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More than 300 people attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the Drew Steele Recreation Center on Wednesday morning. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

**Ribbon cut at Steele Center**

By Wesley Brown

With the snip of a ribbon, people with special needs have a place to call their own in Greenville.

The Drew Steele Center, the city’s first recreational building to provide “first-priority use” to athletes with disabilities, opened its door to the public Wednesday in a ceremony filled with laughter, praise and thanksgiving.

But beyond the dedications, invocations and proclamations, the more than 300 people in attendance learned how every inch of the more 13,400 square feet in the state-of-the-art facility makes up a larger dream.

While the vision goes back more than 40 years, it all comes back to Drew Steele, the young man with Down Syndrome for whom the center is named.

Steele inspired change — none greater than in Skip Holtz, the former head football coach at East Carolina University who joined the effort to transform a facility deemed as “aging and inaccessible” into a place of refuge, fun and excitement for people with special needs.

“We really have had our own version of ‘Extreme Makeover’ here in Elm Street Park,” Greenville Recreation and Parks Director Gary Fenton said.
New beginnings

On the site of the former Elm Street Gym, the Drew Steele Center features “quality space” for people with special needs to play and train.

There’s a gymnasium, a multi-purpose room, a weight room and an outdoor shelter, each of which will officially be open to the public in the next 10 to 15 days, Fenton said.

The renovation was part of $1.3 million project paid in part by the city, private donations and a $500,000 matching grant with the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

Although construction took a year, Holtz and Mike Steele, Drew’s father, started collecting donations in 2005. Checks came in steadily, but fundraising at times was difficult in challenging economic conditions.

The fight to bring a facility like the Drew Steele Center to Greenville began on April 16, 1967, when the thinking of the day was that people with special needs could not compete alongside athletes with no disabilities.

Boyd Lee, who served more than four decades with the city’s Recreation and Parks Department, many of them as director, was on his second day on the job. His office was located where ceiling rafters now hang in the gym of the Steele Center.

Lee and other administrators met with a group of parents who were upset that there was “absolutely nothing going on in the city” for children with disabilities.

When the meeting was over, Lee’s supervisor gave him his first task — develop a summer program for children with special needs. The next year, Camp Sunshine was born.

“Each day since then, the program grew and kept growing,” Lee said. “But we never had a facility.”

Finding hope

The fight stretched more than three decades until Holtz crossed paths with Drew Steele on a cold, rainy spring morning in 1999 at a local golf tournament held to raise money for Pitt County Special Olympics.

Holtz was new to the area. His golf game was rusty and, frankly, the event was a “burden” on Holtz’s schedule, chocked full of recruiting and planning meetings, the coach said.
Everything changed, though, when Steele, whose family had “purchased” Holtz for nine holes, stepped up to the first hole.

Steele “destroyed” the tee box, Holtz said, before dribbling his ball off into the grass. Later on the green, he zipped it past the hole.

But there were no complaints; instead there were high-fives and celebratory pony rides on his putter — a sense of optimism that moved Holtz.

Holtz asked Steele to help him give out the tournament awards and, afterward, to talk to his team and work in the program’s equipment room during the upcoming season.

“He touched my heart,” Holtz said. “And I wanted to do something for him.”

**Making an impact**

Elm Street Gym was gutted, leaving just the walls and roof.

If either could talk, said Alice Keene, former director of Pitt County Community Schools and Recreation, they would speak about the birth of the Special Olympics in Greenville in 1974.

On Saturdays, volunteers counted nickels, dimes and quarters collected at red lights throughout the city to send 30 Pitt County Special Olympic athletes to their first Spring Games in Raleigh in 1975.

The class — competing only in track and field events — finished first, second and third in a competition many say inspired a new sense of pride in the community.

Pitt County soon became a leader in Special Olympics in eastern North Carolina. In 1991 and 1992, the county was selected to host the first Summer Games held east of Raleigh.

More than 3,000 volunteers were recruited. The opening ceremonies were televised, and Chubby Checker and The Platters headlined celebrity involvement.

Today, Pitt County Special Olympics serves more than 575 athletes who are trained year-round to compete in nine sports in state, regional, national, international and world games.

The program is expected to grow with the Drew Steele Center, a sight that reminds Keene of one of her favorite quotes: “Happy are those who dream dreams and are willing to pay the price to make them come true.”

“The Drew Steele Center is a dream come true for so many people that are Special Olympic athletes, as well as other people with special needs that
now have a place to call home,” Keene said. “A place where they will have first priority in scheduling, instead of last.”

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Green Hope grad wants to provide dental care to poor

By Anne Woodman

Until she was 8, Alisha Huria lived in India. Going to the dentist was at the bottom of her family’s list of concerns – basic needs like food, water, and clothing were the focus. For many people, dental care that could have prevented dire medical emergencies was not always easily accessible.

Now Huria, a graduate of Green Hope High School, wants to provide dental care to people in underserved communities in North Carolina when she completes her degree at ECU School of Dental Medicine. North Carolina ranks 47th out of 50 states in dentist-to-population ratio. That means cannot afford access to dental screenings. ECU has pledged to cater to underserved communities across the state, which appealed to Huria. She is about to complete her first year as part of ECU’s first class of dental students.

Q: If dentistry wasn’t a priority when you were growing up in India, what made you consider it as a career?

A: People did say, “Make sure you brush.” But I was never taken to a dentist to have my teeth cleaned; there were no annual checkups. A lot of things changed when we moved to America, and dental insurance made those things possible.

I thought I wanted to go to medical school. I took an internship at Duke Medical Center in radiation oncology because I thought that was what I wanted to do. I’m glad I did it, because I discovered that wasn’t what I wanted to do.

I had braces pretty late in my teens; I got them when I was a senior in high school. So I started thinking about dentistry as a career.

Q: How does it feel to be part of ECU’s first dental medicine class?
A: It was both an exciting and nerve-wracking experience. It is like the first time with anything: new school, new equipment, great new faculty ... Overall, a great experience.

Q: How many years did you pledge to work in an underserved community?

A: There was no specific agreement. Most of us knew that ECU had a mission to make dental care accessible to those who don’t have easy access. Most of us already knew that we wanted to work somewhere where there aren’t very many dentists.

Q: Is it true that North Carolina ranks near the bottom in the numbers of dentists to patients?

A: It is true that most counties in North Carolina have about one to two dentists each. Many dentists tend to seek work in the more populated areas, like the Triangle and Charlotte.

Q: By the time you enter your fourth year of dental school, you will start seeing patients, right?

A: Yes, ECU has 10 planned Community Service Learning Centers across the state, and we will do three nine-week rotations so we can experience what it is like to be in practice and be a health care provider. (So far, six learning center locations have been announced: Ahoskie, Elizabeth City, Lexington, Lillington, Spruce Pine and Sylva.) I am very excited about getting to see our own patients, the patients many dentists don’t see, including patients with disabilities or other health care issues.

Q: You seem to have a passion for helping others. Do you volunteer?

A: Yes, I love volunteering my time. I volunteer at the North Carolina Missions of Mercy clinics (affiliated with the North Carolina Dental Society). As an undergrad, I was only allowed to help with clean-up or do a little assisting. But now, as we learn about each procedure, we are able to do more assisting and can help with X-rays. I am looking forward to being able to treat patients at these clinics in the future.
Poll: Wake Forest men No. 1

Wake Forest University has the most-attractive men, UNC-Chapel Hill has experienced the most-impressive academic improvement, and the University of South Carolina is one of the most fun-loving schools.

Those are findings in a poll released recently by Her Campus, an online magazine aimed at college-age women.

Her Campus was founded in 2009 by a trio of Harvard University students -- Stephanie Kaplan, Windsor Hanger and Annie Wang -- and has won a number of awards.

Using a network of 3,000 correspondents at more than 200 colleges and universities, Her Campus came up with the rankings, which it says is aimed at college women.

“We wanted to showcase those schools that go above and beyond to provide a complete collegiate experience -- whatever that means to them,” Kaplan said of the correspondents.

In the category for Most Attractive (schools with the most-attractive men), Wake Forest came out No. 1. Rounding out the top five were the University of Virginia, the University of Wisconsin, James Madison University, and Boston College. Duke University ranked 10th.

North Carolina was No. 1 in the category New, New Ivies (schools that have seen a rapid rise in academic reputation). Tufts University, Carnegie-Mellon University, the University of Notre Dame, and Rice University completed the top five. No other Carolinas schools were in the top 10.

And if you’re looking for a place that’s cool and fun-loving, says Her Campus, South Carolina is second-best in the country, behind only Boston University. The rest of the top five includes the University of Wisconsin, Harvard University, and New York University.

Here are some other top fives:


Most Celebrified (schools with the most celebrity presence): 1. New York University. 2. Southern California. 3. UCLA. 4. Harvard University. 5. Columbia University.


Most Presidential-Romney (schools most likely to support Mitt Romney): 1. Brigham Young. 2. Yale. 3. Utah. 4. Patrick Henry College. 5. Full Sail University.

More about the rankings (and more categories) are available at the Her Campus website.
It is very analogous to authentic assessments in other professions,” said Raymond L. Pecheone, a Stanford professor who leads the center that developed the new standards.

To Earn Classroom Certification, More Teaching and Less Testing

By AL BAKER

New York and up to 25 other states are moving toward changing the way they grant licenses to teachers, de-emphasizing tests and written essays in favor of a more demanding approach that requires aspiring teachers to prove themselves through lesson plans, homework assignments and videotaped instruction sessions.

The change is an attempt to ensure that those who become teachers not only know education theories, but also can show the ability to lead classrooms and handle students of differing abilities and needs, often amid limited resources.

It is also a reaction to a criticism of some teachers’ colleges, which have been accused of minting diplomas but failing to prepare teachers for the kind of real-world experience where creativity and flexibility can be the keys to success.
The new licensing standards will be required next year in Washington State and have been committed to in Minnesota. New York will impose the new standards starting in 2014 with the estimated 62,000 students expected to graduate with teaching degrees.

Illinois, Ohio and Tennessee are also moving toward mandating the new assessment in the coming years, and about 20 other states are testing it through pilot programs to determine if they will ultimately use it.

“We don’t want to know if you can pass multiple-choice tests,” said Stephanie Wood-Garnett, an assistant commissioner in the New York State Education Department’s office of higher education. “We want to know if you can drive.”

Although there are myriad paths to becoming a teacher in New York, candidates typically must complete a state-approved undergraduate program, majoring in the candidate’s chosen subject, and pass three state tests. Candidates also usually meet some type of student-teaching requirements. Others can accomplish the same requirements in an approved master’s degree program.

The new assessment system replaces two of the three written exams, made up of multiple-choice questions and essays, and introduces the classroom assessment elements.

“It will be harder to meet the passing threshold,” said John B. King, the state’s education commissioner. “You will have to demonstrate more content knowledge.”

But critics are dubious that the new assessment system will produce better teachers and said that imposing a standardized program on education schools undermines their autonomy in preparing teachers. They also fear that the schools may have no choice but to adapt their curriculums to the new standards.

The model for evaluating educators, known as Teacher Performance Assessment, was designed by Stanford University, with input from more than 600 educators, including university professors, across the country. In New York, the system will be introduced in the fall at all 130 education schools and colleges that award teaching degrees.

“It is very analogous to authentic assessments in other professions, in nursing, in medical residencies, in architecture,” said Raymond L. Pecheone, a professor of practice at Stanford who leads the center that developed the
new assessment. “In its most basic form, we collect authentic artifacts of teaching that all teachers use on the job.”

Under the system, a teacher’s daily lesson plans, handouts and assignments will be reviewed, in addition to their logs about what works, what does not and why. Videos of student teachers will be scrutinized for moments when critical topics — ratios and proportions in math, for instance — are discussed. Teachers will also be judged on their ability to deepen reasoning and problem-solving skills, to gauge how students are learning and to coax their class to cooperate in tackling learning challenges.

Linda Darling-Hammond, an expert on teacher education at Stanford who led President Obama’s education policy transition team, said the new evaluation methods were critical to any classroom reform efforts.

“Teaching is action work,” Ms. Darling-Hammond said. “You have to make a lot of things happen in a classroom with a lot of kids, effectively. You cannot just have book learning. It is not enough to pass a paper-and-pencil test, or even to have taken a bunch of classes in an education program. You have to be able to demonstrate whether you can actually teach.”

The new certification system comes at a time when the performance of teachers is being much debated and more closely linked to the success of schools. The new teacher assessments, which were adopted in March by New York’s Board of Regents, have also been included in the state’s application for federal grants, under the Race to the Top competition.

Michael Mulgrew, the president of the United Federation of Teachers, the New York City teachers’ union, said he supported making teacher licensing requirements more stringent, saying the prevalence of rookie teachers leaving schools of higher education “unprepared to teach is one main reason our attrition rate is so high.”

“We have to train teachers better,” he said.

But a top official of the state’s union was more skeptical. The official, Maria Neira, a vice president at New York State United Teachers, said college educators did not oppose a more rigorous evaluation system, but resented what they considered a process of carrying it out that was “driven by” politics and that left them excluded from any meaningful input.

“It erodes the role of what professors do, which is create curriculum, create that coaching model,” Ms. Neira said. “Who is going to grade the process? How will you ensure it will be done in a way that is fair and equitable for all candidates?”
The new system will require teachers to electronically submit their work, including the videos, for grading by trained evaluators who have been recruited by the education company Pearson.

Last month, some of the skepticism about the assessment was evident after a presentation by Mr. Pecheone and Ms. Wood-Garnett to college educators at the City University of New York.

“Our decisions are being outsourced,” said one faculty member at a state university in New York who supervises student teachers and asked not to be identified because she feared retribution from her employer. She said other educators in the audience that day also expressed concern that the new evaluation system would undermine their role in supervising aspiring teachers.

Some of that sentiment has been exhibited in Massachusetts, which is testing the new licensing procedure. At the University of Massachusetts, 67 of the 68 students in a program for future middle and high school teachers refused to submit two 10-minute videos of themselves teaching, as well as a 40-page take-home test. The students said that evaluators chosen by Pearson were not qualified to judge their abilities, and should not be allowed to do so over their own professors.

Because the new assessment programs are not yet in place, data about what kind of teachers they produce is a long way from being available. In California, a similar assessment system for granting new teaching licenses was started a decade ago, but the one being adopted in New York and the other states is newer and has different elements, including a new grading system.

One study of California’s evaluation system, Mr. Pecheone said, indicated that high performance on the assessments corresponded to higher standardized test scores.

About 100,000 teachers in the United States — 2.5 percent of all the country’s teachers — already have undergone a more grueling and elaborate evaluation process in earning certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which is akin to becoming a board-certified pediatrician or accountant, said Ronald Thorpe, the board’s president.

A number of studies done for the national board, he said, have found a statistically significant and positive relationship between a teacher’s
performance on assessments to receive national board certification and a student’s achievement.

“Across the full spectrum of a teacher’s career,” Mr. Pecheone said, “there is growing evidence teachers who perform well on these assessments have students who outperform students whose teachers do less well on them.”

Supporters of the new assessment say that unveiling it in so many states will yield a broad picture of what good teachers need to know and how it can help their students raise their performance.

“The teacher is central because he or she is where the rubber hits the road,” said Mary Diez, dean of the school of education at Alverno College in Wisconsin, one of the states piloting the assessment system. “The teacher’s relationship with the kids, and as manager of their learning experiences, is key for better or for worse.”
Why an All-Female School May Be Best Training Ground

By MELISSA KORN

The best training ground for success in a male-dominated business world is a classroom full of women, says Cathy E. Minehan, dean of the all-female Simmons College School of Management.

In a coed environment, "male leadership roles remain unchallenged, and women are left with 'play the game our way, or go home,'" she says.

Ms. Minehan, 65 years old, knows a thing or two about the old boys' club.

She is a former chief of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, and spent nearly 40 years at central bank branches in Boston and New York. She stepped down in 2007, then took the deanship at the Boston-based school last summer, joking that she "flunked" retirement.
Ms. Minehan spoke with The Wall Street Journal about the merits of an all women business education, and brand-management lessons learned at the Fed.

Edited excerpts:

**WSJ:** You were in a very different industry before coming to academia. Why did you take the job at Simmons?

**Ms. Minehan:** [The job] intrigued me. I've always had this interest in what you can do, systemically, to make it easier for women to be successful in business.

**WSJ:** Why is it better to address those systemic issues in an all-women environment when so much of the business world is dominated by men? How is that good training for real life?

**Ms. Minehan:** Just think about mission-driven education in general—for example, historically black colleges. The schools provide not only a firstclass education, but also an environment and culture in which it's easier to talk about some subjects.

[At Simmons, students] can develop tools to navigate better in the business world because they understand the subtleties of a male-dominated culture in a way that they might not understand in classrooms that are dominated by men.

An example: negotiations. Women don't negotiate the same way that men do. We teach classic negotiation theory, classic negotiation practice, but we also teach about the situation women will find in [the outside world] and then how to deal with it.

**WSJ:** Should coed business schools address gender issues more?

**Ms. Minehan:** I think some reference should be made to it. Should it drive out the real focus on hard [quantitative] topics? No, it shouldn't.

**WSJ:** Simmons boasts of teaching "principled leadership." How is what you do different from your peers' approach to ethics and leadership?

**Ms. Minehan:** We [have] incorporated the "giving voice to values"
framework. The idea is that you don't have an ethics course, you embed values in every single course. So if you're talking about finance, you talk about how you develop a financial tool that's appropriate for the customer. You want to serve your customer, you don't want to sell your customer just the next schlocky thing.

\[To teach leadership\], we give each student the organizational behavior and other theory that goes into what makes a good leader, but we also give them lots of team-based work. You get a lot of opportunities to develop your own voice.

We write cases about women leaders. Harvard \[Business School\] doesn't have a whole lot of cases written about women. If Harvard wants a case about a woman leader, they usually are looking at stuff we've developed.

**WSJ:** What lessons did you take from the Fed that you want to bring to Simmons?

**Ms. Minehan:** The process of establishing your personal brand is a good thing to do. I was at the [Federal Reserve Bank of New York] for 10 years before I had my children. Both times, I was promoted while I was on maternity leave. Companies are not stupid; they know when they've got a good asset. You've got to be flexible enough to figure out how to keep the people you really need to have.

I really learned the value of establishing your brand, and then working from there. I was fortunate enough to find good household help. People draw on family, they use day care. There's a lot of different options there and you can make them work if you want to make them work.

**WSJ:** Women leaders have been a hot topic in recent weeks, particularly after Marissa Mayer was named CEO of Yahoo YHOO -0.59%. Should her pregnancy be as big of a deal as it is?

**Ms. Minehan:** I think it's interesting, but I don't think it's so interesting that you've got to focus so many column inches on it. If she's smart enough to run Yahoo, which the board seems to think she is, she's smart enough to figure this out.

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