THE DAILY CLIPS

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Time
Budget waits for signature from Easley

BY GARY D. ROBERTSON
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — The General Assembly gave final legislative approval Tuesday to a nearly $21.4 billion budget bill for state government, a measure that now will get the close review of Gov. Mike Easley.

Following its initial approval Monday night in both chambers, the spending plan for this fiscal year was approved 97-20 in the House and 32-14 in the Senate with little debate compared to Monday’s floor sessions.

Now lawmakers hope Easley will sign the bill into law. He was unhappy at times with his fellow Democrats during two weeks of intense House-Senate negotiations.

But legislative leaders ultimately agreed before the July 4 weekend to delay by a year a pair of tax breaks and make some spending reductions. Easley had demanded changes after tax collections missed estimates by a total of $63 million in May and June.

See BUDGET, B3

ECU ITEMS

The $21.4 billion budget adopted by the General Assembly on Tuesday contained nearly $106 million for East Carolina University's dental school and medical facilities. There also is another $1.75 million for other ECU projects.

■ $89 million — Construction of School of Dentistry and up to 10 satellite campuses around the state. Construction of the 112,500-square-foot school should begin mid-2009. The building will open in 2011.

■ $36.8 million — Family Medicine Center at the Brody School of Medicine. The new structure will be 117,561 square feet and include a geriatric care practice.

■ $1.5 million — To hire the professional staff needed for planning and operation of the ECU dental school.

■ $1.5 million — To expand the medical schools at ECU and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The additional students will spend their third and fourth years of medical school in clinical rotations in Asheville, Charlotte and selected cities in eastern North Carolina.
BUDGET
Continued from B1

Easley's office hinted late Tuesday the governor was pleased with the changes. Easley, who is in his eighth and final year in office, has never vetoed a budget bill.

"The governor hasn't fully reviewed the bill at this point, but he believes there has been some positive movement," Easley spokesman Seth Effron said.

A majority of House Republicans also were pleased enough with the plan to join Democrats in voting for the final spending package, which adjusts the second year of a two-year budget approved last summer.

They were pleased with the pay raises for public school teachers and state employees despite a slowing economy. Overall spending increased by less than 3.4 percent, less than half the growth rate of 2006 and 2007.

"The overall spending trend is down considerably from what we have seen the Democrats do in recent years," said Rep. Nelson Dollar, R-Rockingham, who voted for the bill. "There were no tax increases for a change."

But other Republicans said the budget authorized too much debt — $857 million over the next four years — to construct 1,500 additional prison beds, university and state buildings. None of the borrowing requires voter approval in a referendum.

The bill also provides seed money for another $1 billion in capital projects that if carried out ultimately could threaten the state's prized triple-A credit bond rating and may require additional taxes to pay for other needs such as transportation.

"We are on our way to maxing out our credit limit," Senate Minority Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, said during Tuesday's brief debate. "We are tying down the future in North Carolina."

Democrats contend the borrowing remains reasonable and is needed to prepare the state for a population projected to grow from 9 million today to 12 million in 2030.

Easley didn't get all that he wanted in the budget process. His plan for average 7 percent raises for teachers to help get their salaries to the national average never took off because it required raising taxes on cigarettes.

Instead, teachers would receive an average 3 percent raise while other state employees would receive the greater of 2.75 percent or $1,100 — less than what either group wanted. Easley's More at Four preschool initiative also would get $30 million, not the $45 million he sought.

But as other states are laying off workers or offering little or no pay raises, "I think we did a pretty good job," said Rep. Mickey Michaux, D-Durham, senior co-chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

The budget bill also:

■ gives $25 million to help begin construction on a proposed toll road circling Raleigh.

■ sets aside an extra $14.2 million in lottery funds to boost construction funding in schools that have received less in the current formula.

■ orders officials to require all state agencies to develop a unified e-mail system by Jan. 1, 2010. A consolidated system will make it easier to store public, electronic records.
Local police departments join for practice sessions

BY MICHAEL ABRAMOWITZ
The Daily Reflector

Local police departments combined forces and resources Monday on the campus of East Carolina University to train officers to deal with sudden attacks in closed quarters and situations that require immediate response.

"All of our officers have had rapid deployment training, but this is the first time the Greenville Police Department, the Pitt County Memorial Hospital Police and the East Carolina University Police have had the opportunity to train jointly," said Tim Nelson, chief of the PCMH forces.

The exercises at ECU’s Umstead Residence Hall taught patrol officers how to handle violent situations in schools. Other exercises planned for this month at the hospital and Brody School of Medicine will train a total of 300 officers to control and contain emergencies in those settings and other workplaces.

The scheduled exercises, led by a team of 18 instructors, will provide the most realistic training conditions, where officers can learn roles, responsibilities and skills in the context that they might be used, Nelson said.

"There is no training, outside a real emergency or disaster, that can unify cross-agency relationships like good hands-on exercises," Nelson said.

The training unifies more than the policemen themselves. The communication methods, deployment tactics, policies and procedures will be coordinated to employ the strengths each department brings to an emergency, Nelson said.

"The important thing is for all of us to be able to respond the most effective way to an emergency in our city," Nelson said.

The Greenville Police Department’s Emergency Response Team is specially trained and ready for the type of situations that can require their services, Chief William Anderson said. Now they can contribute their resources to the other departments.

"Being the largest agency of the three, we have more manpower, equipment and resources than the other agencies," Anderson said.

"Naturally, the first responders at the scene will be responsible for securing a situation, and then a group like our Emergency Response Team can offer support," Anderson said.

Scott Shelton, chief of the ECU Police, thanked Anderson for bringing the departments together.

"We know that, if a critical situation arises on our campus, we will have to go in as the first responders," Shelton said, "but we don’t have the manpower to cover every situation that may occur. Working hand-in-hand with (GPD) officers gives our staff confidence that we’re sharing the same mission.”

Shelton said the specific details of critical scenarios and training are kept secret to ensure their effectiveness in actual emergencies, but he described their nature.

"A hostage situation, a barricaded-intruder situation and a shooter on campus are the types of situations that we train to deal with. This gives officers the confidence to move in and do what needs done — to stop the shooter, if that’s the case,” Shelton said.

The actual rarity of such incidences only underscores the need for frequent, repetitive training to make officers more comfortable about their readiness, Shelton said.

Greenville Police Sgt. Carlton Willams coordinated the joint rapid deployment training.

"Everything we do is calculated to get a jump on the bad guy," Williams said. "At Columbine (High School, Boulder, Co., where two teens killed 13 and injured 24 inside the school on April 20, 1999), officers waited for the shooting to stop, then went through the door.

"We will not wait here," he said. "Our training prepares us to go in and take out the shooter."

The training will continue for the next three weeks on ECU’s campus, then move to the PCMH and Brody campuses, a hospital official said.

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**SECU invests in student loans**

RALEIGH — College students in North Carolina should be able to get the financial help they need this year.

The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority says it will have the money to meet demand after the State Employees Credit Union agreed to invest $1.1 billion in the student loan market.

The money will replace some of the money that had been generated through auction-rate securities.

The auction-rate securities market failed earlier this year as part of the bigger credit crunch.

Auction-rate securities were used to finance about $2 billion a year in student loans in North Carolina.

The $1.1 billion investment allows the authority to provide loans with better rates than other available options.
Breast cancer study shows change with age

BY ZOE ELIZABETH BUCK
STAFF WRITER

A Duke University study has enhanced scientists' understanding of what makes breast cancer in younger women so different from breast cancer in older women. The results provide further evidence for genetic factors as the primary contributors to young women's tumor development, which could help medical researchers develop better and more targeted therapies to treat young breast cancer patients, defined as age 45 or under.

Researchers also found that tumors in older women, defined as age 65 or above, are linked to a much wider pool of possible causes.

"Older women's cells have survived longer than younger women's cells, and in the process they have been subjected to a larger number of things that could contribute to cancer development," said Dr. Kimberly Blackwell, senior investigator for the study and breast oncologist at Duke University Medical Center. "It makes sense that there would be a more limited set of things that are contributing to younger women's tumors. The result implies some influence in the younger women who develop breast cancer that hits the cells that develop the cancer harder."

This influence tends to be related to underlying genetic problems, Blackwell added. "It could be genetic mutation from diet, nutrition, environmental exposure," she said. The study, which was funded by the National Cancer Institute and published Thursday in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, found that the underlying difference between older and younger women's tumors was that younger women's tumors all looked pretty much the same genetically, whereas older women's were different.

"The tumors were extremely similar in both their appearance and their biology," Blackwell said, referring to the younger women's tumors. But the older women's tumors had no common genetic elements.

"It's a much more heterogeneous makeup," Blackwell said. "What this implies is a smaller set of contributors to tumor development for younger women."

After examining more than 13,000 genes each on 411 tumors, what they found were the same few hundred genes popping up over and over again in the young women's tumors.

"We were looking for which genes had a higher level of expression," Blackwell said. A gene is said to "express" itself when it is being transcribed into something called RNA, a kind of genetic Xerox. The more RNA associated with a gene, the more active the gene being transcribed.

Previous studies have shown that tumors in younger women, who represent about 15 percent of breast cancer patients, tend to be significantly more aggressive than those in women a few decades older. The younger women's cancers are faster growing and more resistant to treatment, which is one of the reasons Blackwell says it is such an important field of study.

Lalania Hall, 37, was diagnosed with breast cancer last year. For Hall, who has five sons ranging in age from 3 to 12, being a part of the study was an experience of hope. "I'm so grateful that there are people out there who are starting to focus on younger women," Hall said.

Blackwell hopes the results from her study will lead to increased scientific interest in young women with breast cancer.

"It's one of the most comprehensive studies to date," said Blackwell. "We could clearly differentiate between tumors in younger women and tumors in older women, and that is truly remarkable."

Dr. Steven Akman, an oncologist who heads the Breast Cancer Center of Excellence at Wake Forest University said that the analysis being done in the study appeared to be standard but that that did not diminish the potential utility of the results.

"The question of why younger women's breast cancers are so aggressive is a really important question that we've known about for a long time," Akman said. "What they're doing is providing a plausible biological way of looking at that question."

He added that the findings are a step in the right direction in terms of the possibility of a cure.

"It's really worthwhile work," Akman said.
"If you don't know what you're fighting against, it's almost impossible to develop a therapy for it," Blackwell said. "By isolating specific genes, we can look for specific causes and perhaps specific targetable features."

SEE CANCER, PAGE 4B
July 9, 2008

Ohio Gives Veterans In-State Rates at Public Colleges

By TAMAR LEWIN

In an effort to attract more veterans to Ohio’s public universities, Gov. Ted Strickland announced Tuesday that the state would charge in-state tuition to all veterans attending college on the G.I. bill.

The Ohio plan, the first of its kind in the nation, makes all veterans “honorary Ohioans” for the purpose of a college education.

On June 30, President Bush signed into law a new G.I. bill, doubling college benefits for eligible troops and veterans, essentially guaranteeing full scholarships at their in-state public colleges or universities, as well as providing monthly housing stipends. But generally, veterans can attend college under the law only in their home states.

The Ohio plan, called the Ohio G.I. Promise, changes residence requirements at the state’s 36 colleges and universities to allow all veterans, their spouses and dependents to attend Ohio colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates.

Ohio, which has about 470,000 students enrolled in its public institutions, recently adopted a 10-year strategic plan with a goal of enrolling about 230,000 more over the next decade.

“We have for years had a net out-migration, not only for the state generally, but for people with college degrees,” said Eric D. Fingerhut, chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents. “So one of our goals, specifically delineated in the strategic plan, is to reverse the out-migration of people with degrees. In order to achieve that, we have to graduate more students and keep them here, and also attract more from out of state.”

Mr. Fingerhut said the veterans plan will work in tandem with other new programs to encourage students to stay in Ohio.

“If we are able to attract veterans to Ohio, we can link them and their families to internships, co-op and other opportunities, and if they get good jobs here, we’ll have Ohioans,” he said.

“We want veterans to know Ohio wants them to come here, and that we think they’re incredibly valuable high potential students,” Mr. Fingerhut said. “We already have a number of very good programs, which we’ll be
expanding, to provide the type of counselors, advisers, and mentors who can work one on one with veterans to help them make the transition to civilian life and navigate the academic environment.

Currently, out-of-state students make up about 7.2 percent of those enrolled in Ohio's state colleges and universities.