THE DAILY CLIPS

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Safety offices at ECU merge

BY JOSH HUMPHRIES
The Daily Reflector

The East Carolina University Police Department is combining with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety to form the Environmental Health and Campus Safety unit on campus.

The new unit will report to Bill Koch, associate vice chancellor for environmental health and campus safety.

ECU spokesman John Durham said the change has been in the works for months and is not a reaction to recent violence in Greenville.

"The basic reason is to try to get everything that is related to campus safety — whether it has to do with crime and violence on one hand or natural disasters or weather incidents on the other — to be under one roof," Durham said. "It is all related to the safety and well-being of our campus community."

Chancellor Steve Ballard said the new organization will streamline campus organizations that focus on safety and will provide a more seamless structure to deal with campus emergencies of all kinds.

Safety is the No. 1 priority across campus and will remain the focus of senior university administrators and the ECU Board of Trustees, Ballard said.

"The change is not related to the budget, but we are always looking for ways to be more efficient," Durham said.

The police department previously was part of the Division of Academic and Student Affairs.

Durham said there is no precedent across the university community in the United States as to where police departments report, and other universities handle the department differently.

"An ongoing evaluation of our policies, procedures and operations and identification of areas for improvement is a necessity for an exemplary organization," Koch said.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.
‘Winning with Diabetes’ conference set for Saturday

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, July 15, 2009

Local health officials will host a conference Saturday on diabetes at the East Carolina Heart Institute.

The eighth annual "Winning with Diabetes" conference will include information sessions and various screenings from 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The conference, designed for people with diabetes and their friends and family, costs $25 per person and $20 per additional family member.

East Carolina University medical, nursing and nutrition faculty, and staff from the Pitt County Health Department and ViQuest Center, will offer instruction.

"The purpose is to help inform people with diabetes to learn more about diabetes and to manage their own personal day-to-day care and living," Susan Houston, a certified diabetes educator at ECU's Brody School of Medicine, said. "So many people get a preconception of diabetes that it's the end of the world, but this is to promote that you can live really well with diabetes."

The program came from a national program called "Taking Control of Your Diabetes" and has been adapted to fit the local population, Houston said.

Cathy McLean of the ECU College of Nursing is the program's coordinator.

Displays will feature the newest and best products for diabetes care. Eye, foot, blood pressure, kidney, vascular and cholesterol screenings will be offered, along with information sessions and activities including an "ask the experts" session with diabetes educators and pharmacists.

"Serious complications can come from diabetes, and the more you can learn from this program the better you can avoid those complications," Houston said.

The program is made possible by a Pitt Memorial Hospital Foundation grant and is facilitated by the ECU College of Nursing in collaboration with the Brody School of Medicine at ECU and University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina.

There are $10 scholarships available to people who can display a hardship. To register, call Jane Boardman in the ECU College of Nursing at 744-6504.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.

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Inconvenience: Law enforcement operation strikes a blow

Thursday, July 16, 2009

Lowering the number of violent crimes in Greenville will require a broad array of initiatives, but arguably none are more valuable than determined and professional police work. That was on display last week as the Greenville Police Department, working with several other agencies, raided several convenience stores it believes served as hubs of crime.

Even as new initiatives are implemented to bolster safety in Greenville's commercial heart, residents should be cheering the apparent success of this operation. The type of cooperative effort witnessed here will be needed in the weeks and months to come if Greenville hopes to make further progress to fight crime across the city.

The raids that came in the early morning of July 9 were six months in the making. Careful investigation led law enforcement to four convenience stores suspected as centers of illegal operations. The two stores on Farmville Boulevard, one on Hooker Road and one on Dickinson Avenue were the subjects of careful surveillance, investigation and research before warrants were served.

The nine people arrested that morning face charges including the transportation of stolen property, wire fraud, theft, conspiracy and money laundering. Officials detailed $167,000 in merchandise and government funds that were illegally manipulated, sold and transferred during the investigation.

While plaudits are deserved for Greenville officers' work on this case, they did not operate alone. Several federal authorities were involved, including the FBI, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Also assisting were N.C. Alcohol Law Enforcement agents and several local businesses. Operation Inconvenience, as it was dubbed, was the definition of a collaborative effort.

Those arrested will have their day in court, but Greenville Chief William Anderson argues the operation marks an important step for public safety. He said that the stores were hubs of crime where shootings, assaults and thefts were commonplace. Nearby residents, who aided police efforts by providing witness accounts of activity, should see safer neighborhoods as a result.

Greenville's response to last month's drive-by shooting deaths of two innocent bystanders on a Fifth Street sidewalk should help bolster safety in that critical city district. But officials and residents should recognize that Greenville faces a larger problem that stretches far beyond downtown, one that demands a broad and determined response.

Operations like this demonstrate there is no safe harbor for the criminal element in Greenville. Let it serve notice to all who intend to break the law here that such behavior will meet the firm and steady hand of justice in due course.

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UNC system might have to raise tuition again

Legislators look for revenue

BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer

Students at the state’s public universities may end up paying more for tuition this fall than the bills showing up in mailboxes call for.

Legislators grappling with the state’s massive budget deficit could scrap the tuition rates set months ago by the UNC system’s Board of Governors and institute larger increases to provide revenue for the state’s general fund.

If that happens, students may get a supplemental bill well after classes begin in mid-August.

A further complication: Campuses could lose millions of dollars in financial aid revenue that UNC system officials wanted from the tuition increases.

In March, the UNC system board approved a plan to raise tuition and fees by 3.9 percent, on average, for in-state undergraduate students.

But in its budget proposal, the N.C. House junked that plan in favor of raising tuition at UNC system campuses by 8 percent or $200 per year, whichever is less. That would result in an estimated $34.7 million in revenue for the state.

The Senate budget did not make a similar proposal, and the issue won’t be ironed out for weeks, at least. Meanwhile, students, admissions officials and financial aid planners alike are in flux.

"We have a lot of unknowns," said Steve Brooks, executive director of the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority, which administers financial aid programs for college students from North Carolina. "More than ever, I’d say."

Under the UNC system governing board's plan, yearly tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates at UNC-Chapel Hill would rise 4.4 percent this year to $5,456.16, with 35 percent of the revenue gleaned from the increase funneled back into financial aid.

That's $3.3 million in financial aid revenue that could be lost, said Shirley Ort, who directs the UNC-CH scholarships and student aid office. So students could end up losing some of the financial aid they've already been offered, Ort said.

"That's a large chunk of change we'd have to pass along to students," she said.

That puts financial aid officers in a lose-lose situation because students have already been told about their financial aid packages, said Greg Doucette, the sole student member of the UNC system's governing board.

"What do you do? Do you tell some kid who got a financial aid package he's getting a reduction so we can help someone else?" said Doucette, who will enroll in N.C. Central University's law school this fall. "That's untenable."
At N.C. State University, the economic uncertainty is sending some students away but
drawing some in as well, making life difficult for admissions officers trying to predict the size
of this fall's freshman class. Some are dropping plans to attend because a parent recently
lost a job, said Thomas Griffin, NCSU's undergraduate admissions director. But others who
originally planned to attend a private college are now opting for NCSU as a lower-cost
alternative.

"We have seen more students than we remember from previous years calling in the summer
and changing their minds," he said.

One thing is clear: More students are asking for aid.

Brooks, who directs the state assistance authority, said the number of FAFSA forms -- the
Free Application for Federal Student Aid -- submitted by students hoping to attend either a
UNC system school or a four-year private institution in North Carolina is up 10 percent this
year. And the number of prospective community college students who filled out those forms
rose 30 percent.

Even with a healthy economy, the admissions game is more art than science, as colleges
admit more students than they want, assuming some will go elsewhere. This year, it's far
more complex. Students are applying to more colleges to broaden their options and seek out
the best aid packages. That makes the admissions game even more unpredictable.

"When you throw a wild card like the depth of this recession into the mix, it's making us all a
little nervous," Brooks said.

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'Save the Bronto' campaign going strong

FROM STAFF REPORTS

DURHAM - The Museum of Life and Science has hired Greenville sculptor Kenneth "Tripp" Jarvis to reattach the head and make other repairs to the brontosaurus statue vandalized in late May.

Jarvis holds a Master of Arts degree from East Carolina University and has more than 15 years' experience forming concrete-over-steel structures.

Restitution from the vandals is paying for the May damage, but community fundraising is needed for more work on the mouth and body. Additional work including fencing, painting, further restoration or security and maintenance could bring the total needed, beyond the restitution money, to $10,000.

A museum benefactor has made an anonymous donation of $1,000. Bronto Software has pledged a $2,000 challenge grant, and the museum has received more than $1,500 from 20 individual donors. In addition, the Northgate Park Neighborhood Association Bronto Project Fund has received more than $400 in contributions.

The Bronto Project Committee has also produced a "Save the Bronto" T-shirt. A total of 500 shirts will go on sale Saturday at the Durham Farmers Market and Sunday morning at Elmo's on Ninth Street. For details, go to www.savethebronto.com.

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Report raises concerns over surgical option

Longer cuts may be healthier

BY SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer

Nearly 70 percent of heart bypass surgeries in the United States use a small incision in the leg to harvest a vein for grafting into the heart, but the method now appears to result in slightly more heart attacks and deaths years later.

The findings, reported today in The New England Journal of Medicine by scientists at Duke University and elsewhere, raise concerns for the first time about a surgical option that has become widely popular with patients and doctors alike.

About 470,000 people in the United States each year have heart bypass surgeries to reroute blood around clogged arteries.

Doctors use a patient's own veins, harvested from the large saphenous vessel in the leg, to create the heart's new blood-flow pattern.

The idea of a smaller incision in the leg has been cheered by patients since it was introduced in 1996.

"Every patient wants it," said Dr. David Robaczewski, with Carolina Cardiovascular Surgical Associates in Raleigh.

Studies have shown that people recover sooner and have far fewer infections when they aren't burdened with an incision that could run from 12 inches to the entire length of the leg.

But those studies did not look at how patients fared in the long run.

According to the new findings that were culled from a lengthy drug study, patients who had the minimal incision had a 2.8 percent higher rate of vein graft failure, heart attack and death three years after their bypass surgeries.

Researchers don't know what causes the long-term problems but suspect that tugging out the vein through a small incision somehow takes a toll on the delicate tissue.

"It is humbling that a one-time intervention at the time of surgery has effects that don't become apparent for years," said Dr. John Alexander, senior author of the study and a cardiologist at the Duke Clinical Research Institute.

Now the challenge, Alexander said, is mounting a new study that would offer deeper insights.

Robaczewski said surgeons would welcome the clarity.

"This is great stuff -- we want to know if there are problems with our techniques," Robaczewski said. "We're all about making sure it gets fixed."

Replication necessary
Dr. Brett Sheridan, a surgeon at UNC Hospitals, said the study gives him pause, but the findings need to be replicated in a study designed specifically to compare the two methods. Until then, he said, he would likely not change his practice. He said patients have too much to gain from the smaller incision when weighed against the slight increased risk of problems later on.

"I don’t think I could convince my patients" to choose the large leg incision, Sheridan said. "I've had patients refuse [bypass] surgery just because of the leg incision. It's the part of the operation that's hardest to manage."

Alexander acknowledged it may be too late to reverse the predominance of the endoscopic approach, especially because it does have significant short-term benefits to patients.

Instead, he said, researchers may focus on more gentle techniques for vein removal and more finely tooled instruments.

"This should raise questions about what level of evidence ... should be required before a drug or device is approved," he said. "Requiring larger, long-term outcomes means waiting longer, but we know more about them."

Dr. Sidney Wolfe, head of the Health Research Group for consumer advocacy organization Public Citizen, agreed and said the study’s findings raise questions about patient protections.

"There just isn't enough emphasis on safety," Wolfe said. The government should fund more research into surgical procedures, he said, just as it does for drug or device development, to make sure safety issues are explored early on.

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**About the study**

- 3,000 patients were followed as part of a drug trial, and their long-term outcomes were studied in a later analysis.

- At 12 to 18 months, 47 percent of patients with endoscopic incisions had vein-graft failure, compared with 38 percent with the larger incision.

- At three years, 20.2 percent of endoscopic patients died, had a heart attack or needed another replacement vein, compared to 17.4 percent of those with the larger incision.

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Swine flu virus confirmed at Valle Crucis camp

From staff reports

Several students at an Appalachian State camp in Valle Crucis have tested positive for H1N1 flu virus.

According to ASU officials, 10 campers and one counselor reported flu-like systems last week. ASU student health service sent samples to the state health department in Raleigh on Friday. State health officials informed the university on Wednesday that seven of the samples tested positive for H1N1, formerly known as swine flu.

“Our camp staff has either phoned or sent home information to all parents who have a child at the camp alerting them to the situation,” said Lynn Drury, associate vice chancellor for University Communications.

“Going forward, we will follow Appalachian’s Infectious Illness Control Plan and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Guidelines for Residential and Day Camps, which means all students attending camps at either Camp Broadstone or on Appalachian’s campus will be interviewed upon arrival and monitored throughout their stay for any symptoms.”

Drury said the CDC recommends anyone having symptoms should be sent home as soon as possible and isolated for seven days after symptoms begin, or until symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.

“We are telling parents that if their child has any flu-like symptoms in the seven days prior to camp beginning they should not bring them to camp,” Drury said. “We will be asking each parent and child when they arrive to confirm there have been no symptoms such as a fever in the past seven days. If there has been, we will not be able to register the child and they will have to return home.”

Contrary to earlier concerns about the H1N1 virus, the CDC reports that the mortality rate has been no higher than for the common Type A and Type B viruses, and has a death rate of about .5 percent. The majority of the deaths occur in people who have an underlying condition such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes.

Currently, every state in the United States has confirmed cases of H1N1, and the CDC last week said that a total of 37,246 cases of confirmed H1N1 have occurred in the country since the initial identification of the virus. There have been 311 confirmed cases in North Carolina and two deaths. Unlike other flu viruses, however, H1N1 has occurred more frequently in a much younger age group – 16 to 24 years of age.

Symptoms of the virus include fever and coughing, sore throat, headache, fatigue, chills, congestion or stuffy nose, nausea/vomiting and body aches. Anyone exhibiting such symptoms is encouraged to see their primary care physician.

The CDC notes that the majority of cases do not require treatment, but that the individual should be isolated in order to prevent spreading the virus.

No other cases of H1N1 flu have been reported in Watauga County.