THE DAILY CLIPS

August 27, 2012

News, commentary, and opinion
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In tune with her students
By Kim Grizzard
Sunday, August 26, 2012

Editor's note: As class begins in Pitt County's public schools, The Daily Reflector focuses on educators awarded Teacher of the Year honors.

The Monday morning bell at Wintergreen Primary School will be a melodious sound to Beth Ulffers.

She has been waiting all summer to hear it ring, to hear students throughout the school begin singing the words, “My country tis of thee ...”

“I’m one of those teachers that I’m ready to go back to school,” Ulffers said. “It’s not often that people find a job that they go to and they’re surrounded by love, happiness, joy, excitement. ... I just can’t imagine not being a teacher.”

Ulffers, who is entering her 15th year as a music teacher at Wintergreen, was recognized this spring as Pitt County’s teacher of the year. The Edenton native was finalist for the honor in 2000 and was named her school’s teacher of the year after her first year at Wintergreen.

That’s quite an accomplishment for a woman who had not intended on becoming a teacher at all. Ulffers is a lateral-entry teacher. After receiving her undergraduate and graduate degrees from East Carolina University’s School of Music, she went back to school there to be certified for the classroom.

“My whole life I thought I wanted to be a concert pianist,” said Ulffers, who began music lessons at age 6 and studied piano at ECU while still in high
school. “It’s funny how you get into your adult years and you realize that’s not really what you want.”

Ulffers remembers that, as a child, “playing school” meant bringing in children from her neighborhood, seating them on the sofa and teaching them songs.

“I should have known then I was going to be a music teacher,” she said, laughing.

Her high school music teacher had encouraged her to consider a career in music education, but Ulffers had a passion for performance. When she and her husband, Christopher, a faculty member at ECU’s School of Music, decided to start a family, they realized that there would be a lack of harmony between 14-hour days at the piano and raising children.

Beth Ulffers took a part-time job as a music teacher at a private school. When a full-time position opened the next year at Wintergreen, it sounded like the ideal job.

“I loved it,” she said. “It was just a perfect fit.”

Music teacher Courtney Brown, teacher of the year at Lakeforest Elementary School, applauds Ulffers’ classroom performance.

“(Teaching) is definitively what she needs to be doing,” Brown said of Ulffers, who served as her teaching mentor. “She really values that music’s not just about teaching quarter notes and eighth notes. I learned so much more from Beth than even from some of my music classes in college.”

One thing she learned is the importance of getting to know her students, even though she only sees them once a week for about 40 minutes.

“I think it’s hard sometimes to be so individual with the students because you see every student in the whole school,” Brown said. “Beth can tell you every single child’s name.”

Though nearly 800 kindergarten through second-graders will come to her classroom each year, Ulffers believes that getting to know them is a key to knowing how to teach them. Beginning with a seating chart, she keeps a journal of each class, noting which students are engaged and which ones seem out of sync.

“They teach you how to teach them. If you’re in tune with what they’re doing, you’re going to know what to do,” she said. “A lot of teaching is watching their cues.”
Students watch her cues as well. Ulffers introduced sign language into her classroom after noticing how students seemed fascinated with an interpreter who was working with a hearing-impaired child. She uses sign language to tell students to sit and stand.

Students learn signs to indicate to Ulffers when they hear changes in the music. And, although the keyboards and drums in the classroom are quite tempting, students don’t touch them until they get the sign.

Ulffers also introduces the concept of sign language to students at ECU, where she works part time, teaching elementary education students how to integrate music into the curriculum. She also helps fellow teachers at Wintergreen come up with songs to use to teach concepts in the classroom.

“If I have to teach a definition or a concept, I put it to a chant (like) ‘Tempo is the speed of the beat in music,’” she sings, snapping her fingers in time. “The classroom teachers who teach concepts through song, those children are typically the ones that retain the most information, and they have the most fun.

“Children learn through music,” she said. “Sometimes the arts take a back seat ... but if they would embrace the arts and let us teach through our medium, I think that we could teach the whole child.”

Though Ulffers only sees each student at Wintergreen once a week, the students have at least some music every school day. After the announcements, all the students sing one verse of “America.”

“If I can get them interested in music and interested in the arts, even if they choose to be a doctor ... music can bring joy to their lives,” Ulffers said. “I think that if I can make them a lifelong lover of music and the arts, it’s going to be make them a better person.”

Contact Kim Grizzard at kgrizzard@reflector.com or 252-329-9578.
A book titled “Half the Sky” — which tells of oppression of women and girls in the developing world — led East Carolina University graduate Megan Keels to a bold decision. In September, Keels will leave her hometown of Wilmington to spend six months in India as a volunteer with Apne Aap Women Worldwide, a small, nonprofit organization with a mission to end sex trafficking and prostitution.

A December 2011 graduate, Keels will work in the organization’s research and development department, collecting, analyzing and reporting the most recent data available on sex trafficking in Delhi, India.

Reading a book on the topic triggered Keels’ desire to make a difference.

“It felt like a light came on that helped me see and decide that, at this time, volunteering to fight against human trafficking is my top priority,” she said.

She said the United Nations estimates that more than a million people are trafficked annually, the majority for sexual exploitation.

Keels said that ECU courses in multivariate statistics and qualitative analysis provided the skills she will need in her volunteer role. Her duties in India run
parallel with the duties she performed as research assistant at ECU’s Community Research Lab.

“My academic career has prepared me for understanding the cultural and structural dynamics of the issues that entrap individuals in the cycle of sex trafficking,” she said.

Rebecca S. Powers, associate professor in the Department of Sociology and co-director of the Community Research Lab, is confident Keels is ready for the challenge.

“I know firsthand that Megan is well-prepared to undertake this project,” Powers said. “She has the skills that they need — a researcher to collect the data. That’s what she’s really good at.”

“Here’s a person who is not only capable, but also willing, to the extent that she is prepared to take on personal debt to do it,” Powers said.

Keels needs financial support for her undertaking. Apne Aap is nonprofit, so it will not provide pay and housing. She is working to raise $10,000 for her expenses through donations to her website, www.sendmegantoindia.com. By mid-August, she had reached 20 percent of her goal.

“I am passionate about human rights and gender equality, and this project thrives at the heart of these two goals,” Keels said.

Collaboration leads to curriculum, playground exchange

A film crew zoomed in as tiny shovels plunged into sand on a playground at ECU.

Dinosaurs were buried there — toy replicas carefully stashed by ECU professor Linda Crane Mitchell for excavation by children who attend the Nancy W. Darden Child Development Center on campus.

The “Dino Dig” is one activity in an inclusive educational curriculum Mitchell created in collaboration with playground manufacturer Little Tikes Commercial in exchange for new, fully-accessible playground at the center.

The equipment was installed in August 2010. This spring, Mitchell delivered her Clever Activities curriculum, written for child development professionals to use with Little Tikes Commercial’s Clever Climber.

The resulting product — a commercial playground package that includes a detailed teaching manual — will launch in November at the 2012 National Association for Education of Young Children annual conference in Atlanta.
Mitchell said that Little Tikes Commercial products are not the simple playthings one might find in a local toy store, but sizeable playground structures installed in schools and parks around the country.

“The curriculum development was one way to provide the new playground equipment that we desperately needed,” Mitchell said.

She led a curriculum development team composed of Child Development and Family Relations professors Archana Hegde and Suzannah Berry and graduate assistant Alex Lopez. The team developed accessible learning activities in math, literacy, science and social studies for ages 2-5. They created 10 projects, each containing five outdoor activities adapted for age and ability levels.

Mitchell said they designed the projects so that child development professionals might begin a learning process in the classroom, then extend it outside with hands-on lessons.

The exchange of equipment and curriculum materials is just the beginning of an ongoing relationship with Little Tikes Commercial, Mitchell said.

Judy Siguaw, dean of the College of Human Ecology, where the Department of Child Development and Family Relations is housed, said the partnership between ECU and Little Tikes Commercial benefits the university.

“As state dollars to fund university-operated expenses continue to decline, it will be critical to fund public-private partnerships so that universities can acquire much needed equipment and other resources,” Sigauw said. “Doing so will allow us to continue to provide cutting-edge education to our students. The Little Tikes Commercial partnership is just one example of how the College of Human Ecology is advancing in that direction.”

Mitchell said she is excited about future opportunities afforded through an ongoing relationship with Little Tikes Commercial.

“This is a curriculum that makes learning fun while promoting mental and physical development,” she said. “I think a lot of people are going to be excited about it.”

**Upcoming event**

Sept. 5: Voyages of Discovery: Dr. Mae C. Jemison on “Exploring the Frontiers of Science and Human Potential,” 7-8:30 p.m., Wright Auditorium. Jemison was the first black woman in space and is the founder and president of two medical technology companies.
One complementary ticket is available to ECU students, faculty and staff, and tickets are $10 for the general public.

Contact the Central Ticket Office by calling 1-800-ECU-ARTS.
Dr. William E. "Bill' Stephenson died on Thursday, August 16, 2012 at Glenaire Skilled Nursing Center after a brief illness. He was preceded in death by his wife Marilyn, his parents Allen W. and Lefa Whisman Stephenson, and his three siblings, Robert Stephenson, Ruth Caldwell and Mary Elizabeth McNay. He is survived by nephews and nieces, and by a group of close friends he counted as "family."

Bill was born in Plymouth, Indiana, October 31, 1930. He grew up in Indianapolis, graduating from Shortridge High School in 1947. He studied classical piano for eight years, and gave a solo recital the day of his thirteenth birthday. He was also a successful entertainer at piano comedy, working professionally through his adolescence. He appeared on national and local radio, and had a program of his own on early local television. At Shortridge he was active in school clubs, appeared in school plays and entertainments, and was editor and columnist for the school paper. Writing became a second major interest, along with music.

He attended Indiana University-Bloomington, graduating with a B.A. in Drama in 1951. He continued to work as a pianist until he entered graduate studies in English literature at the University of California-Berkeley in 1957. There he received his M.A. in 1959 and Ph.D. in 1963, holding a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship 1961-1963.

He began publication of scholarly articles in 1962, on topics from the ancient Roman writer Apuleius to modern motion pictures, and became an assistant professor of English at University of California-Los Angeles in

Bill came to East Carolina University in 1970 to establish a program of film studies, emphasizing the literary nature and critical principles of film, in the English Department there. He became a tenured full professor in 1976 and retired in 1991.

Besides articles in these years, he published Sallie Southall Cotten (1987: Pamlico Press), the biography of a North Carolina woman who while a plantation wife and mother near Greenville became known nationally as an advocate for women's education. Her story had not been told, and Bill thought it deserved to be. The book won the Margaret Schumann Award of the North Carolina Victorian Society that year.

After retirement in Raleigh, NC, Bill continued to write, producing 68 biographical articles about film and theater figures for American National Biography (1999, Oxford University Press). He was also active as a volunteer: he read books on tape for the North Carolina Library for the Blind; he played the piano at Mayview Convalescent Center in Raleigh, UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill, and Glenaire Retirement Community in Cary, NC; he devoted much time and interest to the Raleigh Men's Center, serving as Chairman of its Leadership Council in 1994-1995. All his life, Bill maintained a deep interest in books, films, theater, music and world travel. His quick wit and sense of humor always sustained him through personal ups and downs.

He became a resident at Glenaire in 2005. A celebration of life service will be held at Glenaire on Friday, September 7, 2012 at 2:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in his memory to the Glenaire Foundation, 4000 Glenaire Circle, Cary NC 27511.

Condolences may be sent through www.brownwynnecary.com
Editorial: No. 1 in wrecks no accident
Sunday, August 26, 2012

A report from AAA Carolinas this month ranking Pitt at the top of the state’s 100 counties in vehicle crashes with injuries for 2011 should be an eye opener for every motorist in the area. It certainly is for law enforcement.

Greenville police officers are conducting regular enforcement campaigns at busy intersections that see a high rate of crashes. That’s a good development. An even better one would be for more drivers to take it upon themselves to abide by traffic laws, put down the cell phone and become more vigilant behind the wheel.

A state highway patrol official attributed the increased incidence of vehicle wrecks here to the high number of young drivers. Our population of less-experienced drivers does swell with the influx of students attending East Carolina University, and many who commute to Pitt Community College.

Injecting the traffic flow with thousands of motorists, many who are from distant areas and unfamiliar with our city streets and rural back roads, most assuredly is a recipe for more fender-benders. But the blame for this troubling statistic cannot be entirely placed upon youthful drivers.

If everyone who regularly assumes responsibility for traversing Greenville and Pitt County in a 3,000-pound (at minimum) missile would make it a habit to never hold that responsibility lightly, we would not be the No. 1 county for crashes. Other cities have even bigger universities and greater populations with busier intersections, and yet they rank somewhere below us in the rate of vehicle crashes.
All variables considered, of course, statistics are not always a reliable gauge of how things really are. Another AAA Carolinas statistic that would seem to reflect positively is Pitt County’s ranking at 57th in vehicle crashes resulting in death. But take that statistic for what it’s worth, too — which is not very much when a distracted driver is crossing over in front of you from the oncoming lane.

Some drivers are better than others and every area has its share of bad ones, but we can all do a better job watching our speed, watching the other 3,000-pound missiles and ignoring the cell phone.

There’s a reason the DMV puts all those tricky questions on the driving test. They want more drivers who will think about what they’re doing. Swelling that number could go a long way toward helping Pitt County lose this particular No. 1 ranking.
Obit

Charlie Futrell

Charlie Futrell, a retired public school teacher from Montgomery County, Md. and WWII veteran of the Army Air Corps, who was known locally as the "Ironman," passed away early Sunday morning, August 19, 2012, just ten days after his 92nd birthday.

He is survived by his daughter Allison Clair of Brandenburg, Ky.; son, Robert Futrell of Georgetown, Texas; and five grandchildren. A life-long athlete and former high school coach, Ironman Charlie earned his nickname when he began competing in the 140.6 mile Ironman World Triathlon Championship race in Kona, Hawaii in 1992 at age 72. He never finished worse than 3rd in the world in his age group for six consecutive Ironman races 1992-97. After Ironman, he continued to compete in more than 125 career triathlons of shorter distances, along with over 400 other road races from sprints to marathons to duathlons. On June 11, 2011 at the Central Florida Triathlon Series in Clermont, Fla. he became the oldest person to ever complete a USA Triathlon Association officially sanctioned race. His last completed race was the Florida Duathlon Festival on February 25, 2012 in Groveland, Fla. where he ran for 4.1 miles, and biked for 10 miles, becoming the oldest known duathlete. He also competed in The Villages Senior Games, winning dozens of medals in running, swimming, and track and field events. He has been featured in news, magazine, and TV stories locally, regionally, and nationally for his athletic and fitness achievements. He was inducted into the East Carolina University Athletic Hall of Fame in 1993. His full biography can be seen at www.CharlieFutrell.com.

Charlie moved to Polo Ridge in The Villages in 1999 with Peggy, his wife of 62 years who passed away in January 2009 at age 93. Prior to The Villages, they lived in Brevard, Clearwater and Tarpon Springs, Fla., Wheaton and Silver Spring, Md., and Washington, DC. He was born in Tuscaloosa, Ala., and raised in Greenville. He graduated from Greenville High School, earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from East Carolina Teacher's College (now East Carolina University), and earned a Master's
degree in education from the University of Maryland. A memorial service will be held at the New Covenant United Methodist Church at The Villages on Saturday, Sept. 1, 2012 at 1 p.m. where Charlie and Peggy were among the first 50 members of the church congregation. Remembrance contributions may be made in Charlie's name to the New Covenant United Methodist Church Building Fund, 3470 Woodridge Drive, The Villages, FL 32162, (352)750-4529.

Published in The Daily Reflector on August 26, 2012
A few years back, while I was serving on the Tar River University Neighborhood Association Board of Directors, a public meeting was held with the Greenville chief of police about crime in the TRUNA neighborhood. He was just about to retire, so he had nothing to gain from misleading us.

The police chief told us that most of the crime in our neighborhood stemmed from too many students out walking late at night, often returning from downtown and intoxicated. He described the robberies and muggings of these students as “like shooting fish in a barrel” for the criminals and said that there was little the Greenville Police Department could do about it.

If the city’s “three-unrelated” rule is overturned, there will be even more students for the criminals to target. More students will mean more robberies, break-ins and muggings. That is like throwing gas on the fire of crime in our neighborhoods.

JONATHAN WACKER
Greenville
Sleep disorder specialist joins Brody School of Medicine staff
Monday, August 27, 2012

Dr. Tushar Thakre, a psychiatrist who specializes in sleep disorders, has joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Thakre has a joint appointment as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatric Medicine and the Department of Internal Medicine in the division of pulmonary, critical care and sleep medicine. He has a medical degree from the Government Medical College in Nagpur, India, and completed a residency in psychiatry at the University of Missouri Kansas City School of Medicine.

Thakre completed a clinical fellowship in sleep medicine at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. He also has a doctorate in integrative physiology from the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

Thakre is board-certified in psychiatry, neurology and sleep medicine. His clinical interests are psychotic disorders, mood disorders, insomnia, obstructive sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome, circadian rhythm disorders and narcolepsy.

Thakre sees patients at the ECU Physicians Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic, 905 Johns Hopkins Drive. Appointments are available by calling 744-1406. He also sees patients at the ECU Sleep Disorders and Research Center. Appointments there are available by calling 744-1600.
Contributed / Vandals badly damaged "Cow House," created by Chapel Hill artist Jane Filer on the UNC-CH campus. The fiberglass cow is part of a CowParade across the Triangle and was to be auctioned off to benefit the N.C. Children's Hospital.

2nd cow vandalized on UNC-CH campus

By Tammy Grubb - tgrubb@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL–Police arrested two students Friday in the vandalism of a second CowParade cow on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus.

Ryan Matthew Bradley, 21, of 101 Donna Court, Moyock, N.C., and Ryan William Tyson, 22, of 7 Robinson St., Apt. 5, Binghamton, N.Y., were charged with injury to personal property, a UNC police report said.

Campus police caught them in the act but two more suspects ran away, UNC Police spokesman Randy Young said.

A police report estimated the damage to the cow at $5,000.

The group gained enough leverage to push the “Cow House” cow on its side, despite the block anchoring it to the ground. The cow and block together weighed 400 pounds.

Chapel Hill artist Jane Filer created “Cow House,” sponsored by the Medical Foundation of North Carolina, as part of CowParade North Carolina. Eighty-one cows will be auctioned in January to benefit the N.C. Children’s Hospital. Fifteen are on display in Chapel Hill.
Filer estimated the cow’s value at $7,500 to $10,000, according to a news release. She spent seven days and $400 on materials, including stained glass, plywood and fiberglass to create the house on the cow’s back.

UNC Facilities employees removed the cow Friday afternoon. It will be repaired.

“It was a pure charity project, a labor of love, something I did because I know the money is going to good things for a great cause. I’m just so mad,” Filer said.

Cow House was the second act of vandalism this week on that part of campus.

Late Tuesday night or early Wednesday morning, someone stole the bolted-on bowtie on Alexander Moo-lian Bow-vine from outside the UNC Visitors Center near Franklin Street. That cow was created by fashion designer Alexander Julian.

Young said the cases are not thought to be related, and police are still investigating.

The Children’s Hospital is giving the bowtie thief until 5 p.m. Thursday to turn it into the hospital’s front desk, no questions asked. If the bowtie is not returned, a $500 reward will be offered for information leading to an arrest.

Grubb: 919-932-8746
The University of North Carolina Wilmington has a billion-dollar impact on the Southeastern North Carolina economy, according to a new study from UNCW’s Swain Center for Business.

The study, presented to trustees at their Friday meeting, found that UNCW put $1.064 billion into the economy for eight counties in Southeastern N.C. in 2011-12. That’s 4 percent of the total economic activity for the region, said Woody Hall, the Swain Center’s senior economist and the study’s leader. It’s also a reminder to the community that universities have contributions beyond advanced education, Hall said.

The study looked at university construction, student, faculty and staff spending, and daily university operations, pulling from university salary data, and county sales and property tax information, and surveying students and staff.

Through its economic activity, UNCW helps support more than 9,200 jobs and contributes to $13 million in property tax collections, the study found.

The university decided to do the study partially to update a similar study done nearly 25 years ago, said Mark Lanier, assistant to UNCW Chancellor Gary Miller. But it was also prompted by a study done by N.C. State professor Michael Walden that looked at the economic impact of the entire UNC system, Lanier said.

Walden’s study was different from UNCW’s, focusing on the impact higher education has on a person’s income. But it “prompted (UNCW) to start thinking again that it had been a while since we did our regional impact,” Lanier said.

Other campuses have also done similar studies, looking at how they affect their region, he added.

Some of the data in the study has a one-time impact, Hall acknowledged. Construction projects at the university put $26.7 million into the economy in 2011-12, for example, but those numbers will fluctuate based on when projects are started and completed.
Other portions of the data, like student and faculty spending, are more constant, he said.

The new study is the first major update on the university’s economic impact since 1986, when a study found that UNCW put $500 million in the local economy, Hall said.

Since then, Hall and the Swain Center have only updated the data by looking at fluctuations in the number of students and staff. The new study takes into account a change in how people spend their money, he said.

Like in other recent examinations of the economy, the 2008 housing market collapse and subsequent slide had an impact on the study.

Normally, a university is countercyclical to the economy, he said: Enrollment goes up when times are bad and down when they’re good.

But the 2008 crash was “totally different,” Hall said. “It hit a lot of people really hard.”

So while enrollment hasn’t declined, it hasn’t grown as much as university officials expected. But the new study indicates, Hall said, that UNCW will “continue to grow, continue to be a major force in economic activity.”

Pressley Baird: 343-2328
On Twitter: @PressleyBaird
New UNCW funding plan emphasizes graduating

By Pressley Baird

A new plan for how the University of North Carolina Wilmington will get its funding puts the emphasis on graduating more students.

Members of the educational planning committee heard a presentation Thursday from Vice Provost Stephen McFarland about the performance-based funding model being put into place across the UNC system by the board of governors.

Under the model, schools will receive funding based on their ability to meet 10 performance-based goals – such as six-year graduation rates, degrees earned by Pell grant recipients and community college transfer graduation rates – in addition to their enrollment numbers. Five goals are set systemwide, and five are tailored to each campus.

Campuses must meet their enrollment growth goals before qualifying for dollars based on performance, McFarland said. Once a school enters into the performance model, it must meet seven of its 10 goals to earn the money.

Under the enrollment-only funding model, which has been in place for the UNC system since 1998, a school got funding based on the number of student credit hours it had.

Each credit hour was weighted based on the amount of revenue it would generate, and funding varied based on the school’s average faculty salary. At UNCW, for example, one basic student credit hour brought in $110 in new funding for faculty salaries and $154 in general support dollars.

The system was designed so campuses focused only on getting bigger, McFarland said.


Under the performance funding model, schools have “incentives and rewards for improved performance,” he said.

The board of governors will negotiate and approve numbers for each goal at its October and November meetings and incorporate the model into its budget plans for the 2013-14 school year, McFarland said.
The board of governors did request $11.5 million in performance funding in the 2012-13 budget, but the N.C. General Assembly denied that request.

McFarland said the new model gave the university a more realistic set of goals. He cited a 2007 UNC-system performance plan that focused on the 90-70-50 model: retaining 90 percent of students; graduating 70 percent of students in six years; and graduating 50 percent of students in 4 years.

UNCW has met only the 4-year graduation goal of those three, he said, something he attributed to the school’s already high graduation rates.

“When you set goals that high, the closer you get to those goals, the more difficult it is to achieve them,” he said. “Going from 75 to 80 percent is not nearly as difficult as jumping from 89 to 90 percent.”

Trustee and committee member Ronnie McNeill wanted to know if the new model would raise UNCW’s profile.

“There is a general presumption that UNCW was punching above its weight,” he said. “Do you feel like this performance funding is going to level that?”

While it’s still too early to know for sure, McFarland said, “we sure hope so.”

Pressley Baird: 343-2328
On Twitter: @PressleyBaird
Private-sector colleges’ useful role

By Jayson Boyers

Private-sector colleges and universities have become an easy target for people like U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan and others who blame them for overspending and for the nation’s lack of an educated job force. The reality is that critics have chosen a few bad apples from a large group of well-run private-sector colleges. A closer look reveals that these schools make a positive impact on their students and add jobs to the economy. The key contribution is the way they prepare their students for employment and facilitate opportunities for them to meet their educational goals.

A common complaint is that private-sector colleges spend more on marketing their schools than on facilitating high-quality education. I cannot speak for all for-profit colleges, but I can say that at The Chef’s Academy in Morrisville, a culinary division of Harrison College, our focus, and the focus of many other privately held schools, is on student outcomes and support.

Our students come from demographics typically forgotten in higher education: single parents, young families, military veterans and other non-traditional students. Our priority has consistently remained on a singular focus of supporting our students. We provide resources including tutoring, a student advisory board and third-party counseling if needed, paid for, in part, by Harrison College.

At the same time, we offer support through our existing community relationships. For instance, when students cannot put food on the table for their families, our relationships with local food banks help them obtain their basics needs.

We are involved in our students’ lives and interested in their success. We tell our students that we will do everything in our power to make their dreams come true, as long as they are willing to contribute the hard work required for their degree, and that is a promise that we stand behind.

Another criticism of many of the private-sector colleges is that credits often do not transfer to other institutions. The reality is that non-transferring
credits are an educational obstacle faced by all institutions of higher education, private or public. This information is disclosed to all students, but we expect that the students who enroll at our institution will stay until they obtain their degrees.

This is due, in large part, to the high level of student support and the emphasis placed on positioning our students for career opportunities in the post-graduate job market. Harrison has a lifelong guarantee that graduates can use our career services for as long and often as they would like, regardless of when they graduate.

Assertions that private-sector schools prey on military veterans could not be further from the truth. For the last three years, Harrison College has been ranked by G.I. Jobs magazine as one of the top “military-friendly” schools in the country for transitioning veterans and their families into careers. Veterans are strong candidates because we can help them customize their educational goals to accommodate their schedule, we offer online options and we provide support to assist veterans overcome obstacles that would prevent them from meet their career objectives.

Any industry can have a few people or organizations that give the entire business a bad name. We must not give into the temptation of pitting private-sector colleges against public-sector colleges and universities. We are going to need everyone to focus on outcomes and solutions for training the 21st century workforce and bringing back our economy.

*Jayson Boyers is the National Division president of The Chef’s Academy at Harrison College, located in Morrisville.*
On College Move-In Day, Resist the U-Haul

By ALINA TUGEND

THIS week, my neighbor Lisa, who owns a smallish Honda, asked if she could borrow our minivan to help move her daughter to college in New York City, about 40 minutes away.

No problem, we said. But as it turned out, with all the belongings her daughter was taking, Lisa needed to supersize and borrowed a friend’s much larger sport utility vehicle.

“I thought we’d have the most stuff of all, but far from it,” she said. “People were there with U-Hauls.”

And remember, this is to move freshmen into furnished dormitory rooms.

What’s going on? I know I sound like an old fuddy-duddy, but when I went to college, I took a couple of suitcases. And nothing was brand new. I used whichever sheets and towels my mother decided she didn’t need anymore.

Well, things have changed. Now stores like Bed Bath & Beyond, Target and Walmart make it so easy to buy so much. They offer convenient college
registries and remind you to tell your friends and family. In many cases, you order everything at home and it is all delivered right to your college.

“We’re not keeping up with the Joneses anymore; we’re keeping up with the Joneses’ college kid,” said Nancy Berk, a clinical psychologist and self-published author of “College Bound and Gagged: How to Help Your Kids Get Into a Great College Without Losing Your Savings, Your Relationship or Your Mind” (2011). “A friend’s daughter is coordinating comforters for their dorms, and they’re doing it with $300 comforters.”

There is a psychological component to all of this. First of all, as with every other milestone in our lives, we have become convinced that we need to observe our children’s college transitions by purchasing things. And the more the better.

Also, for a generation of parents intimately involved with every aspect of their children’s lives, sending them off on their first real-world experience without us is a big deal, said Ms. Berk, who has seen two sons off to college. One way we think we can smooth that adjustment, she said, is “by buying stuff.”

Or, as Chris Seman, president of Caring Transitions, a relocation and estate liquidation company, said, “I think parents are trying to duplicate their home for their kids.”

In addition, Ms. Berk said, parents are more invested financially in college than ever before. “We’re paying a fortune, and we want it to be all so wonderful for our kids,” she said.

So how do we rein all of this in? I collected some advice from the experts, including parents in my neighborhood whose children are in various stages of the college experience.

Now, I know I will hear cries of sexism, but everyone I spoke to agreed that packing for a boy was completely different from packing for a girl.

“For guys to get dressed up, they need one polo shirt,” Mr. Seman said. “Girls bring a lot more.”

But, he said, for boys it is electronics that take up space.

One of the first suggestions from Mr. Seman and others was that your children should contact their roommates to avoid duplicating items. If your children are just starting college, they have most likely been communicating with their roommates online; otherwise, they are probably rooming with people they already know.
My neighbor Kim, whose daughter is entering her sophomore year at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, said the first year the roommates planned over Facebook who would bring what.

“The people who lived the closest brought the big things like the futon couch and the microwave,” she said.

My neighbor Pam, whose older son just graduated from college and whose younger one is entering this year, chuckled when she remembered the first online exchanges between her older son, Daniel, and his roommate.

“His roommate talked about ambient lighting, and Daniel had no idea what that was,” she said.

Pam decided not to use the registry options made available by various stores, because she thought it was best for her sons to figure out what they needed.

“When you get to the college, emotions are running high and everyone is tense,” she said. “The best thing for them to do is go with their roommate to get what they need.”

After all, few campuses are going to be out of reach of a store where students can stock up, and some college bookstores even carry all the basics.

I asked my group of parents what advice they would offer from their hard-won experience.

Mr. Seman said that when he took his first son to college, they had bought so many unnecessary items, like shower curtains, “that I returned $150 worth of stuff to Target. With the second kid, I figured it out.”

Also, tempting as it is, don’t buy six dozen bottles of shampoo at Costco to last the year. “There are plenty of places they can buy,” Ms. Berk said, “or if they want to buy in bulk, they can do it online.”

Kim warned against packing items in plastic bins. “We took them all down there and there was nowhere to put them, so we brought them back,” she said. “Use cardboard boxes or those big Ikea bags — those have been a godsend.”

Ms. Berk said she had discovered the wonders of space bags, which allow you to pack and then expel all the air. “That’s how we packed all the items that could be compressed, like bedding and down jackets,” she said.

Don’t send anything that you don’t want beer spilled on or nail polish dripped on, Kim said, and don’t buy anything, no matter how sensible, that your child just won’t use.
“The college made a point of suggesting you have a lock for your computer, because kids tend to leave doors open,” Pam said. “We know a girl who lost two computers. You can also bring the lock to the library. It seemed like a good idea.”

But, she recalled, “we went through all sorts of gyrations to get the lock installed. We had to call a friend who lived in the suburbs to get a drill to drill a hole into the desk.” And did her son use the lock? “No.”

This, however, seems like an easy, workable plan: Kim said she scanned all of her daughter’s important papers, like her birth certificate, driver’s license and high school records, onto her computer so she and her husband would have access to them if needed. Then her daughter took the originals in a colorful rubberized letter-size holder, like a laptop case.

“Everything she shouldn’t lose was in there, and it was bright red so it stood out,” Kim said. “It went under the mattress.”

The most important thing in the end is not the Ikea desk or the Target sheets you buy. Instead, my advisers said, you should remember that it’s your children going to college, not you.

“If you take control away from them, it makes it even more stressful,” Mr. Seman said. “They’ll make some horrible decisions, but let them make them.”

And please, don’t be the parent who sends rolls of quarters overnight so her son or daughter can do the laundry. “The guy at the post office said he’s had a parent do that,” Kim said.

Really? We’ve come to this? Please, stop yourselves before you mail again.

E-mail: shortcuts@nytimes.com