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Back to class at ECU

By Jackie Drake
The Daily Reflector
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East Carolina University welcomed an estimated 27,000 students both physically and virtually when classes began Tuesday morning.

Enrollment is projected to be slightly less than last year's 27,783 students, according to John Fletcher, associate provost for enrollment services. The numbers are not final until a census snapshot is taken on the 10th day of class and sent to general administration for review.

About 5,300 students are new to ECU, a combination of 3,900 freshmen and 1,400 transfer students.

“It's exciting, I was a little nervous at first, but everyone's here for the same reason,” said freshman theater arts major Blake Burke. “Things have gone pretty smoothly,” Burke said. “My sister's in her second year so she was able to show me around.”

For seniors, it was business as usual. “I'm just getting back into the swing of things,” said senior hospitality management major Chris Low.

Senior sports studies major Matt Contipodero said he enjoyed being back on campus but that it was “bittersweet” because it is his last year. “I'm about to graduate so that's something to look forward to,” he said.
Distance education numbers are down slightly, with about 5,500 students registered, compared to about 5,800 at this point last year, but registration continues. The 52 students in the new dental school started orientation on Monday.

The Honors College began its second year with 106 incoming first-year students for a total of 192.

Built on the previous honors program, the Honors College provides academically gifted students with opportunities for leadership, service and global understanding, according to interim dean Richard Eakin.

Students complete an original research project and take special interdisciplinary seminars in addition to the standard curriculum in their field.

“It raises the tenor of the academic discourse in all their classes,” Eakin said. “All their peers benefit, and it is a benefit to the institution and the region.
“We need more brainpower to stay here,” he said. “We bring some of the best and brightest to eastern Carolina.”

Junior biology and chemistry major Matt Edwards said the college has been “a huge opportunity.”
“It's helped me grow as a person and as a student,” said sophomore nutrition major Taylor Lawless.
“We get to help shape and build the Honors College and give our own ideas,” freshman neuroscience and biology double major Shayna Mooney said.

While the Honors College was able to proceed despite a 16 percent budget cut to ECU, administrators warned some courses might have fewer sections or classes might be larger.
“Getting into class was hard,” said freshman nursing student Kelsey Hardison. “Some classes filled up really quick, like psychology and chemistry.”

But Hardison said her morning math class was small, only about 30 students. “The teacher really cared about getting the message through, we got right into the material,” she said.

Sophomore nursing student Holly Dixon said she didn't have any trouble registering, but made sure to grab her science books early since those tend to run out.
“I got in all my classes right away,” said freshman Kyle Krueger-Maynor, who plans on majoring in business.
“Everything has gone well. It's good to be on campus.”

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Adam Wainwright was working in the audio-visual shelving area at Pitt Community College's library when the shaking started Tuesday afternoon.

“The bookshelves and the lights in the ceiling were shaking back and forth,” the 19-year-old Grimesland resident said. “I just stood there watching everything, hoping that nothing fell on me.”

Millions of East Coast residents shared Wainwright's concerns when an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.8 on the Richter Scale struck Mineral, Va., 35 miles northwest of Richmond, at 1:51 p.m.

An estimated 100 telephone calls flooded Pitt County's emergency communications center in the minutes after the earthquake, said Allen Everette, Pitt County fire marshal. “We had the calls coming in the 911 center plus the calls coming into our (emergency management) office and the questions were, ‘Did you feel that?’ and ‘What was it?’” Everette said.

No damage or injury was reported to Greenville police, the Pitt County Sheriff's Office or county emergency services, officials said. Also, no damage had been reported to state emergency management officials as of 6 p.m. Tuesday, a state Division of Emergency Management spokeswoman said.

Greenville Utilities is monitoring gas, water and electrical services but no problems have been reported, officials said. East Carolina University, Pitt County Schools and Pitt Community College also reported no damage. Damage assessment was continuing late Tuesday closer to the epicenter.

The tremors were felt as far north as Rhode Island and throughout North Carolina. They reached Greenville like ripples in a pond, said Lara Wagner, a UNC-Chapel Hill geology professor monitoring U.S. Geological Survey information.

“The waves from an earthquake propagate throughout the entire planet,” she said. “We basically felt those waves a little while after the earthquake happened.” Residents everywhere in Pitt County felt the shake. Otis Cox, a nurse in Bethel, was in a patient's home when it happened, he said by phone.

“The TV fell over and some other stuff fell over but no damage that I know of,” he said. “We've been having a lot of water and sewer work here, so at first we thought it was
bulldozer going down the street. ... I couldn't believe it, it was the weirdest thing, I've never experienced one before.”

Tom Chambliss, a resident of Rosewood Drive near the stadium in Greenville, said he “felt the floor vibrate” and said “the pictures went crazy on the wall.”

In Grimesland, Lorraine Pridgen was sitting outside in her gazebo when she felt the tremor and saw water in a garden fountain sloshing. “It kinda scared me,” said Pridgen, 69, a Vanceboro native who's lived in Pitt County for about 15 years. “The water was kinda moving around like it's shaking and I said, ‘What in the world? ... Good grief what should I do?’”

Pitt County's emergency management staff was reviewing preparations for Hurricane Irene in the basement offices of the county government building when the shaking started, Everette said. “We all looked at each other and said, ‘Did you feel that?’ and ‘What was that?’” he said.

People outside of Greenville flooded their town halls and emergency centers with calls a With no reports of damage in Farmville, town manager Jim Smith turned to humor. “I'm in the middle of planning for a hurricane … I'm kinda glad it happened, now Farmville has had a linear storm, tornado, (maybe a) hurricane — without it, we would've been short an earthquake,” Smith said with a laugh.

Coffee sloshed in cups at the Pitt County Courthouse in Greenville, where sheriff’s deputies wondered like everyone else what had happened. Officials quickly began to gather information. Some court employees and visitors left the building as a safety precaution.

The quake response was added to the agenda of a 3 p.m. meeting already called to discuss the approaching Hurricane Irene with staff members from county emergency services and other officials. “We actually have a section on earthquakes in our emergency planning manual, but I've never had occasion to refer to it,” said Noel Lee, Pitt County emergency services director. “We also have a section on preparing for tsunamis, but I'm not expecting one of those, either.”

In Winterville, the tremor startled Pitt Community College students studying at the Everett Building, the school's library. Several students on the second floor wondered why the building briefly shook, but they weren't alarmed.

Hayley Dwyer, 19, of Farmville, who also works part-time at the library, said she went back to her reading when it stopped. “It was just shaky,” she said. “At the beginning, it was a little freaky.”
Lottie Joyner, a library technical assistant, said she first thought the vibrations were from construction. Then, she saw a report on CNN, the channel that plays continuously in the lobby.

Student Lorenzo Becton, 24, of Greenville, said he was in a study room upstairs when the tremor hit. “The blinds were shaking,” he said. “At first, I thought it was just hard-blowing wind outside, shaking the windows. It's kind of bizarre.”

Wagner, the geology professor, said she had not heard of any reports of damage in the state.

“I would be surprised if there was any damage. Usually with a 5.8 in areas with good construction, there isn't a ton of damage unless you're really close to the epicenter,” she said. “A 5.8 is usually bigger than what you expect on the East Coast.”

The most recent East Coast earthquake was a 2.9 magnitude event that occurred in March along the North Carolina/South Carolina border, said Eric Horsman, assistant professor with the East Carolina University Department of Geological Sciences. While significant for an East Coast quake, the waves of that event weren't felt in Greenville, he said.

Christy Wallace, the sheriff's public information specialist, said she was awed by nature's power.

“I thought about how amazing it is that today in Pitt County we're dealing with smoke from wildfires, preparing for the arrival of a major hurricane and feeling the ground move under us from an earthquake. The only thing left is a tsunami,” Wallace said.

Staff writers Michael Abramowitz, Bobby Burns, Jackie Drake, Ginger Livingston, and K.J. Williams contributed to this report.
Expectations for Hupp
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I was dismayed to see how low our expectations of our educators and public officials have fallen. You saw fit to print an editorial praising Dr. James Hupp, the founding dean of the new dental school at ECU. It was discovered (or made public) in recent days that he was receiving unreported income from other sources. He taught part-time at UNC-Chapel Hill without receiving approval. That must have been extremely difficult to uncover.

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard acknowledged that the timing is terrible. I guess the best time to make public these transgressions would be over Christmas vacation.

Why is it necessary to travel to Switzerland and spend $5,000 for Hupp and an unidentified staff member to examine equipment at the manufacturer's plant when the equipment could have been examined at the dental school in Chapel Hill? Of course, part of the trip was paid for by the manufacturer, which I am sure had no bearing on the equipment purchased.

To quote the editorial, Hupp "did a good job in getting the school started." I guess the Board of Trustees has the attitude common in Italy during the '30s. At least Mussolini made the trains run on time.

Michael Sherman
Nashville

Editor's note: The editorial noted Hupp's "questionable travel expenses" and his failure "to strictly follow rules with regard to disclosing some outside income ..." It concluded by saying: "Hupp's resignation as dean because of errors in judgment as he worked to get the new dental school up and running is unfortunate, but the university's solid commitment to this important public health venture should not be deterred."
Here are some things North Carolinians deserve to know in light of the latest twist involving the UNC-Chapel Hill football program:

Was star player Marvin Austin routed, as a summer school student before the start of his freshman year, into an upper-level African-American studies course because it was assumed he would be given an easy ride to a decent grade?

Are there professors on campus to whom athletes and their minders in the athletics department can turn with the expectation that normal academic standards will not apply? (At plenty of schools, "jocks" have enjoyed solicitous treatment from friendly professors since Knute Rockne was a water boy - while notions of academic integrity fly out the window.)

Who at UNC-CH is responsible for setting prerequisites for courses to ensure that enrolled students are prepared to do the work?

Why has the Carolina faculty as a whole, in keeping with its responsibility to defend academic standards, not taken a harder line against special treatment for gridiron gladiators?

It would be some comfort if the Marvin Austin example could be dismissed as an aberration. Common sense, however, suggests that when vast effort is plowed into so-called "academic support" for marginal students who also happen to be outstanding athletes, what happened with Austin is probably not that unusual.

**Impressive debut**

Austin was recruited amid great fanfare to play on the Tar Heels' defensive line, beginning with the 2007 season. Before that season began, he was placed in a summer school course called Bioethics in Afro-American Studies.

As The N&O's Dan Kane reported Sunday, the course was classified at the 400 level, open to both undergraduate and graduate students. There were no prerequisites in terms of introductory courses, although departmental permission was needed for a student to enroll.
The class was taught by the chair of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies, Julius Nyang'oro. Austin received a B+. That fall he went on to take English 100, Basic Writing - suggesting he had not been well-equipped to deal with the ins and outs of an advanced course supposedly suited for grad students.

Nyang'oro also was the professor who failed to report football player Michael McAdoo for submitting a paper that included passages where evidence of plagiarism should have been obvious.

Revelations about the paper contributed to the downfall of head football coach Butch Davis, who already was on the hot seat because of other transgressions in the football program related to improper benefits received by players. Davis was fired by Chancellor Holden Thorp as Thorp expressed dismay over damage to the university's academic reputation.

**Too gooey**
Now Austin's transcript raises further questions that need to be addressed by the school's faculty and administration. To name just one: Where's the academic rigor underlying a Bioethics course that examines "the process involved in resolving moral dilemmas pertaining to people of the African Diaspora"? It examines the process, not the dilemmas? This looks like one course that came out of the professorial oven half-baked - something that campus deans are supposed to prevent.

Austin, now competing for a spot with the New York Giants, went to Chapel Hill to polish his chances of making it in the pros. He was forced to sit out his senior season after it came to light that he had accepted benefits worth more than $13,000 from people with pro football connections.

Many players, even with little hope of NFL success, become entangled in the forced marriage of athletics and academics. UNC-CH goes to extraordinary lengths to keep them eligible for competition while, as often happens, they pursue majors in congenial fields such as communications or exercise and sports science. All the signs are unmistakable: The faculty must stop collaborating in what is clearly a by-hook-or-by-crook process in the misguided service of football glory if this renowned university is to stop the stain spreading on its good name.
For-profit colleges are facing a tough test: getting new students to enroll.

New-student enrollments have plunged—in some cases by more than 45%—in recent months, reflecting two factors: Companies have pulled back on aggressive recruiting practices amid criticism over their high student-loan default rates. And many would-be students are questioning the potential pay-off for degrees that can cost considerably more than what's available at local community colleges.

"People are just frozen or deferring, delaying decisions to go to school," said DeVry Inc. Chief Executive Daniel Hamburger in a conference call earlier this month. "The average person in the U.S. has become much more risk-averse and cautious when it comes to spending or committing to anything. It's unrealistic for us to think that education would be immune from this."

Undergraduate new-student enrollment fell 25.6% at DeVry's namesake university in the quarter ended June 30. The company—considered by many industry watchers as one of the stronger school operators because of its portfolio of business, technology and health-care courses—had earlier forecast earnings growth for the current fiscal year but now expects relatively flat bottom-line results.

Per-share earnings at Corinthian Colleges Inc. are expected to be down about 72% when it reports results Tuesday, according to analysts' forecasts. The company, with offerings in health care and criminal justice among other areas, has seen its stock sink to 11-year
Education stocks dived as reports of dropping enrollments at for-profit schools emerged. Many students are re-considering their options, including attending community colleges, Melissa Korn reports on the Markets Hub. (Photo: AP Photo.)

At Corinthian, which implemented changes to its recruiter compensation in April, new-student enrollment declined 21.5% in the first calendar quarter, compared with an 8% decline in the previous quarter.

A representative from Corinthian declined to comment, citing a quiet period before releasing earnings.

Enrollment at for-profit colleges soared during the recession, amid heavy advertising that appealed to suddenly jobless people needing new skills. But while the advertising continues, a number of for-profit schools including Corinthian, Apollo Group Inc. and others have tamped down aggressive recruiting. They've cut back on recruiter bonuses based on factors such as how many students make it past their first term. Apollo, operator of the University of Phoenix chain, has been criticized for targeting injured veterans and homeless adults to fill seats.

Apollo spokesman Alex Clark said the company's policy on such tactics is "clear and unambiguous," and it doesn't allow employees to visit homeless facilities for recruiting purposes. "Any employee who violates this policy faces disciplinary action up to and including termination," Mr. Clark said.

As for military students, Mr. Clark said University of Phoenix "is proud to meet the needs of active-duty military students and veterans of the armed forces."

Some companies are feeling pain not only from students shying away but from their own tightened admissions standards. Washington Post Co.'s Kaplan Higher Education, like Apollo, now requires certain students to participate in a trial program before enrolling and paying tuition. Kaplan reported a 47% decline in new-student enrollment for the June quarter. Even without the orientation program, new-student enrollment would have dropped 36% in the quarter.

Corinthian briefly stopped accepting students without a high-school diploma, but reversed its policy this spring and once again admits students who take the "Ability to Benefit" test intended to show they would benefit from higher education. Cutting recruiter commissions had a rapid and profound effect at Capella Education Inc., which introduced a new pay structure in January: New-student enrollment dropped 35.8% in the first quarter, compared with a 10.7% decline in the period immediately before the launch.
The specter of a hefty debt load dissuaded Jason Tomlinson from enrolling to study business at Berkeley College, a for-profit school with locations in New York and New Jersey. Mr. Tomlinson, now 25, said he would have had to pay more than $20,000 per year, for four years, for that school's bachelor's degree program.

On Mr. Tomlinson's $8-per-hour salary as a part-time sales associate at the Gap, "it just didn't seem realistic" he said. "I really did not want to go into that much debt."

Mr. Tomlinson enrolled in LaGuardia Community College, where he pays $3,600 per year for his full-time associate-degree program in business management and works at the school's fitness center to help cover expenses. A barber in his spare time, Mr. Tomlinson plans to open a high-end men's day spa after graduating with his associate's degree in business management this spring.

State and federal investigators began turning up the heat last year on for-profit schools as default rates on federally backed student loans began to climb. Even before the enrollment boom, default rates—at 11.6% in 2008, the latest year available—were about double that of public colleges. State officials, accrediting agencies and others have begun investigating the schools' recruiting efforts, financial-aid programs, job-placement rates and other business practices after a U.S. Senate committee started a series of hearings on the schools last summer.

Earlier this month, the Justice Department and four states sued Education Management Corp., alleging the company's compensation system for its admissions personnel violates the federal Higher Education Act because admissions employees had been paid based on how many students they recruit.

The company's legal adviser said the lawsuit's claims were "flat-out wrong."

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