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System failure at UNC

Julius Peppers has had a terrific career as a professional athlete (now with the Chicago Bears), and his turn as a football and basketball player while at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1998 until 2001 represents a relatively brief stopover in his life. It was an opportunity that helped the Tar Heels win some games and helped Peppers gain attention within the professional ranks.

But as a student ... Peppers was a great athlete. And that was just fine with the university, or at least one could conclude that after looking at what appears to be a transcript of Peppers’ academic record. It seems Peppers, majoring in African and Afro-American Studies, was staying barely eligible for football with little apparent intent of graduating. The transcript shows no grades at all for his last semester, in the fall of 2001.

What kept Peppers eligible were his good grades in courses related to the African and Afro-American Studies department, headed then and until recently by Julius Nyang’oro, whose accommodating nature toward athletes is under scrutiny as part of an academic fraud investigation at the university.

Nyang’oro resigned as department chair and retired after The News & Observer reported on 54 courses, most with him listed as the instructor, that basically included no instruction and often featured heavy enrollments of athletes. Some of those athletes were football players under Butch Davis, who presided over a program that resulted in sanctions for the university from the NCAA, college athletics’ governing body. Davis resigned with a multimillion-dollar settlement.

Still probing

The university’s investigation of the academic scandal, which has gone back no further than 2007, is ongoing and so is one by the State Bureau of Investigation, covering fraud issues.

But the Peppers transcript, which ordinarily would be no one’s business but which turned up on a university web portal, now appears to show that these connections to the African and Afro-American Studies department, and the department’s helpfulness to athletes, go back well prior to 2007.
That Peppers, or anyone with his academic record, could have stayed eligible for sports is an embarrassment to the university, which was clearly tolerating a system putting athletes under the special care of advisers who were charged with keeping them eligible to put UNC-CH on the big sports marquees.

What’s needed

If UNC-Chapel Hill is ever going to come out of the shadows of this scandal, the beleaguered Chancellor Holden Thorp has little choice about his next steps.

First, the university’s investigation must expand and go back in scope to the years before 2007. Let’s have the whole story.

Second, Thorp and other officials need to quit focusing on “damage control.” Get everything out there, in the public eye, admit mistakes and shortcomings, apologize for the embarrassment to alumni and the university’s loyal supporters and institute reforms.

Third, change the university’s “culture” so far as athletics go. That means keeping track of athletes’ academic progress beyond ensuring their eligibility, instead making certain they are progressing in a degree program. That means no more special advising system, which seems to have evolved into an eligibility system.

Finally, administrators must take charge, not shrug their shoulders and reckon that the athletics department, and specifically the football and basketball programs, are simply too big to pull under rein. Admissions officers must not be so quick to make exceptions to normal standards just to accommodate blue-chip players.

The university now knows what happens when the athletics enterprise is left to its own devices.
Greenville Mayor Allen Thomas looks over a proposed site map with Kenneth Lloyd during a public forum called by local residents to discuss the construction project to connect 10th Street to the hospital held at Mt. Calvary Church on Tuesday, Aug. 14, 2012.

**Connector changes protested**
*By Wesley Brown*

Wednesday, August 15, 2012

When the City of Greenville passed on an offer to buy five parcels of land off Watauga Avenue, Kenneth Lloyd went to Plan B: invest in the property and convert it into a tire shop for the local community.

Lloyd got a building permit, bought the necessary equipment and found a mechanic who agreed to rent the land to open an auto center.

Everything was set to go. Then two weeks ago, Lloyd got a call. The state government was going to shut him down, take his land by eminent domain and write him a check for his work for the sake of creating a central avenue between East Carolina University and Vidant Medical Center.

Now, the mechanic has backed out of the lease, the supplies sit unused in a garage and Lloyd is out $50,000 and maybe more, depending on what the state offers him.

“It’s not right,” Lloyd said at a Town Hall meeting held Tuesday night at Mt. Calvary Free Will Baptist Church in protest of the N.C. Department of Transportation’s recent change in plans in a highway project known as the 10th Street Connector.

Lloyd is one of a handful of landowners who thought their businesses would be spared in 2014 when contractors start bulldozing from Memorial Drive to Evans Street.
But an unknown group of appraisers — the DOT does not even know their names — has in the past four months expanded the scope of the project, in the works since 2005, to make room for 15-foot utility easements for overhead power lines.

Since April, five local entrepreneurs have received letters, phone calls and visits at their place of work, most of them “unpleasant,” to inform them of the move.

On Tuesday, State Rep. Marian McLawhorn and N.C. Senator Louis Pate, each of whom represent parts of Pitt County, called for more training, accountability and transparency in the highway project at the public meeting. They added ECU and Vidant Health Systems, each of which contributed $2 million to the planning of the connector, need to become more involved in the project.

Greenville City Council members Rose Glover and Max Joyner went one step further, demanding updated maps — which are not on file with the city — and for the DOT to stick to its original promise to make uprooted businesses whole again.

“We spent seven years getting people onboard with the plan and making them feel comfortable with the end result and now it is different,” said Glover, who represents the district through which much of the connector will run. “It is frustrating.”

McLawhorn, in hearing much of the business owners concerns, felt most of the miscommunication could have been avoided.

For example, when the DOT approached Malinda Gorham in 2009 to tell her they were going to curb and gutter the parking lot of her printing shop, Air Mania, to symmetrically widen 14th Street for turn lanes, the two agreed on a less invasive route: widen to the east, not the west.

Gorham’s property was saved, until subcontractors with Telics, the firm in charge of right-of-way acquisitions for the project, showed up at her doorstep to tell her they reneging on the deal.

“If I would have known this three years ago, I could have prepared a little bit better,” said Gorham, whose business requires a three-phase electricity plan. Moving expenses would cost her at least $25,000 she said.

DOT promises business owners fair-market value for their land and at least $20,000 in moving expenses. Plus, the city has chipped in $100,000 and continues to search for grants and loan options to assist with relocation.
But the resources will be shared among the 30 homes, 24 businesses and seven nonprofit organizations to be leveled and the DOT’s credibility took a hit with this recent lapse.

Doug Askew, right-of-way agent with Greenville’s DOT office, said 80 of 202 people who will lose some land have been contacted and appraisals are beginning to be finalized.

Askew said he expects demolitions and relocations to be complete by October 2013 for utility work to start. He added less than one percent of state buyouts are contested in court and Taylor Keith, project manager for Telics promised that once an offer is made it will not be lowered.

“That’s the bottom-line truth,” he said.

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Editorial

Classrooms vs. financial aid. UNC faces a Catch-22, students pay the price

If our universities are going to continue to increase tuition, it is only fair that part of that tuition increase go toward financial aid for students not born with silver spoons in their mouths. But University of North Carolina officials are discussing possible elimination or cuts in the amount dedicated to such assistance.

Their concerns are understandable, if troubling. Deep budget cuts over several years have begun to take a toll on our public universities. Class sizes have increased, class offerings and financial aid awards have decreased, and "efficiency" efforts have given way to attempts to limit the damage.

To soften the blow, the General Assembly allowed the board of governors to increase tuition, action that further burdens poor- and middle-class students; universities are required to set aside 25 percent of their tuition increases for financial aid. UNC President Tom Ross has suggested using more of that money to offset budget cuts that have an impact on the classroom.

A proposal being discussed would eliminate or cap that requirement, which board of governors member Fred Eshelman of Wilmington, called a "hidden tax." And in a sense, it is. It is the result of the General Assembly's utter disregard for the section of the state constitution that admission to public universities in North Carolina "as far as practicable, be extended to the people of the State free of expense."

Not long ago Eshelman, speaking to a Wilmington audience, made an impassioned case for a strong public university system. Among other things, he estimated that the state gets a $12 to $15 return on investment for each dollar spent on the public university system. He also challenged the board of governors to reject tuition increases to force the Honorables to "deal with it." His comments were somewhat ironic in that his substantial contributions to conservative political action committees has helped elect lawmakers who seek deeper budget cuts.

As for the argument that middle-class parents who pay all or part of their child's college expenses also resent that part of the increase goes to financial aid, tuition and fees cover various university expenses including financial
aid. The crux of the problem is not that financial aid is subsidized, but that the cost of attending a public university in North Carolina continues to rise much faster than families' paychecks.

The state and its residents benefit significantly from having a work force educated in its public universities. That means the state also has an interest in investing in those universities, as well as a constitutional mandate to do so. Our system may be a bargain relative to other states' colleges, but each tuition increase makes it harder for lower- and middle-income students to get an affordable education.

The average college student today graduates with more than $25,000 in student loans. State-funded financial aid took a hit with recent budget cuts. The tuition set-aside requirement offset some of those cuts. At UNC Wilmington, it raised $1.6 million and helped about 1,000 students.

In allowing universities to increase tuition, the General Assembly pushed a larger share of its own responsibility for funding public education onto the universities, which in turn have passed them along to the students. If our state is determined to continue chipping away at the state share of university funding, then financial aid is essential to allow qualified students of limited means to get a college degree without drowning in debt.
Former Winthrop basketball player Dreher pleads guilty to 2011 assault

By Jonathan McFadden

YORK–A former Winthrop University men’s basketball player has pleaded guilty to second-degree assault and battery, more than a year after he and a teammate were accused of raping a woman in their on-campus apartment.

Robert “Robbie” Dreher, a 21-year-old former guard for the Winthrop Eagles, was sentenced to one year of probation. His criminal record shows that he was once charged with a misdemeanor for disturbing schools in Greenville that was later dismissed.

In April 2011, Dreher and his Eagles teammate, Julius Francis – a then-21-year-old center from Warri, Nigeria – were arrested when a 19-year-old woman said the two athletes sexually assaulted her in the Courtyard apartments after she rebuffed their sexual advances.

Both players, enrolled at the university on scholarship, were charged with third-degree criminal sexual conduct and held on a $20,000 bond each.

Two months after their arrest, Winthrop’s men’s basketball coach at the time, Randy Peele, told The Herald that both Dreher and Francis would likely not be part of the team for the following season. Peele said Dreher had already voluntarily terminated his scholarship while Francis was considering exploring attending a junior college or prep school.

The cases against Dreher and Francis remained pending in court until July 26 when Dreher appeared before Judge Michael Nettles and pleaded guilty to second-degree assault and battery, which contains elements of criminal sexual conduct, said Erin Joyner, the assistant solicitor who prosecuted the case.

The charge changed after prosecutors encountered “certain...evidentiary issues that we discussed with the victim and law enforcement,” Joyner said.

Joyner was unable to elaborate on what those issues were, but she said prosecutors and Dreher’s defense attorney agreed that the statute for second-degree assault and battery applied to the victim’s allegations.
“Any time you have the allegation of a sexual assault, the sexual assault, by its very nature, would involve the non-consensual touching of a private part,” Joyner said.

The victim, a former Winthrop student from Greenville, didn’t attend the hearing, Joyner said.

“It was a very short plea,” she said, adding that second-degree assault and battery normally carries a three-year maximum sentence.

Prosecutors recommended probation and, after meeting with law enforcement and the victim, agreed on the resolution, Joyner said. Because Francis’ case is still pending, she was unable to give more details.

Dreher’s defense attorney, Gary Lemel of Rock Hill, declined to comment and said Dreher’s family declined to comment, as well.

Police reports show that around 6 a.m. April 17, 2011, a “highly distraught” crying woman went to Richardson Hall on campus, yelling that she had been “molested.”

The woman’s friend called police. When officers arrived, they found her sitting on the curb. The report states that it was “apparent” that the woman suffered a traumatic event before she told police she had been touched by a man.

She refused to elaborate and began lashing out at police and her friends, claiming that they were victimizing her further. She then vowed to leave Winthrop as soon as possible.

The next morning, a supervisor from Greenville Memorial Hospital called Winthrop Police to notify them that the woman had gone to their facility for treatment after claiming she was raped at the university. Authorities picked up a completed rape kit and placed it in evidence as police investigated, the report states.

During the investigation, the woman told campus police that she had been at Dreher’s and Francis’ Courtyard at Winthrop apartment, according to the report. She claimed she and Dreher had argued over his sexual advances toward her. Dreher had put her out of the apartment twice, but she was let back in.

The woman said Dreher led her to Francis’ room, where she was restrained while both players engaged in sexual activity with her although she said “No,” according to the report.
Police issued warrants for Dreher and Francis. On April 27, 2011, both players turned themselves in to police and were arrested.

In August, Dreher, a sophomore business administration major at the time, and Francis, a freshman sociology major, were officially expelled from the university before classes began for a new semester, according to Dean of Students Bethany Marlowe.

Before his departure from Winthrop, Dreher played in 27 games and led the team in scoring with 12.7 points per game average. He also averaged 3.9 rebounds.

After leaving Winthrop, Francis transferred to Northern Oklahoma College in Tonkawa, Okla., where he played post for the school’s men’s basketball team, the Mavericks.

The Daily Advertiser, a newspaper in Lafayette, La., reported last week that Francis recently signed on as a center for the University of Louisiana-Lafayette’s men’s basketball team, the Ragin’ Cajuns, for the 2012-2013 season.

Brian McCann, the university’s sports information director, said Tuesday the athletic department was unable to comment on any potential student athletes unless they’ve already enrolled in classes or have turned in a letter of intent. Francis, 22, preparing to enter his junior year, has done neither.

“Classes start Monday,” McCann said.

The Daily Advertiser reported that Francis told a reporter he made the decision to attend the university after visiting the campus and meeting the athletic director. He also said he would occupy a scholarship spot left vacant by a player who quit the team last month.

In a follow-up story, the university’s athletic director told The Daily Advertiser that the athletic department and other “constituents” within the university planned to meet to see if Francis would be enrolled at the school.

“We haven’t made any decisions” regarding Francis, McCann said.

Jonathan McFadden 803-329-4082
U.N.C. Humiliated, but Eager to Return to the Field

By VIV BERNSTEIN

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — The first football practice of a new season and a new era at North Carolina came mercifully this month, a much-needed respite in what has been a two-year nightmare for a once-respected program.

It “was just like Christmas; I could compare it to that,” quarterback Bryn Renner, a redshirt junior, said before the annual Meet the Heels fan day Aug. 4 at Kenan Memorial Stadium. “So happy to get on the field. A full staff and everything and all the momentum behind us.”

The Tar Heels can only hope the scandal that has roiled this community since 2010 is behind them, too, even as it remains unsettled for some on campus.

“It’s been like a roller coaster, so many ups and downs throughout the years,” kicker Casey Barth, a senior, said. “A lot of good times kind of came down a lot, but we’ve done a good job of getting back up.”

When they take the field for their season opener Sept. 1 against Elon, the Tar Heels will be playing for a new coach, Larry Fedora.
That is one of the many byproducts of an N.C.A.A. investigation that began in 2010 after accusations of improper gifts from agents to athletes and quickly escalated into a humiliating academic scandal for a university that was once called a new Ivy by Newsweek. A report over the weekend suggested the academic malfeasance could stretch back more than a decade.

The scandal led to the dismissal of Coach Butch Davis, who was fired shortly before practice began last August; the early retirement of Athletic Director Dick Baddour; and N.C.A.A. penalties, announced in March, including a bowl ban this season and scholarship losses and probation for three years.

Victories from 2008 and 2009 have been vacated, along with team records of some players, including Giants wide receiver Hakeem Nicks. Those records have been given an asterisk to indicate they were set while the athletes were determined to be ineligible to play.

“Obviously, we did some things wrong, and that brought all the attention to us,” offensive lineman James Hurst, a junior, said. “That was our fault, and now everyone’s kind of got us under a microscope. That’s what happens when you mess up, especially on such a high collegiate level. That’s part of being part of D-I football.”

Which is why North Carolina’s commitment to athletics is being questioned by some at the university. As many as 112 faculty members signed a statement on athletic principles in February, seeking institutional openness, educational responsibility and mission consistency. And three faculty members released a report of their own investigation in late July calling North Carolina a “campus with two cultures.”

“The athletic enterprise has grown so large and so remunerative that it may not be appropriate at universities anymore,” Lewis Margolis, a professor in the university’s school of public health, told The News & Observer in Raleigh after the July report came out.

Margolis is a member of the Athletics Reform Group, made up of faculty members who meet to discuss the role of athletics on campus. He also signed the February statement on athletic principles.

“I’m troubled, I’m appalled when actions take place within a university that violate its fundamental mission, and so that’s what’s prompted my reaction,” Margolis said in a recent telephone interview. “I think there’s a profound sense of dismay and anger that the institution of the university — and it’s
not just here, obviously — but that institution is being harmed; it’s being damaged in very fundamental ways.”

Still, Bubba Cunningham, hired in October to replace Baddour, said he did not believe there was a rift between academics and athletics at North Carolina.

“I think that the discussion is very good,” Cunningham said as he sat in Kenan Football Center high above the stadium field. “But I really believe there are people that have extreme views on a lot of different issues, this being one of them.

“I think you need the diversity that an athletic program brings to an institution. I think that the diversity of our student population is enhanced by the student-athletes that are here.”

Cunningham said the academic issues, including an internal review revealing that athletes registered for 54 no-show classes in African and Afro-American studies, were now behind the program. But that statement came before another report by The News & Observer over the weekend that indicated the academic fraud could date to Julius Peppers, the former star defensive end and basketball player for the Tar Heels from 1999 to 2001 who now plays for the Chicago Bears.

That report was prompted when an academic transcript that appeared to be Peppers’s showed up on the university’s Web site. North Carolina said it was investigating how the transcript was posted online.

Cunningham said concern among the university’s academic community would not affect North Carolina’s commitment to athletics. There is no going back for a university that recently spent $70 million for a new athletics facility.

“College athletics is very important to an awful lot of universities,” Cunningham said. “I know it’s important to North Carolina.”

And of course, to its fans. Rich Shopmyer, 41, of Hillsborough, N.C., was among the hundreds who showed up for the meet-and-greet with players and Fedora.

“I think people feel like maybe this is a clean start for the program, with Coach Fedora bringing in a new staff, a new A.D.,” Shopmyer, clad in Tar Heels gear, like the rest of his family, said as he tossed a football with his 6-year-old son, Liam, on the Kenan Stadium field.
“I think it’s probably a feeling like a new beginning, hopefully, and learn from some of the mistakes that were made. Academic integrity is, I think, pretty important to most Tar Heels fans, so I think they want to see us put this in the past and kind of not visit it again.”

Maybe that is why the line of people waiting for Fedora’s autograph was longer than any other that day, stretching from the end zone nearly to the 50. Fedora was hired away from Southern Mississippi in December to replace the interim coach Everett Withers, who took over for Davis last summer.

Fedora arrived before the N.C.A.A. announced its sanctions in March. If those sanctions, which include the one-year bowl ban and the loss of 15 scholarships over three years, handicap Fedora, they will not change expectations.

“I don’t think anybody cares one way or the other,” Fedora said of scholarship losses, pointing to Bill Parcells to make his point. “They just want the results. I think Parcells had a saying, ‘Don’t tell me about the pain, just show me the baby.’ Nobody really cares about all that. Let’s just see you win.”

It is the one reality that has not changed at North Carolina.
Teresa Sullivan

**U-Va. president: I made mistakes**

By Donna St. George and Jenna Johnson

CHARLOTTESVILLE — Teresa A. Sullivan concedes that she may have made mistakes. Maybe the University of Virginia president should have challenged leaders of the school’s governing board when they told her in early June that they had enough votes to fire her.

“Maybe that was something that I misjudged and I should have asked to have a hearing and a public vote,” she said in her most extensive public comments since the tumult in June, when she was ousted and then reinstated.

Told by U-Va. Rector Helen E. Dragas that 15 of 16 board members wanted a new president, Sullivan said she worried that a public airing of the question would throw the campus into turmoil. But forcing a robust board debate at that critical moment might have altered the course of events.

“I didn’t really want to put the university through a difficult period,” she said. “As it turned out, I did not save the university from a difficult period at all.”

In her Madison Hall office lined with shelves of sociology books, Sullivan reflected on Monday afternoon on the crisis that made her one of the best-known university presidents in America — the celebrated survivor of a clash that has come to stand for the uncertain future of public higher education.
Seven weeks after she was returned to her post, Sullivan trod cautiously through many questions. She refused to speak about last week’s abrupt resignation of the university’s chief operating officer, Michael Strine, amid questions about his role in her ouster. She avoided comment on personal feelings about Dragas. Pressed several ways, she said she does not know what precipitated the effort to force her out.

Sullivan and Dragas pledged in July to work together to advance the university’s goals. The two will do so in public Wednesday and Thursday at a Board of Visitors retreat in Richmond that could provide an early hint of how well they can achieve that and how much tension remains.

In the interview, Sullivan was asked whether Dragas ever apologized to her. “I don’t think I want to go there,” she said.

The start of it

Looking back, Sullivan, 63, said she is still unable to pinpoint red flags that may have warned her that her presidency was in peril.

The 18-day leadership crisis at the historic Charlottesville campus started June 8, when Sullivan was told that the board wanted her to leave. Soon the campus was in an uproar about the secretive process and the loss of a popular president. The controversy made national news, and on June 26 the board reinstated her.

Sullivan noted that at a spring board meeting, she was praised by one board member — and applauded by all — for her work with alumni and community leaders.

“Possibly, I was overly lulled by what I saw as positive signals,” she said.

Sullivan said she has drawn lessons from the crisis — the importance of communication with members of the board besides the rector and vice rector, for example.

She was blindsided by the depth of the board opposition Dragas depicted on June 8. Later, Sullivan would learn that her support was broader than she had been told.

“In retrospect, I wish I had communicated more frequently with more members of the board,” she said Monday.

“I would rather hear about the problem before it becomes a formal problem, and so I’m looking for ways, informally, to talk with board members about things they’re concerned about,” she said. “. . . I can’t always guess in advance. I can’t guess, period, what might be the concerns that board
members might have. So I’ve encouraged them: ‘Don’t believe that I’m a
mind reader. I’m not.’”

Lessons learned
During the 70-minute interview, Sullivan talked about how she has changed
as a leader by reciting a quote from Shakespeare: Sweet are the uses of
adversity, which like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious
jewel.

“I think we do learn things about ourselves and about our institution — not
things you necessarily had planned to learn or wanted to learn, because none
of us wants to head into a difficult time,” she said.

She said she has learned “so much about this university community I would
not have learned any other way” and described herself as “astonished” by
the outpouring of support from faculty, staff, alumni and students.

“It is certainly a sobering experience to go through something like this,” she
said. “And, you know, I just hope that I learned the right lessons.”

Asked about calls for the resignation of Dragas, which were numerous in the
heat of the crisis, Sullivan said Monday that she did not seek any such
action, in spite of news reports that said she would return as president only if
the rector were removed.

“The board makes the decision about who its leader is, and that is right and
proper. I don’t get to pick my boss,” she said.

When asked if she, personally, had feelings on the issue, Sullivan replied:
“Not that I want to share with you.”

In a statement Tuesday, Dragas noted that she voted with the board to
reinstate Sullivan. “I have extended my sincere apologies,” she said. “It’s
time to move forward and, as demonstrated by this retreat and our agenda,
we are doing so guided by a spirit of constructive leadership, committed to
full collaboration with President Sullivan and keenly focused on the future
of U.Va.”

Many on campus have called for a thorough investigation of what caused the
June crisis.

Last week, 14 prominent alumni wrote an open letter insisting that “a
painstakingly fair and civil” review be done, suggesting that the crisis would
not end until “board members finally explain candidly, to satisfy common
sense, what really motivated them to act so precipitously.”
As asked about the letter, Sullivan spoke about the board’s interest in
governance issues, which will be addressed at the retreat. She stopped short
of embracing a thorough analysis of what went wrong.

“I’m not sure I’m the right person to make the judgment about that,” she
said.

She paused at the question of whether she personally needed to know.

“Not really,” she said. “... I think it would be very easy to get
psychologically stuck on an episode like that, and I don’t think that would be
healthy — not healthy for individuals and probably not healthy for the
institution. I think moving forward right now is probably the best thing we
can do in terms of the institution. ... I don’t think reengaging past events
right now is going to take us where we need to go.”

At the same time, Sullivan said she encounters alumni who ask her for
explanations she can’t fully provide. “They’re wondering, ‘What’s happened
at the university? What just went on?’” she said.

Still, she maintained, “I think they would much rather see us have a plan for
where we’re going and not just kind of dwell on what happened, and I think
I can give them that.”

The way Sullivan describes it, the original wording in the June 10
announcement of her departure remains the best summation of her
understanding of the conflict. “We formulated it as a ‘philosophical
difference of opinion,’” she said. “I’m not sure I can improve on that.”

Exactly who was involved in the effort to remove her from office, she
doesn’t know, she said.

“I really don’t think I can answer that,” she said. “What I have to go on as
evidence is not much, and I can’t point to anything that suggests there were
other forces. ... Maybe there were. There was certainly lots of speculation. ...
On the other hand, academics are very good at theories, so there were a lot
of theories that went around.”

Asked whether she trusts Dragas, Sullivan replied: “I think we are both
committed to making it work. ... I completely believe that she cares about
the future of the University of Virginia. And so do I.”
An Ex-Wrestling Executive Wins a G.O.P. Primary

By MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM

Linda E. McMahon, a former wrestling executive, easily captured Connecticut’s Republican Senate primary on Tuesday night, clinching a second chance to run for a position she failed to win two years ago.

In defeating Christopher Shays, a former United States representative and longtime fixture in moderate politics in the state, Ms. McMahon underscored the power of being an outside candidate, as well as a wealthy one. She outspent her opponent nearly 12 to 1, and flooded the airwaves with advertisements promoting herself as a political maverick who could bring common sense to Washington.

It appeared that Mr. Shays, who held his House seat for two decades before losing his bid to keep it in 2008, was tripped up by the Washington experience and centrist viewpoints that once made him one of the more popular Republicans in a left-leaning state.

Before a roaring crowd in Stamford, Ms. McMahon took the stage hours after her win and told supporters that she would jump-start a stagnant
economy. “We need to give all these career politicians in Washington who have agreed to this mess a pink slip!” she said.

Mr. Shays met reporters at his sparse campaign headquarters and said he would support his opponent in the general election. Ms. McMahon’s millions, he added, “trumped the experience we bring to the table.”

Ms. McMahon will face Representative Christopher S. Murphy, a Democrat, in the November election for the seat being vacated by Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, an Independent. Mr. Murphy won his primary on Tuesday, by a wide margin over his opponent, Susan Bysiewicz, a former secretary of the state.

Elizabeth Esty, a former state representative, won the Democratic nomination to replace Mr. Murphy in his Congressional seat. Ms. Esty beat Christopher G. Donovan, the speaker of the State House, who was an early favorite until a federal investigation into his fund-raising practices led to conspiracy charges against several of his aides. Andrew Roraback, a state senator, will be Ms. Esty’s Republican opponent.

In 2010, Ms. McMahon spent tens of millions of dollars of her own fortune in her Senate bid, only to lose to Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat, despite a political climate that year that propelled Republicans to the leadership of the House.

Mr. Shays, who is on a first-name basis with many of his former Fairfield County constituents, earned the endorsement of Connecticut’s major newspapers this year. But Ms. McMahon, absorbing the lessons of her defeat, waged a large campaign with an emphasis on jobs and her personal story, including her stewardship of World Wrestling Entertainment, which appeared to resonate with some voters Tuesday.

“We like Chris Shays, but I tend to think he’s a career politician. He’s been in government a long, long time,” said Roy Ferris, 76, a retired telephone repairman from Fairfield who voted on Tuesday morning with his wife, Peggy. Both pulled the lever for Ms. McMahon.

“We need people who have gone through the challenges they have to face to run a business,” Mr. Ferris said. “She’s got business experience. She’s been very successful at it.”

In Westport, Georgene Huber, 81, voted for Mr. Shays “because he’s been a friend all these years.” But her husband, William, 84, a retired executive at United Technologies, said he had grown more conservative of late.
“We have to have someone who can turn things around,” he said, after voting for Ms. McMahon. “We need the entrepreneurial spirit again in our country.”

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr. Shays said in an interview that he would not challenge Ms. McMahon in November as an Independent. “I have run as a Republican 20 times,” he said. “I never would consider it.”

In Fairfield, Kellie Kowalsky, 50, who works for Clear Channel Communications, said she was voting for Ms. McMahon. Did she consider the wrestling executive inexperienced in government?

“That’s an absolute plus,” she said.

Robert Davey and Elizabeth Maker contributed reporting.