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Alternative energy helps campuses reduce costs

Wind energy, geothermal systems, photovoltaic systems and use of methane gas are just some of the ways UNC system campuses are reducing their energy costs.

Working from a 2002-03 baseline, all universities in the University of North Carolina system are required by N.C. law to reduce energy consumption by 30 percent by 2015.

Campus representatives met at Appalachian State University this week for the first Appalachian Energy Summit designed to share best practices and investigate ways campuses can meet the 2015 mandate.

Western Carolina University was the first university in the system to meet this goal, achieving it five of six years since 2005-06.

The only other school in the system to meet the 30 percent reduction goal so far is the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in 2010-11, according to information released by the N.C. Energy Office.

Examples of energy efficiency measures in place or planned at UNC system schools are:

• N.C. Central University's energy performance contract will upgrade 10 existing buildings with 83 energy conservation measures, saving $670,000 a year.

• UNC Asheville reduced energy use by 50 percent after installing its first geothermal system in 2002. The university has since expanded its use of geothermal systems to seven buildings across campus.

• Appalachian State University's first energy savings performance contract is saving nearly $600,000 a year in energy costs through upgrades to HVAC systems, energy efficient lighting and other measures.
• Methane gas from a nearby landfill will provide electricity to a complex of support buildings at UNC Chapel Hill.

• N.C. State University is undertaking a combined heat and power project that will improve electrical and steam efficiency by 35 percent and reduce greenhouse gases by 8 percent.

• UNC Pembroke and Fayetteville State University have opened or are constructing buildings that meet LEED energy efficiency standards.

• The UNC School of the Arts has implemented a “no incandescent” bulb program.

• UNC Charlotte recycled 2 million pounds of material in 2010-11, equaling a landfill diversion rate of 36 percent.

• Energy savings measures at N.C. A&T have reduced energy consumption and operating costs in 17 buildings that are expected to achieve an additional 15 percent reduction in energy consumption by 2015.

• East Carolina University's winter break shutdown results in a 30 percent reduction in natural gas use and a 15 percent reduction in electrical use.

For more information about the summit, visit the following website http://sustain.appstate.edu and click on Appalachian Energy Summit.
Duke University to offer free online courses

By Jane Stancill - jstancill@newsobserver.com

Duke University will offer noncredit, online courses free to anyone as part of a venture with 15 other universities and a California-based company, university officials announced Tuesday.

With the announcement, Duke joins a pack of universities plunging into a big experiment – free online education for the global masses. In May, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University unveiled their own venture, called edX, which prompted a seismic reaction in higher education.

The partnership that Duke is joining started last year with a company called Coursera and four universities – Stanford, Michigan, Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania. A dozen additional universities, including Duke, were added Tuesday. The company provides the universities a single platform to deliver the online courses. Already, about 650,000 students from 190 countries have taken Internet courses through Coursera.

Duke’s provost, Peter Lange, said the move is part of a larger push by Duke for more innovation in teaching. That has included team-based learning, greater use of technology and “flipped classes,” in which students can watch a video of a faculty lecture before class and then spend class time on collaborative projects and interactive exercises.

The Coursera partnership will accelerate new teaching methods, Lange said, and extend Duke faculty expertise on a global basis.

“It’s an experiment,” he said. “Nobody knows how these things are actually going to work long term. But it’s an opportunity to try some new things, to be innovative, to get the feedback and assess it and then see where you want to go next.”

So far, 10 Duke faculty have committed to the project. Starting this fall, they will teach courses in astronomy, engineering, philosophy, neuroscience, nursing, human physiology and cell biology. Duke professors will work with information technology specialists to record videos and create online assignments for students they’ll never see.
The process

Here’s how it works: A student anywhere can take a course on his or her own time, and the length of the course could range from four weeks to 12 weeks. Lecture videos are available online, as well as quizzes or other electronic assignments. Students can discuss the material on message boards.

Students receive no grades or course credit, so once the course is created, there is little time demand on the professor.

Duke will spend some money on course development. The venture is not a money-maker yet, but there is always a possibility that down the road people might be willing to pay for the content, Lange said. It’s too soon to tell.

The biggest boon may be the way the new methods influence teaching of Duke students in Durham.

Mohamed Noor, a Duke biology professor, will teach a course called “Genetics and Evolution” online through Coursera this fall.

There’s a big demand for science content, he said, and this will be a way for people who have an interest, but maybe not the money or the time, to enroll in a university class.

“I’ve always been an advocate for open access to research data, for open access to publications,” Noor said. “This is a chance to bring that same concept to education and teaching.”

And in an added twist, he’s going to have his class at Duke watch the same lectures online from their dorm rooms. Then, the class time will become more productive, with group projects, added question-and-answer time and greater connection to his face-to-face students.

“I’ll be much more interactive with them than I could have been in a passive lecture with people just sitting there,” he said.

A bargain

Noor’s online students will be getting quite a bargain. Undergraduate tuition this fall at Duke is $42,308 (total cost of tuition, room, board and fees at Duke will be $56,056).

Will that breed resentment? No, said Lange, the provost.

“They’re getting credit for it,” he said, “and the Joe down the street is not. It won’t be the very same course.”
Noor points out that his students in the physical classroom will get all kinds of extra benefits, including more academic activities, a hands-on lab section and direct contact with the professor.

“There’s still a huge added value to taking the class at Duke University,” Noor said. “Nonetheless, the very base level product is put out for the world.”

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**Duke University's online adventure**

The Coursera venture started last year with Stanford, Michigan, Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania offering free online courses. On Tuesday, a dozen universities joined the partnership. They are: Duke University, University of Washington, Georgia Tech, University of Illinois, University of Virginia, California Institute of Technology, Rice University, University of Toronto, Johns Hopkins University, University of California-San Francisco, University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and EPF Lausanne, a university in Switzerland.
Joe DeSimone to head Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise

By Jane Stancill jstancill@newsobserver.com

Joe DeSimone, a star chemistry professor who developed several spinoff companies from his research at two Triangle universities, will take on a new role to drive innovation and entrepreneurship.

He has been named the new director of UNC-Chapel Hill’s Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, part of the Kenan-Flagler Business School. He replaces John Kasarda, who stepped down as director last month after 22 years.

DeSimone holds two endowed professorships in the Triangle – he is a chemistry professor at UNC-CH and a chemical engineering professor at N.C. State University. He is a well-known entrepreneur whose research has ranged from developing environmentally friendly industrial processes to designing new medicines and vaccines using manufacturing techniques from the computer industry. He is the inventor on more than 130 patents and has another 100 pending.

He is also the co-founder of Liquidia Technologies, a Triangle-based nanotechnology company, which has a flu vaccine in clinical trials and a newly announced collaboration with GlaxoSmithKline.

In an interview Monday, DeSimone pointed out that other areas, including San Francisco, New York and Chicago, are building new collaborative ventures among multiple universities and business, based on big ideas, applied research and economic development – the kind of thing that Research Triangle Park pioneered.
“This region used to drive this,” said DeSimone, who is also on the Research Triangle Park board. “And now in some ways, we’ve sort of lost our mojo.”

The Kenan Institute can help promote the applied research agenda that will ultimately have an economic impact and a benefit to society, he said.

“I’m really looking forward to try to help North Carolina get to the next level, because I’m a firm believer in the role research universities have in society,” he said. “I think the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise is a really great opportunity to help elevate that dialogue and that discussion.”

DeSimone said the new role fits in with his current teaching and research. He teaches in the entrepreneurship program at UNC-CH, and his research lab is an amalgam of chemists, chemical engineers, medical doctors and cell biologists. He will give up other administrative roles and some of his activities with national organizations in Washington, he said.

Earlier this year, DeSimone was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, a top honor for an American scientist. He was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2005.

The Kenan Institute was founded in 1985. It promotes collaboration among business, government and academia and the use of research and private-sector resources to serve the public interest.

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U-Va. takes major step in online education

By Daniel de Vise

The leadership crisis that rent the University of Virginia last month arose partly out of fear that other elite schools were moving into the vanguard of a coming digital revolution, and that U-Va. stood to be left behind.

That argument, advanced by the leader of the university governing board, turned out to be based on a faulty premise. Almost no one on campus knew at the time the breadth of the collective investment that U-Va. was already making in online education.

On Tuesday, the investment will yield a major payoff. The university is joining a prestigious online consortium led by two Stanford University professors. With one stroke, the Virginia public flagship heads toward the front of a potentially transformative movement to online learning on a global scale.

The university’s participation in Coursera, an initiative to offer free online courses to the masses, answers a criticism that loomed large in the recent power struggle in Charlottesville that began with the abrupt resignation of President Teresa Sullivan and ended with her reinstatement.

U-Va. Rector Helen Dragas, who leads the governing Board of Visitors, thought university leaders had ignored the Internet at their peril, like the music industry and media companies before them. In the months preceding her attempt to oust Sullivan, Dragas had read various articles about a coming online “tsunami” that would upend higher education, e-mailing one to a board colleague under the heading “why we can’t afford to wait.”

As it turns out, university leaders weren’t waiting.

Officials from U-Va.’s Darden School of Business first contacted Coursera in April, after learning that the Silicon Valley start-up had attracted venture capital and was expanding from Stanford to other top-tier universities, according to Milton Adams, the university’s vice provost for academic programs. A Darden delegation visited Coursera in early June, a few days before Sullivan resigned.
In the ensuing debate, Dragas singled out an apparent lack of online vision at U-Va., which, she reasoned, seemed to have “no centralized approach” for online education.

That critique gave new urgency to the Coursera partnership. Last week, university officials contacted Daphne Koller, co-founder of the initiative, and negotiations accelerated. U-Va. signed a contract over the weekend. Its participation will require no financial investment from U-Va., except for staff time, and yield no revenue for the university.

Founded in fall 2011, Coursera offers a platform for partner universities to experiment with a vast global audience. Students earn no college credit and the universities make no money. But many in higher education see future potential for both. More than 680,000 students from 190 countries have taken Coursera classes.

“These are some of the best universities in the United States,” Adams said. “This is a great opportunity for us to experiment ourselves, and to try to learn from our colleagues.”

Over the past decade, online instruction has exploded in higher education. But the nation’s top universities have been slow to embrace online for core undergraduate and graduate programs. The movement seemed at odds with the residential, dialectical learning experience that is their chief product.

Now, opposition is melting away. A compelling body of research has shown that some online initiatives yield improved outcomes at reduced cost, an irresistible proposition.

“We don’t want to be another industry that didn’t see change coming and, because they didn’t see it in time, they’re dead,” said James Dean, dean of the business school at the University of North Carolina, which is known for its online experimentation.

Any lingering doubts were swept away in May, when Harvard and MIT announced a $60 million partnership to offer free online courses to the public under the edX brand.

Coursera, chief rival to edX, is responding Tuesday by expanding from four institutions to 16. The new partners include Johns Hopkins University, the University of Illinois, Duke University and CalTech.

“I think people are recognizing that this kind of experience is where a lot of the future of higher education lies,” said Koller, a Stanford computer scientist.
EdX and Coursera allow top schools to expand their global brand and share their intellectual capital with the world in the manner of academic missionaries. Perhaps as important, the online laboratories allow each institution to cultivate an internal digital culture.

“Simply put, online learning can substantially improve on-campus learning as well,” said Anant Agarwal, president of edX. “The way we educate students really hasn’t changed much in centuries.”

Some educators suggest that the global online platforms offer more flash than substance, and that financial benefits for schools are dubious.

“There’s no income from it. Nobody’s made a case that there will be any income from it,” said Marva Barnet, director of the Teaching Resource Center at U-Va. “Why is this such a desirable thing?”

Like many of its peers, U-Va. has lacked a central approach to online instruction. Until this month, no one had taken an inventory of the school’s online offerings.

Now, faculty are racing to take stock, and the emerging digital portrait is surprisingly rich. U-Va. offers at least 11 fully online degrees, all at the graduate level, and 15 professional certificates. Scores of undergraduate classes are taught partly online, and nearly every professor conducts at least some class business over the Internet.

“Almost all the faculty at U-Va. are doing it. The breadth and scope are shocking,” said William Guilford, an associate engineering professor who completed a quick tally of the university’s online efforts last week with a 53-member task force.

Sullivan has an ambitious plan to retool introductory courses as “hybrids,” replacing much of the human labor with technology and freeing professors to focus on higher-level classes. Her initiative would go further than most elite universities have dared in replacing human instructors with software.

Partly in response to Dragas, faculty leaders have announced a campus-wide “challenge,” offering $10,000 grants to professors who draw up “technology-enhanced” courses as a way to jump-start Sullivan’s initiative. The deadline is midnight Thursday.

Dragas declined an interview but offered a prepared statement that seemed to applaud the university’s efforts.

“The rapidly escalating application of technology in the delivery of higher education, especially by well-respected institutions, is a significant
development — one worthy of substantive inquiry that should include appropriate input from internal constituencies and expert resources,” she said.

“Without the benefit of such a study, the Board of Visitors has certainly not formed an opinion about the University’s future in this area. The Board’s primary interest is in the University’s development of a strategy that promotes the highest order of excellence in the quality of our students’ learning and enrichment, especially in a resource-constrained environment.”

Over the past few years, several initiatives have pushed online instruction into more college classrooms.

One is known as instructional “flipping,” an adaptation of the age-old classroom lecture that is fast taking root in K-12 schools and colleges. Students view recorded lectures as homework, freeing professors to use class time for discussion, group exercises and problem-solving.

Another is “computer-mediated” instruction, which asks students to complete courses online in a series of self-paced lessons, a technique Virginia Tech has pioneered in introductory math. Some skeptical parents, who pay tens of thousands of dollars a year in tuition, wonder whether their children are getting their money’s worth from this arrangement. But advocates say the model can yield vast savings for a university without sacrificing student achievement.

“The student learning has in most cases improved, and it certainly hasn’t diminished,” said William “Brit” Kirwan, Maryland state university chancellor. “This highly interactive online education is going to be a dominant trend in higher education. Is it going to replace every course in the university? No.”

The newest development is the wave of global online platforms, which give Harvard, Stanford and now U-Va. a stake in a movement that Dragas last month had suggested was an “existential threat” to the flagship university.
The Dragas-Sullivan statement: Who’s kidding whom at U-Va.?

By Valerie Strauss

Today we were treated to a joint statement (see below) by University President Teresa Sullivan and Helen Dragas, rector of the school’s governing board, which talks about their renewed commitment to work together as if the recent drama in which Dragas fired Sullivan never happened. Well, actually, there was this reference: “Recent events have caused the respect that U.Va. generates to acquire a new level of energy, focusing widespread attention on our future.”

This statement was released shortly after The Washington Post published an edited version of a piece I posted here yesterday calling for the resignation of Dragas and all of the other members of the Board of Visitors for dragging the elite public university into an unnecessary crisis and then never bothering to explain to the school community why they really fired Sullivan. We know why they reinstated her: There was a revolt on campus.

But should Sullivan now be expected to get along with people who tried to fire her and lied to her, directly or by omission? She shouldn’t, but at the
moment she is in a trap. She has to sign silly joint working-together statements with Helen Dragas because Dragas is still her boss.

The Dragas/Sullivan statement, which has a “we doth protest too much” quality to it, elicited immediate reaction from some people on the campus still angry about the leadership crisis. One of them, Raúl A. Baragiola, Alice and Guy Wilson professor at the school’s Laboratory for Atomic and Surface Physics, wrote the following (see his full statement below):

It is not possible to maintain the integrity of the university with Ms. Dragas continuing as Rector. It is also a delusion to repeat over and over again that there is a new energy that arose from the events, one that will propel the university to new heights. The energy displayed was against the perception of injustice, and of irresponsible and dishonorable behavior. That energy cannot be focused into non existent initiatives and is diminished every time we are sent new platitudes, without proposals for concrete actions. To assume that the faculty and staff will be induced by communiques into accepting requests to just go along with whatever is decided at the top is a delusion or an insult to our collective intelligence.

Here’s the joint statement from Dragas and Sullivan, complete with headline:

**JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE RECTOR AND PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA**

*This is an important moment in the history of our great University. Recent events have caused the respect that U.Va. generates to acquire a new level of energy, focusing widespread attention on our future. We are unequivocally united in the belief that the institution’s future is brighter than ever. Together, we commit to harness this renewed energy to advance the University’s leadership role in higher education.  

Our University faces the same challenges — many of them resource issues, both financial and human — as our peer institutions. We are prepared to address them in ways that are consistent with the vision of our founder, the integrity of our Honor Code, and the aspirations of our community.  

As first steps, we will work to strengthen the networks of communication and collaboration between each other, as well as among all of our stakeholder groups: students, faculty, and staff; members of the Board of Visitors; alumni, donors, and parents; and key external constituencies in the Commonwealth and beyond. We also commit to engaging the community in*
the creation of a plan of action that will sustain excellence for future generations.

As leaders of U.Va., sharing a common love for the institution and its mission in the world, we pledge to work together to ensure that our University remains a beacon for superb higher education, outstanding health care, and important research. We also call on those who share our love to join us in fulfilling Jefferson’s vision for the University to become the “bulwark of the human mind.”

We look forward to working with you on the critical and exciting endeavors that lie ahead.

Helen E. Dragas, Rector
Teresa A. Sullivan, President
July 16, 2012

And here’s Baragiola’s full response. He is undoubtedly not the only person in the U-Va. campus who is reacting to this statement in this way:

From Raúl A. Baragiola:

I have just read the joint statement copied below, astonished at the examples of magical thinking.

When the Rector removed the President, my first reaction was to assume that grave reasons were behind this abrupt action. I waited for clarifications and urged the Faculty Senate not to escalate by asking for the resignation of the Rector until we had all the facts. Now we have the facts. According to public reports, the Rector lied in saying that requesting Dr. Sullivan’s resignation had the agreement of the majority of the BoV. This was not a simple, white lie, this was a calculated deceit by the top university officer.

At the time Senators responded to me that the escalation (as opposed to moderation) was necessary because principles were in play. There was no compromise possible. That does not appear honorable now that we heard that top officers of the Senate say that they can work with the Rector since the President says she can. Clearly, the principles have been subordinated to politics.

It is not possible to maintain the integrity of the university with Ms. Dragas continuing as Rector. It is also a delusion to repeat over and over again that there is a new energy that arose from the events, one that will propel the
university to new heights. The energy displayed was against the perception of injustice, and of irresponsible and dishonorable behavior. That energy cannot be focused into non existent initiatives and is diminished every time we are sent new platitudes, without proposals for concrete actions. To assume that the faculty and staff will be induced by communiques into accepting requests to just go along with whatever is decided at the top is a delusion or an insult to our collective intelligence.

I hope for a resignation of the Rector and the birth of transparent dialogues, devoid of futile rhetoric.

Raúl A. Baragiola

Alice and Guy Wilson Professor

University of Virginia, Laboratory for Atomic and Surface Physics
Florida A&M President's Resignation To Be Effective Immediately

July 16, 2012

by Mark Memmott

Instead of staying on until his retirement in October, it was reported this morning that Florida A&M University President James Ammons' resignation will be effective immediately.

According to The Tallahassee Democrat, "the board [of trustees] waived the 90-day notice requirement in Ammons' contract, meaning his five-year term as president is effectively over. Trustees also agreed to pay the two bonuses in Ammons' contract for the past two years. The trustees also are expected to name an interim president later today."

As Eyder wrote last Wednesday, it's the hazing scandal at Florida A&M that is costing Ammons his job:

"Robert Champion, an A&M drum major in the famed 'Marching 100' band, died in November after going through a violent hazing ritual on parked bus. Eleven marching band members have been charged."

Champion's parents last week added the university to a wrongful death lawsuit they have filed.

The student-run Famuan newspaper says that "Ammons and Board of Trustees Chairman Solomon Badger agreed last night to a quick 'transitioning out' that means he would give up his post at the top of the university and take outstanding bonuses on his way out.”
After loosening their coffers to help families cope during the recession, some colleges now are cutting back on grants and scholarships, aid that students don't have to pay back.

The move—prompted in part by the colleges' own financial troubles—is prompting students and their families to borrow more to close the gap, raising the already-heavy debt load many graduates will face.

Grants and scholarships fell 15% during the just-completed academic year, according to a study to be released Monday by student-loan provider Sallie Mae.

On average, U.S. undergraduates received $6,077 in grants and scholarships in the 2011-2012 academic year, down from $7,124 a year earlier, according to the study, which polled 1,601 undergraduates and their parents.

While college aid typically accounts for a big chunk of grants and scholarships, the category also includes scholarships from outside organizations and federal funding, such as Pell Grants.
"During the deepest valleys of the recession, schools were trying to maintain a certain level of [financial aid]. As schools have burned through their reserves, they're pulling back," said Justin Draeger, president of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

Some colleges are raising the bar to qualify for both need- and merit-based scholarships, a trend that will likely continue next academic year, Mr. Draeger said. Meanwhile, college costs have continued to rise at rates faster than inflation, particularly at public schools faced with state budget cuts, according to College Board figures.

As a result, some students and their families are taking on more debt or are opting for lower-priced public schools or two-year institutions. Some students also are passing on dorm life, choosing instead to live at home to save on room and board, according to the study.

The average amount borrowed by families—a calculation that includes parents and students who didn't borrow at all—rose nearly 17% last year to $5,551. That was up from $4,753 in the 2010-2011 academic year.

Meanwhile, the percentage of families with college students taking out federal student loans grew to 34%, up from 25% in 2008-2009, according to the report, conducted by the research group Ipsos.

When his father's income dropped last year, Aldo Frosinini anticipated his aid package from Swarthmore College would be more generous for his coming sophomore year. Instead, his expected family contribution—the amount a school believes a family can cover—rose, and he was offered about $3,000 less in grant and scholarship aid, to a total of about $36,000, he said.

His choices right now, he said, are either loans or transferring to a cheaper school, an option he said he is seriously considering.

"We've had to go entirely with loans, though we really didn't want to do that," said the 19-year-old. "There's been a lot of stress in our house."

Swarthmore said it has raised its financial-aid budget 51% over the last three years and strives to meet the financial needs of every student.

Some families last year couldn't afford even to maintain the same contributions as the prior year amid tight household budgets. In the typical family, parents contributed $5,955 from their own income and savings in 2011-12, down from $6,664 in 2010-11, the survey found.
And only one in five parents said they strongly agreed that children should attend college for the experience, no matter their future earnings potential, down from one in three in the 2009-10 academic year, when the question was first asked.

"Parents have stepped back a bit and said 'We can't foot all the bills,' " said Sarah Ducich, senior vice president for public policy at Sallie Mae.

Meanwhile, some colleges are altering programs that promised students of certain family incomes they wouldn't need to take out any loans. Cornell University said earlier this month that, beginning with the class entering in fall of 2013, only students whose parents earn less than $60,000 will be eligible for loan-free aid. That policy previously covered families with incomes below $75,000.

Dartmouth College and Williams College also have limited their no-loan packages in recent years, while Wesleyan University earlier this year announced it will begin to consider a student's ability to pay in its admissions decisions, due to the school's financial constraints.

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