorologist Bel Melendez of the National Weather Service at Newport, adding that the triple-digit reading was not enough to top the record of 102 set in 1977. “That week back in 1977 was really hot.”
That’s little comfort to Cathy Davenport, who spent much of Wednesday outside. Davenport was at Elm Street Park, watching her grandson, Hunter Christopher, playing in the Tar Heel 9- and 10-year-old all-star game against Morehead City. About an hour into the game, Davenport went to her car, just to get out of the heat.
“I had to cut on the air conditioner,” she said. “The car was registering 104. Think of those poor boys out there playing.”
At least the players were done for the day when the game ended with a Tar Heel victory.
Davenport had to head home for a shower and then suit up to watch her other grandson, Coleman Sawyer, play in Newport with the older boys’ team.
“I’m a good grandmother,” she said, laughing. “You’ve got to be where the grandchildren are.”
Swelltering temperatures didn’t keep most people from getting where they needed to be on Wednesday. East Carolina University was hosting an orientation for students and their parents.
With temperatures near 99 degrees, Latasha Bell of Kernersville and her family were making their way from Mendenhall Student Center to Wright Auditorium for a presentation. She was glad that orientation activities were being held inside.
“It was really hot, really early,” Bell said of her first visit to the ECU campus. She’s grateful that the dorm she’ll move into in August is air conditioned.
Bill Bagnell, ECU associate vice chancellor for campus operations, said the university has to cool the campus, even in summer months when student enrollment is much lower than in fall and spring semesters.
“The campus doesn’t shut down for the summer,” he said. “We don’t have campus locations that we can shut down.”

Instead, the university focuses its conservation efforts on working to maintain standard temperatures in its facilities of 78 degrees in the summer and 68 in winter. The standards, set in December, give the university greater control over most of its thermostats. Another recent conservation policy has involved shutting off hot water in classroom and office buildings that are not used in medical or food preparation facilities. Such efforts, Bagnell said, have helped ECU reduce energy consumption by 17 percent since 2003, even though both student population and campus square footage have increased.

“The way we pay for our energy here is not only just use, but it’s also on demand,” he said. “We get signals from the local utility that tell us when they’re approaching a peak demand period. What we will do on campus to try to reduce our overall cost is we’ll adjust HVAC setpoints down for a period of time to avoid that coincidental peak charge.”

Roger Jones, director of electric systems for the Greenville Utilities Commission, said that despite mid-week high temperatures, GUC does not expect to set energy usage records this week. “Usually the week before and after the Fourth of July, you have some industry that’s shut down,” he said. “It tends to take some of the edge off the numbers.”

Still, for the poor and the elderly, there is little to dull the effects of the heat. The Pitt County Council on Aging reported that it only took two days to give away all 50 fans that GUC provided for seniors with no air conditioning.

“We’ve given out 70 fans already this year,” Christal Curran, case assistance coordinator, said. “Normally we would not even get the fans until next week. It was just so extremely hot so quickly this year. We still have people who are requesting fans.”

For the first time Curran can remember, the Council on Aging is asking for donations to help purchase more fans. Nine people have been placed on a waiting list for fans; others have been referred to the Pitt County Department of Social Services.

Niagara Parker, emergency assistance supervisor for Pitt County DSS, said the department has some fans as well as some funding available for qualifying residents who are struggling to pay their utility bills.

“This heat this time has really caught us early,” Parker said. “We’re hoping we can make it through.”

Lynne James hopes the air-conditioning system at the Greenville Community Shelters makes it through the long summer heat. The shelter experienced problems with its heating system earlier this year, and James worries that too many days of temperatures above 95 could strain the air conditioning units.

They are functioning nearly around the clock these days as the shelter, which is near capacity, keeps its doors open during the day for residents who usually are out by 8 in the morning. “When it’s 95 or higher, we have an open policy for people to come back in or to stay in,” James, the shelter’s executive director, said. “The same applies whether it’s severe heat or severe cold.”

In the severe heat, many city residents, especially children and teens, seek shelter in the nearest swimming pool. Pool manager Chris Ross said the Windsor neighborhood pool had 250 families join this year. Sixty more are on a waiting list.

Still, early Wednesday afternoon, the pool wasn’t even crowded. For some, apparently it was simply too hot to swim.

“We seem to have an influx of people before lunch,” Ross said. “In the dead heat of the midday, they go home.”

Contact Kim Grizzard at kgrizzard@reflector.com or (252) 329-9578.
ECU worker faces embezzlement charges

The Daily Reflector

A court appearance has been set for East Carolina University Athletics Director Terry Holland’s administrative assistant, who is facing embezzlement charges that spanned a three-year period from 2006-09.

Lisa Cannon Britt, 41, was arrested June 3 by ECU police and charged with embezzlement of state property amounting to $973.80. She will appear in Pitt County Superior Court on Aug. 25, according to court records.

Britt is accused of using a university credit card to collect reimbursement for expenses that were not business-related between Oct. 13, 2006, and Nov. 4, 2009. She also used the university’s business account to charge FedEx shipments to personal locations, the complaint alleged.

Britt waived her right to an attorney for her Aug. 25 court appearance.

The university did not respond to a request for comment on the case.
90 candles, and an inner flame

This coming Tuesday in Chapel Hill, what is likely to be the largest open-to-the-public birthday celebration in the history of that community, and perhaps the state of North Carolina, will commence at 4 p.m. at the George Watts Hill Alumni Center. The honoree in fact is a little embarrassed by it. He has, he figures, received a multitude of accolades in the course of his long life, every honor North Carolina has to bestow, some of them more than once. He has been to the Oval Office more times than he can count, has been in the company of royalty, has been courted by giant corporations and Ivy League universities.

(If you didn’t know that, it’s because he kept it quiet.)

In fact, five years ago, one News & Observer letter-writer even suggested that those searching for a new president of the University of North Carolina system might consider bringing then-85-year-old William Friday out of retirement. “He seems in good health,” the writer said.

He was, and thankfully remains so as he readies to turn 90 next week. And Bill Friday remains as tuned-in to the issues of the day as he has ever been. He still goes almost daily to an office on the UNC-Ch campus, and still records interviews for UNC-TV’s longest-running program, “North Carolina People,” now in its 40th year.

Despite having mentored university leaders, governors and presidents in the course of his public life, Friday carefully stays behind the line that separates counsel from interference. Though he was president of what is now the UNC system for 30 years, and saw that university through many crises weathered from 1956 to 1986, he doesn’t engage in personal, public criticism of new generations of leaders. What he does do is stand up in matters of conscience, sometimes to the chagrin of powerful people on the other side.

As co-chair of the Knight Commission, he tried for decades to pull the reins on the runaway stagecoach of big-time college sports. He’s fought for maintaining affordable tuition rates in the UNC system, which has been a covenant with taxpayers since the university’s creation, and every increase pains him. He joins forces with others when the issue is important, even when it doesn’t directly connect to public universities. He spoke out against the campaign for a state lottery, for example.

His mentor as his career began was the late Frank Porter Graham, the beloved UNC president, U.S. senator, and a man who inspired many of Friday’s generation. He followed Graham’s advocacy of racial equality and stepped it up a notch. Friday was a progressive voice when those who shared his opinion could have held their convention in a coat closet.

All this would explain, perhaps, why his place in history is so lofty. But what is the secret as to why he remains so admired, nearly 25 years after his retirement, by people of all professions, political persuasions and circumstances? (I come to the question with a viewpoint, as my late father worked with Friday for 15 years.)

The answer will be in abundant evidence this Tuesday, but it comes down to some simple things:

He is a person of uncommon modesty. If a freshman from Gastonia is having a conversation with Bill Friday, the president emeritus likely will recall his childhood in Dallas, a small Gaston County community, and call the names of the kid’s kinfolk.

He is genuine. The affection people feel for him is not the product of public relations or image consultants. He has never had any use for pretense of any kind. The meeting he has with a prospective student and his parents, who might have just called out of the blue, is just as important to him as a pow-wow with a potentate.

He surrounds himself with real friends, and has remained grounded in a great marriage to his Ida and in the raising of three daughters. And those friends. He has quite probably delivered more eulogies than any lay person in America, some celebrating the lives of the famous in grand places, others noting the passing of an old friend in country churches.

He is soft-spoken, but he can be a fierce force if need be. As UNC president, nothing made him madder than to hear that a student had been treated badly by someone in the bureaucracy. A call would be made. “Remember,” he would say to the offender, “you and I work for the people of North Carolina, all of them.”

And so, on this 90th birthday, the good-wishes line will be long, full of the people, all of them, who appreciate and understand that whenever Bill Friday said something like that, he really meant it.

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Colleges offer orientation courses for parents
Parents of incoming freshmen attend workshops, tours and speeches
Call it Empty Nesting 101: Colleges around the country are holding orientations for families of incoming freshmen. But these are not simple "Meet the Dean" receptions held the day before school starts. These are elaborate two- and three-day events, often held on midsummer weekdays, requiring parents to take time off from work and pay $70 or $80 in addition to lodging, food and travel expenses.
They're packed with workshops, tours and speeches on subjects ranging from letting go to campus safety. Reed College in Portland, Ore., even invites parents to read "The Odyssey" and attend a lecture and discussion similar to what their kids will experience in a freshman humanities course.
You might think parents facing massive tuition bills would balk at more demands on their budget and time. But many colleges report that well over half their freshmen have family in attendance at these events, and lots of parents think the orientations are the greatest thing since "What To Expect When You're Expecting."
"What I've heard across the country from parents is that these events are marked on their calendar with a big red heart," said Natalie Caine, who counsels parents through her business, Empty Nest Support Services in Los Angeles. "They'll pay the airfare, they'll go into debt to attend parent orientation if they have to. They're worriers. They say, 'I need to go. I need to see what it's like. I want to hear what they have to offer, what the security system is like, who's the contact person if there's a problem."
Joe Mondy said he was skeptical when he saw a long lecture on "letting go" scheduled for the parent orientation at his daughter's
school, Stonehill College in Massachusetts. But he ended up thinking the session was terrific.
"My generation, the Baby Boom generation, wants to over-control and manage things," said Mondy. "You want to make sure everything goes smoothly, familiarize yourself with the college and what it stands for."
Kristine Goodwin, associate dean for student life at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., says the orientations try to show parents that the school is on their side: "Don't we both want to prepare the student for independent living?"
Holy Cross also warns parents that kids may call home in the first few weeks saying they're unhappy. "They don't have emotional support yet," Goodwin said. "Your job is not to overreact. Don't panic! They're just venting."
At Northern Michigan University in Marquette, parents get to hear exactly what those desperate calls sound like. The school plays tapes during the parent orientation of upperclassmen recreating actual calls they made home. One girl tells mom and dad she'll be spending Thanksgiving with her new boyfriend instead of her family. In another call, a boy confesses that he's not doing well in school, and P.S., he's in trouble for alcohol violations. A third call is from a student who's homesick and lonely.
"The girl's voice in the homesick tape makes many parents cry every time we do it," said Christine Greer, dean of students at NMU. The tapes were made some years ago, but "the issues haven't changed — independence, breaking rules, not doing well in classes, homesickness. They are still things that parents worry about, and students deal with, every year."

a resident adviser and later a teacher; she's now married with three kids.
Steven Hill of Salt Lake City, whose son will be attending NMU this year, said he and his wife Shawn thought the presentations were outstanding. "You can imagine how hard it is for Shawn to see her baby grow up and move so far away from home to go to school," said Hill. "But the orientation was the best thing we could have done for our son and our family. My wife for now is liking the idea that her son chose to go away to college and she feels that he will be in a place that has taken every step to ensure his success."
Some parents say they feel OK about skipping the orientations. Lisa Richards' daughter attended an orientation at Tulane University in New Orleans this summer, but mom stayed home. "We had just been to Tulane the third week of April," said Richards. "We spent two days there and a lot of my questions had already been answered."
Other parents think the events could be more to the point. "A lot of this letting go business — they could condense that before lunch, and then after lunch do the practical stuff," as Morgan Roth put it. Roth loves American University, where her daughter will be a student in the fall, but she thought much of the material in the parent orientation could have been covered in a webinar, and she wished they'd included a session on how to understand the tuition bill instead of one on student nutrition.
Still, the number of family members attending these events at Cleveland State University has tripled in the last five years. At Northeastern University in Boston, "at least 85 percent if not 90 percent of students have parents that also attend our programs," said spokeswoman Katherine Cadwell.
At Indiana State University at Terre Haute, orientations have included "as many as nine family members, including grandparents," said spokesman John Beacon. "We don't mind at all and we enjoy having the whole family participate. We recognize
there are lots of helicopter parents. Rather than try to limit their involvement, we embrace it."
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The Coveted but Elusive Summer Internship

By HILARY STOUT

It’s been a rough summer so far for the Baltimore Orioles, Miley Cyrus and (it goes without saying) BP. Now, summer interns may have joined the list.

Between the sputtering economy and updated federal guidelines governing the employment of unpaid interns, many students have had a tougher time than they anticipated in landing résumé-enhancing experience this summer.

Tales of frustration abound. One junior at Penn State had his paid corporate internship offer revoked during the last week of classes this spring. A journalism student in Washington had to walk away from three internship opportunities because she wouldn’t receive academic credit. After an “awesome” internship at a venture capital firm last summer, a student in an M.B.A. program in Los Angeles struggled to find 15 hours a week of unpaid work this time around. And at ESPN, Howard Hamilton, a vice president of human resources, said that 10,000 people applied this summer for 90 paid internship spots.

The internship culture has grown markedly in the last two decades. A survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers in 2008 found that 50 percent of graduating students had held internships, a striking increase from 17 percent in 1992. Forget burger flipping or ice cream scooping — now even high school students seem anxious to obtain a few weeks of summer experience with “real” employers, fearing that colleges will look askance at applicants without substantive professional experience on the students’ lists of summer activities.

As a result, the big-name internship has become coveted capital — a reality that was showcased in the extreme when the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights recently auctioned media internships to help raise money for its cause. The opportunity to work — unpaid — went for some pretty big amounts: $2,900 at Vanity Fair, $9,000 at the Huffington Post — and an eye-popping $42,500 at Vogue.

But the willingness of many young people to sacrifice pay for experience has led a number of states as well as the federal government to take a close look at the legality of hiring young
people to work free. In April, the Obama administration issued a fact sheet listing six criteria aimed at preventing employers from violating the Fair Labor Standards Act with their unpaid internship programs. Among the stipulations: that the training the intern receives must be similar to training that can be obtained in an educational setting, that unpaid interns don’t displace a paid employee, and that the employer does not derive any “benefit” from the intern’s work.

The guidelines, from the Labor Department, have left employers scrambling to bulletproof their internship programs, said Camille Olson, a management-side employment attorney, who represents companies who have been dealing with this issue. Some employers, she said, have converted to paid internships but in the process have cut back on the number of posts they can offer. Others have abandoned their programs altogether.

Oscar Michelen, a labor lawyer in New York, said his son, a junior at Penn State, had secured a paid internship for the summer, but during his last week of classes the company suddenly pulled back the offer. “Companies were cutting back on the number,” he said. “They said we can only offer paid positions to rising seniors.” (The young man was able to find a six-week paid position at another firm.)

Dave Phillipson, the organizer of CEO Space, a California-based network of entrepreneurs, said he had been working on starting an internship program this summer but abandoned it “because of this silly ruling.”

“I was an unpaid intern and I had no problem with it,” he said.

The Atlantic Media Company, which publishes The Atlantic Monthly magazine and other print and digital publications, decided this spring to start paying its interns immediately — and even compensate last year’s interns retroactively. Many employers, however, especially those who have long-established unpaid internships, were reluctant to comment about whether they have instituted changes.

But at least one employer has been outspoken. John Stossel, a former anchor on ABC’s “20/20” who now hosts his own show on the Fox Business Network, has been sounding off about the issue all over print, the airwaves and cyberspace. He even donned a police uniform for an appearance on the Fox News program “America Live” to ridicule the crackdown.

“I’ve built my career on unpaid interns,” he said in the interview, “and the interns told me it was great — I learned more from you than I did in college.” (Asked why he didn’t pay them if they were so valuable, he said he didn’t have the money.)

Many people believe a focus on unpaid internships is an important effort to protect young
people from economic exploitation, as well as to even the intern playing field so students who can afford to work without pay aren't the overwhelming beneficiaries of internship experience. But some worry that the crackdown may actually limit their opportunities.

Sarah Green, a 20-year-old art history major at Emory University, landed a prestigious internship last summer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This year she hoped to return to the New York art world. She applied to every auction house and museum she could find for both paid and unpaid spots. Every place turned her down, with some explaining they'd cut back on the number of interns they now hire. The experience may have been a career-changer for Ms. Green. "I took this as a sign that I was not meant to work in the fine arts," she said. Instead she enrolled in summer courses in graphic design and advertising and has now decided to apply to a graduate program in art direction for advertising.

Most employers aren't entirely eliminating their unpaid internship programs but are instead becoming sticklers, requiring that schools grant credit to any person they hire for an unpaid internship. That can be difficult for some students. Alyssa Wolice, a journalism major at American University in Washington, had to walk away from three promising internship opportunities — one at a sports organization and two at news organizations — because all three employers insisted she obtain credit from her university.

There were two problems with that stipulation for Ms. Wolice. First, she had already been granted the maximum number of credits that American allows for internships in her degree program. But even if she hadn't, she says she couldn't afford the estimated $1,000 she would have had to pay American for the credits. She's already planning to graduate a semester early to save on tuition. She ended up finding a part-time paid internship, but it's not in journalism; it's a post at the federal Food and Drug Administration.

Emily Lennox, a 25-year-old M.B.A. candidate at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, said the academic credit requirement hadn't arisen last summer when she took an unpaid internship at a venture capital firm, a position she said provided a valuable "quick immersion" into the business world. "This year it was more difficult," she said. She finally found two part-time unpaid internships, though she said she has since quit one out of dissatisfaction. But, she added, she is learning a lot in the other — a 15-hour-a-week stint at a start-up retail firm.

Other students are finding ways to get around the federal requirements. "Kids don't necessarily have to go back to their university to get the credit," said Jill Tipograph, the founder and chief executive of Everything Summer, which works with families to help them find camps and summer internships.
Kathryn Ciano, a law student at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., who aspires to become a legal journalist, worked through a group called the Institute for Humane Studies, which helped place her in an unpaid internship at Fox Business News in New York and awarded her a $3,200 stipend. But Fox still required her to obtain a letter showing she was receiving academic credit for the work. Her law school wouldn’t grant credit for a journalism internship, however. So she found a community college in Los Angeles that would award her credit and furnish the required letter for $200 — much less than she would have had to pay George Mason.

Ms. Ciano’s internship sounds like the type of post the new rules might call into question — 40 to 50 hours a week working on the development of a new show. But Ms. Ciano said the hands-on experience has been terrific. “It’s really wonderful,” she said. “They’re really nurturing, great mentors.”
Borrowing | July 3, 2010

Student-Loan Gadfly Gets a Starring Role as the U.S. Pushes Out the Private Lenders

By Jane J. Kim

Nearly every college student who has borrowed money to pay tuition over the past decade can thank Mark Kantrowitz for helping to make the process easier and cheaper.

Mr. Kantrowitz isn’t a banker or a Washington bureaucrat. Working from his cluttered basement outside of Pittsburgh, he is the gadfly of the student-lending business, poking and prodding Washington and private-sector student lenders to make college more affordable, especially to lower-income students.

He identified a loophole in the Higher Education Act that enabled students to consolidate their federal student loans while in school and lock in record-low rates. He worked with the U.S. Department of Education to put the federal financial-aid form online and the Federal Trade Commission to shutter scholarship scams. His college financial aid and scholarship websites—FinAid.org and FastWeb.com—are among the most popular ones of their kind.

"All sorts of good things flow from higher education," he says. "The main problem is that there are a lot of people who would benefit from a higher education who can’t afford to go."

Now, at a time when the government is taking over the private side of the federal student-loan business—amid skyrocketing tuition and swelling student debt—Mr. Kantrowitz is having something of a Lady Gaga moment. Members of Congress, the Department of Education, lenders and financial-aid administrators seek out his advice. His testimony in April 2008 before the Senate Banking Committee on the credit crunch in student loans helped lead to legislation that temporarily provided much-needed cash to education lenders and prevented a potential meltdown of the student-loan industry.

Just last week, he testified on a report issued by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, which advises Congress and the secretary of education on financial-aid policy. His argument: Unless need-based grant aid is sharply
increased, the number of people graduating with bachelor's degrees will decline.

"Mark provides a lens to look at the issues to help policy makers think through what they might do," says Bob Shireman, who left his post this past week as a deputy undersecretary of the Department of Education. He has consulted with Mr. Kantrowitz on a variety of topics ranging from student-loan default rates to simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or Fafsa.

Mr. Kantrowitz started FinAid as a hobby in 1994; five years later, he left his job as a research scientist to work on the site full-time, taking a 40% pay cut. He receives a salary from Monster Worldwide Inc., which bought FinAid.org and FastWeb.com in July 2001, but regularly distributes his original research for free to thousands of financial-aid administrators, plus more than 30 congressional staffers.

Mr. Kantrowitz sees an impending crisis unfolding in the next decade or two. "We're going to start hitting a situation where today's students will still be in debt when their own children are enrolling in college," he says. "If the current trends continue, families will soon be at a breaking point."

From his perspective, the most efficient way to increase college access is to provide more aid to low- and moderate-income students. The Obama administration has taken steps in that direction, such as raising Pell Grant limits to a maximum of $5,550. Mr. Kantrowitz says those limits need to be roughly doubled.

Mr. Kantrowitz, who tends a menagerie of four dogs, three puppies, two cats and five lizards, works at a cluttered desk, piled high with prospectuses, white papers and financial-aid information. He works from one of the six computers in his office, including a laptop in the bathroom. When inspired, he jots down mathematical equations on an electronic whiteboard that prints out a copy of whatever is written on it. Most recently, the equation on the board showed the derivation of a formula for loan amortization.

Mr. Kantrowitz, who also is an origami whiz and often leaves tiny paper frogs, foxes or dragons in his wake, isn't universally popular. Some college financial-aid administrators bristle at his involvement because he has never worked as an aid administrator himself.

He says he once received a threatening letter from a financial-aid consultant after he wrote about the strategies that students could use to get the most financial aid—providing free advice for which many consultants charge.

Still, most industry players—whether they agree with Mr. Kantrowitz or not—say his work helps inform their decisions because his analysis is balanced and fact-based. For his part, Mr. Kantrowitz watches his words and avoids superlatives to avoid the perception that he has an agenda. "He's not a political animal, but an analytic one," says Nancy Coolidge, coordinator of student financial support at the University of California's Office of the President, who often calls him for help or refers families and students to his Web site.

Mr. Kantrowitz never had to take out any student loans. In high school, he won enough math and science competitions and scholarships to cover his undergraduate tuition at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, of Cambridge, Mass., and his graduate expenses at Carnegie Mellon University, of Pittsburgh.

Mr. Kantrowitz, who holds six—soon to be seven—patents, says he has been contacted by recruiters for Google Inc. and AOL Inc., as well as by investment banks and hedge funds, but has turned down all offers.

"It gives you a very good feeling knowing that you are helping millions of people pursue a college education," he says. "I think that is a more valuable and more beneficial result than building a better Web search engine."

Write to Jane J. Kim at jane.kim@wsj.com
Is college overrated?

By Patrick Welsh

Three weeks ago, the school system in Alexandria, Va., announced that 80% of the students who were about to graduate from T.C. Williams High School would be going on to college. That’s an impressive statistic for a school that is 79% minority, with more than half its kids on a free or reduced-cost lunch program. But when one looks at just what “going on to college” means nowadays — and what it will mean a couple of years from now — we might do well to restrain our applause.

I had great students in my senior English classes this year — kids accepted to Yale, Columbia, the University of Virginia, Wesleyan and other highly competitive colleges and universities. But I also had other seniors whom I still feel guilty about passing, and they, too, are among the 80% whom we boast about going to college.

In fact, it seemed to me that many of our staff beat the bushes to send as many warm bodies as they could on to higher education regardless of whether the students had the skills or motivation to do rudimentary high school work. T.C. Williams is not alone in this drive to move everyone on to college. A new study from the Pew Research Center reports that “freshman enrollment at the nation’s 6,100 post-secondary institutions surged by 144,000 students from the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2008. This 6% increase was the largest in 40 years, and almost three-quarters of it came from minority freshman.”

Paying customers

The trend is certainly a boon to the education establishment: High schools like mine, always eager for good press, can boast that they have prepared an ever greater percentage of their charges to move on to the halls of academe. And though colleges blame us in the high schools for sending them kids who are woefully unprepared, they blearily pocket the tuition from such students lest they have to downsize and lay off professors and administrators.

But how much students with low skills, little motivation and lousy study habits are going to profit from going to college is not so clear. Over the past five years, I have seen students who didn’t have the skills one would expect of a ninth-grader going off to four-year colleges where fewer than 30% of entering freshman graduate.

That means that 70% of the freshman class is likely to end up not with a diploma but a pile of debt. In these days of tight budgets at every level of government, it’s also hard to ignore that these schools are heavily subsidized by the federal government.

While T.C. Williams boasts about the 80% going on to college, it makes no effort to track what happens to these kids. Nor does it ask another important question — which is not how many make it through to a traditional college diploma, but how many need to? In a paper about to be released by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Arnold Packer, co-director of the landmark study “Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century,” points out that in 2018 — as is the case today — two of three jobs in America will not require either a bachelor’s degree from a four-year college or an associate degree from a community college.

Vocational training

Jobs in health care and social assistance, leisure and hospitality, retail trade and so-called middle-skill jobs such as plumbers, electricians, legal assistants and police officers will require job specific licenses or certificates from community colleges or technical institutes, and/or on the job training. In fact, many graduates of four-year colleges are now enrolled in community colleges to get the specific training and licensure for jobs for which college did not prepare them.

And yet we educators — and most parents — keep giving all kids the impression that without a college degree, they will be on a slippery slope to oblivion and poverty. In fact, for the majority of jobs, what will be needed even more than the subject matter we teachers think is so essential will be what Packer calls soft skills: The report “Are They Really Ready to Work,” put out by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society for Human Resource Management, found that the four skills most prized by employers were a work ethic, an ability to collaborate with others, facility in oral communication and social responsibility. “Other than writing and reading English, no academic courses (including mathematics) make the top 10,” says Packer.

As an English major with seven years of Latin and four of Greek, I am the last to say that the liberal arts or learning for the sake of learning are a waste of time and money. But given the nature of the market that is developing, for many kids, the liberal arts, in fact the very idea of a four-year college degree, will be taking a back seat to training geared to the jobs that are coming out of this economy.

And that’s good news for those thousands of students who graduated from high schools across America this month and are honestly wondering to themselves whether — the encouragement of their teachers notwithstanding — the pursuit of a traditional college degree is the right next move toward a satisfying future.

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NCAA may ban early offers

Rule would curb middle school recruitment

By Marlen Garcia
USA TODAY

About four years ago Illinois men's basketball coach Bruce Weber widened his recruiting efforts to include middle school players.

His prized incoming recruit, Jereme Richmond of Waukegan, Ill., received a scholarship offer from Weber before playing a game as a high school freshman.

"I had to change," Weber said. "I had been old-fashioned. I thought, 'Wait until they're juniors.' But we weren't getting some kids. As a staff we thought, 'Let's get after these kids at a younger age.'"

Weber didn't want to lose another Jon Scheyer, an Illinois native who spurned the Illini for Duke and helped the Blue Devils win a national title in April.

The coach's new recruiting strategy landed him a highly regarded class for this fall, led by Richmond. Another incoming player, Crandall Head of Chicago, received an offer from Weber as a sophomore.

But proposed NCAA legislation could end such early offers. If adopted in January or April, it would ban offers of financial aid to athletes in all sports until July 1 following the prospect's junior year in high school.

The proposal also calls for schools to get a five-semester or seven-quarter high school transcript before offering a scholarship. That way schools can tell if recruits are on track to be eligible. Petrina Long, chairwoman of the Division I recruiting and athletics personnel issues cabinet and UCLA's senior associate athletics director, told the NCAA News, "I understand why they're doing it," Weber said of the proposal. "The downside of making early offers is the pressure on these kids at a young age."

Weber said coaches are taking a gamble by making offers to young teens. "What if the kid doesn't develop?" he asked.

Still, he said he would be disappointed by a rules change.

By developing relationships with recruits in their early teens, he has been able to keep "third-party people" away from interfering in the recruiting process. Third-party people, he said, tend to be street agents or family friends looking to benefit from recruits' decisions.

"The NCAA wants coaches to try to limit third-party intervention," Weber said. "To me that's one way."

Additionally, Weber said, he and his staff closely monitor their recruits' academics throughout high school to ensure their eligibility. "We really can help the kids focus on their grades."

Weber said he has had eighth-graders willing to commit but won't offer a scholarship until they're in high school.

In recent years, though, coaches have been criticized for making offers to middle school players. Notable cases:

- Southern California football coach Lane Kiffin offered a scholarship over the winter to David Sills V, a 13-year-old seventh-grader from Delaware.
- In 2007 Ryan Boatright accepted a scholarship offer from then-USC basketball coach Tim Floyd before he had picked a high school. Floyd left the school last year under the pall of NCAA rules violations and is at Texas El Paso. Boatright, going into his senior year at Aurora (Ill.) East, re-opened his recruiting.
- Two years ago, then-Kentucky coach Billy Gillispie offered eighth-grader Michael Avery a scholarship. Last year Gillispie lost his job, and Avery started the recruitment process over again.
- Zak Irvin, a 6-4 rising sophomore guard at Hamilton Southeastern High in Fishers, Ind., says he has offers from Indiana and Illinois. "It doesn't matter that much to me," he said. "I like that they notice me, but I don't want to get a big head about it. I know I still have a long way to go."

If the proposal passes, it could create confusion, Xavier assistant coach Travis Steele said. "If you tell kids or their parents that you are going to offer but can't yet," he said, "I could see how that could be confusing."

Long acknowledged in her interview with the NCAA News that enforcement would be tough. Coaches could still extend offers with a wink and a nod to indicate a scholarship is forthcoming.

Yet after hearing from coaches who expressed concern about a need to make those early offers or lose out on prospects, as well as hearing from prospects and their families, the NCAA's recruiting cabinet decided to push for legislation, she said.

"People who don't plan to follow the rules don't follow the rules whether we can monitor them or not," she said. "There has to be an agreement among coaches and administrators that the spirit of what we're doing is as important as the rule itself, and the spirit is clearly that we do not want this behavior to go on."

Contributing: Kyle Neddenriep of The Indianapolis Star

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