THE DAILY CLIPS

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A playground for all: ECU opens inclusive facility

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, August 25, 2010
Officials celebrated the opening of a new state-of-the-art and inclusive playground at the East Carolina University Child Development Laboratory on Wednesday afternoon. The new playground, built in collaboration with Little Tikes Commercial Play Systems, will allow students and researchers to work with children of all ages and learning abilities in a safe environment, officials said.

With features like soft rubber paths, rubber mulch around large plastic slides, sandboxes, a plastic tree house for toddlers and specially designed swings, the playground adheres to strict accessibility codes as outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
The old playground at the lab, which has been in operation on campus for 70 years, could not accommodate children with disabilities.

“I want to thank Little Tikes for this partnership,” said ECU Provost Marilyn Sheerer. “Nothing is more important to the university today than the kind of partnerships we build.”

Linda Mitchell, director of the Child Development Laboratory, said the playground is the result of a dream, a sketch that she sent to Little Tikes that the company was able to make a reality.

“It is a glorious playground that will last for years,” Mitchell said.

Mitchell said the Child Development Lab at ECU is one of the few remaining in the country and it serves as a model.

“This playground was designed to be inclusive,” she said. “All children can play together on this playground.”

The playground benefits students and staff because they can work with children of all learning levels, officials said.

“It gives our students and faculty the opportunity to do research and study of children in this kind of environment,” Sheerer said.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@reflector.com or (252) 329-9565.
Letter: Heart Institute, staff appreciated
Thursday, August 26, 2010
My husband David and I would like to express our deepest gratitude to Dr. Randolph Chitwood and his entire surgical team for David’s recent successful heart surgery at East Carolina Heart Institute in August. They took his case when no one else would and gave us back his life. We would also like to thank the PAs, nursing and support staff for their amazing talent and expertise tempered with exceptional empathy for both patient and family. This extraordinary caring and concern extended far beyond the medical staff to your cafe and cleaning people, who were always most comforting and considerate to our family during his stay.
David has experienced two previous open heart surgeries and numerous procedures at other hospitals but your heart institute is heads above the rest.
Pitt County residents are fortunate to have such a world class facility in their midst!

CHERYL DARWELL
West End, N.C.
Pitt DA won't pursue death penalty in Falcone shooting death
By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, August 25, 2010
Pitt County’s district attorney won’t pursue the death penalty in the case of a Greenville man
arrested and charged with shooting a New Jersey native in the back on Aug. 9.
Phillip B. Lewis, 20, was indicted Monday on one count of first-degree murder following his
arrest in connection with the shooting death of Tommy Falcone, 22, after a fight between two
groups. If convicted, Lewis will face life in prison without the possibility of parole.
Lewis is currently out of jail under a $500,000 bond. No conditions were placed on his release.
“You have to have an aggravating circumstance to go after the death penalty,” District Attorney
Clark Everett said.
There is insufficient evidence the shooting involved any of the 11 aggravating circumstances
North Carolina law says must be present to pursue a death penalty prosecution, he said.
The list of 11 aggravating circumstances includes factors such as the crime being especially
heinous, atrocious or cruel; the crime being conducted during the commission of another crime;
or the suspect knowingly creating great risk of death to more than one person.
The grand jury indictment stated that Lewis was a ringleader in the shooting and listed that as an
aggravating factor in support of the first-degree charge. An aggravating factor also is applied to
sentencing.
Aggravating circumstances are the actions surrounding the crime which determine if the death
penalty should be sought.
“The following aggravating factor exists for this offense,” the indictment said. “The defendant
induced others to participate in the commission of the offense or occupied a position of leadership
or dominance of other participants.”
Falcone was discovered in the parking lot of Pirates Cove apartments on East 10th Street with a
single gunshot wound to the back shortly before 4 a.m. on Aug. 9.
Police arrested and charged Lewis with an open count of murder later that day.
Police say the shooting stemmed from a fight between two groups that occurred after Lewis and
his friends drove Falcone and some friends from the downtown area to Copper Beech.
Lewis reportedly left Copper Beech and drove to his home, where he got two rifles and a shotgun.
He returned to the Copper Beech-Pirates Cove area, where the shooting occurred.
No one else has been arrested in connection with the shooting or the earlier fight.
Lewis’ next court appearance will be in early October when attorneys will discuss administrative
issues.
Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or (252) 329-9570.
GREENVILLE

ECU group collecting cell phones

East Carolina University's Student Legal Services is conducting a cell phone drive to benefit the Family Violence Center. Used phones, batteries, chargers and other accessories may be dropped off at the department's office, 2303 Old Cafeteria Building (MS 115). The department also will collect phone items once a month at Wright Plaza, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., on Sept. 2, Oct. 21 and Nov. 17. A collection box also has been placed at the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center in the Old Cafeteria Building.

Dawn Gibbs, a paralegal with Student Legal Services, said the department hopes to collect more phones and equipment this year, when people donated 286 phones. Including accessories, about 450 items were donated.

For more information, contact Gibbs at 737-1067 or gibbsmi@ecu.edu.
Board of Governors expected to pick him today to follow Erskine Bowles.

THOMAS W. ROSS
Age: 60
Current position: President, Davidson College since 2007.
Education: Bachelor's degree, Davidson College; law degree, UNC-Chapel Hill.

House chief of staff and twice-failed U.S. Senate candidate had no prior higher education experience before taking the job in 2006. But Bowles won praise for navigating the university system through several dicey budget seasons while preaching transparency and accountability.

Ross, like Bowles a Greensboro native, also has political ties. A lawyer and former judge, Ross holds a bachelor's degree from Davidson and a law degree from UNC-Chapel Hill. In 1984, he became the youngest judge in the state when then-Gov. Jim Hunt appointed him to N.C. Superior Court.

Ross later directed the state's Administrative Office of the Courts and headed the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, a charitable agency, before taking over at Davidson in 2007.

"He's worked in and around all the forces that work for good in North Carolina," said UNC President Emeritus William Friday, who ran the university system for three decades. "I think the university is indeed fortunate. Mr. Ross is a splendid example of a person dedicated to a life of public service."

D.G. Martin, a former UNC lobbyist and a onetime U.S. Senate candidate, said Ross follows the

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pattern of previous UNC presidents with weighty ties to state politics.

"He knows North Carolina – I don’t want to say better than anyone – but he’s in the top 1 percent or 100th of 1 percent," Martin said.

Like Bowles, Ross also has a strong commitment to being a public servant, Martin said, and has built a reputation as an honest and trustworthy advocate. "That’s worth a lot," Martin said. "I believe Tom will have that credibility."

A quick study

Ross had no prior experience in higher education when tapped to lead Davidson three years ago. But he caught on quickly, said Robert Dunham, a Davidson trustee from Chapel Hill. "He had such an array of experiences. He had a great deal of respect," Dunham said.

WHAT’S ON HIS PLATE

The UNC system is a far-flung empire of 17 campuses and 215,000 students. Its new leader will deal with a number of issues including:

Growth: By 2017, about 50,000 new students are expected to enroll at public campuses.

Money: A larger low-income population will challenge a system increasingly squeezed by a lack of state money.

Technology: More students will enroll via online programs, collaborations with community colleges, and satellite sites and shared programs.

PREVIOUS UNC SYSTEM PRESIDENTS

- William Friday: 1971 to 1986
- C.D. Spangler Jr.: 1986 to 1997
- Molly Corbett Broad: 1997 to 2005
- Erskine Bowles: 2006 to 2010

"But he acknowledged that he’d be learning on the fly. And he did very well."

An elite private college just north of Charlotte, Davidson enrolls just about 1,700 students. UNC, in contrast, is a sprawling system of about 215,000 students.

Susan McAvoy, president of the board of directors of Davidson's alumni association, doesn't expect Ross to stumble.

"He'll be amazing," she said. "When you have his methodical mind, it doesn't matter how big [a problem] is because you break it into manageable pieces."

Fiscal woes to persist

Ross will take over a university system in flux. Bowles has spent the past several years shaving hundreds of millions of dollars from the system's budget – slashing positions and seeking savings in all corners to help the state deal with its ongoing economic woes. Those financial struggles are expected to continue in the next year or two, perhaps exacerbated by the loss of a great deal of temporary funding to higher education from the federal economic stimulus initiative.

Enrollment pressure

Meanwhile, demand for higher education is rising. The system expects to enroll an additional 50,000 students by 2017 and continues to invest in online and distance education initiatives to help meet that demand.

For Ross, the new job may bring a pay raise. In 2007-08, he earned $357,702 in total compensation, according to federal tax forms that Davidson, a nonprofit, must file.

The UNC system job could pay as much as $550,000, the ceiling recommended earlier this year by a committee of the UNC system's governing board. Bowles earns $478,000.

Staff writers Rob Christensen and Jane Stancill contributed to this report.

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UNC stem cell projects at risk

Judge’s ruling means some researchers will need to line up alternative funding.

By Leah Friedman

Some researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill may have to abandon their human embryonic stem cell research projects after a federal district judge blocked a 2009 presidential executive order that expanded such studies, saying it violated a law banning federal money from being used to destroy embryos.

Now UNC officials are trying to determine the meaning of Monday’s ruling from Chief Judge Royce C. Lambeth of the Federal District Court for Washington, which concluded that embryonic stem cell studies are research in which human embryos are destroyed.

“It’s not good,” said Matt Fagan, director of UNC-CH’s Human Embryonic Stem Cell Core Facility, which maintains a stock of cells and makes them available to UNC researchers for approved research projects. “We are a state institution, so most of the funding is from the federal government.”

Scientists say research with human embryonic cells could lead to cures for Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, paralysis and other ailments. The cells are derived from embryos, mostly ones that develop from eggs that have been fertilized at an in vitro fertilization clinic and then donated for research purposes with the consent of the donors, according to the National Institutes of Health.

About 60 percent of UNC’s research has begun since the 2009 executive order and most are biological studies looking at how the stem cells can become any cell in the body, Fagan said.

Most of the researchers

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STEM CELL

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are doing work that entails successive experiments conducted over months. If they have to walk away from current projects, they would have to void previous findings and start over because their cells will die if not fed every day, Fagan said.

At least one graduate student may be forced to abandon a thesis that depends on this research, said Bob Lowman, UNC-CH’s associate vice chancellor of research.

On Tuesday, Lowman sent a letter to the nine UNC researchers working with human embryonic stem cells, asking them to notify him of their funding sources. Lowman said he is working to find other funding sources for these researchers.

Lowman said that he did not think the judge’s order took effect immediately and that the federal money awarded to researchers would last a year after it was awarded.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Justice Department appealed the decision, but it’s unknown how long the appeal will take.

The National Institutes of Health told researchers this week that if they’ve already received money this year they may continue their stem cell work but that no new money will be granted, according to The Associated Press.

That means 22 projects due to get yearly checks in September, an additional $54 million, “will be stopped in their tracks,” NIH Director Francis Collins said. Proposals for new research won’t be considered, AP reported.

At least one UNC researcher’s federal grant is up for renewal at the end of this month, and this researcher will probably be among the first in the country to lose his funding, Lowman said.

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UNCW professor focuses on Jewish culture

By Ben Steeleman
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For Jarrod Tanny, Jewish culture means a lot more than the Holocaust, the Talmud or the Arab-Israeli conflict — important as those issues are.

Tanny, who just assumed the new Charles and Hannah Block chair of Jewish history at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, likes to consider other questions, too. For example, why are Mel Brooks, Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David so funny? And why are so many of America's great comedians Jewish?

"Jewish humor is a great example," Tanny said, "of how Jews integrate into the host society but still maintain their own identity. It's been shaped by popular culture, but it's shaped that culture in turn."

And why is it so funny? For Tanny, it's a complex problem. Part of it involves the nuances of Yiddish, the language most Russian Jewish immigrants spoke when they first reached Ellis Island. Part of it involves the Talmud, the hallowed commentaries on Jewish law and tradition, which promoted a tradition of argument, irony and debate.

Part of it is the role of the Outsider, imposed on Jews by centuries of exile. And part of it is an existential response to a history of persecution. As Tanny put it, "Hey, God made us the Chosen People. What have we been chosen for?"

Tanny was chosen for his demonstrated teaching abilities, said Paul A. Townend, chairman of UNCW's history department.

"We've been hunting for a couple of years for the right person for the job," Townend said. "His way of thinking about history and the place of the Jewish people in it is wonderfully broad."

For his part, Tanny is starting early to reach out to the community beyond the campus. In his honor, the university's Hillel chapter, Go4It and the local Jewish community are bringing the "high octane Jewish rock" of recording artist Josh Nelson to UNCW for a free concert at 7 p.m. Sunday in Kenan Auditorium.

Tanny is also scheduled to speak at 11 a.m. Sept. 12 at Wilmington's Temple of Israel, downtown at Fourth and Market streets.

A native of Montreal, Tanny grew up in what he described as a "diaspora community," of English-speaking Jews in a French Catholic Canadian province.

"Talk about stereotypes," he said, "we always had Chinese food on Sunday. Now, when you say 'Chinese,' it was often reconstituted East European."

"I always loved history," Tanny added, "and I owe a lot to my grandfather. It was my
job in the family to pick him up at the airport when he flew back from Florida. From the time I was 12, he kept asking me, 'What are you going to do with your life?'

“Well, eventually, I figured out I liked teaching and being in a classroom.”

After graduating from Montreal's McGill University, Tanny went on to earn a master's in Russian and East European studies from the University of Toronto and, in 2008, a Ph.D. in history from the University of California at Berkeley.

His dissertation was on the Jewish community in the 19th century Russian city of Odessa. As Tanny describes it, “Odessa was a frontier boom town – like a combination of San Francisco in the Gold Rush, New Orleans as a city of sin and New York as a land of opportunity.”

Russian laws were less restrictive there, he said, and tens of thousands of Jews flocked there in search of their fortunes.

Tanny's first book, based on that dissertation, is to be published next year by Indiana University Press. Its title: “City of Rogues and Schnorrers.”

What's a schnorrer?

Tanny smiled. “A schnorrer is a Jewish mooch. But he's more than just a mooch because he projects a sense of entitlement. He uses guilt to push his benefactors into giving him charity.

“Kramer in 'Seinfeld' is an archetypal mooch,” Tanny added. “He believes he's entitled to everything in Jerry's refrigerator.”

Tanny comes from Ohio University, where he earned high marks on student surveys as a postdoctoral fellow.

An assistant professor at UNCW, he is the first faculty member to hold the newly established Block chair, named for local businessman Charles Block and his wife, Hannah Block, the first woman to serve as Wilmington's mayor pro tem.

This semester, Tanny is teaching a survey course in Jewish culture through 1492 – a pivotal year, when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, while helping Columbus, also expelled the Jews (and the Muslims) from Spain – as well as a seminar on Jewish humor.

He and his family, who moved here in July, are already acclimating to the area, he said. His two children love the beach.

Tanny also hopes to offer more on Judaism in the South, a topic he finds "fascinating." He's already started looking at Marcie Cohen Ferris' book "Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South.”

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