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Ticket demand heavy for ECU-ASU game Saturday

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, September 01, 2009

Cary Trump said she wasn’t about to miss her chance to get tickets for East Carolina University’s football season opener.

Trump, a senior special education major, was among about 50 students who pitched a tent or slept outside Monday night beside the university’s athletic ticket window at Minges Coliseum hoping to land a ticket for Saturday’s game against Appalachian State.

By the time student tickets went on sale at 10 a.m. Tuesday, the line had grown to hundreds and stretched around the north side of Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium.

“We had heard that the Student Pirate Club tickets went pretty fast yesterday so we wanted to be sure we got a ticket,” said Trump, who arrived with about 20 others Monday night at 8. “It has been a long night, but I’m sure it will be worth it Saturday.”

Preston Stanford, a senior studying finance, also camped out to guarantee himself a seat. He said he would likely sleep in his own bed and wake up early to get in line for the next big game.

“The concrete is actually a lot harder than it looks,” Stanford said.

ECU officials say the demand for tickets to Saturday’s game has been stronger than any in recent memory, including the two visits by North Carolina and North Carolina State two years ago.

Scott Weatherbee, assistant director of athletics for marketing and ticket operations, said tickets for the first meeting between the Pirates and Mountaineers in 30 years have been hard to come by.

The university had about 4,000 tickets to give away Tuesday to students, Weatherbee said, adding that he expected them to be gone by the end of the day.

Student Pirate Club members snatched up the remaining 400 of their 8,000-ticket allotment Monday in just more than an hour, he said. Season tickets sold out in early August.

“I have been here for seven years now and I think there has been more demand for tickets to this game than any game during that time,” Weatherbee said. “I think the combination of excitement from last year’s Conference USA championship has had something to do with that. Appalachian State also has a strong following and they have had no trouble getting rid of their allotment.”

Mountaineer fans were allotted 5,500 tickets for Saturday’s game.

The Pirates and Mountaineers, former Southern Conference and North State Conference rivals, haven’t squared off on the gridiron since 1979. Appalachian State leads the all-time series, 19-10.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@coxn.com or (252) 329-9574.
Game-day parking just got a bit trickier

The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, September 01, 2009

The new chain link fence in front of the East Carolina University baseball and softball complex on Charles Boulevard is a sign of change for Pirate football fans.

Those accustomed to parking on Saturdays in the grass lots at the corner of Charles and Greenville boulevards will have to find a new place for tailgating this year, an ECU police official said Tuesday.

Construction is about to start on a new softball stadium at that location and the area has been fenced off for the season, Major Frank Knight said.

There also will be no public parking in the Carol Belk Building lots across the street from the stadium complex, Knight said.

There have been 600 public parking spaces set aside, however, at the Brody School of Medicine, the patrol division commander said.

Shuttle bus service will be available from Brody to Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium with a $5 charge for the round-trip ride, Knight said.

Coolers, lawn chairs, umbrellas and all the items on the list prohibited from entry into the stadium also are not allowed on the bus, Knight said.

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NC university carries on amid swine flu outbreak

The Associated Press

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. - Officials at a North Carolina university say approximately 100 students have been diagnosed and treated for swine flu.

Wake Forest University spokesman Kevin Cox said Tuesday that classes are continuing as usual and that students who are not feeling well are being advised to tell their professors that they are sick and to stay home.

Cox says two cases of swine flu were confirmed last Friday. He says the cases have been relatively mild and the students are feeling better after a few days. Some students were treated at the university's health service, and Cox said there have been no extraordinary cases.

Doctors say most cases run their course naturally. Medical care is recommended if body temperature reaches 103 or higher, if there is vomiting, a rash or a change in behavior.

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Erskine Bowles, 64, president of the UNC system, plans to eliminate some jobs and make changes for better academic account ability.

CHUCK LIDDY, Staff photo by Chuck Liddy

Buy Photo

**UNC restructuring will come before Bowles retires**

**BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer**

RALEIGH - Though he reaches retirement age next year, UNC system President Erskine Bowles says he isn't going anywhere until his desk is clear.

Speaking Tuesday to News & Observer reporters and editors, Bowles said that while retirement sounds good, he still has plenty of work to do, including the task of overseeing the elimination of about 900 administrative positions across the 16-campus system.

"I'm going to focus on the job; we have some issues we need to deal with. The buck stops with me," said Bowles, emphasizing the need for more accountability within the university system. "We have some things to get right, and I'm not leaving until I get them right. Nobody's going to out-wait me on this deal."

Public campuses are cutting 10 percent from their budgets, and Bowles demands that most of the reductions come in the administration, which has swelled in recent years.

Bowles also has to hire a new chancellor at N.C. State following the recent resignation of James Oblinger after revelations about his involvement in the hiring of former first lady Mary Easley.

Oblinger's departure brought to light policies campuses have used routinely over the past five years to give big payouts to top administrators after they left their jobs. Bowles is recommending that those policies, crafted before he took office in 2006, be significantly scaled back, but not eliminated.

Bowles said Tuesday that he will push a series of initiatives for next academic year to improve accountability and better measure performance. They include:

- Evaluate universities by testing students at the start and end of their college careers.
- Set higher admission standards.
• Simplify and market need-based financial aid.
• Consolidate information technology and payroll functions on many campuses.
• Propose a cap on growth for campuses that don't meet retention and graduation goals.

In the future, Bowles said he expects more students to want online courses, and he sees more students starting at community colleges before transferring to universities.

For now, Bowles said, the state's budget crisis will be felt in the classroom despite his efforts to reduce middle management. And the cuts will necessitate professors teaching more courses.

"That's not necessarily a bad thing," he said.

The UNC system is due to review its long-term tuition plan soon, and Bowles pledged to keep tuition as low as possible: "I'm going to do everything I can to keep students the secondary funder of education, not the primary. That's the North Carolina way, and I believe that to my soul."

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Related Content

• VIDEO: Hear what Bowles had to say

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UNC's trimming

UNC system President Erskine Bowles rightly orders budget-cutting in administration.

Maybe it comes from those days during the Clinton administration when he was negotiating a balanced budget with Republicans in Congress as White House chief of staff. But Erskine Bowles, president of the University of North Carolina system, is bringing a no-nonsense view to ordering sizable (900 positions) reductions in administrative jobs in the UNC system.

After a News & Observer report showed dramatic and disturbing growth in administrative jobs (associate vice chancellors, assistant provosts, etc.), Bowles sent an e-mail to chancellors characterizing the situation as "an absolute embarrassment." He directed that budget reductions start at the top, and emphasized in meetings with chancellors of UNC schools that most budget cuts will be made at the middle-management level.

Bowles, a North Carolina native who succeeded at the highest levels in the business world, was credited during the Clinton years with bringing efficiency and effectiveness to the White House staff. He has done the same in his years in Chapel Hill, seeking a way to measure how campuses are performing. (A "data guy" he calls himself.)

All the while, however, he has stated that he recognizes that a university is not a business, and that the traditions of "the academy" must be preserved, in that most of them have had positive effects on higher education. He respects, as all people should, the special nature of the academic and cultural mission of UNC system campuses. On the part of chancellors at those schools, there were justifiable reasons at the time for additional administrative jobs. (Growth in research, for example, necessitates additional people to oversee it.)

But Bowles understands that in a state with a multibillion-dollar budget shortfall and too many taxpayers out of work or stretched to the breaking point, the universities they support must demonstrate they are ready to do their part at a time when public schools and health-care programs are taking a hit.

And as examined by The N&O, it's clear that appointments to administrative jobs on some campuses simply had gotten out of control. In addition, the duties of some of those in the positions did not seem well-defined. Were these promotions and the reasons for them not carefully reviewed by those making the appointments? Did they simply get no scrutiny from individual campus boards of trustees or from the UNC system's powerful Board of Governors?

Meeting yesterday with reporters and editors from The N&O, Bowles took responsibility, but vowed that "this time next year you'll see remarkable progress" in terms of streamlining. "I should have known" of the additional layers of management jobs, he added. Bowles' willingness to acknowledge that something went wrong is refreshing, and his directives about the need to slice administrative positions first when looking at cuts is reassuring.
Tough times, Bowles said, provide a chance for universities to look at priorities. Out of these budget times and the adjustments made because of them will come new ways of looking at things. For example, there may come more teaching responsibilities for senior faculty, or even for those in administrative jobs.

The president of the UNC system cannot be clearer in signaling that things have changed, and that public universities will change with them.

North Carolina is proud of the history of its university system, which has produced opportunities for the people who have used that affordable education as a springboard to better lives. There is no reason to believe that focused, reasoned and careful steps to reduce administrative bloat will change that.

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UNC looks into fraternity's party

From Staff Reports

CHAPEL HILL - UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp has asked staff members to investigate whether any university or fraternity policies were violated at a party the night that Delta Kappa Epsilon President Courtland Benjamin Smith was shot by police.

According to a post on Thorp's blog, Chapel Hill police contacted the university Aug. 23, the day after the party, and Jenny Levering from the university's Greek Affairs office accompanied the police to the DKE house.

"It was obvious that there had been a party there, with alcohol," Thorp wrote. "I know that doesn't necessarily sound unusual. But in light of the tragedy, we felt that we needed to try to determine whether any University or fraternity policies were violated. So I asked Student Affairs to look into this."

Thorp met with a DKE alumnus, a DKE parent and a student member of the fraternity over the next two days. "Like us, they were concerned about Courtland's tragic death and worried about how it would affect the other fraternity members and Courtland's friends," he wrote. "They were also concerned about the party -- maybe being out of hand."

They asked the university to help DKE set up a substance-abuse education program, which Thorp said staff members will begin working on this week.

The State Bureau of Investigation is reviewing Smith's death. On Wednesday, it issued a court order for the fraternity president's e-mail, which UNC-CH's Department of Public Safety provided, Thorp wrote.
Smith, 21, was shot by an Archdale police officer after being stopped on Interstate 85 just before 5 a.m. Aug. 23. He had dialed 911 as he drove west at a high speed. He told a dispatcher that he was trying to kill himself, that he had been drinking and that he had a 9 mm handgun. Authorities haven't said publicly whether he had a gun.

At least one of the two police cars on the scene had a dashboard video camera. A Randolph County assistant district attorney had a judge seal the recording Aug. 25.

Five media organizations including The News & Observer are going to court to get a police video recording of the traffic stop. The organizations also are asking for an unedited version of Smith's 911 call.

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Group working to eradicate suicide

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, September 01, 2009

Suicide took 41 lives in Pitt County between 2004-07, and a local group wants to eradicate it.

The REAL Crisis Intervention Center and county officials kicked off Suicide Prevention Month on Tuesday morning on the steps of the Pitt County Courthouse.

International Suicide Prevention Day and National Suicide Prevention week both take place in September, but the REAL Crisis Center wants to keep the issue in focus for an entire month, said Niekie Simo, youth suicide prevention coordinator at the center.

"Working together we can all make a difference for those who are suicidal, mentally ill or depressed," said Melvin McLawhorn, chairman of the Pitt County Board of Commissioners.

The county commissioners and every mayor in Pitt County signed a proclamation read by McLawhorn that named September Suicide Prevention Month in Pitt County.

"Suicide knows no economic, racial or social boundaries," McLawhorn said. "Suicide is a health problem."

The crisis center handles all the calls from Pitt County that come in from the National Suicide Hotline.

Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the nation and the third-leading cause for people ages 15-24. In North Carolina, it is the seventh leading cause of death for people ages 19 and younger.

There were four suicides in Pitt County in 2007, down from 11 in 2006. The numbers for 2008 are not available, Simo said.

Nationally, the country loses 32,000-33,000 people every year to suicide.

The REAL Crisis Center has a number of events planned this month to battle the potential of suicide.

The group is collecting 122 backpacks to represent each youth suicide in North Carolina in 2007. The group is working with Pitt Community College, East Carolina University and others in the community to collect and ultimately decorate the bags to be used in parades and other events to raise awareness about suicide in the state, Simo said.

The group will be handing out suicide prevention materials at Greenville’s Freeboot Friday events, working with the Pitt County Sheriff’s Office to distribute gun locks and participating in the safety and violence prevention day planned for Sept. 16 at East Carolina University.

"If we can take away some of the means young people use, it will go a long way," Simo said.

The group also will collect expired prescription drugs at K-Mart from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sept. 14 and at Kue’s Pharmacy in Farmville from 9-11 a.m. on Sept. 15.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.

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By Nathan Summers  
The Daily Reflector  
Tuesday, September 01, 2009

Despite speculation from Appalachian State head coach Jerry Moore that All-American quarterback Armanti Edwards was a long shot to play against East Carolina Saturday, nothing has changed in the ECU camp.

ECU head coach Skip Holtz has said since the Mountaineers’ QB injured his foot with a lawnmower in early August that he, defensive coordinator Greg Hudson and the Pirate defense would be ready for anything and anyone under center for the Mountaineers.

“We’re expecting a very athletic quarterback whether Armanti plays or not,” Holtz said of the senior App State passer and three-time All-American.

Edwards returned to practice on Monday and participated in a bulk of drills with his team. Last season, he led the Mountaineers in rushing (941 yards, 11 touchdowns) and passing (2,902 yds., 30 TDs).

But Holtz knows sophomore DeAndre Presley is plenty capable of running the offensive show for App State.

Also in tow are sophomore newcomer Travaris Cadet and true freshman Jamal Jackson. Cadet has had a promising camp that’s showcased speed and throwing ability similar to that of Edwards.

“They’re backup quarterbacks are both their punt returners,” Holtz said. “They’ve got a philosophy in what they do there. They recruit very athletic quarterbacks, the 6-foot, 185-pound quarterback who can run and is athletic. They’re running back and defensive back type players.”

Ready Robinson

For the first time in his career, senior defensive end Scotty Robinson enters the season as a guaranteed starter, joining fellow seniors C.J. Wilson and Jay Ross and junior Linval Joseph on a bruising defensive line.

While the raw poundage comparison between ECU’s defensive front and Appalachian State’s offensive line suggests a mismatch in favor of the Pirates, Robinson and his linemates are still hoping to turn in their best work to date on Saturday.

“We know how important this game is, and we know we’re going to get App State’s best shot,” said Robinson, who made six starts as a freshman in 2006 but has only had one start since after playing the last two seasons largely behind Zack Slate. “Everybody in the back of their mind knows we’ve got to bring our A-game this weekend.”

Robinson echoed the weeklong sentiment of Holtz in saying the news that Edwards likely won’t play Saturday has not changed ECU’s approach to the game.

“It’s not going to be a game where it’s East Carolina against Armanti Edwards,” Robinson said. “If he’s not ready to go, we know they’ve got two other guys who can step right in and run that offense.”

Mountaineer mimicry
Tuesday was an intense day of game preparation for Saturday's noon kickoff with the Mountaineers, with the top offensive and defensive units both squaring off with ECU's scout teams.

According to Holtz, his team's relatively clean bill of health at the moment has allowed the Pirates to see a more complete look of Appalachian's schemes.

"We've got a lot of numbers, so we're able to keep a fresh scout team out there on the offensive and defensive lines, and that's given us an opportunity to get a good look," Holtz said, noting that it was important to bring the top two units together at the end of practice to give both sides of the ball a good look during the two-minute drill. "What you're trying to do is still get some good-on-good (repetitions) so that you continue to get speed on speed and understand the tempo of the game. That as much as anything is for the schemes and what they're going to see on Saturday."

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@coxnc.com or (252)329-9595.

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Challenging slate awaits ECU hoops

The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, September 01, 2009

A November trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands for a four-day tournament and nine games against teams that participated in postseason play last season highlight East Carolina's men's basketball schedule, which was released Tuesday.

The Pirates will play 14 games in Minges Coliseum, including a visit from Atlantic Coast Conference foe Clemson on Dec. 16 and a date with George Washington on Dec. 22. It will be the Tigers' second visit to Greenville in the last three seasons and the first game between the Pirates and Colonials since 1973.

The non-conference schedule also includes two games at Greensboro Coliseum. ECU will play Wake Forest on Nov. 15 before taking on UNC Greensboro Nov. 28. The Pirates and Deacons will face off for the fourth straight season.

"Pirate basketball is in for a tremendous challenge with our schedule for the upcoming season," said Mack McCarthy, who's entering his third season as East Carolina's head coach. "We again have a number of nonconference games in Greenville, highlighted by Clemson and George Washington, and quality road games within driving distance for Pirate fans such as Wake Forest in Greensboro."

ECU and Charlotte will renew their series on Dec. 2 at Halton Arena on the UNCC campus. This will be the first meeting between the two since 2005 after the 49ers departed Conference USA for the Atlantic 10.

Other non-conference road games include trips to Campbell and 2009 NCAA Tournament participant Virginia Commonwealth.

The Pirates face NCAA Tournament entry Tennessee in the first round of the U.S. Virgin Islands Paradise Jam on Nov. 20, and have a second-round date against tourney participant Northern Iowa or DePaul. The Jam field also includes Boston College, Purdue, St. Joseph's and South Dakota State.

"The Paradise Jam will be an opportunity to play against some of the nation's best teams on a neutral court," McCarthy said.

ECU's Conference USA slate includes five games against teams that reached the postseason last season. The Pirates will be on the road to face three of the top four C-USA teams from a year ago, including the league opener against UAB on Jan. 6.

The Pirates will play home-and-home series with Marshall, Rice, Southern Miss, Tulane and UCF for a fifth consecutive season, while they have single games at home against Houston, SMU and Tulsa. In addition to one game against UAB, ECU will be on the road at Memphis and UTEP.

"Opening the season with seven of eight games away from the friendly confines of Williams Arena at Minges Coliseum will be difficult, but will help prepare us for the rigors of conference play," McCarthy said. "Conference USA continues to improve every year and we have an exciting home conference slate again."

The Pirates open the season on Nov. 13 against The University of Virginia's College at Wise

— ECU Media Relations
University of Kansas students isolated by the flu

- Story Highlights
  - Spread of H1N1 among roommates illustrates how quickly virus jumps around
  - "It wasn’t like I was licking the handlebars of the bus," freshman says
  - Girls quarantined in room, doing homework, until fever dissipates for 24 hours
  - The University of Kansas estimates about 1 percent of student body has H1N1

From Elizabeth Cohen
CNN Medical Correspondent

LAWRENCE, Kansas (CNN) -- It started with a sore throat. Then her chest was burning.

University of Kansas freshman Arielle Spiridiglozzi said she thought her symptoms were signs of allergies, or maybe even a sinus infection.

It couldn’t be H1N1, she thought.

But it was.

"I mean, I’d never, ever guessed that coming into freshman year I would get the friggin’ swine flu," Spiridiglozzi said.

Now she accessorizes her royal blue T-shirt with a mask.

A stuffy nose, body aches, fever and coughing make up the litany of symptoms, Spiridiglozzi, 18, and her roommate, Kaitlyn Perry, 18, said they have suffered.

For more than a day, the girls have been stuck in their suite, on what they call "lockdown."  "Watch more about life on "lockdown" »

University officials have asked the girls to stay in their dorm suite to limit exposure to other students. The school provides door-to-door delivery from the campus dining hall, giving the girls one less reason to have to leave their immediate four walls.

Spiridiglozzi has abided by the university’s request, worried that she could infect another. But she doesn’t understand how she ended up in this situation in the first place.

“We took all the necessary precautions. Like, we really did. It wasn’t like I was licking the handlebars of the bus or anything," she said. "I was hand sanitizing. I was being very careful. I don’t know how this happened."

But she only has to look to her roommates for an answer, as illness has rapidly made its way through her suite.

When Perry became ill it struck her suddenly. While shopping, she came down with a fever and started feeling like she didn’t have the strength to stand, she said.

Perry’s flu hasn’t been confirmed as an H1N1 strain, but a third roommate, the first to get sick, they said, was diagnosed with H1N1. Then a fourth roommate got sick, illustrative of a spreading flu pattern the girls said is obvious from the empty seats in classes.

The university estimates about 340 students, or 1 percent of the student body, have flu they suspect is H1N1, said Patricia Denning, medical chief of staff at Watkins Health Center. The number of cases could be higher if students were not seeking care from campus doctors and nurses, she added. She said she has not heard of any students being hospitalized because of the flu.

Vaccines are unlikely to help much this year, because supplies are not expected until late October and require about five weeks from the
first inoculation -- two are required -- before they become effective.

So, to make life easier for the sick, the school's medical center has distributed what it calls a "flu kit," which includes a mask and a home-care instruction sheet, Denning said.

The tip sheet borrows from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's information on H1N1. It says to drink lots of fluids, eat three small meals a day and get plenty of rest, Denning said.

"And so it just goes through simple common-sense things that we all know we need to do that sometimes, when mothers and dads aren't around to remind them, this will help remind them," she said.

Spiridigliozi and Perry will get to wander outdoors again once their fevers have dissipated for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications, they said. They are eager to get back to their normal lives.

Spiridigliozi is tired of the soup and Jell-O, and Perry looks forward to playing Frisbee again.

"So boring" is how Spiridigliozi described their isolation.

With all this free time, at least the freshmen -- on campus for only two weeks -- aren't falling too far behind in their school work.

"I got all my homework done," Perry said.

"Yeah, I've gotten all my homework done for the next two weeks, probably," added Spiridigliozi.

CNN's John Becfield contributed to this report.

All About Swine Flu University of Kansas Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Find this article at:

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Pressler can pursue Duke suit

BY ANNE BLYTHE, staff writer

RALEIGH - The state Court of Appeals ruled Tuesday that Mike Pressler, the former Duke University lacrosse coach, could pursue his claims of slander and libel against his former employer.

The opinion was issued after Duke appealed a ruling made by Judge Howard Manning in April 2008.

Duke lawyers had argued that Pressler, a former employee, was required to go through a university arbitration process before taking his case to court under contracts he had signed while working at the school.

After learning of the unanimous opinion issued by the three-judge panel, a top Duke administrator said the university would continue to fight Pressler's allegations.

"Duke intends to defend this case whether it is in arbitration or the courts," Michael J. Schoenfeld, vice president for public affairs and government relations, said in a prepared statement.

Jay Trehy, a Raleigh lawyer representing Pressler, said the decision could mean that he and his client could soon begin taking statements from Duke officials and have access to university internal correspondence and memos about the lacrosse case.

"This was an effort to deny Mike Pressler his right to a jury trial," Trehy said Tuesday. "I'm not surprised by the court's decision, and I'm not surprised it was unanimous."
Duke still could petition the state Supreme Court to review the appeals court decision.

But Trehy was preparing for a Sept. 15 status review hearing in Durham County Superior Court.

Pressler, who built a national powerhouse lacrosse team during his 16 years at Duke, was forced out in April 2006 shortly after an escort service dancer accused players of gang-raping her -- allegations that turned out to be phony.

In 2007, Pressler and Duke reached a confidential settlement.

Lawyers for Pressler argued in a 2008 Superior Court hearing that language from the settlement agreement showed the former Duke employee was no longer bound by policies of previous contracts with the university.

Pressler has alleged that John Burness, Duke's former senior vice president of public affairs and government relations, made slanderous, libelous and defamatory remarks about him to the news media after the settlement was reached.

Burness retired in June 2008 after 30 years on the job.

Initially, Pressler argued that Duke had reneged on its settlement agreement, which had a clause prohibiting disparaging remarks.

But in a legal maneuver designed to sidestep arbitration, Pressler dropped that claim and slimmed down his complaint to focus on Burness' comments.

In the suit, Pressler complains about an April 9, 2007, article in the New York newspaper Newsday quoting Burness as saying the difference between Pressler and current lacrosse coach John Danowski was "night and day."

In that article, the suit contends, Burness described Danowski as a "mensch," a Yiddish word for a person of great integrity and honor that Pressler's lawyers defined in their brief.

The second comment that Pressler complained about came in June, when The Associated Press quoted Burness as saying, "It was essential for the team to have a change of leadership in order to move forward."

Since losing his Duke job, Pressler has written and promoted a book about the lacrosse case. He now coaches at Bryant University in Rhode Island.

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For $6,000, Restoration of Canceled College Class

By TAMAR LEWIN

When times get tough, the tough get sponsors.

For $6,000, the City College of San Francisco is offering sponsors a chance to restore one of the hundreds of classes being canceled because of budget cuts.

Even after freezing hiring, cutting student support services, and reducing administrative salaries, the college is facing a $20 million deficit that has forced it to cut or postpone almost 800 courses this year — about 300 in the fall, and 500 in the spring.

“Our goal is to try to raise money to cover these sections, about $5 million,” said Don Griffin, the chancellor of the 100,000-student community college. “The $6,000 represents the minimum we’d be paying faculty to teach one section of classes, three hours a week for 17-and-a-half weeks. We have 8 or 10 people who’ve come forward so far, and prospects for a lot more.”

When Mr. Griffin floated the sponsorship idea in June, he said donors might get naming rights on courses. But that idea, described in an article in The San Francisco Chronicle but never formally proposed, did not sit well with some board members, who were concerned that, for example, a tobacco company might sponsor a health course.

So in the new version, donors will not get naming rights. In fact, while donors can specify which department they want to support, it will be left to the department, and not the donor, to decide which course to reinstate.

“I don’t think that’s going to stop people from sponsoring,” Mr. Griffin said. “The corporations and individuals I’ve been going to say they are interested in helping the college, not having a course named after them.”

Barmak Nassirian, associate executive director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, said he was not aware of any other college taking the same fund-raising approach to deal with budget cuts.

The sponsorship plan does not have official approval from the board, and there are no plans to present it formally, according to Mr. Griffin and Milton Marks, the president of the board.

“We haven’t approved it, but it’s going forward,” Mr. Marks said. “I’m comfortable with it going forward. The thing I’m not comfortable with is that I believe public education needs to be fully funded by the public. But the reality is that we’re in such a bad place that we need to do outside fund-raising. I just don’t want support for outside fund-raising to take away from our advocating for full public funding.”
According to The Chronicle, which reported over the weekend that the donor program was going forward, one sponsor was Mary Allen, 76, who taught math at the college starting in 1969, and has taken classes every semester for the last quarter-century.

Mr. Griffin, too, is sponsoring a course.

“I don’t care what department it’s in,” he said. “It’s just general support. Some faculty, too, have said they’re interested in sponsoring. I think some people have been waiting to see how this would play out with the board before they pledged money.”
University leaves merit scholar program
Recession takes toll on school's ability to dole out student aid
The Associated Press
updated 3:21 p.m. ET Sept. 1, 2009

AUSTIN, Texas - The University of Texas at Austin is pulling out of the National Merit Scholarship Program to focus on needs-based financial assistance.

The university — second only to Harvard in the number of merit scholars enrolled — said budget pressures were causing it to end its participation in the merit-based program, which awards scholarships to top high school achievers.

Colleges nationwide are struggling to meet higher demand for financial aid amid fewer resources from states and their own endowed scholarship funds.

"The financial constraints brought about by the economy on families and the university require the redirection of resources to ensure accessibility to UT Austin by all qualified students, regardless of ability to pay," the UT Office of Student Financial Services said in a statement Tuesday.

The university will redirect the scholarship money to financial assistance programs designed to help students who have a hard time paying for tuition and fees. It had 281 National Merit Scholars enrolled last year.

Reward for good grades
Over the past decade, nearly every state has started or expanded politically popular "merit aid" programs that reward students with high SAT scores or GPAs, even those whose families could afford college costs.

But the economic downturn, and the surge in demand for need-based aid, is causing a number of institutions to rethink that trend.

The National Merit Scholarship program is a hybrid, run by a nonprofit and supported by companies and individual universities. Students advance to the semifinal round based on the scores on the PSAT exam, taken by about 1.5 million students each year. About 16,000 are selected as semifinalists, and based on other application materials such as high school grades and essays, 8,200 receive awards.

The initial phase of the selection process has drawn criticism from the National Association for College Admission Counseling, which argues scholarships shouldn't be awarded on the basis of test scores alone.

A number of state universities, such as the University of Oklahoma and Arizona State, have attempted to boost their student profiles by offering National Merit Scholars generous financial aid packages.

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