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Politics complicate zoning changes

By Wesley Brown
Sunday, August 19, 2012

The Tar River University area, a historic college district that runs along the city’s northeastern waterfront, is not among Greenville’s thriving neighborhoods.

The area’s decline, some say, has been hastened by a three-decade old ordinance that caps at three the number of unrelated people who can share a home in the city.

A succession of Greenville mayors — including Don McGlohon, Nancy Jenkins and Pat Dunn — sought to revitalize the area. But for 31 years, the Tar River University neighborhood has remained blighted by street crime, trash and debris and vacant houses in need of repair.

Now, discussions of a change in policy suggest that the revitalization the people have long awaited finally is taking root. The only question is how the “Rule of Three” fits into the equation and if it is in need of major reform or minor repair.

At the heart of each argument is home ownership and the incentives needed to promote it in the city. Who the benefits should be tailored toward is where the debate gets complicated.

Politically-driven

University housing in Greenville officially came under the microscope in March, when the City Council added to its list of strategic goals amending zoning ordinances to allow for a fourth renter in certain homes.
The strategy was one of 13 the council adopted to “protect and preserve” city neighborhoods. But many argue that the plan was “politically-driven,” with its origins dating back to Mayor Allen Thomas’ election.

Campaign finance reports show that close to 30 percent of the $46,000 in contributions Thomas received during his run for mayor came from developers, investors, property managers, landlords and real-estate agents, some of whom work and live in the Tar River University neighborhood.

He received a $300 check from the N.C. Realtors Political Action Committee and $100 from Councilman Max Joyner, who authored the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, which is up for review before the city’s Planning and Zoning Commission.

Joyner’s initiative is a permit program that would allow a fourth person in homes between Elm, Fifth and Reade streets that are greater than 1,500 square feet and have more than four bedrooms.

No professionals with ties to the housing market contributed to Joyner’s campaign, but the councilman donated $500 to Thomas’ election committee.

Among the $29,000 in contributions made to the campaigns of the five other council members in office, 5 percent came from contractors, Realtors and landlords, according to reports on file at the Pitt County Board of Elections.

Both Joyner and Thomas have denied having a “political agenda.” Instead, Thomas said that as an East Carolina University alumnus, he has been “laser-point focused” on addressing the increase in crime in the college community.

“I could care less about Washington, D.C.-style politics and looking for smoking guns,” Thomas said in a recent interview. “What I care about is saving that neighborhood.”

**Reversing the vacuum**

Less than a month before Election Day 2011, a rickshaw driver barely survived a drive-by shooting on Rotary Street, after first being robbed on Jarvis Street.

It was a crime unlike any the Tar River University neighborhood had ever seen, Thomas said, and one that fueled the mayor’s campaign to reverse the “vacuum of crime” that had sucked the area dry of investors.
Thomas proposed lifting the cap on the number of renters allowed in university neighborhoods to encourage investors to renovate homes to attract more families to the neighborhood.

The plan drew widespread support, especially since statistics obtained by Thomas from the Greenville Police Department showed crime increased in the Tar River area by 34 percent last year.

The same report showed a 30 percent decline in crime citywide.

More donations kept rolling in, including $200 from Allison Faulkner, a longtime resident of the Tar River University neighborhood who owns seven rental homes in the area.

Faulkner has watched for years as family after family moved away in search of higher-quality homes in safer neighborhoods, a lot of them asking her why she lives in the waterfront community.

“I love the neighborhood — I really do — but our neighborhood is very broken,” Faulkner said.

Most of the houses in the Tar River area were built before the 1950s and require from $50,000 to $100,000 to bring them up to modern standards, Faulkner said.

Kitchens are outdated. Foundations are in disrepair. And most homes need to be gutted, she said.

With a lack of financing options available, investors are going elsewhere to buy refurbished homes they can rent right away to more than three people. As a result, the Tar River University neighborhood continues to slowly deteriorate.

Property values in the University Neighborhood District are down by $6 million, Pitt County tax records show.

“It just doesn’t pay,” Faulkner said of investing in college rental property.

The opposite effect

Faulkner likes Joyner’s initiative, as it encourages private investment, something she said will lead to an eventual shift in the neighborhood from rental to owner-occupied property.

But Andrew Morehead, president of the Tar River Neighborhood Association, said the idea that increasing the percentage of rental properties
in the area will reduce crime and increase property values is “seriously flawed.”

National studies show homeowners are less likely to commit or be a victim of a crime, Morehead said. They are less likely to move, are more vested in their neighborhood and typically are more stable and less violent.

Rental housing, on the other hand, is at greater risk of property-based crimes such as theft. They usually are poorly managed and exhibit greater signs of physical deterioration — factors Morehead said are seen as opportunities to burglars and robbers.

For example, Cumberland, Md. — a small city in the Appalachian mountains with a relatively low rate of home occupancy — has experienced a significant increase in crime during the past 20 years, according to a study conducted by the Allegany College of Maryland.

Councilwoman Marion Blackburn, the district representative of TRUNA, said Joyner’s initiative, if passed, only will lead to more code violations, more crime and more homes falling further into disrepair.

From Jan. 3, 2011 to July 20, 2012, the Greenville Police Department investigated 857 code violations and filed 840 crime reports in TRUNA, 90 percent of which were at rental houses, according to data.

Rhonda Conner, of the Greenville Police Department’s Planning and Research Division, could not clarify the source of the statistics quoted by Thomas.

“This initiative is not designed to serve the residents of TRUNA,” Blackburn said. “It was pushed through to serve the policies of a political agenda.”

**Keep it simple**

Home occupancy in Greenville pales next to cities around the state, especially university towns.

A report compiled by the city’s Community Development Department showed that only 38 percent of Greenville’s homes are owner-occupied. Among the state’s major college towns, only Boone has a lower rate at 24 percent.

The council agrees promoting home ownership is crucial.

Councilwoman Kandie Smith, who voted in favor of Joyner’s initiative, said the good of his plan outweighs the bad, specifically the part that calls for the
establishment of a civilian work group to enforce new policies and pursue revitalization funds.

Councilman Calvin Mercer, who voted against Joyner’s plan, fears the initiative will result in the council having to approve another multi-million-dollar, taxpayer-funded bailout, like it did in recent years to fund revitalization efforts in West Greenville and the University District.

“This is an issue for the entire city, because if we change the rule in this neighborhood, this movie may eventually come to your neighborhood,” Mercer said.

Mercer said the council needs to do everything that is “reasonable and appropriate” to build quality into both owner-occupied neighborhoods and rental neighborhoods, like promote sustainable housing projects and build aesthetically appealing neighborhoods with good traffic patterns.

The problem may be making the issue too complicated, former Greenville mayor Donald C. McGlohon said.

McGlohon presided over the council on Aug. 13, 1981, when the council first adopted the “three-unrelated rule,” at the request of TRUNA. The measure initially was passed to better control widespread blight in the area, according to archives of The Daily Reflector.

Today, McGlohon, 80, runs an insurance agency with his son, Donald Jr. He proposed leaving zoning regulations as they are and allowing more renters into homes on a unit-by-unit basis.

“I like to keep those types of ordinances as simple as possible,” McGlohon said. “It’s easier that way.”

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ECU Transit Safety and Training Supervisor Justin Boyd, left, gives feedback to new driver Bryan DeLello, a rising junior at ECU, during a driving test at the facility's training course on Dickinson Avenue Friday morning.

ECU drivers gear up for school
By Kristin Zachary
Monday, August 20, 2012

Although East Carolina University classes do not start until Tuesday, junior Bryan DeLello began studying early.

On Friday, DeLello, 21, training to become a driver for the university’s transit system, was put to the test by Safety and Training Supervisor Justin Boyd.

ECU Transit provides an important resource for students and decreases traffic, according to Director Wood Davidson. For every bus headed to campus, 60 to 80 personal vehicle trips are cut, he said.

Davidson said hiring students to drive is the norm for a college or university with its own equipment and transit system.

ECU Transit employs 113 students. Its fleet is composed of 40 buses, six passenger vans and four support vehicles.

The drivers are young, Davidson said, but the group undergoes extensive training to learn how to maneuver the large vehicles on Greenville streets.
Boyd, 25, taking classes to obtain a second bachelor’s degree, said students at the university often are thought to be immature or irresponsible, but that is not the case among the transit drivers, he said.

“People think all ECU college kids do is party, but we are dedicated to our jobs,” Boyd said. “We’re driving a quarter-of-a-million-dollar vehicle, and we’ve got people’s lives in our hands. It’s our mission to get them to their destination safely.”

The interview process is strict, and a candidate with more than one active conviction of a moving violation is not considered, Davidson said. Once hired, drivers spend 54 hours in one-on-one training then 27.5 hours carrying passengers while under supervision.

“It’s set up very much like a school curriculum,” Davidson said. “That 54 hours is broken down into a number of sessions, and each session has specific goals. We do hands-on with as much of it as we can.”

DeLello, in the process of completing his one-on-one training, weaved in and out of orange cones Friday on a course set up in a gated lot off Dickinson Avenue.

He said the most challenging aspect of driving an ECU bus is learning to manage turns through the use of the mirrors.

“In your own car, you have rear-view and side mirrors,” DeLello said. “On the bus, you just have your side mirrors. It’s such a stark difference from driving a car. You’re driving a much bigger vehicle.”

On the cones course, Boyd instructed DeLello to perform several turns, including what was called a “reverse snake” in which a driver travels in reverse between cones set up in a line.

“If they can overcome these tight turns in a controlled environment, everyday driving will be more comfortable for them,” Boyd said.

“We put a lot of effort into training our employees and give them a lot of behind-the-wheel time before we send them out on their own.”

The most important part of training focuses on safety, Davidson said.

“We try to really infuse that in drivers,” he said. “We talk a lot about what it means to be a safe driver, a defensive driver. That’s what we’re trying to do — teach defensive driving.
“Not only are you thinking about the things you are doing behind the wheel, you are being trained to anticipate what other drivers are doing behind the wheel,” Davidson said.

“You kind of have to keep your head on a swivel at all times while you’re driving,” Boyd said.

During a trip from the transit garage on North Memorial Drive to the cones course, a driver pulled in front of the bus from a side street.

“I don’t think you can drive a single route without someone pulling out in front of you or turning without using a signal,” Boyd said.

“You have to maintain a safe following distance so, if someone stops or darts out in front of you, you have plenty of time to stop,” DeLello said.

In the course of a day, the buses travel less than 100 miles to more than 300, Davidson said, and collisions sometimes cannot be prevented.

From July 1, 2011, to June 30, the fleet traveled 823,640 miles and reported 25 collisions, the director said. When an incident occurs, an internal investigation is launched to determine if the driver did everything possible to avoid the collision, Davidson said.

“For us, if there’s anything the driver could have done to avoid the collision, it’s classified as preventable,” he said. “We classify quite a few of our incidents as preventable, even if the driver is found not at fault.”

Ten of the 25 reported collisions were classified as preventable, with six of the 10 considered minor with little to no damage, he said.

“When we’re talking about collisions, we count things like mirror strikes or contact with a tree branch or road sign,” he said. “If the vehicle makes contact with anything, we believe that’s serious enough to report it as a collision.”

Each investigation provides data that helps strengthen the transit system’s safety record and leads to improved routes for the drivers, Davidson said.

Other measures taken to better the safety record are continuous training efforts and evaluations, he said.

“We’re always looking for a new way, a better way,” Davidson said. “When we look at other systems, most don’t train as many hours as we do.”

Evaluations occur within a driver’s first two weeks on the job, as well as within the first month and at other times, Davidson said. Any driver who receives an average to negative evaluation completes additional training.
He said ECU Transit has a phone number and website address on each bus to prompt feedback from other drivers.

“We want to make sure we have the best people out on the street,” Davidson said.

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Freshmen Honors College students saw some familiar faces when they moved into Garrett Residence Hall on Thursday, thanks to a summer series instituted by the college this year.

For the first time, East Carolina University administrators offered opportunities for incoming honors students to meet and mingle — and have some fun — with their classmates-to-be. Three events were scheduled across the state in June and July.

“We were struck by how students entered Honors College without any sense of community,” said Kevin Baxter, associate dean. “And that (sense of community) is very important to us. We wanted to connect them with one another … to their cohort.”

The first event was an excursion on the Pamlico River in the Jeanie B. schooner, based in Washington, N.C.

A service-oriented event in Raleigh followed with students participating in a cleanup of the William B. Umstead State Park.

The series concluded with a trip to Charlotte, where students visited the U.S. National Whitewater Center, then Knights Stadium to see the Charlotte Knights face the Durham Bulls.
More than 50 percent of the incoming class participated in one or more of the events, Baxter said. He called that a “spectacular response rate” and said each event was filled to capacity.

“They were so excited to — in their words — start their college career early,” Baxter said.

Halbert Campbell III of Kinston attended all three outings.

“I am looking forward to becoming my own man at ECU and becoming more independent,” Campbell said. “Now I already know some of the other freshmen going to ECU.”

Haley Bowman of Newport attended the Washington and Charlotte events. She said she most enjoyed the whitewater rafting excursion at the U.S. National Whitewater Center.

“We were broken up into groups of six and had to physically work together in order to be successful in our rafting,” she said. “This encouraged conversations out of the ordinary and was a great bonding experience.”

“By attending these Honors College events, I have been able to meet a great number of people that I will be working closely with, inside the classroom and out, throughout the next four years,” Bowman said.

The series was funded primarily through donations from supporters of the Honors College. Students also were able to meet and thank several of those donors during the summer events, Baxter said.

More information about the Honors College is available online at www.ecu.edu/honors/.

**New SGA President: ‘Called to serve’**

Political science major Justin Davis never imagined he might one day sit at the table with policymakers at ECU.

In his early days at the university, Davis struggled through classes, changed his major, attended his fair share of parties and changed his major yet again.

“I wasn’t engaged, I wasn’t involved,” he said.

But this summer, as ECU’s 2012-13 Student Government Association president, he was sworn in as a member of the ECU Board of Trustees.

“If four years ago someone would have told me I would be president of SGA and be sworn into the Board of Trustees, I would have called them crazy — politely,” he said.
“I’m not the cookie-cutter college student that one might imagine an SGA president would be,” Davis said. But the struggles he experienced in his early college days helped him realize he needed to make some changes.

“ECU transformed my life, allowing me to be become self-aware … identifying what I want to do and how I want to do it.” he said.

Davis began to get involved in 2010 when he decided to run for SGA treasurer at the urging of his friend and former SGA president, Tremayne Smith. He held that position for two years. But he said his transformation began in earnest when he decided to run for student body president and even more so after he won the election.

“I have the opportunity and responsibility to represent and advocate for each and every student at our great university,” Davis said. “This is a daunting task.”

He said he is excited about the challenge of leading the SGA, but anxious as well.

“SGA in the past has not represented the entire student body,” he said, “and this year we’re focusing on building a new foundation, so we’ve identified a new mission.”

Davis said he wants everyone’s voice to be heard, and that means encouraging students to get more involved.

“Students who aren’t engaged really can become engaged. … I was someone who was not engaged at all,” Davis said. “At ECU, you’re either involved or you’re not, so we have to find a way to bridge that gap between students who aren’t involved.”

Davis has a long list of campus activities, including the ECU Marching Pirates, Phi Mu Alpha music fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, the ECU Symphonic Wind Ensemble, ECU New Student Orientation and the Volunteer and Service Learning Center.

Outside of school and his SGA duties, Davis said he enjoys spending time with friends, being involved in his church, reading to unwind and playing his tuba every now and then.

“I want to go into the mission field when I graduate,” Davis said, listing Africa and India as potential destinations.

Davis said the university motto, “to serve” plays a part in his life.

“That’s what I feel we are called to do,” he said. “We’re called to serve.”
**Upcoming events:**

Monday: Faculty convocation, 9 a.m., Wright Auditorium, featuring a presentation by Ravi Paul, recipient of the 2012 Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Monday: New student convocation, 4 p.m., Williams Arena, followed by Pirate Palooza, 6-9 p.m., Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium.

See www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.
Letter: ECU preservation effort appreciated
Sunday, August 19, 2012

Congratulations to the ECU administration for protecting the trees at the former location of Stratford Arms Apartments. According to an article in The Daily Reflector on June 16, the existing parking lots were preserved and will be used for additional athletic parking for Dowdy-Ficklen and Clark-LeClair stadiums. It also stated that no additional parking spaces will be added.

Tree protection fences from during the demolition earlier this summer were still in place the last time I rode by as the grass that has been planted in disturbed areas grows in. I also understand that ECU found organizations that could reuse appliances from the apartments and much of the concrete from building foundations was ground and used at other ECU construction sites.

The site will remain an open park setting that will be a great environment for tailgating for the foreseeable future. It is nice to see a beautiful greenspace being preserved.

DANNY LAUDERDALE
Extension Agent
ReLeaf Advisory Board Member
Greenville
Dr. Salma Syed and Dr. Prem Shekhawat have joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Syed, an infectious disease specialist, joined the Department of Pediatrics as a clinical assistant professor. She is a graduate of Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kirksville, Mo., and completed residency training in pediatrics at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Mich. She also completed a fellowship in pediatric infectious diseases the University of Michigan. Before coming to ECU, Syed was a faculty member at Stony Brook University Medical Center in New York.

Syed’s clinical interests are the evaluation and management of immune deficiencies, travel medicine and international adoptee evaluation. She is board-certified in pediatrics and infectious diseases. She also has started a pediatric travel medicine clinic and pediatric primary immunodeficiency clinic.

Syed sees patients at the ECU Pediatric Specialty Clinic. Appointments are available by calling 744-2511.

Shekhawat, a neonatologist, joined the department as a clinical associate professor. He comes to ECU from Ohio, where he was in private practice. He has a medical degree from Dr. Sampurnanand Medical College in India and completed residency training in pediatrics at Michigan State University. He completed fellowships in neonatalology, neonatal-perinatal medicine and pediatric endocrinology and metabolism. He also served on the faculty of the Medical College of Georgia.

Shekhawat is board-certified in pediatrics and neonatal-perinatal medicine. His research and clinical interests are general neonatal endocrinology, the expansion of newborn screening on diagnosis of metabolic disorders and its effect on changes in morbidity, mortality and long-term cost of care of these disorders, and the study of polyunsaturated fatty acid metabolism and the onset of inflammation.

He sees patients in the neonatal intensive care unit at Vidant Medical Center.
Wreck rate high in Pitt
By Jane Dail
Saturday, August 18, 2012

Pitt County made its way to the top of a list that it is not likely to boast about.

AAA Carolinas found the county had highest chance of vehicle collisions in the state in 2011. It has topped the state’s 100 counties four years straight.

Pitt also ranks No. 1 for crashes involving injuries, though it was 57th for fatal injuries.

First Sgt. M.A. Williams, district supervisor with State Highway Patrol, attributed the county’s high population, especially of young drivers, for the findings.

“We have the university here, so you have a lot of different driving habits that come from all over the country here,” Williams said. “You’re dealing with teenagers or young 20s, the age universities draw. There’s a good chance there’s a distraction going on with phones or other distractions in the vehicle.”

AAA Carolinas also found the most dangerous roads were found in rural areas, though Williams said road conditions were not to blame for most collisions.

“As far as I know, I don’t know of any roads that are creating a driving hazard that hasn’t been tended to,” Williams said. “I don’t think our roads are any worse than any other in eastern North Carolina.”
In an effort to curb collisions and encourage driver safety, the Greenville Police Department recently started holding enforcement campaigns, where a unit concentrates all day in an area with high traffic volume or unsafe driving complaints.

“Our goal is not to write tickets,” department spokesman Sgt. Joe Friday said. “It’s to get the message out to our community that we need, as a community, to slow down, drive safer and obey traffic laws. (Officers) do this with the thought process we want voluntary compliance of our traffic safety laws.”

Cpl. R.S. Johnson said the unit patrolled around the intersection of Memorial Drive and Greenville Boulevard Thursday because it was identified as having a high number of collisions.

“Using unmarked vehicles to watch the intersection, we were able to view violations and call the motorcycle units to make the stop,” Johnson said.

Friday said the police unit plans to hold the enforcement campaigns once every week or two.

“(We want to) get everybody together and work an all-hands-on-deck effort at traffic safety enforcement,” he said.

Dr. Herb Garrison, director of Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program, found positive news, saying the rate of fatal crashes remains relatively low.

“If you look at the severe crashes, the ranking for Pitt County is really, really good,” he said. “Even though we’re the 14th most populous county in the state of North Carolina, in terms of fatal crashes, our rate is 57th.”

The effort, a collaboration between Vidant Medical Center and ECU’s Brody School of Medicine, works to reduce incidence and effect of injuries by offering some programs that encourage safe driving.

The Safe Driving School is an 8-hour course for those who have received traffic speeding citations that “emphasizes the outcomes that can occur when driving too fast and some strategies you can use to arrive alive,” Garrison said.

Another program focuses on young drivers called SAFETeens, which educates high school driver’s education students through an interactive program featuring health care providers, first responders and law enforcement.

Garrison said he has seen positive results from the programs and continues to see fatal crash numbers in the county fall, from 33 in 2007 to 18 in 2011.
“What that tells me is ... the people in the crash prevention business, which includes law enforcement, Safe Communities Coalition and the Injury Prevention Program, we’re doing a really good job of preventing those severe crashes.”

To learn more about the Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program, visit www.vidanthealth.co or call 252-847-8688. Contact Jane Dail at 252-329-9585 or jdail@reflector.com.
McNeill embraces last of preseason
By Nathan Summers
Monday, August 20, 2012

With less than two weeks remaining until the East Carolina football team kicks off its season against Appalachian State, third-year ECU head coach Ruffin McNeill is in a glass-half-full state of mind.

He wants his players to continue fine tuning and competing for their places on the depth chart for the Sept. 1 kickoff inside Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, but he wants them to embrace one of his coaching staples — the process.

“We’re two weeks out, there’s no need to panic right now,” McNeill said following the team’s second 40-play scrimmage. “We’re getting 500 team reps a week, minimum. People don’t understand why you only go 40 plays, but we’re going as many as 550 a week, group against group, ones versus ones.”

With the team’s second scrimmage now viewed and reviewed by the coaching staff and players, one final summer-style workout was scheduled for this morning before the beginning of classes Tuesday, and the corresponding shift to evening practices that will remain intact throughout the regular season.

“I think our guys are ready to play an opponent,” said McNeill, whose Pirates finished 5-7 last season and were left out of the bowl postseason for the first time since 2005. “We’ve been banging each other every day. I’m looking forward to them getting their legs under them a little bit with classes beginning Tuesday, and we’ll be on track.”

By the end of this week, the head coach said opponent planning will have begun. On Sunday, the team will begin its normal game week schedule, and there are no breaks after that until a bye week in November.

From the players’ perspective, late August and the onset of classes means the final days are ticking away until another season begins.

For veterans like junior free safety Damon Magazu, that feeling is palpable by now.
“I think the second scrimmage was a bit more intense, and everyone is starting to pick up the tempo,” he said. “It’s getting down to crunch time, getting down to playing App. State at home.”

Although the inevitable beating on each other in camp can breed a little testiness between the offense and the defense, Magazu said those feelings usually get replaced quickly with a feeling of unity.

“During camp it’s kind of an offense-defense kind of thing, but toward the end we all start to realize we’re all playing as a team,” said Magazu, second on the team last season with 80 tackles and first with four interceptions.

“We’re not playing against each other on Sept. 1, we’re playing against App. State, and usually around this time of the year we come together as one.”

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ECU grad documents stars' life in 'After Porn Ends'

By David Menconi - dmenconi@newsobserver.com

The iTunes movie-download chart tends to have the same big-studio movies that dominate the theaters – “The Dark Knight,” “We Bought a Zoo” and so on. But occasionally, something truly unexpected sneaks in – like “After Porn Ends,” a straight-to-video documentary about the pornographic-film industry that was directed by East Carolina University alumnus Bryce Wagoner.

Wagoner studied in ECU’s theater department before moving to Los Angeles and working as an actor while trying to break into directing. He got his chance with “After Porn Ends,” which traces the post-porn lives of more than a dozen stars now involved in everything from bounty-hunting to religious activism.

“After Porn Ends” has climbed as high as No. 29 on the overall iTunes chart, while also topping the charts for documentaries and independent films. Not bad for any movie, especially by a first-time director with no advertising budget. Given the subject, it’s about as non-exploitive as you can imagine.

Q: So how did you come to this subject?

I was working as an actor on the “Smackdown vs. Raw” game, doing motion capture. The crew was watching porn between takes and somebody made this offhand remark: “Man, how the (expletive) do you do anything in your
life after porn?” Now, I’m not a huge fan of porn, I’m still a good ol’ boy from back home. But that stuck in my head. Howard Stern used to have porn stars on his show all the time, and I remembered some names. So I fired up Google and Bianca Trump came up, this epic story involving the Aryan Nation and prison for meth and kidnapping. I wanted her to be the main theme because it ended in redemption, which didn’t work out because she wouldn’t let us film her. But I was intrigued and started digging, and the stories were amazing. I always thought my first movie would be something scripted, but these stories were just too compelling.

Q: What did your family think?

Well, I told them I was directing a project, actually getting paid, and I waited until I had some footage. I showed my grandparents about seven minutes, no cursing or nudity. And my grandma says, “Well, darlin’, I’m just glad you came up with the idea before anybody else.” I told them there would have to be some nudity, and my grandpa says, “Son, you can’t make a movie about lumberjacks and not show some trees gettin’ cut down.”

Q: What did you learn that you didn’t expect?

I didn’t think I’d come to care about the people in the film so much, and how open they were willing to be with this kid from the South with a funny accent. It was life-changing. The reaction from the participants has been quite good, mostly. Some people were not crazy about the edit, but we had 100-plus hours to edit down to 93 minutes. So not everybody got exactly the story they wanted out there.

Q: Parts of it are very sad, how damaged some of these people seemed.

Porn stars are people, too. I come from a very conservative family, but I don’t pass judgment. Unfortunately, a decent amount of these people went into porn with problems that it exacerbated.

Q: One of the film’s most heartbreaking moments was Asia Carrera talking about her awful childhood and saying she “packed up my suitcase and a teddy bear” and went to Los Angeles to be a porn star.

I had all these scripted questions, but to hear her say that her parents told her she should kill herself – wow, that has to be one of the top-five worst things I’ve ever heard. But she was strong and brave, and used porn to get ahead. She thought it made her better. Now that’s not my personal belief, but if that’s what she did to get through it, God bless America.

Q: Has “After Porn Ends” opened some doors for you?
The crowning moment was meeting (director) Morgan Spurlock. I saw him out one night and went up to him: “Mr. Spurlock, I don’t want to bother you but you’re a big hero of mine. I made a movie because you inspired me.” He asked what it was, I told him and he said, “I just watched that! You should be very proud, it’s awesome!”

I was blown away. We talked for about 20 minutes about how we should advertise, get some controversy. Then he brought his production partner over and he gave me his card, told me to call. That’s been my favorite part so far. “Supersize Me” is why I did this.

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Forward steps for UNC

Holden Thorp, chancellor at UNC-Chapel Hill, a university embroiled in an academic and athletics scandal, has taken some positive steps toward pulling the school out of what has now been a long-running and embarrassing controversy. Thorp, a distinguished scholar at the university before his rise to the top job, cares about the place passionately, to be sure.

His appointment of former Gov. Jim Martin and a national management consulting firm to dig deeper into academic fraud that has come to light could be what’s necessary to finally expose the scandal’s full dimensions and put safeguards in place to keep anything similar from happening again.

Martin, a former chemistry professor at Davidson College with a doctorate from Princeton, certainly understands how universities work, or should. And as governor of North Carolina for eight years, a Republican with a Democratic majority in the legislature, he’s familiar with the duties and difficulties of public life and public institutions.

The consulting firm, Virchow, Krause & Co., has offices all over the United States and is respected. Its duty is to do a thorough job of looking into academic irregularities or curiosities in addition to those that have been exposed recently involving former football and basketball player Julius Peppers and his relationship with the African and Afro-American Studies department.

That department, with a former chairman, Julius Nyang’oro, apparently friendly to athletes, had come under unflattering scrutiny already because of courses in which athletes were enrolled, but received no instruction. They did, however, receive grades, in Peppers’ case mostly good ones.

When the probe is over, former Cornell University President Hunter Rawlings, who now heads a national educational association, will review findings.

Thorp has already made some welcome changes. The academic support structure for athletes will no longer have an administrative input from the Department of Athletics. That was never a good idea. And Thorp is adding people to oversee the types of courses in which athletes are enrolled.
All this is good. Thorp has been under heavy criticism for not taking this kind of action sooner, and he should have. Damage has been done. And the university should have been more forthcoming with records and data requested by news organizations, including The News & Observer, which has uncovered many of the problems.

Now the test will be to see if Martin’s appointment, efforts of the consulting firm and Rawlings’ input will bring all problems to the attention of North Carolinians who rightly have high expectations that their university will operate all its programs, including athletics, with high integrity.

Finally, Thorp and UNC system President Tom Ross have an opportunity here to teach, to show members of the university community the need to put athletics in the proper perspective and not let it define this or any other university. For UNC-Chapel Hill has reaped the sad consequences of what happens when the push for “big-time” sports throws a university’s mission out of balance.
Transcript shows low hurdles for North Carolina athletes to stay eligible

Peppers’ GPA below standard at times

By Andrew Carter

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—When a transcript bearing Julius Peppers' name came into public view earlier this past week, some wondered how an athlete with such poor grades could have remained eligible to play football and basketball at the University of North Carolina.

Peppers, though, did enough to pass through a system that didn't require even academic mediocrity.

The transcript, once publicly accessible on UNC's website, showed that Peppers received D's or F's in 11 classes, began his college career with a 1.08 GPA in his first semester, never raised it above 1.95 and yet was never academically ineligible.

He came close, though. Peppers ended his spring semester in 2001 with a 1.82 GPA, according to the transcript. According to UNC's minimum academic eligibility standards for athletes then, Peppers would have needed a GPA of at least a 1.9 to play football in the fall of 2001.

Peppers' transcript doesn't list any grades after the 2001 spring semester, but what UNC had identified as a "test transcript" - which mirrors Peppers' transcript almost exactly - offers clues about how he kept his eligibility.

According to the test transcript, Peppers in the spring of 2001 appears to have received a B-plus in one course - Black Nationalism - in which he originally received an incomplete. He also appears to have received an A in the summer of 2001 in an African and Afro-American Studies seminar.

Those two grades - the B-plus and the A - would have improved Peppers' GPA enough for him to be eligible to play football in 2001, his final season before entering the NFL.

Jay Smith, a UNC history professor who has taken a leadership role among faculty members who have grown disgusted by continued academic problems related to athletics, studied Peppers' transcript with interest.
"Assuming it's a legitimate transcript - and I guess everything suggests that it is - I was struck by the very poor showing in the student's very first semester," Smith said. "And (by) the pattern that quickly developed of the student doing a kind of high-wire act - barely staying eligible, or even falling under the eligibility bar in the course of the academic year and then getting back over the bar with courses over the summer."

**A 1.5 for sophomores**

Peppers remained eligible thanks to courses from the AFAM department, which has recently come under scrutiny after an internal UNC investigation uncovered 54 suspect AFAM courses between 2007 and 2011. The problems in those courses ranged from no-show professors to unauthorized grade changes.

In AFAM courses, Peppers carried a 2.16 GPA. In non-AFAM courses, he received a 1.41 GPA. A similar disparity existed between the work Peppers did during the regular academic year and in the summer.

Peppers produced a 1.65 GPA - below a C-minus average - in his first six fall and spring semesters, but he recorded a 2.93 GPA in the four summer classes for which letter grades are listed on his transcript. UNC officials won't confirm that the transcript is Peppers', but they have said Peppers was academically eligible to compete.

Carl Carey Jr., who is Peppers' agent and former academic counselor at UNC, declined Friday to discuss specifics of Peppers' transcript. But Carey said it wasn't uncommon during his years at UNC for athletes to find themselves tip-toeing a line eligibility on one side and ineligibility on the other.

"There are always a significant number of student-athletes that need to make certain grades to have their eligibility before their season begins," Carey said. "That is not uncommon at all. You see close calls from time to time in every sport."

Carey, who worked as a UNC athletic department academic counselor from 1998 to 2002, also said it was "irresponsible" to suggest that Peppers was given fraudulent grades so he could remain eligible.

"I cannot think of one case - not one - during the time that I was at North Carolina where a faculty member knew what a student needed in order to be eligible," Carey said. "Not one single case where a faculty member was told what grade a student-athlete needed to earn."
To remain eligible during Peppers' years at UNC - he played on the football team from 1999-2001 - the university required athletes to have at least a 1.5 GPA entering their third semester, a 1.75 entering their fifth semester and a 1.9 entering their seventh semester.

It wasn't until athletes entered their ninth semester - their fifth year of eligibility - that they would have needed a 2.0 GPA to be academically eligible.

"In retrospect, it's kind of amazing that the floor was ever that low," Smith said.

**A change in standards**

In the fall of 2006, UNC adopted stricter academic eligibility requirements. Athletes must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA after their freshman year. Any athlete who falls below 2.0 is placed on academic probation and allowed to compete as long as the athlete meets the NCAA's minimum eligibility standard, which requires a 1.8 GPA entering the third semester, a 1.9 entering the fifth semester and a 2.0 after that.

UNC said it would be unlikely for an athlete to be granted probation more than once.

Smith praised UNC's improved eligibility standard but questioned what it really means.

"I guess that's one thing that has changed for the positive in the last few years," he said. "Although, I doubt that the stricter GPA guidelines have done much to change the nature of the overall game that is played. The game is still, it seems to me at most big-time sports universities, to find course schedules that will keep players eligible."

Carey, meanwhile, reiterated how common it is for athletes at major universities, particularly in football and men's basketball, to be on the verge of academic ineligibility. The problem, he said, begins in high school when college-bound athletes might barely receive qualifying test scores.

From there, academic struggles intensify, he said.

"Pull any roster in college basketball and football," Carey said, "and count the number who are very close to the edge."
UNC defensive end Julius Peppers (center) on the bench during the Tar Heels loss to FSU in 2000.

Between transcripts of Peppers, Austin, a decade of questions for UNC

By J. Andrew Curliss and Dan Kane - acurliss@newsobserver.com

The academic scandal at UNC-Chapel Hill is marked, more than anything, by the disclosure of parts of two academic transcripts tied to high-profile athletes.

One was football star Marvin Austin, who was kicked off the team in 2010 and now plays in the NFL for the New York Giants. The other belonged to two-sport star Julius Peppers, an All-American in football who was a key reserve on the 2000 Final Four basketball team.

The transcripts show classes and grades that have raised serious and ongoing questions about the rigor and type of education UNC has offered athletes, who bring in millions every year for the university with their on-the-field performances.

What would a deeper review of athlete transcripts show?

Chancellor Holden Thorp said in an interview that the university has reviewed some transcripts as part of its investigation that earlier this year found dozens of classes in the African studies department in which students,
a majority of them athletes, did not have to show up. That review was completed months after an unrelated NCAA investigation found that a tutor engaged in “academic fraud” by writing parts of papers, conducting research and doing other work for three football players.

Thorp would not be more specific about what kinds of transcripts were looked at and what was discovered. But the university has not produced any information to the public that indicates it has undertaken a comprehensive inquiry into the types of classes taken by athletes and the grades they received.

Thorp said that is something a new audit, announced Thursday, could dig into. The effort will be led by former Gov. Jim Martin, working with the Virchow, Krause & Company management consulting firm. It specializes in academic performance audit procedures and controls.

For two years, university officials have declined to provide The News & Observer with athlete transcripts. The newspaper had asked for the documents with stripped-out personal information, such as the names and any other identifying details of students, as the NCAA investigation heated up in 2010.

Transcript information, if provided, would show whether there are clusters of classes, disparities in grades, favored professors and other such details at a university where a faculty report issued last month described a “campus with two cultures,” one academic, one athletic.

Jon Ericson, a former provost at Drake University in Iowa, and others who have a reform-minded approach to college athletics say more openness and transparency about classes, professors and grades – information contained in transcripts – would help expose which departments and classes are serving to protect athletes’ eligibility.

“If the faculty and the administrators and the athletic directors knew that the grades and the courses would be public, there wouldn’t be courses to be embarrassed about,” said Ericson, who founded the Drake Group, an association that is trying to reform college sports.

Writing in two law review articles, Ericson and Minnesota lawyer Matthew Salzwedel have argued that universities can release much more information than they do now about athletes’ performance in the classroom.

But schools don’t, they argue, because administrators incorrectly cite federal privacy law and do not want to address what they call academic “corruption” in college athletics.
“Without (full) disclosure,” they wrote in the Dartmouth Law Review in 2010, “isolated disclosures of academic corruption in college athletics by whistleblowers are treated as anecdotes, easily dismissed and often ridiculed. After all, no one likes a spoilsport.”

**Withholding transcripts**


In early 2011, the university denied The N&O’s request, saying that classes taken by athletes, even with names and other such details deleted, might still be “easily traceable” back to the athlete and violate their privacy.

“Our student-athletes attend class with other students on campus,” Regina Stabile, UNC’s director of institutional records and reporting compliance, wrote in a memo. “That means that many students on campus know which student-athletes were in a particular section of a particular course. Knowing the specific courses taken and the order in which they were taken could too easily provide all the clues needed to match a de-identified transcript with a specific student-athlete.”

Salzwedel, a former tennis player at Drake who published his own university transcript in one of the law review articles, said that approach is typical of universities seeking to protect big-time athletics.

“It simply isn’t credible for UNC to say that because other students (many of whom are long gone from UNC) might be able to discern individual athlete’s transcripts, the redacted transcripts cannot be produced to you, a reporter,” he said. “In addition, as we’ve discussed in our articles, there should be no federal privacy protection for classes taken because, even as UNC admits, any student can watch an athlete walk into class.”

The N&O subsequently requested the data in a different format altogether, seeking classes taken and grades earned for teams, asking UNC to organize the information not in the form of each athlete’s transcript but instead by showing it for each semester. That request is pending.

Thorp said he would not consider the request again until the special audit is completed. A similar request to N.C. State University also has been denied.

**Problems a decade apart**

The details from the two UNC athletes’ transcripts that have become public – with the star-studded names attached – were revealing.
For Austin, a partial transcript showed that in the summer he first arrived on campus as a heralded recruit, he took a 400-level course taught by the longtime chairman of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies, Julius Nyang’oro.

The transcript’s revelation helped prompt UNC’s more formal review. It found Nyang’oro and an assistant had organized and led at least 45 of 54 no-show classes, ones in which no instruction was offered and students were required only to submit a paper. The university says Nyang’oro was forced to retire. His assistant retired in 2009, and has not cooperated with university inquiries.

Then, last week, a 2001 transcript bearing Peppers’ name was found residing in a portal on UNC’s web site. Peppers acknowledged Saturday that it was his and said there was no academic fraud involved in the grades he received.

After it was published in the N&O, national attention focused on the problems at UNC. The transcript showed that Peppers received grades of B or better in the same classes and independent study courses that in later years were identified as suspect in the internal investigation.

In the spring of 2000, for example, Peppers received a B-plus in AFRI 120 – Southern Africa. That same course was listed six times over three later years as a no-show class in the university’s internal review.

The transcript shows Peppers received poor grades, including at least 11 Ds or Fs, in other courses.

The university’s previous review of the African studies department had gone back only to 2007; there is no information available about whether those courses listed under Peppers’ name were also no-show offerings.

By the week’s end, Thorp had written a letter to trustees, faculty and staff that says, “Our focus every day remains on fixing the problems and ensuring they never happen again.”

In the same letter, Thorp announced the new inquiries, including the audit that he said would review “any additional academic irregularities that may have occurred.” It was not otherwise clear what the scope or depth of the new audit will be.

No time frame was given for when it will be complete.

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Truth leads to accountability

Lawyer Matthew Salzwedel and former Drake University provost Jon Ericson have argued in two law review articles that more openness about classes taken by athletes would help end academic “corruption” in college athletics.

Here’s a sample from the Wisconsin Law Review in 2003:

“There is a way – only one feasible way – to face reality, to expose the corruption and hold presidents, academic administrators, faculty, and governing boards accountable: tell the truth.

“How does an institution such as a college or university tell the truth? It discloses its records to the public. In order to tell the truth about corruption in college athletics, colleges and universities need to disclose – that is, make available to the public – athletes’ academic majors, academic advisers, courses listed by academic major, general education requirements, and electives (with the names of instructors and course grade-point averages) …

“Colleges and universities today could demonstrate their academic integrity by releasing the academic records, including grades, of members of athletics teams as long as the number of records is large enough that no individual student records could be identified. The formatting for such a large number of records need not be complicated: simply arrange the courses by grade received.”
Julius Peppers says transcript is his, says there was no academic fraud

By Andrew Carter - acarter@newsobserver.com

Julius Peppers on Saturday acknowledged that a transcript bearing his name that had been posted on the University of North Carolina website did in fact belong to him.

But Peppers defended his academic record and said he legitimately earned his grades, good or bad.

“I can assure everyone that there is no academic fraud as it relates to my college transcript,” Peppers said in a statement released by his agent, Carl Carey Jr.

An All-American football player during his time at UNC, Peppers responded to what he described in his statement as “false allegations regarding my connection to an academic scandal within the University of North Carolina athletic and African-American Studies departments.”

Peppers entered UNC in the fall of 1998 and ended his first semester with a 1.08 GPA. He majored in African and Afro-American Studies, but never graduated and left the school after the 2001 football season to enter the NFL, where he became an all-pro player with the Carolina Panthers.

Peppers’ transcript shows that he was barely eligible to play throughout his time at UNC, and the transcript calls into question the quality of his education. He made D’s or F’s in 11 classes and never had a cumulative GPA higher than 1.95.

But Peppers, now a defensive end with the Chicago Bears, made B’s in more than half the AFAM courses he took. UNC’s Department of African and Afro-American Studies has been embroiled in controversy since an internal university investigation identified 54 aberrant courses between 2007 and 2011.

The problems in the AFAM classes, described by the university as “academic fraud,” include classes that were expected to include lectures but that actually did not meet and required only a paper at the end of the semester. The university also found unauthorized grade changes and other forged records.
Athletes, particularly football and men’s basketball players, made up a high percentage of the enrollments in many of those 54 classes.

Peppers’ statement does not specifically address whether four courses on his transcript that were identified in later years as no-show classes actually met. But Peppers, who also played basketball at UNC, defended his academic record.

“I took every course with qualified members of the UNC faculty and I earned every grade whether it was good or bad,” he said. “I was never given unapproved assistance or preferential treatment in terms of my academic career because I was a student-athlete.

“I was also never deemed ineligible to compete on any of the football or basketball teams.”

Peppers’ transcript became public after it was inexplicably posted on an obscure page of UNC’s website. After The News & Observer published what UNC had originally described as a “test transcript,” which had also been available on UNC’s site, N.C. State fans discovered a link to Peppers’ transcript, and it spread quickly on the Internet.

UNC removed both transcripts, which were nearly identical. The test transcript showed a B-plus in an AFAM course in the spring of 2001 for which Peppers’ transcript originally showed an incomplete. That grade, plus an A on the test transcript in another AFAM course that summer, would have improved Peppers’ GPA enough for him to be eligible to play football in 2001, his final season at UNC.

Peppers described the past week as “upsetting and challenging” because his transcript had become public.

“I’m terribly disappointed in the fact that my privacy has been violated,” he said, “as well as frustrated with whoever negligently and carelessly committed such a flagrant error.”

Carter: 919-829-8944
Department saw Chapel Hill charade

By Steve Ford

Big-time college football is not a recent invention, although the takeover by the TV networks and the consequent influx of vast sums to the schools with successful “programs” has sent the whole enterprise to new heights, or depths.

The crowds, the pageantry, the huge stadiums, the intensive news coverage—all were characteristics of top-level intercollegiate football during its earlier years that we’d recognize today.

Starry-eyed amateur ideals aside, college football back then also could be rough around the edges. The violence and injuries during an era when equipment was rudimentary sparked a backlash that could have seen the sport banned.

Payments, jobs and other benefits for players were common practice in some places whether legal or not. There also were instances of ringers—players who suited up for a school even though they weren’t legitimate students.

Is that essentially what they’ve been doing in recent seasons at UNC-Chapel Hill—fielding a football team salted with ringers?

This has to be the standard: For a university to avoid the conclusion that it’s cheating, team members cannot be allowed to perform so poorly in the classroom that if they weren’t football (or basketball) phenoms, they’d be flunked out.

In Chapel Hill that standard has been breached if not shredded. Worse, the fault lies heavily with an academic department, where professors are supposed to be front-line guardians of integrity.

The Department of African and Afro-American Studies, under then-chairman Julius Nyang’oro, looks as if it was allowed to become Tar Heel ringer heaven.

Athletes, notably football players, flocked to courses the university has classified as “irregular”—courses that didn’t meet and typically required only a term paper. Judging by the transcript of former football and basketball star Julius Peppers that surfaced last week, cossetting of athletes in the
department known as AFAM probably went on at least since Peppers was a freshman in 1998.

We’ll now see whether an investigation headed by former Gov. Jim Martin – the latest assigned to dissect a situation that the university for too long was reluctant to confront – can lay out the full extent of the abuses.

But even if AFAM was enlisted in what amounts to a scheme to keep athletes eligible to play while they bombed in other courses, the university should resist any calls to downgrade or dismantle the department itself. Whether the focus is on Africa or the experience of African-Americans, the issues, topics, questions and challenges that can be addressed by a department of this nature are worthy ones.

When black Americans were regarded as inferiors who weren’t even allowed to attend UNC-Chapel Hill, the study of issues pertinent to their lives would have been a specialized niche for a small coterie of open-minded scholars.

But in recent decades we’ve come to recognize the significance of black-oriented themes to a broader understanding of American history and culture. African-Americans have contributed mightily to our society’s overall success, and also have figured and still do figure in some of its most vexing dilemmas, such as generational poverty and the crime that is a corollary.

As for study of the African continent, that’s a rich field indeed. It is a place of turmoil where wars have global ripple effects. And going back as far as the days of slavery, Africa has been a principal theater in the struggle for human rights.

The Department of African and Afro-American Studies, on its website, says its goal is “to give specific attention to the histories, cultures, cultural linkages, and contemporary socio-political realities of the peoples of Africa and the African Diasporas.” A diligent student choosing to concentrate on Africa as a major could broaden out to include some of the science-themed subjects in which the continent looms large. It is, after all, the mother lode for anthropologists and other scientists trying to decipher the riddles of human origin.

Or an American history major could engage with AFAM 408, “Black Thought and Black Intellectuals in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” taught last spring by Professor Kenneth Janken, a Rutgers Ph.D. in American history who is the department’s director of undergraduate studies.
UNC-CH aims to teach its students about the world and how to think. There is nothing wrong with athletes, many of them African-American, choosing a field of study that appeals to their curiosity and personal identity while giving them intellectual skills that could lead to any number of careers.

But the university must uphold its end of the bargain by making sure courses in this or any department are rigorously taught and graded. Overall paths of study must be logically structured.

If any department becomes a place for the football program to park athletes who are students in name only – i.e., ringers who can’t or don’t do college-level work – then there has been a monstrous failure in standards and oversight for which faculty members must be held responsible. At UNC-CH, let the damage be fully gauged and the repairs begin.

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Duke divers and 2012 Olympic medalists Abby Johnston and Nick McCrory, along with their coach Drew Johansen (center), arrived at Raleigh-Durham International Airport Monday, August 13, 2012. They talked to the media at the Terminal 2.

**A career in diving leads Duke coach to the Olympics**

By Marti Maguire - Correspondent

Drew Johansen’s Olympic dreams were sparked by watching Team USA dominate the 1984 summer games in Los Angeles – particularly in diving, in which Greg Louganis took two gold medals.

So it was especially sweet for the Duke diving coach to help put to rest the country’s recent dearth of diving medals. Johansen, 42, led the 2012 U.S. Olympic diving team, which brought home three medals from the London games – the country’s first diving medals in 12 years.

The tally includes the first U.S. medals in synchronized diving, which went to two Duke divers who have long trained with Johansen, along with their partners.

For Johansen, who returned this past week from a month in London, the games represent a high mark in a decades-long career as a diver and coach.
“It was the most amazing moment in my coaching career, and one of the most special moments in my life,” Johansen said of winning the medals. “To be part of the team that brought success back to the U.S. after all those years is a great honor for me.”

Johansen was a key part of his athletes’ life-changing victories. Duke diver Nick McCrory describe his coach as “very demanding,” and said Johansen’s firm belief in their abilities was crucial to the team’s success.

“He asks a lot based on what he knows each of his athletes is capable of,” said McCrory, who has worked with Johansen for five years and won a bronze medal in the men’s synchronized 10 meter platform with partner David Boudia. “He believes in us, and he pushed us to do all that we are capable of doing.”

**Rubbing elbows in London**

In addition to McCrory’s bronze, Duke’s Abby Johnston and partner Kelci Bryant took silver in women’s synchronized 3 meter springboard, and Boudia bested McCrory and others to take the gold in men’s individual 10 meter platform.

Johansen hopes this year’s strong showing will signal a turning point for U.S. diving, which reached its peak with Louganis’ success in the 1980s but has faltered since.

“It wasn’t necessarily that they fell behind,” Johansen said of the U.S. diving team. “The rest of the world caught up, and the competition got so much deeper, we struggled to find our way onto the podium for a while.”

In recent years, China has transformed the sport with its overwhelming success. But other countries are starting to catch up.

Johansen competed at the national level, but never in the Olympics. So he and his team were all experiencing the grandeur of the games for the first time.

Johansen said one of the most impressive parts of the games was the Olympic Village, and the sometimes-surreal experience of rubbing elbows with elite athletes.

“It’s like a giant college campus with 10,000 of the world’s greatest athletes living in the dorms,” he said. “You go into a cafeteria and see a 7-foot basketball player and then a 4-foot gymnast, and they’re all the best at what they do in the world. It’s pretty amazing.”

**A mother’s influence**
Johansen dreamed of making it to the Olympics for years, but his interest in sports hasn’t always focused on diving. In high school, he cycled through football, baseball and other sports in addition to diving.

“Whatever season it was, that was my sport,” he said.

A self-described “army brat,” Johansen followed his father’s army career to Germany, Florida, and other locations, including Fayetteville. Sports gave him a focus amid the constant moves. In the end, he says, growing up in a variety of settings was good for his career as a coach at the international level – helping him learn to deal with people from a variety of different cultures and with many different personalities.

But it was the influence of his mother, a teacher, that made him decide at the age of 15 that he would someday be a coach.

“The heart of coaching is teaching, and I think that’s what really did it for me,” he said.

He said he chose diving over other sports because he always enjoyed the training aspect – the hard work of preparing your mind and body for competition – and diving required intense training.

“It’s very much like golf, where perfection is something you’re always chasing you will never, ever capture,” he said. “No matter how successful you are, there are always elements you can work on to improve.”

Johansen’s first formal diving training was in college at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania. When program was cut, he went to the University of Arizona.

He left there for Florida Atlantic University, where he took a coaching job and continued to compete.

“In the competitive sense, it’s just the athlete and gravity pretty much,” he said. “But there’s a team aspect to the training, and the coach-diver relationship is really special. It fit me well.”

He soon devoted himself to coaching, leading several collegiate and club teams over the years. In 2007, he left a club team in Columbus, Ohio, to come to Duke.

Helping mold Olympians

Johnston, whom Johansen has coached since she was 12, followed him to North Carolina, where she finished high school online before enrolling at
Duke. McCrory, a Chapel Hill native, started training under Johansen when he was a junior in high school.

U.S. Olympic rules assign the coach with the most athletes competing in the most events as the team’s official coach. Johansen earned the spot when Johnston and McCrory qualified in a total of three events. Johansen cited the close bonds among the three as a key element in the team’s success.

“We trained together for so many years, and we were able to all be there together,” he said. “The strength of that team helped them overcome the immense pressure they were under.”

McCrory said one of Johansen’s strengths is his attention to detail. He said his coach watches hours of video to master the subtleties of elements such as a diver’s precise arm position.

“He’s very meticulous about the little details that actually make a big difference in your dive,” McCrory said.

Johansen also coached the USA Diving team at the 2011 World Championships team in Shanghai, China. In the past year, U.S. divers also competed in Dubai, Russia, China and elsewhere. The busy travel schedule helped team members from all over the country bond, Johansen said, and sharpen their skills for the world stage in London.

Both Johnston and McCrory expect to graduate before the next Olympics, to be held in Brazil in 2016. But whether or not the three are still together, they all are hoping to build on their successes.

“You never know what the future holds,” Johansen said. “We are looking forward to Rio.”

Know someone who should be Tar Heel of the Week? Contact us at tarheel@newsobserver.com or find Tar Heel of the Week on Facebook.

**Drew Johansen**

Born: Aug. 22, 1969, Delray Beach, Fl.

Residence: Durham

Career: Head diving coach, Duke University

Education: Bachelor’s in Physical Education, Rochville University

Family: Wife, Jenny Keim Johansen; daughter, Lina Mei

Fun Fact: Johansen's wife is the diving coach at North Carolina and a former N.C. State diving coach. She has won two Olympic diving medals.
NC college student dies at welcoming event

The Associated Press

GREENSBORO, N.C.—An ill student has died during a welcoming ceremony at North Carolina A&T university in Greensboro.

Twenty-year-old Jawuan Paul Trotter of Charlotte was attending a welcome event for the fall semester over the weekend when he became ill and died.

Desiree Trotter says her son had the autoimmune disease scleroderma and was in constant pain. She says he was determined to attend college anyway and had attended a welcoming ceremony last summer but was unable to attend fall classes.

She says he did attend the spring semester and was looking forward to this fall's semester.

University spokeswoman Nicole Pride says Trotter had attended the Union Takeover and became ill sometime after midnight. He died at Moses Cone Hospital.
Largest freshman class at UNCC ever – again

By David Perlmutt

 UNC Charlotte is set to begin classes Monday with the largest freshman class in the school’s history, its size surprising even enrollment officials. Unofficially, the class numbers about 3,600 – with more from other states than ever before. That’s up nearly 500 freshmen from last year’s biggest freshman class ever.

The official class size won’t be determined until late August, after UNCC tabulates how many freshmen who said they were coming actually enroll and how many others stay enrolled, said Tina McEntire, associate provost for enrollment management.

Whatever the number, it’ll be a long ways from 1946, when the school opened as a small center for GIs returning from World War II. Its first graduating class numbered 23.

McEntire credited the growth to recruiting, attention from a prestigious scholarship, the lure of Charlotte and UNCC’s new football program.

In a lingering bad economy, UNCC is also a relative bargain for students who might have opted for more expensive private schools.

McEntire had planned for about as many freshmen as last year’s class of 3,170 – despite an 11.8 percent uptick in undergraduate applications and an 8.9 percent rise in transfer applications last spring over the previous year.

The surge allowed UNCC to be more selective.

By April 1, the number of commitments to attend had risen only 1 percent or 2 percent. A month later, commitments were up 16 percent, sending McEntire scrambling to alert to services such as housing, food and orientation that they’d need to prepare for a significantly larger class.

UNCC officials don’t anticipate any strains from the extra 500 students.

To make for more housing space, the university quickly scuttled summer plans to demolish an on-campus apartment building. It is out-dated, and other housing and dining facilities are under construction.

“If I’d announced the increase one month later, (the dorm) would have already been torn down,” McEntire said.
The school also added two more freshmen orientation programs.

“What we didn’t want was for these freshmen to enroll and find a campus that was overwhelmed,” McEntire said. “They’re going to find that the preparations were pretty seamless.”

**Reasons for the surge**

The factors are many for the surge in interest for UNCC.

For starters, the school has worked hard to grow the past five years, sending a team of counselors and assistant directors to recruit at college fairs.

Initially, they concentrated on New York and New Jersey, but in recent years they’ve expanded their recruitment into other states such as Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and heavily in Virginia.

“New York and New Jersey have always been good states for us,” McEntire said. “But now we are beginning to see the fruits of our efforts in these other states.

“That is good for the university. The out-of-state students pay more money and they add to the diversity of the classroom experience.”

Around the country, UNCC’s Levine Scholarships have raised the university’s profile.

In 2009, Charlotte philanthropists Leon and Sandra Levine donated $9.3 million over 10 years to establish the merit scholarships aimed at developing leaders.

UNCC and the Levines hope to have at least 60 Levine Scholars on campus by 2014, each getting a full ride for four years. The third class of 17 scholars starts Monday, pushing the number of scholars to 46.

Freshman Tanner Parks of Atlanta is a member of that class.

He had an opportunity to go to three other schools, including his in-state flagship University of Georgia, but the scholarship and UNCC’s architecture school drew him to Charlotte.

“The architecture program is a combination of everything I love about school – art, writing and math,” Parks said. “When my mom and I toured the campus last fall, it was clear that UNC Charlotte is a school on the rise. All the new buildings – it was clearly growing.

“I could see myself going here from the get-go.”
He moved into his residence hall Thursday and met students from all along the East Coast. “I’d heard it’s a school of mainly in-state students, but I’ve met ones from as far away as Buffalo, N.Y.,” he said. “It’s been a great surprise.”

The scholarship has drawn attention from school counselors from across the country, McEntire said.

Last spring, a group of high school counselors from Seattle visited the campus to see UNCC and hear about the scholarship.

“Until two years ago, we never had any visits like this,” McEntire said. “The last two years, we’ve had five or six groups visit. That doesn’t sound like a lot, but it’s significant.”

**Football excitement**

And then there’s the fledgling football team, scheduled to kick off Aug. 31, 2013 against Campbell University.

“We’ve received a lot of positive press about football,” she said. “We do feel a lot of students are excited about being a part of a program that’s starting. It’s become a part of our recruitment: We tell students, ‘You enroll here and you’ll be among the first class to see football for the first time. You can say you were here at the beginning.’ ”

Parks wanted to go to a school with a football team “to experience school spirit.”

He’s sure to be at the 49ers’ first game.

“The line here is that we’re undefeated,” he said. “I hate to see that go, but it’ll be fun to be a part of something new.”

The lure of Charlotte, too, has become a big part of the recruitment.

It’s a city with major league sports, drawing students from rural areas and other North Carolina cities who want a shot of “big-city life.”

There are intern opportunities, and jobs after graduation.

“Many kids even in the Raleigh-Durham area are beginning to look at UNC Charlotte as a wonderful opportunity to stay in-state and get a big-city experience,” McEntire said. “We tell them, ‘When you choose UNC Charlotte, you’re choosing Charlotte for a lifetime.’

“Many of our graduates stay in Charlotte to launch their careers.”

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BOONE, N.C. (AP) -- Appalachian State University is working to recruit students from overseas, especially in Asia.

The Winston-Salem Journal reported (http://bit.ly/NAGoPY) the school the school has put banners in more than a dozen high schools in China in hopes of recruiting more students.

Vice chancellor Jesse Lutabingwa says school officials think it's important for students to have a global learning experience. One alternative to traveling abroad for students is to bring foreign students to the Boone campus.

Appalachian State has reached agreements with universities in Thailand and Vietnam for students to study two years in those countries and transfer to Boone for their last two years.

A delegation from South Africa visited last week. Only about 150 international students are enrolled at Appalachian State now out of the more than 17,000 students.
A College Lifts a Hurdle for Illegal Immigrants

By DAN FROSCH

DENVER — Monday is the first day of the school year for Metropolitan State University of Denver, a compact, urban campus in the heart of the city’s downtown.

It also signifies the dawn of a controversial new policy for this institution of 24,000. Among the crowd of students who will show up for class next week are dozens of illegal immigrants who, as part of a specially tailored tuition rate, can now qualify for a reduced fee if they live in Colorado.

The new rate, approved by the university’s board of trustees in June, has garnered praise from immigrant rights advocates here who have tried for years to get legislation passed that would allow state colleges to offer discounted tuition to local, illegal immigrant students.

But the policy has also drawn the ire of conservatives who are threatening to sue the university to keep the rate from being put in place and have accused Metro State of openly defying Colorado law.

Stephen Jordan, Metro State’s president, said the board took action after Colorado lawmakers failed to pass a similar tuition proposal this year.
“Clearly, from our perspective, these are young people who were brought here of no accord of their own,” he said.

“I think what our board was saying was, “Why wouldn’t we want to provide an affordable tuition rate for these students?” he added. “So that they can get a college degree and become meaningful contributors to the economy of Colorado.”

Under the new rate, illegal immigrants will pay $7,157.04 per year at Metro State. That is nearly $3,000 higher than the tuition for legal Colorado students but about $8,000 lower than what out-of-state students pay.

Only those students who attended high school in Colorado for at least three years and received their high school or general equivalency diplomas here are eligible. So far, more than 100 have qualified, university officials said.

Dalia Quezada, 18, an illegal immigrant from Mexico, will start her freshman year at Metro State on Monday.

Ms. Quezada, whose family brought her to the United States when she was 6, said she could not afford college if not for the discount.

“My dream was always to attend a big university,” she said. “But realistically, it was too expensive. But when Metro made the change, it opened up an opportunity. It’s like my dream is becoming a reality.”

Still, in a state where about 20 percent of residents are Hispanic and where the tuition issue generates rancor in the legislature, the new policy has provoked a furor, largely among Republican lawmakers.

On June 20, university officials were called before a hearing of the legislature’s Joint Budget Committee to defend their plan.

That same week, Colorado’s attorney general, John W. Suthers, issued a nonbinding legal opinion criticizing the policy.

“The decision by Metropolitan State College of Denver to proceed on its own to create a new tuition category, undeterred by the legislature’s repeated rejection of specific authorizing legislation, is simply not supported by governing law,” Mr. Suthers said in a statement at the time.

According to the Higher Education Alliance, a coalition of Colorado groups that supports the new policy, 13 states offer in-state tuition for students who are in this country illegally. But opponents have defeated similar measures in Colorado six times.
A spokeswoman for Mr. Suthers, a Republican, declined to address Metro State’s tuition rate, saying in an e-mail that the attorney general’s office would not comment on “matters that may potentially be litigated.”

Tom Tancredo, a former Colorado congressman and presidential candidate who now heads the Rocky Mountain Foundation, a conservative research organization, said his group intended to sue the university in the next few months.

Mr. Tancredo, a fierce proponent of tightening immigration laws, said: “There was a proposal to allow this in the legislature. It failed. In its failure, it seems to me that a pretty strong signal was sent that you can’t do this in the absence of law.”

Terrance Carroll, a Metro State board member and former Democratic speaker of the state House of Representatives, said there was always a concern about legal action, but the school remained confident the policy was lawful.

University officials also said they were heartened by President Obama’s executive order deferring deportation of young illegal immigrants who have been in the United States since they were children.

Though the deferral program, which began accepting applications this week, does not directly affect Metro State, advocates hope it will help bolster support to expand the tuition policy to other Colorado colleges.

Sarahi Hernández, 19, who is poised to start her sophomore year at Metro State, said the reduced tuition would allow her to focus on school, rather than worrying about drumming up enough money to enroll.

“It doesn’t mean I won’t have to work,” Ms. Hernández said. “But it will allow me to get my dream going.”