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ECU Notes: Work progresses on residence hall overhaul

ECU News Services

Sunday, July 12, 2009

Construction crews and East Carolina University staff have been busy this summer improving campus residence halls.

All 15 halls on campus will receive some updates before students return for the fall semester. New features include everything from electronic locking systems to exterior wheelchair ramps. In addition, one residence hall, Scott Hall on College Hill, is under going a full renovation, a project that will be completed in Fall 2010.

"It’s a good summer for construction," said Aaron Lucier, director of operations, associate director of Campus Living. "Every summer, we take advantage of the three months we have to do as much work as possible."

Part of that work this summer involves fitting all residence halls with electronic access control systems on exterior doors. Instead of using a traditional key to access buildings, students and staff will now wave an electronic key fob near the locking system. The key fob will unlock the door if the person has access to the building.

Lucier said the upgrade will enhance the residence hall security system, which includes security cameras monitored by ECU Police. ECU officials will be able to quickly deactivate lost or stolen key fobs and track in real-time anyone who enters or attempts to enter a building. The system can also “lockdown” residence halls to protect residents in emergency situations.

Two halls, Jones and Aycock, are being fitted with fire protection sprinkler systems. The project brings ECU closer to its goal of having sprinkler systems in all residential buildings by 2012.

Also this summer, Cotten Residence Hall is receiving an upgrade to its air conditioning system.

A project in White Residence Hall will improve handicapped accessibility. And, Garrett Hall gained two ADA accessible entrances/exits with ramps for wheelchair use, new individual shower doors (in place of curtains) in all of the bathrooms and new exterior and interior doors intended to improve fire protection.

Scott Residence Hall, which will be renovated in its entirety, has been completely gutted. The building will be fitted with new interior walls, doors, tile floors, bathroom fixtures, paint, carpet, windows, furniture and plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems. The building’s exterior will also be extensively renovated.

The project includes two additions that will change room configurations and increase building capacity. New four-story towers will be built adjacent to each suite, and a four-story addition with 17 four-room suites, two public group bathrooms and a large mechanical space on the ground level will be built in the courtyard area.

When completed, Scott will be the largest dorm on campus with the capacity to house 613 students. The building’s eight-person suites will be converted to two, four-person suites with a bathroom per every four students.

The redesign is a great example of recycling, Lucier said. While the building’s concrete foundations remain, the renovations will yield the equivalent of a new building.
"You can't help but be excited about this project," he said. "I really think students arriving next fall on campus will be unable to tell that Scott Hall is not a brand new building."

**Book explores spread of Islam in prisons**

The growth of Islam among African-American inmates in state and federal prisons poses a powerful challenge to American penal philosophy, structured on the ideal of rehabilitating offenders through historically Judeo-Christian based penance and penal measures.

In his new book, "Islam in American Prisons: Black Muslim's Challenge to American Penology" (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), criminologist Hamid Reza Kusha, assistant professor of criminal justice at ECU, asserts that a growing number of prisoners in the U.S. are seeking an alternative form of redemption by converting to Islam.

The book is meant to aid penologists, prison administrators and others trying to examine objectively the rehabilitative potential of faith-based organizations, most notably the Nation of Islam, Kusha said.

"Some prison administrators and others see the growth of Islam among inmates as a challenge to Judeo-Christian penal philosophy, but administrators need to know that the true tenets of Islam parallel Judeo-Christian teaching in that Islam encourages people to take responsibility for their actions, to respect life — especially human life — and value society’s rules," he said.

Kusha asserts that the Nation of Islam, founded by A. Wallace D. Fard Muhammad in the 1930’s in Detroit, Mich., maintains an active network seeking to convert the prison bound. The organization, though controversial and outside mainstream Islamic teachings, requires converts to take responsibility, forsake the role of victim and use resources within the prison to overcome addiction and gain education.


**Cancer specialist is 'Woman of the Year'**

Dr. Darla Liles, a cancer specialist at the Brody School of Medicine at ECU, is the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Eastern North Carolina 2009 Woman of the Year.

Liles raised more than $23,000 during a 10-week fundraising campaign for the society, more than any other woman in the campaign. Altogether, Liles and nine other women and men raised more than $153,000 for the society from March 26 to June 4.

Liles raised the money through letters to patients, friends and other physicians and events such as dinners, a silent auction, a Pampered Chef party and others.

Liles sees patients and teaches medical students, residents and fellows at the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center at ECU. Since 2004, she has served as the program director for the hematology/oncology fellowship program, which trains young physicians in the specialty of hematology/oncology. She also treats patients with all varieties of blood and cancer diagnoses at an Edgecombe County outreach clinic operated by Heritage Hospital in Tarboro.

All funds go toward blood cancer research and services for patients and families. Since 1949, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society has funded more than $600 million in research.

Survival rates have more than tripled for leukemia and more than doubled for lymphoma and myeloma in the last 40 years.

**Chairman named for Alumni Association**

Ernest V. Logemann of Winston-Salem has been named board chairman of the East Carolina Alumni Association, which serves 130,000 alumni worldwide. His term began July 1.

Logemann graduated from ECU in 1968 with a degree in history. A certified public accountant for 26 years, he is a partner in Gray Callison & Company.
Logemann has been an elected member of the alumni association’s board of directors since 2004, having served as treasurer for three terms, and most recently as vice chair.

Upcoming Event:

Saturday – The first “Latino Youth Visit to ECU,” 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. The event is for eastern North Carolina high school Latino students and their families to learn about college life and admission procedures. Free. For information, contact Rosa Alvarez-Bell at ECU at 328-9724.

Go to www.ecu.edu/calendar for more events.

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COX
Safety measures in place, the party goes on downtown

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, July 11, 2009

Extra officers and traffic diversion efforts this weekend created an increased sense of security in the downtown nightclub district after a shooting killed two people there last week.

Traffic in the district flowed smoothly around barricades first erected on Wednesday to divert auto traffic away from the clubs as bar hoppers strolled the temporary promenade area created in the space, police and retail managers said Saturday.

The barricades go up at 10 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. No incidents were reported to the police, and additional police were deployed to patrol the area from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Friday, according to GPD shift supervisor Sgt. David Bowen.

"Things went very well," Bowen said. "Patrol supervisors told me we had absolutely no problems Friday night."

Bowen said a downtown employee told him he was very happy with the increased police presence in response to recent violence in the district, including the June 30 drive-by homicide of two men who were standing in front of The Other Place nightclub on Fifth Street between Cotanche and Reade Circle.

"We had no complaints," Bowen said.

The newly deployed traffic pattern for the area, which will be in place from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. Wednesday-Saturday was revealed by Chief William Anderson at a closed meeting with business owners and city officials last Wednesday.

"I think the biggest thing (people) want is to feel safe," Anderson told them.

Barricades to Fifth Street were placed on Evans Street north of Sheppard Library from Reade Circle. During peak hours, cars coming from that direction will have to turn left on Fifth and head west.

Cotanche Street will be barricaded from Fourth to Fifth street. Traffic headed around Reade Circle will be diverted right onto East Fifth, away from downtown toward the ECU campus.

At the meeting, which Anderson characterized as "very productive," business owners expressed the need for more officers on foot, he said.

Anderson announced Thursday that the city has contracted police services from East Carolina University to assist GPD officers during peak hours. The effort aims to remove the threat of weapons from the core area and increase enforcement efforts.

ECU will provide four officers from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. Sunday through Tuesday and eight officers at the same times from Wednesday through Sunday, a Greenville Police spokesman said.

"This partnership will further the already great relationship between both departments," Anderson said in a press release.
A restaurant manager who asked to remain anonymous said the traffic diversion plan should eliminate the opportunities for the type of drive-by shooting that happened last week. He also was pleased about the increased police presence, he said.

"There's a bad element that loiters down here," the manager said. "They like to walk the streets and harass the students, creating an unsafe environment."

Drew Greco, who works at Sup Dog's, said it would be best if officers could check everyone for weapons as they pass the barriers into the club district, but admitted that doesn't seem feasible.

"I used to just close the place up and leave, without thinking much about security and safety issues," Greco said. "Now we're extra cautious, especially about the girls who work here."

Scott Davis was at The Other Place on Friday night. Last week's violence outside the club did not seem to deter people from returning, he said.

"The place was packed by closing time," Davis said. "I did notice that the managers were enforcing the membership rules, and people were filling out membership applications while they waited to get in.

"The two-block area along Fifth was heavily populated by the police," he said. "The corners where loiterers used to congregate, especially at Fifth and Cotanche, were quiet. There were some lines outside some clubs, but there was no loitering in the area."

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9571.

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Three physicians have joined the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University.

Dr. Dawn Kendrick joined the department as an assistant professor, and Dr. Leanna Thorn and Dr. Carol Moore joined as clinical assistant professors.

Kendrick comes to ECU from Children's Hospital of Alabama, where she completed a fellowship in pediatric emergency medicine. She has a nursing degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a medical degree from ECU. She completed residency training at Maine Medical Center in Portland and is board-certified in emergency medicine and pediatric emergency medicine.

Thorn comes to ECU from McLeod Regional Medical Center in Florence, S.C., where she was associate medical director of emergency services. She has a bachelor's degree from N.C. State University and a medical degree from ECU. She completed residency training at ECU and is board-certified in emergency medicine.

Moore has a bachelor's degree from the UNC Wilmington, completed the physician assistant program at the University of South Carolina and has a medical degree from ECU. She completed residency training in surgery and a fellowship in plastic surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., in the 1980s. Moore returned to ECU in 2005 for a residency in family medicine. She also has worked in private practice in eastern North Carolina and is a reservist in the U.S. Naval Medical Corps.

Kendrick and Thorn see patients at the emergency department and MedDirect at Pitt County Memorial Hospital under the auspices of ECU Physicians, the group practice of the Brody School of Medicine. Moore sees patients at MedDirect.
Darts & Laurels

Play ball

Laurels — To the hundreds of children and their families visiting this week for baseball and softball tournaments. Three state baseball tournaments, three district baseball tournaments and one state softball tournament were expected to draw about 400 players to the region. For Greenville and Pitt County, that means full hotels, full restaurants and strong competition on the diamond. Welcome to town, and best of luck in the games.

Against violence

Laurels — To the participants in Tuesday’s night’s march against violence, organized in the wake of the shooting deaths of two men on June 30. About 200 marchers, including East Carolina University students, faculty and other members of the community, gathered to protest that tragedy and to memorialize those lost. Continued vigilance is needed in order to bring lasting solutions to this problem.

Darts — To alleged criminal activity which led the Greenville Police Department to shut down four city convenience stores Thursday. Investigators say owners of the stores were aware of crimes being committed on their properties. For public places of business to be the sites of routine illegal acts is most worrisome, and the police department is to be commended for its work to put a stop to such activity.

Laurels — To those residents who filed to run for municipal office this week. The filing period for November’s election opened Monday and had drawn nearly 40 candidates to the Pitt County Board of Elections by week’s end. Running for public office provides needed choices and prompts discussion on issues facing the community. Those running deserve the public’s appreciation.

Laurels — To Pitt Community College for being named one of 11 exceptional schools in North Carolina. The annual Critical Success Factors accountability report points out something we already know in Pitt County: PCC is a top-notch institution for helping students prepare for college readiness and work force preparation. Congratulations PCC!

Laurels — To the nearly completed first phase of the South Greenville Greenway. Officials overseeing the project say bids are being sought for the second phase of construction. That’s good news for citizens who want to be closer to nature and traverse the city without the use of motorized vehicles.

Compiled by Brian Colligan, editorial page editor of The Daily Reflector. Contact him at 329-9507 or via e-mail at bcolligan@coxnc.com
JOURNAL EDITORIAL STAFF

North Carolina aggressively recruits outside corporations, and much is made in government hallways about keeping the business climate friendly.

Given the seriousness of the health-care crisis, we would be wise to put similar effort into recruiting primary care doctors and helping them earn what their time and talents deserve.

Statistics collected by the University of North Carolina and reported by McClatchy Newspapers indicate that the ratio of primary care physicians to patients in the state continues to fall, most acutely in rural areas.

These doctors have been the backbone of the American health-care system. When we get sick, we see our doctor first, and he or she either treats us or sends us to the appropriate specialist.

A growing dependence on more expensive specialists is driving up health-care costs. As Congress debates health-care reform, much attention is focused on re-establishing the primary care physician's prominence in the care-delivery system.

That, unfortunately, will only make their shortage worse. Steps must be taken quickly to turn things around.

The root of the problem lies in economics and the medical schools.

Specialists earn, on average, almost a half million dollars a year, primary care doctors less than 40 percent of that. Because the average doctor graduates with enormous debt, it's no wonder that many choose the more lucrative specialties.

North Carolina could help on this front. The state should actively recruit potential primary care physicians for rural areas with promises to help pay student loans.

Furthermore, if tax breaks are a good way to lure big computer companies and shipping companies, they might also lead more primary care doctors to practice here. An income-tax break for those who practice in rural counties might offset some of what they lose through low reimbursement rates for patients on government aid.

Many medical schools discourage students from primary care and steer them to specialties. In the public medical schools, if that is happening, it must stop. More medical schools must follow the lead of East Carolina University. It recruits students who express a desire to practice in rural North Carolina and its curriculum stresses primary care. ECU produces several dozen primary care graduates for rural areas every year.

North Carolina lags slightly behind the national average for the number of doctors for each of its 10,000 residents. But in our rural areas the deficiency is severe. State government must address this situation with the same enthusiasm it has for finding or creating jobs, and maybe with some of the same tactics.
Duke identifies risky gene

Find could add tool to predict whether -- and when -- a person might get Alzheimer's.

BY SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer

In what could be a repeat of their blockbuster gene discovery of 1993, scientists at Duke University Medical Center have identified a second gene linked to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.

The gene not only appears to predict risk but also pegs the approximate age of onset for the degenerative brain disorder that afflicts 5.3 million Americans.

If the Duke team's findings are replicated by scientists elsewhere, the discovery could open an additional avenue of research for drug development.

"We now have the ability to look at both [genes]," said Dr. Allen Roses, director of Duke's Deane Drug Discovery Institute and lead author the study. Findings were presented Sunday at the annual meeting of the International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease in Vienna, Austria.

The announcement was met with great interest -- and caution -- by other scientists.

Since Roses and a team of gene hunters at Duke identified the first genetic link to Alzheimer's disease 16 years ago, many promising leads have fizzled under further analysis.

"I think this is really interesting, but it needs to be replicated," said Margaret Pericak-Vance, a genetics researcher at Miami University who was a key member of the group at Duke that identified the original gene, known as APOE.

The gene had been the only one associated with late-onset Alzheimer's disease, the most common form, which hits people after the age of 65 and gradually robs them of memory, personality and function.

Roses agreed that additional confirmation is necessary. He said he welcomes other groups' attempts to verify the findings. In addition, he is working to set up a large, international study that will gauge how well the new gene predicts Alzheimer's disease in the general population, and test a potential drug for people whose genetic tests indicate they are at high risk of developing illness.

"We would love to be able to start a study by late 2010," Roses said.

Luck of the draw

The new genetic target is called TOMM40, and it has been a subject of interest for several years to geneticists exploring the hereditary nature of Alzheimer's disease.

Roses' group homed in on TOMM40 and identified how it and APOE appear to interact and
predispose people to getting sick.

Like cards dealt from a deck, certain combinations of the two genes and their variations have significance. An unfortunate draw increases the risk of disease, and of whether it will strike before the age of 80.

For APOE, there are four varieties of the gene. If a person is dealt an APOE4 gene from his mother and an APOE4 gene from his father, he has a double shot of APOE4 -- the highest genetic risk for Alzheimer's.

About half the cases of late-onset Alzheimer's disease are associated with APOE4.

But the other half remained a mystery.

Now it turns out that the APOE3 version of the gene may also be important, depending on what's simultaneously dealt from the TOMM40 deck.

In a way, TOMM40 is a wild card. It comes in two forms -- long and short. Get a long sequence of TOMM40 along with the APOE3 gene, and a person has an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease before the age of 80. Get a short version along with APOE3, and disease is likely to set in later.

Roses estimates that TOMM40 may account for another 35 percent of Alzheimer's cases.

"This is potentially a very exciting discovery," said Dr. Daniel Kaufer, a neurologist and director of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine's Memory and Cognitive Disorders Program. "There has been a big black hole in our knowledge of later-onset Alzheimer's. But the real clinical value remains to be seen down the road."

A tool, not a cure

Kaufer and others noted that a gene discovery doesn't necessarily result in new treatments.

Dr. Donald Schmechel, a neurologist who was on the APOE team at Duke and now runs a center to treat Alzheimer's patients in Granite Falls, said identifying a second gene demonstrates the complexity of the disease and the complexity of the challenge to treat it.

"Finding the gene is not finding the cure," Schmechel said. "The APOE discovery, in all honesty, was a fantastic insight, but no cure has emerged."

Instead, he said, it has added a useful tool for drug researchers to identify people who could test potential therapies.

And it assists doctors who treat patients. In his practice, Schmechel said, he orders genetic tests for patients who are beginning to exhibit symptoms of the disease. If they have the APOE4 gene, he said, he is fairly confident in a diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

But such information is far from definitive, because many who have the gene never develop Alzheimer's, and many who don't have the gene exhibit tell-tale symptoms.

A second genetic marker, he said, would be helpful, but also troubling. With no cures and few effective treatments, the information could set patients back.

"You cannot underestimate the degree of nihilism," Schmechel said, noting that some patients believe a genetic predisposition dooms them to disease. Therapies are available, including diet and exercise regimens.

"It's a process to support families and give people some hope and encouragement that there are things they can do to make life better," Schmechel said.

Mary Davis, whose husband, Bob, 71, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease more than
three years ago, said he was tested for the APOE4 gene a year ago as part of his participation in a clinical trial. When the test came back showing he had the genetic trait, she said, she worried for her children.

"But then, looking at the statistics, they could get Alzheimer's without having the gene, and not necessarily everybody who has the gene gets Alzheimer's," said Davis of Raleigh. "It's just more information."

What she hopes is that scientists will find a cure before her children are old enough to have to worry about the genetic cards they may be holding.

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About Alzheimer's

About Alzheimer's disease

• The risk of developing Alzheimer's doubles every five years after age 65.
• A family history of the disease increases the risk.
• Healthy habits, including a good diet and exercise, offer some protection.
• There is no cure for the disease.

SOURCE: Alzheimer's Association

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Oblinger e-mail erased in 2005

NCSU 'scrubbed' old computer

BY J. ANDREW CURLISS, Staff Writer

N.C. State University has provided a new batch of records to federal investigators, including a report from a technology consultant that indicates e-mail messages from the early days of former Chancellor James Oblinger's tenure likely cannot be recovered.

The consultant, Risk Management Associates of Raleigh, concluded in a report that the e-mail messages on an account Oblinger used in early 2005 had been deleted by September 2005, the earliest date for which there is a backup tape.

The consultant also said there is no way to determine who deleted the e-mail messages.

Investigators have been interested in Oblinger's account from that period because it is when former first lady Mary Easley was hired at NCSU. She was fired last month amid turmoil over her job.

E-mail messages from the hard drive of former NCSU trustee and Easley friend McQueen Campbell have provided details on the job creation, showing that the governor was involved in forming a job at the university for Mary Easley. Campbell's e-mail included messages to Oblinger, who resigned last month.

But the university has not been able to produce those -- or potentially others -- from Oblinger's account.

The consultant said the desktop computer used by Oblinger in that period had been "scrubbed" of all data and reissued to someone else. A laptop used by Oblinger at the time
was located but contained no information.

The consultant said the university has done all it can to try to find the information.

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Mayumi Kishore Obituary: Mayumi Kishore’s Obituary by the The ...

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Mayumi Kishore

Mayumi Kishore, Mrs. Mayumi Kishore, 59, passed away Saturday, July 11, 2009. The funeral service will be conducted at 4 p.m. Monday in the chapel at Wilkerson Funeral Home. Mrs. Kishore was born in Japan and was a Fulbright Scholar, earning a degree in 1972 from the University of Toledo. She became a naturalized citizen, and in 1982 moved her family to Greenville where she worked at East Carolina University Medical School. Mrs. Kishore was a member of Greenville Cotillion and Couples Dance club. She was an avid gardener and also enjoyed time with her grandson, Cooper. She is survived by her husband of 37 years, Dr. Masao Kishore; daughter, Alyssa K. Williams and husband Mark of Cary; son, Leo Kishore and wife Ann Sun of Raleigh; mother, Reiko McKennan of the home; grandson, Cooper B. Williams of Cary; and five sisters. The family will receive friends from 6-8 p.m. today at Wilkerson Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the American Heart Association 3219 Landmark St. Unit 9, Greenville NC 27834. Online condolences to www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.

Published in The Daily Reflector on 7/12/2009
NCSU scientists craft robot bats to help humans

In tiny flying machines, high-tech metals mimic nature

BY JAY PRICE, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - Someday one of the first acts of a rescuer searching for a missing aircraft or survivors in a collapsed building may be flinging dozens of bats into the air. The bats would have muscles of wire and flap away silently on wings of titanium alloy and silicon membrane.

N.C. State University researchers are building tiny, inexpensive robots that would mimic the still-mysterious flight skills of bats to maneuver inside small enclosed spaces, slip through dense forest or spread out in an evenly-spaced flock to relay cell-phone signals from a lost hiker or conduct a search over a large area.

Scientists at NCSU's Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering have built several...
prototypes of the equivalent of a bat's skeleton using metal alloys with startling properties and some of the growing body of data about how bats fly.

Since bats can do things like zip into the corner of a room and in three quick strokes be traveling in the opposite direction, they're a great model for tiny flying machines that must be more maneuverable than, say, tiny airplanes or rotary-wing craft, said Stefan Seelecke, an associate professor overseeing the project.

The idea was to take advantage of the work nature has already done in designing an elegant approach to flight, Seelecke said.

"There are about 900 kinds of bats ... so there are a plenty of different [flight] characteristics among them," he said. "They're a great template to work from."

The thin body shells of the cyberbat prototypes and some of the wing "bones" are made of a lightweight plastic, shaped by computer. The outermost bones are made of a titanium and nickel alloy that scientists call a shape-memory metal because it provides a full range of natural motion -- doing the job of joints, tendons and ligaments -- then returns to its original position.

Gheorghe Bunget, a doctoral student in mechanical engineering who is building the bats, showed off the material Friday by bending one of the metal bones in half and releasing it. It sprang back undamaged.

Each "muscle" that moves a part of the wings, meanwhile, is made of a single strand of so-called smart-metal wire half the diameter of a human hair. When heated, it rearranges its atoms and shrinks rather than expands as metals normally would. That means it can be made to contract like a muscle, then returns to its previous position when it cools.

The whole prototype weighs about as much as six paper clips.

Seelecke thinks that if the robot critters work, they could be mass-produced and used in inexpensive flocks.

The researchers are finishing work on the joints, muscles and an eerie-feeling silicon wing membrane, and by the end of summer should have a model that flaps its wings properly. They can then begin to gather data from its performance so that the motion can be optimized for flight. Next, they will work with other scientists to develop a tiny computerized control system and an internal power source.

Bunget will present the research at a national engineers' conference in two months.

A mystery of movement

Bats' wings are much more sophisticated than an airplane's or a bird's, said Daniel Riskin, a biologist doing post-doctoral research at a lab at Brown University in Rhode Island that studies the movements of bats' wings. If you created a radio-controlled model of a bird's wings, he said, it would need perhaps two or three controls. If you did the same for a bat, you would need about 20 to govern all the ways it could move.

The wings are so complicated that researchers don't fully understand how bats fly. They are starting to believe, though, that the creatures offer lessons that could lead to advances in mechanical flight, Riskin said.

Some of those advances may come through NCSU's robot bats.

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State to get $10M to battle H1N1 flu

Funding helps stock vaccines

BY GABE STAROSTA, Staff Writer

North Carolina stands to receive over $10 million in federal money to treat and prevent H1N1 influenza in the coming months, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced Friday.

The state will be eligible for $7.5 million to make public health emergency preparations, such as stocking labs with vaccines, while as much as $2.6 million will help hospitals prepare for a surge of patients in case of an outbreak of H1N1, or swine flu. The money is part of $350 million the federal government is making available to states to deal with the illness.

State departments and hospitals must submit applications for grants by July 24, and Sebelius said money will begin to be distributed by July 31.

Most of the money will be spent on buying vaccinations, purchasing equipment necessary for testing and treatment, and preparing for emergency situations such as forced school closings, said Dr. Lou Turner, acting epidemiology chief in the state Division of Public Health.

As of July 8, 311 cases of H1N1 influenza had been confirmed in North Carolina, and two people had died of the illness, both in Guilford County. Fifty-seven new cases were reported this week.

The announcement of federal funding for the disease comes on the heels of an H1N1 preparedness summit that took place Thursday at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. Gov. Beverly Perdue, state Health Director Dr. Jeffrey Engel and three other officials attended the conference.

Bracing for fall

In addition to the new federal money, Sebelius said the federal government plans a vaccination program for the fall flu season, if it appears necessary. Sebelius said an H1N1 vaccine is already being developed with the hope that it will be ready by October. She said that because of H1N1’s disproportionate effect on young people, the vaccine would likely be given at schools and day care centers as opposed to hospitals and private clinics.

H1N1 influenza was originally thought to be extremely severe, but more closely resembles the common seasonal flu. With flu season in full swing in the Southern Hemisphere, health officials are keeping close tabs on the disease there as well as in the U.S.

"Right now, we're seeing in the Southern Hemisphere that the flu has not gotten more lethal," Sebelius said. "That said, we're still watching it transmit easily, affect a younger population ... and the Southern Hemisphere flu season has really just begun. We're still learning a lot about what's happening."

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Florida State turns off professors' phones to save cash

By Doug Blackburn, The Tallahassee Democrat

If a Florida State University student needs to reach his English professor, he better have the teacher's cellphone number.

In a cost-saving move that illustrates just how dire the budget situation has become at FSU, the English department is in the process of removing almost all faculty members' office phones. The History and Modern Languages & Linguistics departments are taking similar steps.

"I've never seen anything like this before," English department chairman Ralph Berry said. "It's difficult to have an office and no phone.

"I think if parents of students who are coming here knew how austere the conditions are here compared to five years ago, they would be shocked," Berry added.

FSU and the other 10 schools in the state university system have suffered drastic reductions in funding from the state legislature during each of the past three years. FSU is set to begin the 2009-10 school year with $83 million less than it had in 2006-07.

At FSU, some programs are being eliminated and others are being merged while scores of faculty are receiving notices that this will be their final year at the university. Meanwhile, individual department chairmen are trying to figure out ways they can trim expenses.

The English department, for example, has slashed its budget for paper from $7,000 to $1,500 and cut back the amount allocated for bringing in authors and lecturers from $30,000 to $16,000.

Removing approximately 40 faculty members' phones — two years after the department removed 33 phones to cut costs — will save between $12,000 and $16,000 a year, according to Berry.

"We're making choices where, do we use phones or do we increase the size of every class?" Berry said. "Given our priorities, this is less painful than other things."

Neil Jumonville, chairman of the history department, takes a similar view. He was informed last week that his budget was immediately being trimmed by $7,500. As a result, he plans on having 20 or more phones removed.

"It's just the least-terrible idea we have," Jumonville said. "It's not a good solution, but I don't see any other.

"My feeling is that it's going to hurt students. Students aren't going to be able to reach us by our office phones, or even leave messages there."

Students and faculty will have to rely on e-mail and cellphones to communicate, methods that would not have been available a decade or more ago. They may also use Skype, an Internet-based teleconference program.

But not all faculty members have cellphones. Silvia Valisa, a professor in modern languages, is about to lose her office phone and finds herself in the position of having to purchase a cellphone.

"Why don't they lower the AC instead?" Valisa said in an e-mail from out of the country. "Entire continents live happily without it. I can assure you of that. Even the warm ones."
Berry and Jumonville, who made the painful decisions to have phones removed, find themselves asking how much damage the various cuts have done to FSU's image and reputation.

"The thing that everybody needs to know, every new assistant professor across the country is reading the press about what's going on at Florida State and other schools in Florida," Berry said. "This means they will take a job here only if they can't get a job someplace else."

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The recent news that Harvard was establishing a new chair in Gay Lesbian Transgendered and Queer Studies, in the wake of a 22% drop in the university’s endowment value, suggested that nothing could curtail expenditures on the progressive agenda in the modern academy. But this week brought some indication that even Harvard will have to confront the recession. Not only did it lay off almost 300 employees, but it actually suspended the operations of its Office of Sexual Assault, Prevention, and Response for the month of July. The university indicated that the office’s services were duplicated elsewhere. This summer, someone else will have to sponsor events it previously offered -- like "Hooking Up: Hot Hints for a Great Sex Life" and "Choose Your Own Sex Adventure."

For decades, the only imperative of American universities was to grow -- and grow they did. Flush times provided universities an easy means to please all interest groups. You want an African-American Studies Department? Great. You need another women’s support group? Here’s a few thousand bucks. How about more social programs for gay students? Sure.

But last year’s massive endowment drops rendered this strategy untenable. There is simply not enough to go around. So will universities trim functions only peripherally related to education, or is internal support for these pet causes too strong?

There are high-profile causes for despair. In the face of a 25% drop in its endowment, Yale has mandated a 7.5% cut in total salary costs and a halt in the construction of two new residential colleges. Yet it has not altered plans to establish an Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Resources (an addition to its already considerable stable of LGBTQ resources).

Happily, other colleges appear to believe that, along with trimming salaries, construction and departmental budgets, it’s also acceptable to cut politically correct, previously sacrosanct resources. The University of Georgia has delayed plans for a women’s center. The University of New Mexico’s ethnic centers (there is more than one, of course) face threats of reduced funding from the state legislature. The University of Washington is continuing with construction of an Ethnic Cultural Center, but it’s now incorporating unrelated classrooms into the structure. Even Cornell’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Questioning Resource Center has left positions unfilled.

Academic offerings are being affected by budget constraints as well. Florida Atlantic University has ended support for its women’s studies master’s degree, which is now being funded by private donations. Emory University has eliminated centers dedicated to Latin American and Caribbean studies (LACS), African studies and Asian studies and reassigned the oversight of these programs to such traditional departments as Spanish and Portuguese and Russian and East Asian languages and culture. Colonialism resurgent -- in the academy, of all places!

The outrage has been palpable. The Georgia Women’s Studies Student Organization staged a protest. A spokesman for the department complained to Ms. magazine that the cuts were "an attack on women." Despite a 25% drop in Cornell's endowment, the Cornell Daily Sun demanded that the university fill all of the open positions at the LGBQQ center. At the University of Washington, students actually cried at a public meeting to discuss the incorporation of unrelated
classrooms into the new ethnic center.

Maybe there is an upside to the downturn: Universities will learn that you can't please all the people all the time.

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An Uphill Fight for the Right to Carry Guns on Campus

By ALEX ROTH and ANSLEY HAMAN

Gun-rights advocates have won victories in several states in recent months allowing gun owners to carry concealed weapons in public parks, taverns and their work places.

So it came as a surprise to Tennessee state Rep. Stacey Campfield that he couldn’t persuade his colleagues to pass a law allowing students at public colleges to carry concealed firearms on campus. The bill died this spring in the Republican-controlled legislature -- one of 34 straight defeats nationwide for people who believe a gun wouldn’t be out of place in a college student’s knapsack.

Raucous debates over the parameters of the Second Amendment have become a staple of the culture wars. But even on an issue as divisive as gun control, states may be nearing something resembling a national consensus: Guns don’t belong in a college classroom.

In the two years since a Virginia Tech student shot and killed 32 students and professors, gun-rights advocates have failed to pass laws even in states strongly supportive of gun owners’ rights, including Louisiana, Alabama, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Mississippi and Kentucky. In June, a bill died in the Texas legislature in the face of criticism from college administrators and student groups, who invoked the specter of students toting loaded weapons to booze-soaked campus parties.

Gun-control advocates tout what they label an unprecedented winning streak, noting that it comes at a time when even many Democrats are wary of alienating U.S. gun owners.

Proponents of the bills are pressing on, arguing that passing such laws could help prevent the next Virginia Tech-style massacre. Mr. Campfield said he intends to reintroduce his bill in the next Tennessee legislative session. His state, which had 6.21 million residents in 2008, has approved the sale of more than 2.6 million firearms and issued more than 231,000 handgun carry permits, according to state records. The bill is "coming back stronger next year," Mr. Campfield said.

Some gun-rights advocates predict Texas will eventually provide their first victory, saying the legislature had the votes to pass the bill but simply ran out of time. "If Texas were to pass it, we predict that it would catch on in other states," said Katie Kasprzak, director of public relations for Students for Concealed Carry on Campus.

Only Utah expressly allows students at public universities to carry guns to class. The state passed such a law in 2004, before the Virginia Tech killings. Several states leave the decision up to schools. But only two schools in those states -- Blue Ridge Community College in Virginia and Colorado State University -- allow students to carry guns to class.

The push for legislation began in the immediate aftermath of the Virginia Tech killings. Ken Stanton, an engineering student there, helped found the first local chapter of Students for Concealed Carry on Campus, arguing it would allow students to defend themselves and prevent massacres from taking place. Within a year of the shooting, bills to expand the firearms-carrying rights of college students had been introduced in more than a dozen states.
But if the Virginia Tech shootings helped mobilize supporters of guns on campus, it also helped mobilize opponents. And some of the most vocal have been either victims of the shootings or people who lost loved ones.

Colin Goddard, a 21-year-old junior at the time, was shot four times in a classroom where his teacher and 11 fellow students were killed. Not long afterward, Mr. Goddard began speaking out against guns on campus, and he is now an intern at the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence in Washington.

Like other critics of these proposed bills, including many police departments, Mr. Goddard argues that a proliferation of firearms would simply add to the chaos during a shooting spree, making it impossible for police to distinguish between good guys and bad. He also says events unfolded at such a lighting pace during the shootings that even an armed student would have been powerless to prevent them.

"There were students dead in their chairs -- it happened that quick," he said. "I was shot before I really even knew what was going on."

Another former Virginia Tech student, John Woods, whose girlfriend was killed in the shootings, helped lead the fight this spring against the bill in Texas, where he is now a graduate student at the University of Texas.

In some states, legislators with strong gun-rights voting records have found themselves opposing these bills. This spring, Louisiana state Rep. Hollis Downs was one of 86 members of the Louisiana House to vote against allowing students with concealed-weapons permits to bring their guns onto the state's public campuses. The bill was defeated 86-18.

"I thought that the last thing that law enforcement needed was the fraternity militia to charge the building [in a shooting] with all guns blazing," said Mr. Downs, a Republican whose district includes Louisiana Tech University.

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