THE DAILY CLIPS

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Letter: Pirates helping Pirates great to see
Wednesday, September 1, 2010
As school began for East Carolina University, I had the privilege of witnessing the adage of “Pirates supporting Pirates.” It was great to see students, student groups, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, families, friends, churches and other community partners helping our new and returning Pirates move into their residence halls.
It truly was all hands on deck for three days in the hot, August sun lifting, lugging and, in some cases, dragging suitcases, furniture and other necessities from the car to residence hall rooms. I believe it is a great statement to ECU students that once you are a Pirate, you are a part of the family, and we are here to help.
To each of you who volunteered your time, energy, patience and physical assistance and gave your well wishes, I send out a big thank you. In the words of Chancellor Ballard, “It is a great time to be a Pirate.”

VIRGINIA D. HARDY, PH.D.
Vice Provost
ECU Student Affairs
Robo-doc has a deft touch

Gabby Gutierrez, 15, watches a test palette for the da Vinci surgical robot that her father, Joel, right, is running. The robot was used to remove a tumor from the base of her tongue in early August.

BY MATT EHLERS - STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL -- As Gabby Gutierrez walked into the operating room at N.C. Children’s Hospital, her eyes popped open wide when she recognized the robot that helped make her healthy again.

"This is what I remember before I went to sleep," she said as she moved toward the da Vinci Surgical System, a piece of robotic technology worth more than $1 million. "It kind of looks like an octopus."

Gabby, who is 15 and attends White Oak High School in Jacksonville, underwent a two-hour procedure Aug. 9 to remove a noncancerous tumor from the base of her tongue. In a standard operation, surgeons would have made an incision from Gabby's chin down into the neck, cutting the jawbone so they could reach the tumor.

But thanks to the robot system, which was equipped with a video camera, tiny clamps and a laser-cutting tool that was passed through her mouth, Gabby was out of the hospital in a few days.

Surgeons Adam Zanation and Carlton Zdanski (they both go by "Dr. Z") invited Gabby on Tuesday to try the machine they used during her surgery. Although the robot was designed for abdominal procedures, the FDA recently approved using the machine to remove oral tumors, Zdanski said. Gabby's surgery was the first time UNC surgeons had used it on a child.

The machine has three components: a high-definition video screen that shows the camera's viewpoint to everyone in the operating room, the robotic arms, and an operating console where the
Within minutes Tuesday, the surgeons had Gabby sitting at the console. After a bit of instruction, she began deftly moving her hands and fingers, which in turn controlled tiny clamps at the end of the robot's arms. Working on a set that the surgeons use for practice, Gabby used one clamp to pick up a tiny rubber band and the other to grab the band's opposite side.

Gabby's mother, Kathy Gutierrez, was suitably impressed, and all smiles.

"For all those parents who worry their kids are playing Nintendo too much, they can back off that, huh?" she said.

Zanation said Gabby was most likely born with the tumor. He used an iPad to show his young patient photos of her on the operating table, a short video taken during surgery, and a photo of the tumor - which was bigger than a half-dollar - after it was removed.

Gabby, an energetic and talkative girl, has recovered from the operation and plans to hit the soccer field today for the first time post-surgery. She seemed inspired by the visit with her life-saving robot.

"It was pretty freakin' spectacular. I definitely have a story to tell at school tomorrow."

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Get 'Ready' for honest college advice

Robert Neuman says he has seen "every student problem imaginable" in his 25 years as an associate dean of academic advising at Marquette University in Milwaukee. Now retired, he shares strategies to help middle school and high school students avoid common problems in Are You Really Ready for College? One secret, he tells USA TODAY's Mary Beth Marklein, is to start early.

Q: What's your core message?
A: College is a world very different from high school. College demands that students possess a solid, basic body of high school knowledge. They must also come equipped with the self-management skills to control the learning process.
And lastly, in college, there's no time to learn how to learn.

Q: Why is "really ready" in the title?
What's your point?
A: Many students enter college clueless about the level of work required of them. They believe college will be high school away from home and have a false sense of the effort needed to earn high grades in college. Studies of college-bound high school students prove the point: High school seniors study not much more than they did in middle school, yet more than half graduate with A averages. This is due, in large part, to the rampant practice of cramming that serves so many students too well in high school but fails them in college.

Q: What's wrong with cramming?
A: Mistakenly, students think they're learning because cramming often produces good grades. Yet it yields only short-term knowledge. It lasts long enough to pass the test but fades long before teens get to college, where professors expect a solid background at the outset of their courses. Furthermore, in college, fewer tests are given, and they cover much more material, making cramming impossible. Grades plummet. Cramming is one of several student deficiencies.

Q: You make a distinction between study and homework.
A: For many high school students, simply doing homework earns them acceptable grades. Why do more? Merely doing homework does not lead to real learning. On the other hand, studying does, but it entails more: preparing for every class, besides doing homework, by rereading chapters; taking, organizing and refining notes; memorizing and reviewing; and working beyond minimum expectations. Study takes time and produces learning excellence.

Q: Why do students need to "practice" talking?
A: Talking must evolve from overused teen-speak to
speaking and listening with intelligence and purpose to teachers, counselors and adults in general. Why? Private studying aside, learning is a social activity. Contributing to class discussions, asking provocative questions and listening carefully to teachers and other students are crucial to maintaining an interest in every subject. Plus, talking privately with teachers and counselors covers everything, from getting needed advice to clarifying academic goals or career paths. An articulate student excels in college and the workplace.

**Q: How do students get the most from guidance counseling?**
**A:** Students must schedule more than one appointment per semester with the guidance counselor. Good counseling sessions require good talking skills. Yet these meetings are often perfunctory and unproductive because students lack the ability to communicate. Students who just sit waiting for the guidance counselor to read their minds and then tell them what to do will be disappointed. Productive counseling sessions require good questions as well as good answers for both students and counselors.

**Q: Could all this advice end up stressing kids out even more?**
**A:** Much of everyday teen stress comes from being unprepared and disorganized, not having enough time, and not knowing how to handle problems. My strategies actually help relieve stress, giving teens ways to take control. Teenagers who don’t learn these lessons now will become a part of the dismal statistics that universities know so well and that are becoming a topic of the national conversation. I have seen student stress firsthand in college. It’s demoralizing for students and carries serious life consequences.

**Q: Where do parents fit in?**
**A:** Parents do whatever they can to equip their children for college, buying microwaves, laptops, calculators and so forth. But helping teens develop these skills to succeed academically early — as early as middle school — is the best equipment of all.
A promise sends 15 to college

‘Sydney’s Kids’ enroll, 10 years later, for free

By John Faherty
USA TODAY

PHOENIX — A promise kept is a precious gift. And then it becomes a responsibility.

That transformation is happening this week at Grand Canyon University here for 15 incoming freshmen. They are at the school because 10 years ago a promise was made to them.

At the time, they were third-graders at Granada Elementary School in west Phoenix. Many were poor, and most of their families probably didn’t consider college an option.

When university officials brought them and their parents together to promise the students that they could go to the college for free, none of them really understood what it meant.

Now, it is the students’ time to fulfill that promise.

A teacher gunned down

“Sydney’s Kids” were named after Sydney Browning, a Phoenix native and a Grand Canyon graduate. On Sept. 15, 1999, she was sitting in Wedgewood Baptist Church in Fort Worth when a gunman walked in and started shooting. Browning was the first of seven to die.

In life she was committed to educating the less fortunate. She taught at Success High School, a Fort Worth public school that brought former dropouts back to the classroom.

Sydney’s Kids were chosen to honor her. Two days before the shooting, a group of students from Granada Elementary visited GCU to sing Happy Birthday for the school’s 50th anniversary. The students impressed GCU administrators who, the next year, made them a promise: If their grades and test scores were good enough to get in, they would go to the university free.

Armando Rivera was one of those students. Now 18, he remembers the parents being more excited than the children.

“Honestly,” he says, “at the time, I didn’t understand it.”

On Thursday, freshmen Jessica Reyes, Cameron Stafford and Daron Beck chatted in Daron’s dorm room. Jessica, like Armando, plans to be a doctor and will major in biology. Daron will study business. Cameron is thinking of business or marketing.

They are all aware that being one of Sydney’s Kids comes with responsibility.

“It’s a special gift,” Cameron says. “Now, I have to fulfill it.”

Some Kids can’t be found

On freshman registration and move-in day, faculty and school administrators helped freshmen move into their dorms. Among them were people who helped make the promise and keep it.

Joyce Hatch is GCU vice president of financial aid. “I was here when they came and sang,” Hatch says. “I was here when the promise was made.”

For a while, the promise seemed in doubt. In the early 2000s, GCU was in dire financial shape. It severed its ties with the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention. In 2004, a venture capital firm bought GCU and turned it into a for-profit institution.

But GCU remained committed to Sydney’s Kids. Three years ago Jennifer Hatch, Joyce’s daughter and an admissions counselor, began looking for them.

Of the 60 students offered the scholarship, 15 are taking advantage of it. One more will start next semester, and a 17th will enroll next year.

Some of the other students hadn’t kept up their grades. The rest moved away or just fell through the cracks. GCU was unable to find some of the students. The promise is still open to them.

Faherty reports for The Arizona Republic.
As Sophomore Year Begins, Two Questions

ISAAC: Summer is winding down. As I write this, I'm sitting on the deck of a friend's house in the green mountains of Vermont after driving from Oregon.

It's a perfect time to plan how I can get a good start on another stimulating and anxiety-ridden college semester. And it's also a good time to address those two nagging questions: Is this college experience worth the money? And what will I do with my degree when I'm done?

My first college year forced me to grow up quickly—I was uprooted from all that was familiar, and dumped in a new community filled with fascinating people, ideas and opportunities. But the thrill and novelty of the first year will be worn off going into my second year. Now I will need to find ways to tie my interests together and try to figure out what I want to do with the rest of my time in college.

To that end, I plan to approach some things differently this year:

My first year was mostly about finding my own place on a college campus. It was easy to find a comfortable social group with similar interests and spend most of the time with them. But now I need to branch out to groups I wouldn't usually interact with and connect my interests to the community outside of campus.

I need to improve my time-management skills, to do a better job managing my studying, social life and extracurricular work—and still maintain my sanity.

I need to stop focusing so much on short-term goals and deadlines, and step back and see the big picture more often. Life as a college student has many transformations, and I need to keep better track of how I'm changing and in what direction I'm headed.

That's the easy part. Then there are those nagging questions.

More

Hire Education tracks a group of college seniors on their hunt for meaningful work, or at least something to pay the bills. Read what they have to say about graduation day, job interviews, first apartments and returning to the nest, at http://blogs.wsj.com/hire-education.

First of all, the cost. This summer, studying in Portland, Ore., I saw that you can get a great education at a state school for a lot less money than it costs at the private school I'm attending. Sure, the small class sizes keep me intellectually on my feet and thinking, and I've gotten close to a couple of professors this year. But is that worth the extra tens of thousands of dollars a year?

At this point, I think my best response is yes, but I need to also take it as a challenge—to make my experience worth the money. This means taking advantage of the added opportunities, such as the residential campus life and the ability to have more of a connection with professors.

The second tough question: What do I see myself doing after college? How can I tie together my interests and feel like I'm heading in some specific direction rather than just floundering?

I could ignore this question the first year. Not anymore. But while I don't know yet how to even start answering it, just asking it seems enough for now. I believe that as long as I keep an eye on the future, eventually everything will come into focus—not matter how confusing and uncertain tomorrow may sometimes seem.

STEVE: Funny, those two questions nag me, too, at least twice a year.
As I sat at our dining table last month writing out two fall-semester checks—one for Isaac and one for his older brother, Luke—my mind drifted in a dangerous direction: What else could Karen and I have done with this cash?

Each check was for more than we've ever spent on a car, and our cars are getting old. One check matched a contractor’s estimate for reroofing our house (badly needed). The other was for roughly double our annual travel budget.

Either of them would have been a huge addition to the church offering plate or a contribution toward a world relief organization. Put together, the fall-semester dollars could have bought me a decent used Cessna 170.

Will my sons ever get a full return, I asked myself, on this massive investment Karen and I are making in them?

It's a question many of my friends ask every term, too, as they write checks to private schools while facing job insecurity and questions of just how they'll fund retirement. "It may end up being the worst investment we've ever made," says a mother of a private-college student who tells me she makes her husband write the checks because she can't bear to see the money flowing out.

The payback: Her daughter is thriving in college. "She knows this is a great opportunity," the mother says.

Same here. Luke, a senior mechanical-engineering major, has tapped into the rich resources his college offers enterprising gearheads, taking a full class load while finding a graduate-level professor to mentor him in extracurricular projects that have landed him presentations before the university trustees.

Likewise, Isaac has clearly made it his mission to exploit every opportunity his tuition payments buy him. And it helps that he agonizes over the question of value, how to maximize his sophomore year -- and over whether he'll have a job afterward.

So I dismissed the thoughts of new roofs, cars and airplanes, inserted the checks and licked the envelopes, and stuck them in the mailbox.

**Steve Yoder is chief of The Wall Street Journal's San Francisco bureau. His son Isaac is 19 years old and a college sophomore. His son Levi is 14 years old and a high-school sophomore. Email: yoder&son@wsj.com**