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TRUNA, ECU working together
By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, July 22, 2010

The East Carolina University Board of Trustees is planning to work with the Tar River University Neighborhood Association to develop a vision statement for the Fifth Street corridor that is bordered by the neighborhood and the university.
David Brody, ECU Board of Trustees chairman, said the university’s investigation into future plans for the chancellor’s residence led to discussions with TRUNA about quality of life in the neighborhood.
University officials are discussing plans to renovate the Dail House, where the chancellor lives, or to buy a new property some time in the future.
“I think this has been a positive thing,” Brody said. “It has brought to board awareness of the issues of the neighborhood.”
The Dail House is located at the corner of Fifth and Jarvis streets, across the street from campus in the TRUNA neighborhood.
Brody said Philip Rogers, executive assistant to Chancellor Steve Ballard, will work with TRUNA officials to develop a statement about what the university and the neighborhood association want to see for the future of the area.
“I believe there are a lot of initiatives that we could undertake in the neighborhood that would help the neighborhood and the university,” Brody said.
The neighborhood has a high population of ECU students who live in rental housing.
“We have to find a way to stop the deterioration of the neighborhood that is just behind Fifth Street,” said trustee Bob Greczyn. “It is not in the best interest of the university to see that neighborhood deteriorate.”
Brody said many students who live in the area deal with neglectful landlords who are letting properties fall into disrepair. He said the university can finds ways to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood for the students.
The discussion of future plans for the chancellor’s residence has drawn fire from some people who are critical of the university for considering an upgrade to the residence while students face tuition increases.
“People ask how we can talk about this during these times but we need a plan for the future,” Brody said.
The chancellor’s residence presents challenges at the more than 100 social events hosted there each year due to a tiny coat closet, a small kitchen, very little parking and only one non-handicapped accessible bathroom on the first floor, officials say.
A subcommittee is investigating the possibilities of upgrading the property, moving social functions to a different location or moving the chancellor’s residence to a different location.
Several officials have stressed that any action taken would be funded through private funds and not university operating dollars.

“We want to keep the chancellor within walking distance of the university,” Brody said. “We do not want to put him out in the county somewhere.”

Ballard addressed the issue of rising tuition in his report to the board.

ECU students will face an increase of around $500 over the next two years as officials have raised tuition to offset major budget cuts from the state.

“It pains me philosophically to see the students with a much higher cost for education this year,” Ballard said.

Ballard said the university has dealt with $19 million in base state cuts over the last two years. The university has addressed the shortfall by making cuts. Around 92 percent of the cuts have come in administrative areas, Ballard said.

“We have done all we can to protect our students,” he said. “We are now faced with either reducing the quality of education across the board or asking our students to pay more. We are not willing to reduce quality.”

Ballard said the past two years has seen a 2 percent increase in tuition at ECU while the rest of the University of North Carolina system has averaged a 9 percent increase.

ECU continues to have the lowest tuition of the seven largest schools in the UNC system and is ranked second in both graduate and undergraduate tuition among a group of 16 officially recognized peer universities across the country.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@reflector.com or (252) 329-9565.
Area coaches want changes
All agree contact with agents has gotten out of hand

BY ROBBI PICKERAL AND KEN TYSIAK STAFF WRITERS

DURHAM – The NCAA and North Carolina's Secretary of State are investigating possible improprieties by sports agents. But Duke football coach David Cutcliffe said Thursday he thinks it will take a more powerful authority – the federal government – to bring agents in line.

"It's gotten beyond being not quite ethically right – it's gotten to a point where it's illegal, what's going on," he said. "... And now, at this point, it may be a federal thing that needs to be looked at as far as the legal issues. And maybe some people get put in jail – that's about the only way we've learned as a society to deter criminal behavior is to put people behind bars, and I think maybe that's where some guys in that [agent] business could be headed."

The subject came up after the Triangle Pigskin Preview at the Washington Duke Inn, where the head football coaches from Duke, North Carolina, N.C. State, East Carolina and N.C. Central previewed their seasons for about 350 alumni and fans. It marked the first time Tar Heels coach Butch Davis publicly addressed the NCAA investigation into whether there was improper contact between agents and any of his players.

Davis would not say which of his players are involved in the probe, although The News & Observer has confirmed that defensive tackle Marvin Austin and wide receiver Greg Little were interviewed by

SEE COACHES, PAGE 3C

'It's come, maybe to a head this year, but it's been a problem for 10 years, maybe 15 years.'

NCSU COACH TOM O'BRIEN

'It's gotten beyond being not quite ethically right - it's gotten to a point where it's illegal.'

DUKE COACH DAVID CUTCLIFFE

'There's so many avenues where a kid can be approached .... How can you keep up with them?'

ECU COACH RUFFIN MCNEILL

ONLINE
Pigskin Preview: To see a photo gallery of the coaches from the banquet, go to newsobserver.com/sports.
the NCAA.

With the NCAA also investigating reportedly similar - and perhaps related - agent issues at schools including South Carolina and Alabama, the question of how to better handle the ever-growing problem has been on area college coaches' minds.

"For years, everybody has fought this," Wolfpack coach Tom O'Brien said. "It's come, maybe to a head this year, but it's been a problem for 10 years, maybe 15 years."

Schools' NCAA compliance officials monitor both agents and "runners," middlemen who try to gain the loyalty of players and then get them to sign with an agent. NCAA rules prevent players, their families and associates from accepting benefits from agents or third parties who are working to get players to sign with an agent.

But agents often try to establish early contact, because the stakes are so high. Agents earn a percentage of their star clients' multimillion-dollar contracts. The more athletes they sign, the more money they stand to gain. The higher their signees go in the NFL draft, the more money they stand to gain.

"It's not so much the agents, it's the runners that they employ," O'Brien said. "They're young kids that are in the campus dining facilities, in the bars, around housing facilities, that are unknown to a lot of the players, but they are actually stringers for people that want to represent them."

Added ECU coach Ruffin McNeill: "It's so hard right now. My daughter's a part of all the [social] media outlets. She has Facebook and Twitter ... there's so many avenues where a kid can be approached. As a coach, how can you keep up with them?"

Pirates athletic director Terry Holland said he believes coaches are doing all they can possibly do to try to make sure their athletes are educated about the rules.

But he said the situation is complicated by the fact that the NCAA allows athletes some contact with agents without taking any benefits, "and it makes it a lot more difficult to determine where that line is supposed to be drawn."

"To be honest, we'd be better off if we went back to the old system where any contact is considered a violation," Holland said. "Because then the student-athlete knows for sure where that line is, and the coaches can help reinforce that. Right now it's almost impossible because nobody knows when that athlete may cross that line unknowingly."

O'Brien thinks one solution would be for the NFL to go to a structured pay scale for rookies, limiting what they make - and their agents' cuts - until they prove themselves at the professional level. That might limit the agents' feeding frenzy for high-profile college players, he said.

Holland also thinks there should be more cooperation from the NFL's players association: "If they said [to agents who broke the rules], 'Look, we're going to kick you out, you're not going to be able to represent our players,' ... It would end the problem."

Still, Cutcliffe thinks the solution needs to be pushed to a national scale. Statutes in most states include a version of the Uniform Athlete Agents Act like the one North Carolina's Secretary of State will use to pursue possible wrongdoing. Those violating North Carolina's law are guilty of a Class I felony.

But the acts differ slightly from state to state. Cutcliffe argued that steroid use has been discussed in Congress, and that the agent issue crosses state lines.

"It's not a North Carolina problem. Obviously, it's rampant across the country," he said. "We've seen it on the West Coast raise its ugly head, just recently. I've been in the SEC for a long, long time, and you're constantly looking for those signs. When you see those people hanging around outside a gate after a game - after doing it for 30 years, you start figuring out who they are. You'd like to see some authorities, legal authorities, help us with this problem. It's bigger than the NCAA can manage."

Staff writer Luke DeCock contributed to this report.

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ECU hosts 15th Summer Guitar Festival
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, July 22, 2010

This year marks the 15th anniversary of East Carolina University’s Summer Guitar Festival. Workshops and concerts will be held today-Monday in the A.J. Fletcher Music Building on the school campus.
The concert series features the artist-faculty, national and international concert artists and teachers. Students participating in the festival workshops will have lessons with the artists. This year’s event takes place with sponsorship from the D’Addario Foundation for the Performing Arts.
Concerts will feature 2009 solo competition winner Chad Ibsin, workshop director Elliot Frank, the Duo Spiritoso of Andrew Zohn and Jeffrey McFadden, the Isaac Bustos/Mitch Weverka Duo, American virtuoso Jason Vieaux, Stephen Aron and the Italian guitarists Solo Duo Lorenzo Micheli and Matteo Mela.
On Monday, young guitarists will compete in the finals of the ECU Solo Guitar Competition. Students will compete for cash awards, a hand-made classical guitar by Luthier Travis Snyder and a performance at next year’s festival.

Elliot Frank
Elliot Frank is director of the guitar studies program at ECU. He has appeared as solo recitalist, chamber player, and as concerto soloist throughout the Americas and Europe. He is a frequent guest performer and teacher at guitar festivals throughout the Americas.

Duo Spiritoso
Guitarists Jeffrey McFadden and Andrew Zohn formed Duo Spiritoso in 2004. Guitar magazine raved about a recent performance saying, “their shared musical sensibilities, technical prowess and unwavering standards provided a performance that was at once audacious, dynamic, moving and powerful.”

Isaac Bustos
Winner of the 2004 ECU Solo Competition, Isaac Bustos has gained critical acclaim and is quickly becoming recognized as one of the top young guitarists of his generation. He’s won
numerous awards including top prize at the 2008 IX Concurso Internacional Guitarras Alhambra, Valencia, Spain; top prize in the 2008 Boston Guitar Fest International Guitar Competition, Boston, Mass.; and the top prize at the 2007 Southwest International Guitar Competition in San Antonio.

**Mitch Weverka**
Mitch Weverka began playing guitar when he was 7, receiving most of his instruction from Bolivian guitarist and artist Oscar Valdez. He holds performance degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music and Southern Methodist University. He also studied in Cremona, Italy. One of his principal teachers was Matteo Mela, who will also perform during the festival. Weverka has been a finalist in a number of international contests, winning top prize at four, including the 2001 East Carolina University Guitar Competition.

**Jason Vieaux**
Jason Vieaux began his guitar studies when he was 8 years old in Buffalo, N.Y. He is the youngest first-prize winner in the history of the Guitar Foundation of America International Competition.
He’s also a Naumburg International Guitar Competition prize winner, and the Cleveland Institute of Music honored Vieaux with its Alumni Achievement Award in 1998.

**Stephen Aron**
Stephen Aron has been professor of music and chairman of guitar studies at the University of Akron since 1981. He’s also teacher of classical guitar and founder of the classical guitar studies program at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. A chamber music enthusiast, he performs regularly with JoNell Aron, a soprano with whom he has recorded two CDs, one of original arrangements of vaudeville songs called “Shine On Harvest Moon,” and one of original arrangements of sacred songs titled “In My Heart.”

Aron has also published a collection of arias arranged for voice and guitar from Handel’s “Messiah” and an original composition for solo guitar called “Rockport Stomp.”

**SoloDuo**
Matteo Mela and Lorenzo Micheli formed SoloDuo in 2003 and have performed throughout Europe, Asia and North America. About one of their performances, The Washington Post wrote: “Extraordinarily sensitive, with effortless command and an almost unbearable delicacy of touch, the duo’s playing was nothing less than rapturous — profound and unforgettable musicianship of the highest order.”

**If you Go!**
What: East Carolina University’s 15th annual Guitar festival
When: Today-Monday
Cost: Single event ticket prices are $15 for adults and $10 for students. Entire series (five concerts) are $40 for adults and $20 for students. Tickets will be available at the door.
Call: 328-4788.

**Concert Schedule**
4 p.m. today: Chad Ibison 2009 Solo Competition Winner (free)
7:30 p.m. today: Elliot Frank and Duo Spiritoso (ticketed)
4 p.m. Saturday: Pre College Solo Competition Semifinals (free)
7:30 p.m. Saturday: Isaac Bustos/Mitch Weverka Duo and Jason Vieaux (ticketed)
4 p.m. Sunday: Collegiate Solo Competition Semifinals (free)
7:30 p.m. Sunday: Stephen Aron and SoloDuo (ticketed)
4 p.m. Monday: Pre-college Competition Finals (free)
7:30 p.m. Monday: Collegiate Solo Competition Finals (ticketed)
SoloDuo's Lorenzo Micheli and Matteo Mela perform at 7:30 p.m. Sunday.
Arsineh Khachikian

Mitch W
The United States has fallen from first to 12th in the share of adults ages 25 to 34 with postsecondary degrees, according to a new report from the College Board.

Canada is now the global leader in higher education among young adults, with 55.8 percent of that population holding an associate degree or better as of 2007, the year of the latest international ranking. The United States sits 11 places back, with 40.4 percent of young adults holding postsecondary credentials.

The report, to be presented Thursday to Capitol Hill policymakers, is backed by a commission of highly placed educators who have set a goal for the United States to reclaim world leadership in college completion -- and attain a 55 percent completion rate -- by 2025.

The campaign mirrors President Obama's quest to reclaim world leadership in college graduates by 2020, although it gives the country five more years to get there. The Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education set its goal in December 2008, seven months before Obama's American Graduation Initiative.

"I don't think what we're saying and what the president's saying are that different," said Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board, the New York nonprofit agency responsible for the SAT and AP tests.

The United States ranks somewhat higher, sixth, among all nations when older adults are added to the equation, according to the report, which Caperton said would be the first of many annual reports charting progress toward the 2025 goal.

But the report focuses more heavily on younger adults, who are feared to be the first generation in the modern era that will be less well-educated than their parents.

Educational attainment has risen gradually among 25- to 34-year-olds in recent years, according to census data, with the share holding associate degrees or better rising from 38.1 percent in 2000 to 41.6 percent in 2008, the latest figure available.

The report is tailored to state leaders and ranks states by college completion among young adults. The District of Columbia ranks higher than any state, with 62.2 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds holding postsecondary degrees. Maryland ranks 12th among states, with a 38.6 percent completion rate; Virginia ranks 17th, with a 36.5 percent rate.
The commission is urging state and national leaders to pursue a 10-part "action agenda," which recommends such initiatives as universal pre-kindergarten for low-income families, better college counseling and dropout prevention, and streamlined college admissions, all of which might raise college completion rates. The group is led by William E. Kirwan, chancellor of the University System of Maryland.

"We have a real, objective way every year to look at every state and see how they're doing," Caperton said, "and we're doing this with legislators all over the country."
U.S. Releases Rules on For-Profit Colleges

By TAMAR LEWIN

The Obama administration on Thursday released its controversial proposed regulations to end federal student aid to for-profit colleges whose graduates do not earn enough to repay their loans.

Since most for-profit programs get the vast majority of their revenues from federal student aid, the regulations could effectively shut down the programs whose students have the most debt and the least likelihood of finding good jobs.

The for-profit colleges have lobbied strongly against the new “gainful employment” regulations. And in a statement Thursday evening, the Career College Association, which represents the colleges, called the proposed regulations “unwise, unnecessary, unproven” and said they were likely to harm students, employers, institutions and taxpayers. The Department of Education estimates that the rules would cut off federal aid to about 5 percent of for-profit college programs, representing about 8 percent of students, and that about 55 percent of the programs would be required to warn applicants and students that they may have trouble repaying their loans.

The coalition of education groups, student groups and consumer groups that have pushed for stronger regulations said they were glad to have regulations proposed in time to go into effect next year — but not impressed with their toughness.

“We are particularly concerned that programs could continue to profit from federal student aid when half their students with loans can’t afford to pay the principal,” said Pauline Abernathy, vice president of the Institute for College Access and Success.

Barmak Nassirian of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers said the new regulations were a step in the right direction. But like Ms. Abernathy, Mr. Nassirian was particularly unhappy about the standard allowing aid to colleges where 45 percent of the graduates are repaying their principal on their loans.
“You’re kidding me, 45 percent and you’re golden?” he said.

The for-profit sector has mushroomed in the last decade. While overall postsecondary enrollment increased 31 percent from 1998 to 2008, the for-profits’ enrollment grew by 225 percent. Although for-profit colleges, which can get up to 90 percent of the revenues from federal student aid, enroll less than 10 percent of the nation’s higher-education students, they get almost a quarter of the federal aid. In 2008-9, for-profit colleges got $4.3 billion in Pell grants and $19.6 billion in Stafford loans.

The new regulations essentially create green, yellow and red zones, based on students’ debt levels and repayment records.

To be in the green zone, fully eligible for federal aid, programs would either have to have at least 45 percent of their former students paying down the principal on their federal loans or graduates with debt-to-earnings ratios of less than 8 percent of their total income, or 20 percent of their discretionary income.

Programs in the red zone, ineligible for federal aid for new students, would have less than 35 percent of their former students paying down the principal, with graduates carrying a debt-to-earnings ratio above 12 percent of their total income and 30 percent of discretionary income.

Those in between would be subject to limits on enrollment growth, and required to warn applicants and students that they may have difficulty repaying their loans.

The proposed regulation will be published Friday for a 45-day comment period, with final rules issued in November.
Failure to Communicate
By ABIGAIL SULLIVAN MOORE

SINCE the very first bunk bed, roommates have annoyed each other. They leave their clothes all over the floor; they host overnight guests unannounced. Big deal. You tell them to pick up their stuff; you work out a “sexile” schedule.

But housing officials say that lately they are noticing something different: students seem to lack the will, and skill, to address these ordinary conflicts. “We have students who are mad at each other and they text each other in the same room,” says Tom Kane, director of housing at Appalachian State University, in Boone, N.C. “So many of our roommate conflicts are because kids don’t know how to negotiate a problem.”

And as any pop psychologist will tell you, bottled emotions lead to silent seething that can boil over into frustration and anger. At the University of Florida, emotional outbursts occur about once a week, says Norbert Dunkel, the university’s director of housing and residence education.

“It used to be: ‘Let’s sit down and talk about it,’ ” he says. “Over the past five years, roommate conflicts have intensified. The students don’t have the person-to-person discussions and they don’t know how to handle them.”

The problem is most dramatic among freshmen; housing professionals say they see improvement as students move toward graduation, but some never seem to catch on, and they worry about how such students will deal with conflicts after college.

Administrators speculate that reliance on cellphones and the Internet may have made it easier for young people to avoid uncomfortable encounters. Why express anger in person when you can vent in a text? Facebook creates even more friction as complaints go public. “Things are posted on someone’s wall on Facebook: ‘Oh, my roommate kept me up all night studying,’ ” says Dana Pysz, an assistant director in the office of residential life at the University of California, Los Angeles. “It’s a different way to express their conflict to each other.”

Dissatisfied students rarely take up an offer from a resident adviser to mediate, Mr. Pysz says.
“With mediation you have to have buy-in from both,” he says. “We don’t have a lot of mediation. We have a lot of avoidance.”

In recent focus groups at North Carolina State University, dorm residents said they would not even confront noisy neighbors on their floor.

“It was clear from the focus groups that the students expect the R.A.’s to keep the floors quiet,” says Susan Grant, the university’s director of housing.

Administrators point to parents who have fixed their children’s problems their entire lives. Now in college, the children lack the skills to attend to even modest conflicts. Some parents continue to intervene on campus.

“I can’t tell you the number of times I am talking to a student and thinking I am making headway and the student gets out their phone and says, ‘Can you talk to my mom about this?’ ” Mr. Kane says. Or housing officials field calls from parents pleading or demanding that the college get involved in a dispute, only for the officials to discover that the dispute was little more than a minor irritation, if anything.

Constant cellphone connection means parents jump in too quickly, says Sarah English, director of housing and residential life at Marist College, in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Some go directly to the source, Ms. English says: “It surprises me when students say, ‘My roommate’s mother called and yelled at me,’ and I think, ‘Are you kidding me?’ I can’t believe parents call students. Ten years ago, I never heard of that.”

With avoidance often comes escalation.

With the trend toward smaller families, many new undergraduates may never have shared a bedroom with a sibling. Without that experience, students don’t know how to negotiate potential areas of friction like keeping the room in (relative) order, watching a roommate’s television or borrowing an iPod.

Ryan Melson and Matt Blumenreich had their own bedrooms at home before rooming together as freshmen at Grinnell College in Iowa. They really hit it off. They both played on the baseball team and encouraged each other through long nights of studying during a grueling first semester. But Mr. Melson is a neat freak, and Mr. Blumenreich, by his own admission, is “the opposite.” Quite the opposite.

Mr. Melson says: “I just wanted him to clear a path so I could walk over to my stuff. I always had my own room and had it clean. I didn’t know how to handle it.”
Finally in October, he had had enough. “Hey, man, can you just move your stuff?” he said, clearly upset.

“It didn’t sound very nice,” he remembers. “I really wish I could have taken that back.”

Mr. Blumenreich retreated into silence for several weeks. “I wasn’t used to having someone harp on me to change who I am, to clean up after myself,” he says. Adding to the tension, Mr. Blumenreich was hearing from other students that Mr. Melson was unhappy with him.

The epiphanies came after winter break.

“Ryan came back and walked into the room with a big smile on his face,” Mr. Blumenreich says, “and he seemed so happy to see me that we just talked and we realized it was an insignificant difference. I realized I can’t always do things the way I want to.”

Mr. Melson compromised, too: “I’ve gotten a little messier myself.”

MANY campuses don’t have sufficient housing to accommodate student requests for room changes.

At Loyola University in Chicago, students who want to switch rooms have to find someone to trade places with them. Four years ago, as requests began to increase (to 50 now from about 20), the university started a “swap night” three weeks into classes for students dissatisfied with their roommates. It’s a chance to size up potential roommates. Pizza is served.

“It takes the burden off professional staff to match the people up and it engages students to own the process so the student has some say,” says Warren Hale, former director of residence life at Loyola and now director of university residence halls and apartments at the University at Buffalo.

When relationships really go south, colleges react. Marist used to ban first-semester students from changing roommates but in the past few years has been making more exceptions, Ms. English says. “It just gets to the point where they can’t live together anymore and we’ve exhausted all conflict negotiations and they are sleeping in other rooms and it’s involving other people,” she says.

Five years ago, 5 to 10 students at Marist might have asked to change roommates after the first six weeks; now 30 to 40 do. Marist has had to assign more staff members to freshmen dorms to referee conflicts, which number two to three a day during the first weeks, and peak again during times of stress like exam period. (Older students generate only two or three interventions a semester.)
Colleges are focusing on training members of the residence staff in conflict resolution. R.A.’s at the University of Florida attend a two-hour session with a psychologist on how to handle roommate confrontations. Some colleges have roommates draw up and sign a contract on bedtime schedules, study times, sex in the room, room cleanup and using each other’s possessions. The goal is to anticipate issues and provide students with a starting point to discuss problems as they arise.

Colleges have also been moving away from the purely random assignment, adding lengthier questionnaires designed to pinpoint compatibility or software programs that allow students to have a greater say in who becomes their roommate. “That ownership is incredibly important,” Mr. Dunkel says. The University of Florida uses RoomBug, a Facebook application in which students describe themselves and their vision of a perfect roommate, then browse profiles. Prospective matches communicate on Facebook, and submit their request to the school. But such matchmaking is hardly foolproof.

The lion’s share of freshman-year roommates — 72 percent according to one study, 83 percent in another — don’t live together sophomore year. Instead, they choose from compatible friends, supporting sociologists’ theory of homophily: birds of a feather flock together.

Colleen Card, Kara Gifford and Bridget Christie, freshmen at Marist last year, will live together in the fall. Ms. Christie says they are free spirits who talk easily with one another (unlike her first roommate, who preferred Post-its to talking about sticky issues like restocking the water bottles in their fridge). They also stay up late to study and like to sleep in.

At Marist, campus housing after freshman year is assigned based on merit. Students get more points for high G.P.A.’s, campus involvement and good conduct (like not being written up for under-age drinking) and deductions for infractions (like damaging rooms). The best housing goes to high scoring groups of roommates.

At an all-day event in April, students gathered in the gym to learn the housing consequences of their actions and friendships. Based on their group’s point average, students selected housing style and size. Snacks and boxes of tissue were on hand along with members of the housing and counseling staff to buffer bad news.

As the day progressed, choices diminished. No more townhouses for 10? Only suites for six? Friends must be dropped from the group — thus the Kleenex. Most of the strategizing, though, occurred before the event.

A rocky first semester academically had given Ms. Gifford a low score. Ms. Card’s was average. Friends with designs on the desirable Gartland Commons dorm ditched Ms. Gifford, but Ms.
Card refused to abandon her in the service of better housing.

The two teamed with Ms. Christie, a top scorer who was then invited to join another student with high points. She, too, declined, even with the prospect of another year in a restrictive freshman dorm. “Our room will be the cool room, the cool, drama-free room,” Ms. Card said.

Then, in a twist of fate, this month their names were plucked from a waiting list for Gartland Commons, a destination that eluded those first friends. “It’s really funny the way it worked out,” Ms. Card says now. “I chose to stay with Kara and get along with my roommates instead of living with a group of people whom I might not have gotten along with but had better housing. And I ended up getting my roommate and getting good housing.”

What you can learn from a 50-year college reunion

By Raymond Siller

Last month an envelope contained an invitation to my 50th Fordham College reunion. We, the class of 1960, were to be inducted as Golden Rams. The insert card suggested a jacket and tie. No wife beaters or homeboy pants for "Gen A."

Fordham is in the Bronx, so I’d have preferred to rent an armored personnel carrier, but the only available rental was a sub-compact. My girlfriend and I drove uptown along the Hudson River, hoping to glimpse flocks of Canadian geese making their annual migration along the path taken by Capt. Sully Sullenberger.

The first college reunion I attended was 25 years ago. The Class of 1960 was on hand for its reunion that night, too. Its members were a lively group, dominating the dance floor. A smaller, more sedate number of Golden Rams were celebrating their 50th. To us, they seemed ancient. For me, it was fun catching up with guys I hadn’t seen in a long time about our families, jobs, golf handicaps, exotic vacations. We were middle-aged, at the top of our game. Business cards were traded to ensure we stayed in contact.

Middle-class collar and no ivy

Some Fordham buildings were ivy-covered, but comparisons with the Ivy schools stopped there. Most of us were the sons of middle-class Americans. The island we summered at was Coney, not Nantucket. Our dads’ clubs were the Knights of Columbus and VFW. My father was a NYPD beat cop. My mother worked the four-to-midnight shift at Kings County Hospital.

No, we didn’t walk to school barefoot in the snow. We commuted three hours each day on subways. After classes, we went to work. We were waiters, delivery boys, even toll collectors on bridges. My main job was as an ABC page, hawking tickets to Times Square tourists for TV programs. One game show I was assigned to usher at was Who Do You Trust, hosted by a 34-year-old Johnny Carson.

Fordham can’t claim any U.S. presidents. There was no secret Skull and Bones society. No fraternities at all in the traditional sense. What Fordham did offer was a fine education. Its methodology: a liberal arts cocktail that paired a mandated major in philosophy with a chosen major and the traditional college curricula. Plus Theology, Latin and Greek.

Lessons for life

Jesuit classes were not passive. They challenged us to challenge them, and their teaching went beyond textbooks. They showed us the connection between hard work and success, between discipline and personal satisfaction. We learned that if we fully participated in life, we could make a contribution.

At our reunion, considering our ages, we didn’t look too bad. Old pals whipped out wallets to show photos of their grandkids. Never having married, I produced my lifetime membership card at Costco. Our unspoken mission may have been to defy the insurance companies’ actuarial tables. Los Angeles Dodgers broadcaster Vin Scully, Class of ’49, has noted that “the wolves are getting closer to the campfire.” It was my good fortune to connect with men who shared a common educational adventure, we surviving members of the last bottle club.

A young band hired to play ’50s tunes had valiantly endured the gig. Each generation claims its own music and someday theirs too will be yesterday’s, occupying oldies status with Fats Domino. These musicians will catch themselves in the mirror, wondering how it fast-forwarded so quickly and why “these kids today” consider Lady Gaga quaint.

By now, members of the class of 2014 have their letters of acceptance to campuses around the country. Soon bags will be packed and nests will be left. Incoming freshmen, just remember it doesn’t matter whether you attend a Fordham or a campus draped in ivy. What’s most important is the education you receive, the friends you will make, the lessons you will learn, the memories you’ll collect and the diplomas that will be framed. And in the blink of an eye, invitations will be received to reunions 50 years hence. A toast to jubilant tomorrows.

Raymond Siller is a four-time Emmy-nominated television writer and a political consultant.
Swinging like the pros ... with wood

Many summer leagues for college players eschew the aluminum bat

By Mike Foss
USA TODAY

BETHESDA, Md. — The groundkeeper stared down the base line. He was trying unsuccesssfully to line the field. A kick to the chalk liner helped little. Defeated, he went to the dugout. Time to change. He had a game to play.

Cody Freeman catches for the Bethesda Big Train, a collegiate summer baseball team. He also sometimes lines the field. A member of the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League (CRCBL), which has teams in Maryland and Virginia, the Big Train plays with wood bats used in the pros, not metal bats used in college.

"That's my ultimate goal," said Freeman, a rising senior at Mississippi State. "I've wanted to play professionally since I was a kid."

More than 20 summer leagues across the country use wood bats, including 14 that have started play since 1990. Eight leagues are members of the National Alliance of College Summer Baseball, an organization with the prestigious Cape Cod League, founded in 1885, at its center. The Cape Cod — along with the Alaska Baseball League — was the only premier wood-bat summer league for top amateur prospects during the 1960s and '70s, though the league briefly flirted with metal bats in the '70s according to Jim McGonigle, league director of communications.

"The Cape Cod's prestige lends itself to the other member leagues," Great Lakes Summer Baseball League commissioner Kim Lance said. "It doesn't hurt our reputation to say that we're part of the same alliance as Cape Cod."

Great Lakes teams average around 550 fans a game, according to Lance, while the Big Train team in the Ripken League draws around 750, says team founder Bruce Adams. Cape Cod games draw nearly 2,000 fans, according to McGonigle. Tickets to Cape Cod games average from $5 to $10, while a ticket to Big Train is $7 for adults and $3 for kids.

Alliance leagues draw attention and funding of Major League Baseball.

"MLB is interested in seeing how college players perform using wood bats, and that's the predominant reason for our existence," Lance said.

Said Minnesota Twins scout Ken Compton on wood bats: "That's one of the biggest reasons why teams have pre-draft workouts, just to see how the ball comes off a wood bat. You have such inflated statistics in amateur ball because of the metal bat. That's why the Cape and the summer wood-bat leagues have become a real good thing for us.... We get to see who has the real power."

If a kid is throwing 95 mph in high school, he should throw 95 mph when he turns pro. But when a guy swings a metal bat instead of wood, there's just such a dramatic difference.

While players, scouts and summer coaches believe in the preparation wood-bat leagues provide for the pros, college coaches see no need to change the NCAA game. Of 24 top college coaches surveyed in an Associated Press poll, 17 said they preferred aluminum and that there was no need to study the possibility of going to wood bats.

The argument for using metal bats has long been that they are cost-effective compared with wood. However, high-quality metal bats for a college team often cost well over $2000 while a wood bat of comparable quality can run $40 to $70. Big Train general manager Jordan Henry estimated the team spends approximately $2,000 on bats a year.

Aluminum bats are used in Little League, high school and the NCAA and behave differently from the wood bats.

"You have to hit with the grain on the label side of a wood bat," Kyle Griffis, part-owner of wood-bat manufacturer D-Bat said. "Wood bats break any other way while you can pretty much hit anywhere on a metal bat."

"It's a huge confidence builder," Big Train pitcher Hugh Adams said. "Pitch inside, and you may break a wood bat, where (with) a metal bat, it's a double in the gap."

Balls come off a wood bat more slowly than metal due in part to heavier bat weight. "Most metal bats are heavier in the handle," Griffis said. "Which makes it easier to get them around faster and hit harder."

Big Train manager Sal Colangelo illustrates the technique players need when using wood bats. "You focus early on getting players to hit inside the ball, square up," Colangelo said.

"The sweet spot of a wood bat is not as great as that of an aluminum bat, and you have to get that familiarity early."

Familiarity with bats isn't the only challenge players face. Summer teams feature players from across the nation. Big Train's roster has players from 12 states, including 10 from California.

"West Coast and East Coast are totally different styles," Colangelo said. "West Coast guys love small ball, and they lay down bunts all the time and sometimes it catches East Coast guys off guard. One style isn't better. You just have to learn..."
how to put that all together."

Added Freeman: "It's still baseball. You still have to hit it; you still have to throw it."

In summer leagues, the game is the same, but expectations off the field are different. Most Big Train players work summer camps to pay living expenses and live with host families.

"It's a little bit harder on hitters," pitcher Cameron Love said. "For pitchers, we can schedule a little bit better. We have a rotation and more time off."

The 42-game season starts June 4 and ends July 25 with playoffs July 28–Aug. 1.

"It's hard, but everyone wants to be here," Freeman said. "You're playing for the exposure to scouts, and it's worth it."

Combined, the Great Lakes and Ripken leagues contributed approximately 10% of the players drafted in the 2010 MLB draft, added motivation perhaps to players like Freeman in their final year of college ball.

"The scouts see you use the wood bat, and they see your potential and it means more," Freeman said.

Freeman's potential is clear. He went 4-for-5 with a home run that night, though he couldn't get the field lined.

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Contributing: Bob Nightengale

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Crack of the bat: Action in the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League.

A sampling of summer leagues that give college players the chance to use wood bats:

- **Alaska Baseball League**
  - Year founded: 1974;
  - six teams

- **Atlantic Collegiate League**
  - Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
  - Year founded: 1967;
  - 13 teams

- **California Collegiate League**
  - California, Nevada
  - Year founded: 1993;
  - seven teams

- **Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League**
  - Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C.
  - Year founded: 2005;
  - eight teams

- **Cape Cod League**
  - Massachusetts
  - Year founded: 1885;
  - 10 teams

- **Coastal Plain League**
  - North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia
  - Year founded: 1997;
  - 15 teams

- **Florida Collegiate Summer League**
  - Year founded: 2004;
  - five teams

- **Great Lakes Collegiate League**
  - Kentucky, Ohio
  - Year founded: 1986;
  - 11 teams

- **Jayhawk League**
  - Kansas
  - Year founded: 1976;
  - six teams

- **M.I.N.K. League**
  - Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas
  - Year founded: 1995;
  - 10 teams

- **Mountain Collegiate Baseball League**
  - Colorado, Wyoming
  - Year founded: 2005;
  - four teams

- **New England Collegiate League**
  - Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
  - Year founded: 1993;
  - 12 teams

- **New York Collegiate Baseball League**
  - Year founded: 1978;
  - 14 teams

- **Northwoods League**
  - Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ontario
  - Year founded: 1994;
  - 17 teams

- **Pacific International League**
  - Oregon, Washington, British Columbia
  - Year founded: 1992;
  - 10 teams

- **Prospect League**
  - Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia
  - Year founded: 1963;
  - 15 teams

- **Southern Collegiate Baseball League**
  - North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
  - Year founded: 1999;
  - eight teams

- **Texas Collegiate League**
  - Year founded: 2004;
  - six teams

- **Valley League**
  - Virginia
  - Year founded: 1961;
  - 11 teams

- **West Coast League**
  - Oregon, Washington, British Columbia
  - Year founded: 2005;
  - nine teams

- **WCL Portland**
  - Oregon
  - Year founded: 2009;
  - six teams

- **WCL Tri-state**
  - California, Nevada, Oregon
  - Year founded: 2009;
  - five teams

Compiled by Josh Lederman