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Public Forum

Musical at ECU a benefit to community

A Broadway play in Greenville on the Avenue of the Arts (a.k.a. East Fifth Street)? Yes, in fact and in deed. "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" took place at ECU in McGinnis Auditorium on July 24 and it was beautifully done, at least from this citizen's perspective.

As the main man, Prologus, said in the beginning, "This is a comedy," and the talented cast brought the seven hills of Rome to Greenville as Senex, an old man, and his son, Hero, seemed to vie for the beautiful virgin Philia (Hero won her hand).

There was the warrior Miles Gloriosus, who dressed like he was tough and then turned softer when faced with a beautiful courtesan.

Is $500 too much for a virgin? It is what you can get that counts, as Prologus, the dealmaker, went that away, round and round.

Anyway, Lycus a buyer of courtesan, had a story to tell about where each of his young beauties came from.

All along, Prologus maintained his major role as slave and as slave-trader always with a tale to tell and sometimes with limited concern for "who shot John."

There was the old man, Erronius, who tried out for a courtesan and later wore himself out walking three times around the seven hills. And there was Tintinabula, Panacea, the Geminae, Vibrata and Gymnasia, who, in one of the most significant doings of the play, danced in body motion that included sexual and gymnastics movements sufficient to entice men old and young.

The whole act was so beautifully done that I was even more impressed that there was just one professional actor (Prologus) and that most of the others in the cast were associated with ECU — faculty, graduates and students. What a credit to the university that it would provide the administration and the programming to expose this talent for the benefit of the people of the area.

VANN LATHAM
Greenville
Attorney general expands probe of student loans

East Carolina among 39 universities that Andrew Cuomo served with subpoenas.

By Michael Gormley
The Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo is now investigating whether top college athletic departments nationwide — including those at Auburn University, Ohio University and Texas Christian University — steered athletes and other students to education lenders in exchange for kickbacks.

Cuomo said Wednesday that he served 39 universities with subpoenas and requests for documents about deals between athletic departments and Student Financial Services Inc., which operates as University Financial Services. He said his office is looking into how team names, mascots and colors were used to suggest the company was the college's preferred lender.

"Students trust their university's athletic departments because so much of campus life at Division I schools centers around supporting the home team," said Cuomo. "To betray this trust by promoting loans in exchange for money is a serious issue, especially when Division I schools already generate tremendous revenue from their student athletes."

According to a report by USA Today, East Carolina and UNC-Greensboro were among the schools that received subpoenas and document requests.

Cuomo began the investigation as an outgrowth of his national probe of student loan providers and college administrators, which he said uncovered a pattern of favoritism for lenders who provided kickbacks, "revenue sharing" plans, and trips and other gifts in exchange for designations as recommended lenders. Sometimes the colleges provided campus employees to staff telephone banks for lenders drumming up business.

Cuomo's findings led to state and national reforms.

"Today's action is an important new step as we continue to examine the unethical conflicts that pervade the student loan industry," Cuomo said.

Ohio University spokeswoman Sally Linder said the school received a subpoena and will cooperate with Cuomo, as it did in a student loan probe by the Ohio Attorney General's office. She declined further comment until the university's lawyers review the subpoena.

"We feel confident what we are doing is above board," Linder said.

Spokesmen for Auburn and Texas Christian universities didn't immediately respond to requests for comment. The loan company couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

Cuomo said that during his first investigation, he found the athletic director of Dowling College on New York's Long Island entered into a revenue sharing agreement with University Financial Services that paid the college $75 for every new loan application, exclusive marketing advantages on campus, and allowed the lender to use the department's interns to disseminate its brochures.

Dowling ended the relationship with the company as part of its settlement of Cuomo's investigation.

Cuomo's investigation has resulted in settlements and reforms with 12 lenders — including Nelnet Inc., Citibank, Sallie Mae, JP Morgan Chase and Bank of America — and several colleges, with $13.7 million in payments made to a national education fund to help high school students and their families more wisely and safely apply for student loans.

Cuomo has said the U.S. Department of Education has had weak oversight of the student loan industry, a view supported Wednesday in a report by the investigative arm of Congress.

The Education Department is supposed to make sure banks that participate in the federal student loan program aren't giving schools or school officials anything of value in exchange for getting business at a particular school.

But the department has not sought out cases of improper conduct, according to the report by the Government Accountability Office. It found the department primarily responds to complaints, and doesn't even do a particularly good job of tracking those.

During the past 20 years, the department has only brought cases against two lenders, according to the report. More often, department officials have written letters to lenders asking them to stop acting improperly.

The department recently issued proposed regulations to try to limit abuses by lenders. Those could become effective next year.
Financial probe expands

N.Y. targets athletics programs nationwide, including ECU

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo is now investigating whether top college athletics departments nationwide — including those at Auburn, East Carolina, Ohio University and Texas Christian — steered athletes and other students to education lenders in exchange for kickbacks.

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“Students trust their university’s athletic departments because so much of campus life at Division I schools centers around supporting the home team,” Cuomo said. “To betray this trust by promoting loans in exchange for money is a serious issue, especially when Division I schools already generate tremendous revenue from their student athletes.”

East Carolina was among the schools that received subpoenas and document requests, according to a news release on Cuomo’s Web site at www.oag.state.ny.us.

Officials at East Carolina, though, said they had no knowledge of subpoenas or requests.

“So far as we know, nobody has subpoenaed [East Carolina],” said John Durham, director of public affairs at ECU. “The university as a whole does not have any arrangement with preferred lenders.”

Pirates athletics director Terry Holland was on vacation and unavailable to comment.

Cuomo began the investigation as an outgrowth of his national investigation of student loan providers and college administrators, which he said uncovered a pattern of favoritism for lenders who provided kickbacks, “revenue-sharing” plans, and trips and other gifts in exchange for designations as recommended lenders. Sometimes the colleges provided campus employees to staff telephone banks for lenders drumming up business.

Cuomo’s findings led to state and national reforms.

“Today’s action is an important new step as we continue to examine the unethical conflicts that pervade the student loan industry,” Cuomo said.

In a written statement issued late Wednesday, University Financial Services said: “The relationships between our company and athletic departments of various colleges and universities are part of our generalized marketing efforts, the same as advertising at any sporting event, and do not involve the financial aid departments of the schools involved. ... UPS supports the student loan code of conduct and plans to fully cooperate with the New York attorney general’s office.”

Ohio University spokeswoman Sally Linder said the school received a subpoena and will cooperate with Cuomo, as did in a student loan probe by the Ohio Attorney General’s office. She declined further comment until the university’s lawyers review the subpoena.

“We feel confident what we are doing is above board,” Linder said. Auburn athletics spokesman Kirk Sampson said the university has no preferred aid provider. "However, the Auburn Athletic Department will thoroughly examine and respond to any suggestion that the university’s name, logo or any representation of it has been used improperly in connection with specific lenders,” Sampson said.

A representative of Texas Christian didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.

Cuomo said that during his first investigation, he found the athletics director of Dowling College on New York’s Long Island entered into a revenue-sharing agreement with University Financial Services that paid the college $75 for every new loan application, provided exclusive marketing advantages on campus and allowed the lender to use the department’s interns to disseminate its brochures.

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N&O staff writer A.J. Carr contributed to this report.
MIT prof denies framing son

Wealthy man told tale of family feud

BY DENISE LAVOIE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — What the former MIT professor and wealthy businessman told police sounded like a scene from a bad spy novel: He was shot by two masked men with Russian accents, and saved only because two of the bullets bounced off his belt buckle.

Five months later came the indictment — against him.

Prosecutors say John J. Donovan Sr. staged his own shooting to gain an advantage in a legal battle with his own children for control of trusts that he claims are worth at least $180 million. He’s accused of trying to get revenge against his son by falsely accusing him of hiring hit men.

The accusations and the civil case are overshadowing the career of a man once dubbed “the Johnny Carson of the training circuit.”

Donovan, 65, a business professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1969 to 1997, made a name for himself as a technology guru. He commanded big fees as a sought-after speaker to Fortune 500 companies, started more than a dozen companies and published 11 books.

Trial starts Friday

Donovan is charged with filing a false police report, a misdemeanor that carries a maximum one-year sentence. His trial is scheduled to begin Friday in Middlesex Superior Court.

“John Donovan repeatedly provided false information to police about a crime that did not occur in order to ‘frame’ his son for a crime his son did not commit and had no part in,” prosecutors claim in court documents.

Donovan adamantly denies any role in his shooting and insists he was attacked by two strangers who approached him as he got into his car in the parking lot of his business, Cambridge Executive Enterprises, on the night of Dec. 16, 2005.

During the 911 call Donovan made from his cell phone after the shooting, he told a state police dispatcher that his son James, now 40, “laundered $180 million” and had threatened to kill him.

Prosecutors say Donovan made up the story to exact revenge, but his lawyer Barry Klickstein calls Donovan “the innocent victim of a violent crime.”

“Professor Donovan does not know who shot him. He certainly didn’t shoot himself, and he didn’t have himself shot,” Klickstein said.

Prosecutors say their evidence includes a surveillance tape showing Donovan, before the shooting, reaching up and moving a security camera that had been trained on the parking lot. The tape is alleged to show Donovan moving the camera so that it recorded the ceiling and wall but not the parking lot where he later said the shooting took place.

Klickstein would not discuss the surveillance tape or any other evidence before the trial, but he said, “The physical evidence that the district attorney relies on will not support the charges.”
Building better public colleges

BY STANLEY FISH

Whenever I’m asked, and sometimes even before I’m asked, I advise parents of college-age children to not send their sons and daughters to private schools, but to send them to public institutions, at least if there are any good ones in their state.

I say this for the obvious reason. The tuition/fee difference between a good private school and a good state school can be as much as $40,000, and, aside from the dubious coin of prestige, it’s hard to see what you would be buying. Ivy League colleges once had a monopoly on world-class faculty, but today high-powered scholars and teachers can be found in the classrooms of any number of good state universities.

There’s that word “good” again. A (relatively) inexpensive education may not be such a bargain if along with the lower price comes a lower quality. The challenge is to combine first-class schooling with affordability and access. The temptation is to do things on the cheap.

Both the challenge and the temptation are on display these days in Florida where a drama in many acts is unfolding. A former governor, Bob Graham, is suing to take away the legislature’s claimed authority to determine tuition and fees at the state’s 11 public universities. Graham contends that the legislature has been ignoring Amendment 11, which created a board of governors in 2002 to manage the university system. The board, in turn, has been accused of surrendering its responsibilities to the legislature.

Meanwhile, the same legislature voted a 5 percent tuition increase, which was promptly vetoed by the current governor, Charlie Crist, at the same time that statewide budget cuts threatened to remove $100 million from the system’s coffers. Crist has, however, reversed his opposition to a differential tuition raise of 15 percent for three of the state’s research universities.

Confused yet? I am. But things clarified a bit on July 10 when the board of governors, sometimes called the “somnolent overseers,” woke up and took three actions that amounted to laying down a gauntlet.

First, the board joined Graham’s suit, thereby defying the legislature. Second, the board voted for a 5 percent tuition increase, thereby defying the governor. Third, the board froze enrollment at current levels, thereby defying everyone, including, potentially, parents with children in high school. Moreover, the board did these things despite warnings issued at the meeting by two state legislators who serve on the House and Senate higher education appropriations committees.

These actions did not come out of the blue. Carolyn K. Roberts, chairwoman of the board, fired a warning shot in an op-ed in The St. Petersburg Times in June. "By every indicator," she wrote, "Florida falls behind in higher education.”

Mark Rosenberg, chancellor of the state university system, brought a "background and options” paper to the July 10 meeting, documenting in detail how bad things are (lowest tuition and highest student-faculty ratio in the country). After their vote, board members braced themselves for a firestorm of criticism. But except for a dyspeptic threat by Senate President Ken Pruitt ("see you in court") none arrived. Instead, state newspapers published editorials with titles like "At Long Last” and "Universities’ Board Right.”

What does it all mean? The hope is that it means the beginning of the realization of the goal announced in 1980 by Graham, who called for "a thrust for greatness” and the building of a world-class university system.

More easily said than done. At present, as Rosenberg and his board know, Florida is not even in the second tier of university systems in this country. Florida does not have a single campus that measures up to the best schools in the systems of Virginia, Wisconsin and Georgia, never mind first-tier states like California, Michigan and North Carolina. Climbing that hill will be an arduous task, and the key will be a persistence few states are up to.

The conditions that leave a university system depressed have been a long time in the making and will take time to reverse. Five straight years of steadily increased funding, tuition raises and high-profile faculty hires would send a message that something really serious is happening. Ten more years of the same, and it might actually happen.

Stanley Fish is a professor of law at Florida International University. He formerly taught at Duke University.
Campbell’s visionary leader dies

Norman Wiggins helped build a small college into one of the largest Baptist universities in the country.

By Michael Moore

Staff Writer

When Norman Wiggins first walked onto Campbell University’s campus as a student in the early 1940s, few had heard of the junior college.

After a lifetime devoted to the university, the longtime president and chancellor has left behind a school whose influence extends far beyond the small town of Buies Creek.

Those who knew Wiggins, who died Wednesday at age 83, say Campbell can thank his unbending will and persistence for its growth in the world of higher education.

“He was untiring in his efforts to promote Campbell University, not only among Baptists but among all North Carolina citizens.”

Wiggins became president of what was then Campbell College in 1967 and remained in the position until 2003, when he retired at 79 and was named chancellor.

He established five professional schools during his tenure and led Campbell’s transformation to a university in 1979. Campbell now enrolls roughly 10,000 students, making it one of the largest Baptist universities in the country.

“He was forceful, determined,” said Leary Davis, who was the founding dean at the Norman A. Wiggins Law School at Campbell.

“He was motivated by and tried to be true to all the better values of those institutions.”

The military influence was reflected in the school’s strong ROTC program. Campbell started it as many schools were shutting down theirs, amid anti-war sentiments in the 1970s.

Campbell also established educational opportunities at several military bases across the state, as well as a foreign program in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Wiggins developed close ties to Southern Baptists, even while other private schools in the state distanced themselves from their religious origins. Wiggins served as president of the Baptist State Convention for two years.

Religious values remain part of campus life with a strong academic program and bans on alcohol and premarital sex.

The strict religious policies have stirred some controversy, particularly when one religion professor was fired for joining a Methodist church and another had his contract withheld after he satirized Baptist beliefs in a novel.

But the school’s Baptist affiliation has helped attract students and shape the school’s vision.

“His purpose at Campbell was not to build a career or a resume to attract a more prestigious or promising position but to work toward what he considered was his divine mission,” Wallace said.

“He envisioned his work at Campbell as God’s work and his calling.”

Wiggins was committed to postgraduate education, though many questioned whether Campbell could support it. When Campbell founded its law school in 1976, it was just the fifth in the state and the first to open since 1940. In 1986, the university opened the nation’s first pharmacy school in 38 years.

“With respect to graduate and professional education, he would certainly hope to be considered a pioneer in North Carolina,” Davis said.

Now, the university is in good health. Last year, Campbell set a record for undergraduate enrollment at 2,843. And the law school bears a strong reputation — its graduates pass the state bar at a significantly higher rate than the North Carolina average, according to law.com, a site that ranks law schools.

“He will be missed,” Cogdill said.

“All six schools of the university are doing well, and I think that’s just a real tribute to his leadership.”
‘I came here to work’

*Nelms takes the reins at N.C. Central*

**By Eric Ferreri**

**STAFF WRITER**

**DURHAM** — For Charlie Nelms, the circle is now complete.

In becoming N.C. Central University’s chancellor Wednesday, Nelms capped a professional journey that began in the mid-1960s when he enrolled at the University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff, the local historically black college that, for a poor boy in the rural South, provided the single best route off the farm.

Throughout three decades in higher education administration, Nelms always wanted to lead a historically black university — his way of repaying his debt.

He has reached that goal. At age 60, Nelms heads a university campus for the third time, having previously held top jobs at regional campuses within public university systems in Michigan and Indiana.

He spoke briefly Wednesday at a morning campus ceremony in his honor, mopping his sweaty brow after sitting through 35 minutes of plaudits and declarations of hope from university, city and county officials.

“I did not come here to rest, and I did not come here to retire,” he said, drawing whoops from a well-dressed crowd of more than 100 at the circle in front of NCCU’s administration building. “I came here to work.”

Nelms, whose most recent post was as a vice president within the Indiana University system, is quick to emphasize his interest in student achievement. Though students are scarce now, in the dead of summer, Nelms addressed them directly.

“I’m here because of you,” he said. “No matter how many dollars we raise, no matter how many buildings we construct, if the students don’t succeed, we fail.”

Nelms follows James Ammons, now president of Florida A&M University. Ammons took several top administrators with him to Tallahassee, and one of Nelms’ first tasks will be to fill several jobs, including the chief financial officer, budget director and vice chancellor for student affairs and enrollment management.

The morning program was largely ceremonial. Nelms received two sets of keys: the symbolic key to the city of Durham, presented by Mayor Pro Tem Cora Cole-McFadden, and the keys to his office, given by Cressie Thigpen, chairman of NCCU’s board of trustees.

“This even looks better than the city’s key!” Thigpen said, opening a fancy box that held the office keys.

Nelms was hired by UNC President Erskine Bowles, who on Wednesday was giddy in presenting the chancellor. Bowles pledged Nelms the full support of his office.

“We’ll be behind you, in front of you, beside you,” he said. “You tell me where you want us, and that’s where we’re gonna be.”

Nelms will head the fastest-growing institution in the 16-campus UNC system. Founded in 1910, NCCU boasts one of two public law schools in the state and a burgeoning biotechnology program.

It is also a university with challenges. Nearly 90 percent of NCCU’s 8,600 students receive at least some financial aid. Enrollment has risen about 50 percent in the past six years, but the university still struggles to keep its students in school.

About 30 percent who enrolled as freshmen in fall 2005 did not return for their sophomore year.

For these challenges, Nelms appears a good fit. He has long worked on issues of affordability and access to higher education. As a doctoral student at Indiana University, he wrote his thesis on the academic performance of Indiana students on financial aid, noting that universities often don’t do enough to help poor students succeed in college.

A fitness buff who has run several marathons and once wrote a book of inspirational sayings, Nelms is a lively, engaging speaker. His dynamic nature appeared to rub off Wednesday morning.

“When he talks, he’s energetic,” said Reginald Boney, an NCCU senior from Durham.

“It’s like he’s ready to work. It’s infectious, and I think it will trickle down to the student body.”

**MEET CHARLIE NELMS**

**MOST RECENT POSITION:** Indiana University’s vice president for institutional development and student affairs

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor’s degree in agronomy and chemistry from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, 1968; master’s degree in higher education and student affairs, 1971, and doctorate in higher education administration, 1977, both from Indiana University

**AGE:** 60

**PARTIAL WORK HISTORY:** Chancellor and professor of education, University of Michigan-Flint, 1994 to 1998; chancellor and professor of education, Indiana University East (Richmond), 1987 to 1994

**FAMILY:** Wife, Jeanetta Sherrod Nelms, director of the 21st Century Scholars Program at Indiana University-Bloomington; son, Rashad Z. Nelms, a 2004 graduate of the University of Michigan Law School, a policy officer with the U.N. World Food Programme.
UNC receives Mellon grant

CHAPEL HILL – The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation of New York has given a $2.5 million grant to UNC-Chapel Hill for medieval and early modern studies.

The grant will enable UNC's College of Arts and Sciences to extend the global reach of the program beyond the European borders of the medieval and early modern world to China, Southeast Asia and Japan, the Caribbean and Latin America.

UNC will use $1 million of the grant to endow the Mellon Distinguished Professorship of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, with help from the N.C. Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund.