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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@.ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
U.S. News puts ECU in top tier

By Jackie Drake, The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University moved into the top tier of colleges and universities in the latest national rankings by U.S. News & World Report magazine.

ECU tied for 194th with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and seven other universities, including Louisiana Tech and the University of Montana.

While the U.S. News rankings are popular, ECU officials say they don’t paint a complete picture of a university’s performance.

“ECU continues to rely on the Voluntary System of Accountability to measure our quality,” Chancellor Steve Ballard said, referring to a program begun in 2007 by public four-year universities to supply information on the undergraduate student experience and post it online.

“The VSA actually addresses the learning behaviors of our students and what difference a college education makes,” Ballard said.

Seven public and private universities in North Carolina were ranked in the top tier. Duke ranked 10th, Wake Forest was 25th, UNC-Chapel Hill was 29th, N.C. State was 101st, and UNC Greensboro was ranked 190th.

ECU submits its data to U.S. News subject to its guidelines and data definitions. U.S. News also goes to multiple publicly available sources of data to pull in additional numbers, according to Len Rhodes with ECU Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research.

U.S. News conducts some of its own surveys, ranging from high school counselors to university presidents, and incorporates that data into its ranking formula.

Indicators used to measure academic quality fall into seven broad areas: peer assessment; retention and graduation of students; faculty resources; student selectivity; financial resources; alumni giving; and “graduation rate performance,” the difference between the proportion of students expected to graduate and the proportion who do, and high school counselor ratings.

U.S. News does not release its exact formula.
A total of 1,600 national universities were ranked. This year, U.S. News condensed four tiers into two. Schools in the second tier are not numerically ranked.

The 2012 edition of the Best Colleges guidebook is available at http://usnews.com and will be on newsstands on Sept. 20.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
Students listen as Councilwomen Marion Blackburn speaks during a town hall meeting on ECU's campus, at Mendenhall Student Center on Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2011. (Aileen Devlin/The Daily Reflector)

Meeting offers students safety tips
By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, September 15, 2011

East Carolina University students were given a primer on public safety and code enforcement on Wednesday during a town hall-style meeting hosted by Greenville Councilwoman Marion Blackburn and the city’s Police Community Relations Committee.

The only problem? More officials than students attended.

“We had the East Carolinian (newspaper) here, student leaders,” Blackburn said. “If we’re getting it in the pipeline, we’ve technically done our job.”

Blackburn has made an effort to reach out to Greenville’s student population, regularly holding meetings on campus since she was elected to District 3 four years ago. Police Community Relations Chairwoman Diane Kulik began Wednesday’s meeting with advice. As a parent and grandparent, she urged students to avoid altercations and think twice before walking alone after midnight.

“I would hope that the students can somehow … focus on how to stay safe, how to get out of a dangerous situation,” Kulik said. “What happens today, how does that affect 10 hours from now, 10 days from now, 10 months from now or even 10 years from now?”

Those statements were followed by presentations from ECU and Greenville police officers. Rape and aggression defense classes were touted, as well as tips on staying safe downtown. Personal responsibility is important, ECU Chief Scott Shelton said.
Both agencies focused on how to keep home, body and property protected in the following ways:

- Use locks at home and keep keys with you.
- If you have an alarm, use it.
- Inventory property using serial numbers.
- Put lights on timers, leave TVs on, and let neighbors know if you go out of town.
- Stay with friends if venturing out at night, and be aware of surroundings.
- Don’t leave valuables in a car, and lock the doors.
- Don’t give rides to people you don’t know or invite them into your home.

Sgt. Carlton Williams, a Greenville police spokesman, described a new program his agency is instituting called “Speak Up and Stop Crying,” aimed at encouraging the reporting of crimes by bystanders. “If you don’t tell who did it, what if it happened to your family or one of your friends because you sat on the information?” Kulik asked.

Lynn Roeder, associate vice chancellor and dean of students, said ECU administrators are putting programs in place to encourage safety, as is the Student Government Association.

SGA President Josh Martinkovic said he and other elected students have reviewed a report released this summer by a city-appointed task force examining public safety. He said a position of director of crime and safety affairs has been created in student government, and the SGA is considering putting trained liaisons in student communities across the city who can advise police of ongoing issues.

Availability of tips and resources on websites and Facebook was stressed in several presentations Wednesday.

The meeting wrapped up with a review of rules governing code enforcement and trash. Officer A.J. Basile reminded attendees that no more than three unrelated people can live in one dwelling, parking on unimproved surfaces is prohibited, and indoor furniture can’t be outside on the porch.

He advised students to quickly clean up “remnants of a wild party the night before ... because it’s all about respecting our neighbors.”

“Not only are they here to find (violations) ... also contact them if you think you’ve got some circumstances that are not minimum housing,” Blackburn added. “Students, as much as anybody else, deserve a safe place to live.”

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or 252-329-9566.
SAT scores dip slightly in N.C.

BY JANE STANCILL - Staff Writer

The average SAT score for North Carolina high school seniors decreased slightly - mirroring a dip nationally as more students take the college entrance exam.

The combined critical reading and math score for North Carolina students averaged 1001, down three points from 2010. When the writing portion was included, the total average score in the state was 1475, down five points from last year.

The scores, released Wednesday in the College Board's annual SAT report, are in line with a national decline. The U.S. SAT average was 1011 in reading and math, a decline of four points from the previous year.

Reading scores in North Carolina dropped by two points to 493, while math scores fell by a point to 508. The average writing score was 474, down two points from last year.

The decline occurred in a year when 67 percent of seniors took the exam - the largest group of graduating seniors to take the test in state history.

In a news release, State Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson said she was pleased to see more North Carolina students pursuing a college career.

"I hope that as North Carolina's high school graduation rate continues to increase so will the number of students seeking education beyond high school," Atkinson said.

The number of North Carolina students taking the test rose 4.4 percentage points.

Larger participation may be partly because the College Board changed its rules for reporting SAT scores and began including all scores through June of this year. Previously, March had been the cut-off date for including scores.

As the test-taking pool gets larger, more students of varied academic backgrounds are represented. The pool of test takers in the state was the most diverse ever, the College Board said, and 35 percent of those taking the
test said their parents' highest level of education was a high school diploma or less.

**Across the South**

North Carolina's decline was similar to that of other states. Scores slid in the eight Southern states where more than half of students take the SAT, according to the Southern Regional Education Board.

The good news is that more students are showing an interest in going to college, but the bad news is the scores aren't what states want to see, according to a statement by Joan Lord, a vice president for the Southern states' coordinating organization.

"These declines turn the spotlight on the need to improve reading, writing and math instruction in the middle grades and high school," Lord said.

Also Wednesday, data from the College Board showed that more North Carolina students are taking Advanced Placement, or AP, courses and performing well on the exams.

Participation grew by 1.8 percent last year in North Carolina and nearly 16 percent in the past five years. The number of AP exam scores that were high enough to qualify for college credit this year increased by 4.5 percent.

jane.stancill@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4559
Pirates net 6-foot-10 Guilmette

“He’s a 6-10 kid that can play inside-outside, run the floor and knock down (3-pointers).”

Ben Miller
AAU coach of Marshall Guilmette

By Tony Castleberry
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, September 15, 2011

East Carolina men’s basketball coach Jeff Lebo and his staff are staying ahead of the game in trying to stockpile big men.

For the second time in the last two weeks, the Pirates got a verbal commitment from a talented post player who should help the team deal with the impending departure of star senior forward Darrius Morrow. Marshall Guilmette, a 6-foot-10, 210-pounder from Kennesaw, Ga., made his commitment on Tuesday, an East Carolina source confirmed Wednesday.

Guilmette joins 6-9, 215-pound Mike Zangari on the list of early verbals for the Pirates. Zangari, who averaged a team-high 18.7 points per game for Red Land High in Harrisburg, Pa., last season, made his decision Sept. 2.

“He’s a big find,” said Guilmette’s AAU coach, Ben Miller. “He’s a 6-10 kid that can play inside-outside, run the floor and knock down (3-pointers). He’s versatile.”

As a junior last season for Harrison High, Guilmette posted per game averages of 10.5 points, 6.6 rebounds and 1.2 blocks, helping lead the Hoyas to a 22-7 record. In approximately 50 games for Miller’s Atlanta Allstars, Guilmette averaged 15.5 points and 10 boards per contest.

Guilmette was on East Carolina’s campus for last Saturday’s Virginia Tech-ECU football game in Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium and his visit to Greenville seemingly caused Guilmette to pick the Pirates over Richmond, a school with which he had long been linked. Miller said 30 colleges were actively recruiting Guillmette.

“(ECU’s) getting a kid who’s a tremendous competitor and a hard worker,” Miller said. “He gets up every morning at 5:30 and goes swimming before school. His energy level is tremendous.

“With (East Carolina’s coaching) staff and his skill set, he’ll be one of the best bigs in Conference USA.”
The Pirates will hold their first team workout on Friday and the first official practice of
the season is Oct. 14. Contact Tony Castleberry at tcastleberry@reflector.com or 252-329-
9591.

ECU BASKETBALL
North Pitt football coach Dave Boal talks about his program during the Greater Greenville Sports Club meeting at the Hilton on Wednesday. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

Club gets glimpse of life as a coach
By Ronnie Woodward
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, September 15, 2011

North Pitt football coach Dave Boal gave the people attending Wednesday’s Greater Greenville Sports Club’s meeting a glimpse of what it can be like to be a high school football coach.

Boal said that at a 2-A school like North Pitt, some ninth-grade players have little, if any, experience with organized football before stepping onto the practice field for the first time.

“They haven’t grown up playing and we basically have to teach them, in ninth grade, what things are,” said Boal, one of five Pitt County coaches to address the crowd at the Hilton. “Like when we score down here, the kickoff team goes down there. They don’t instinctively know that we have to go up here because we are kicking that way.

“We are trying to teach those things and teach the game of football.”

Although football was the focal point of the coaches’ speeches, they also stressed that because the players are teenagers, part of their responsibility stretches beyond the playing field.

“We have an opportunity to be great role models and be able to instill discipline and responsibility to these young men, and I’m excited about having that opportunity,” said first-year South Central coach Tim Carter, who added that strong practices are a major part of his coaching style because of the coaches he had as a player.
Each of the five coaches in attendance — Boal, Carter, Ayden-Grifton’s Paul Cornwell, J.H. Rose’s Todd Lipe and D.H. Conley’s Brian Paschal — spent five or 10 minutes discussing their team, their coaching background and style.

They also had the opportunity to share how they got into the business.

The stories ranged from Carter revealing how former East Carolina football assistant Rick Smith took him under his wing at an early age and helped him get a foot in the coaching door, to a couple of them admitting that the idea formed in their head when they were in college and thinking about job possibilities.

Cornwell stressed how important academics are in his program, noting that he hasn’t had a player ruled academically ineligible in the last four years.

“(Football) is more than just a game and we’re trying to teach them to be better people when they walk out that door with a diploma,” he said.

Paschal is in his second year at Conley and has turned around a program that was winless in 2009. He said that teamwork has been important to the Vikings’ recent success, which includes a 3-1 start to this campaign.

“If you don’t emphasize teamwork, there is no way we’ll win at D.H. Conley,” Paschal said. “We’ve got to do things a little differently and I think our kids have bought in to that.”

Injuries have slowed this year’s Rose squad a little, and Lipe is familiar with how important injuries can be. He said a major one in college helped lead him to the coaching business.

“I blew my knee out and I realized that I was never going to play professional football. It was a long shot anyway, but that’s when I knew,” he said. “I had played since the third grade and I knew I wanted to do something with football, so then I just had to decide what I wanted to teach.”

Contact Ronnie Woodward at rwoodward@reflector.com or 252-329-9592.
NCAA personnel visited the University of North Carolina on Wednesday to conduct follow-up work related to the investigation of the school's football program, UNC spokesman Kevin Best confirmed in a short email message.

Details of the reasons for the visit were not disclosed, and Best referred all other questions to the NCAA. In an email, NCAA spokeswoman Stacey Osburn said that in order to protect the integrity of an investigation, the NCAA cannot comment on an inquiry.

UNC officials are preparing a response to NCAA allegations of nine major violations in the Tar Heels football program involving impermissible benefits and academic fraud.

The school's written response to those allegations - which UNC officials have said they will make public - is due Monday.

Since the NCAA delivered its Notice of Allegations on June 21, additional issues for the school have come to light in newspaper reports. On Aug. 27, The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer reported that sports agent Carl Carey was hired by Julius Nyang’oro, the head of the university's African and Afro-American Studies department, to teach a course called "Foundations of Black Education" in the first summer session of 2011.

Carey is a former academic adviser to Tar Heels football players and a former adjunct professor at UNC who left the school in 2002. He became an agent in 2005 and now represents the Chicago Bears' Julius Peppers, a former UNC football standout who signed a six-year, $91.5 million deal in 2010.

UNC athletics officials said they didn't know Carey was teaching the class until after he was hired, but they alerted their academic advisers not to recommend the class to athletes. Just one UNC athlete, a female, took the class.
Carey is not accused of doing anything improper in the Notice of Allegations, and there is no NCAA rule against agents teaching classes at universities. Athletes can lose their eligibility if they accept money or gifts from agents.

In a text message, Carey said he has not been contacted by the NCAA. "There was no reason to," Carey texted. "Teaching a class isn't a violation or even a potential violation."

Carey said he would be happy to talk with the NCAA about his summer teaching experience and encouraged them to talk to students who took the course. He said he is a full-time professor at a college in Texas.

"Often times, certified contract advisers have other things they do outside of representing NFL players," he texted. "Some practice law, some actually work a regular 8-5 job. I happen to be a college professor. For the life of me, I can't see what's wrong with that."

He said he didn't have access to or contact with a single student-athlete except for the swimmer who took his class.

By the beginning of this year, Carey had added 2011 NFL draft picks Robert Quinn, Quan Sturdivant and Bruce Carter to the list of former UNC players he represents.

Nyang'oro, meanwhile, stepped down Sept. 1 as African and Afro-American Studies department head as UNC announced it was looking into "possible irregularities" in undergraduate classes involving athletes and non-athletes. He remains a member of the faculty at a salary of $159,000 per year.

Nyang'oro was also the instructor of a Swahili course who failed to catch an earlier case of plagiarism by then-UNC football player Michael McAdoo. The issue caused embarrassment for the university this summer when it was discovered that large sections of McAdoo's term paper were copied from other texts.

In 2007, Nyang'oro also instructed a 400 level summer class in which former UNC football standout Marvin Austin received a B-plus - before taking remedial English courses.

Staff writers Robbi Pickeral and Dan Kane contributed to this report.
ktysiac@charlotteobserver.com or 919-829-8942
Chris Kruchten was at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Va., to discuss its new guarantee that it will cover the cost of additional tuition if Mr. Kruchten does not graduate within four years for reasons like unavailability of classes or poor counseling by advisers.

Pay for Only 4 Years of College. Guaranteed.

By ALAN SCHWARZ

ASHLAND, Va. — Each incoming freshman at Randolph-Macon College this year was eligible to take part in a brief signing ceremony.

The new student, along with a parent and the college president, could sign a special agreement that is emerging at some colleges and universities: As long as the student keeps up with academic work and meets regularly with advisers, the college guarantees that earning a degree there will take no more than four years.

If it fails to hold up its end of the bargain — if required classes are not available, or if advisers give poor counsel — the college promises to cover the cost of additional tuition until the degree is completed.

Four-year degree guarantees, as they have become known, are being offered at a growing number of smaller private colleges. They work as a marketing tool, giving colleges a way to ease parents’ fears that their children might enjoy college enough to stick around for five or six costly years. And they help to focus attention on the task at hand: graduating in four years.
Randolph-Macon began offering its guarantee this year; Baldwin-Wallace College, outside of Cleveland, will offer it next fall, becoming the latest of about 15 schools where it is available.

“It does give you peace of mind that the school is paying attention to this,” said Debbie Wileer of Warrenton, Va., who was on campus this month with her son, Chris Kruchten, to sign the guarantee. “Now they have a vested interest in having Chris graduate in four years, too.”

“The four-year graduation guarantee is an approach we will see more private colleges take in coming years,” said Tony Pals, a spokesman for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. “More students and parents want assurance that their tuition payments are going to be worth it.”

According to federal Department of Education figures, about 80 percent of undergraduates earning degrees at private colleges and universities do so within four years; at public institutions, where tuition is typically lower, it is 50 percent.

Colleges with guarantees typically find ways to hedge the risk that they will have to cover a student’s tuition.

First, most promise to pay only if the extra year is the result of a problem they caused — a required class not offered when the student needs it, for example. A student who changes his major halfway through senior year, fails courses or goes backpacking through Europe for three semesters would generally not qualify.

The University of the Pacific, in California, was a pioneer of the guarantee, offering it for the first time in 1991. It winds up paying extra tuition for perhaps two students each year, said Robert J. Alexander, the school’s associate provost for enrollment.

“We’ve incentivized ourselves to do everything in our power for students to graduate in four years,” Mr. Alexander said.

Kristin Hammarstrom, a senior engineering major at Pacific, said her adviser recently noticed that she was a unit short of credits to graduate on time this May, and proposed several ways to catch up. “They’ve never really had to pay out because it’s set up so they don’t have to,” she said.

Nationally, the four-year guarantee is still an experiment in its early stages. Many colleges began to offer the program in 2008 or later, meaning that students in the first incoming class have yet to have a chance to graduate.
Embraced mainly by private colleges, including Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., and Virginia Wesleyan College, the four-year guarantee is offered by a few public institutions as well, like California State University, Fullerton and Western Michigan University.

The math of the deal works out well for colleges: For their cost — tuition payments valued at perhaps $60,000 at a private college — they gain allure in the eyes of many more families who are considering enrolling, but who might be put off by the prospect of an open-ended high price tag.

Robert R. Lindgren, the president of Randolph-Macon, said he expected the guarantee to attract enough students to help fill a new residence hall that will house 108, bringing in about $3 million per year in tuition.

“We have another residence hall being built in two or three years,” Mr. Lindgren said. “I think this is going to provide additional students for us. It’s not unique, but it’s a reason we hope to get people to consider us on the front end, and not say, ‘Privates are too expensive.’ ”

Recruiters at Baldwin-Wallace in Berea, Ohio, made sure to mention its new four-year guarantee this summer while prospective students were visiting. Reaction among recent visitors was mixed.

Keith Fredriksen of Hamburg, N.Y., who toured the school with his daughter Lauren, saw the guarantee as a marketing tool that would not factor into the application process. “There seemed to be a lot of reasons for it not to be their fault and to pay for that fifth year,” he said.

But Joe Nist, a retired policeman from North Canton, Ohio, said his ears perked up when he learned of it as he toured the school with his daughter, Sarah.

“I have a son who took a little better than five to graduate, and the expense is enormous,” he said. “They’re doing things to make it consumer-friendly. It definitely will affect our decision.”
U.S. falls in global ranking of young adults who finish college

By Daniel de Vise

America’s global rank in college completion among young adults is slipping, according to a report released Tuesday, signaling that the higher education ambitions of other nations are progressing at a swifter pace.

The analysis comes two years after President Obama sought to stir the nation’s competitive spirit with a pledge to retake the lead by 2020.

Instead of gaining ground, the United States has fallen from 12th to 16th in the share of adults age 25 to 34 holding degrees, according to the report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It trails global leaders South Korea, Canada and Japan and is mired in the middle of the pack among developed nations.

The stagnant U.S. performance on this key international benchmark reflects at least two trends: the rapid expansion of college attendance in Asia and Europe, and the continuing emphasis on four-year degrees in the United States while other nations focus far more on one- and two-year professional credentials.

“Most of these countries are moving ahead,” said Jamie Merisotis, chief executive of the Lumina Foundation, an advocate of higher education reform. “And we are stuck in neutral.”

Obama’s pledge challenged a society generally presumed to have the world’s best higher education system. The United States ranks second, after Norway, in share of adults age 25 to 64 with bachelor’s degrees. Top U.S. universities perennially draw huge numbers of foreign students.

But U.S. officials say it is crucial for as many young adults as possible to get a college degree of any sort to help the nation compete in the global economy. When the president announced his goal in July 2009 at a community college in Warren, Mich., the United States ranked 12th among 36 developed nations in the share of young adults with degrees. The college attainment rate for young adults, as the measure is known, was 39 percent. The figures Obama relied on were based on 2006 data.

Tuesday’s report, based on 2009 data, showed the comparable attainment rate has crept up to 41 percent. But in South Korea, which has become the world
leader, the rate has reached 63 percent. Canada and Japan rank second and third, respectively, with attainments of about 56 percent.

The United States trails Russia, Ireland, Norway, New Zealand, Australia, Denmark, Israel and Belgium — as well as Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, France and Sweden, which all passed America in the latest ranking.

“We don’t have any evidence that anything is getting worse in the United States,” said Andreas Schleicher, head of the Indicators and Analysis Division of the OECD in Paris. “It is just that there is a great deal of dynamism all over the world, and many countries are catching up.”

The United States last led the world in college attainment of young adults in the 1970s. Could the nation regain the lead by 2020? The numbers are against it.

From 1998 to 2009, the share of young American adults with college degrees rose 5 percentage points. But Japan’s attainment rate rose 11 points in those years, and Canada’s rose 10 points. In the global horse race, those countries aren’t just in the lead; they’re pulling away.

College attainment is soaring in China and India as well, although both nations lag far behind the United States, and the OECD has not consistently tracked them. China produces the largest number of new college students.

“I think our country just got complacent. We got self-satisfied,” said Arne Duncan, the U.S. education secretary. “I use these stats everywhere we go, and people are mostly stunned.”

Duncan contends that Obama’s goal is realistic. Half of all states, he said, have set “real targets” for raising college completion. And hundreds of universities have embraced Obama’s quest, setting an unofficial industry-wide target of 60 percent attainment by 2020.

But even that benchmark is problematic: South Korea has topped it.

Obama focused much of his initiative on community colleges. The two-year schools enroll nearly two-fifths of all U.S. college students, but their overall graduation rate is 21 percent.

To raise that performance, the president proposed $12 billion to improve two-year colleges and expand their capacity. Congress approved $2 billion.

In framing his challenge to the nation, Obama and his aides seized on a relatively unflattering chart within an OECD report. It compared nations according to the share of young adults who hold any type of college degree, including short-duration professional degrees.
The United States looked bad on that chart partly because of its historic focus on the bachelor’s degree. Nations that did well emphasized shorter-term professional degrees.

The United States fares much better in rankings that consider the full adult population. Older Americans have much higher college attainment rates than those who are younger. The attainment rate for younger adults is hindered by a growing population of immigrants from families without a tradition of college attendance. Many of America’s economic rivals, by contrast, are smaller, homogenous nations with shrinking populations.

The best U.S. universities are still the best in the world. U.S. schools claimed the top five spots on the 2010 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and 18 of the top 25. The best-placed Canadian, Chinese and Japanese institutions ranked 17th, 21st and 26th, respectively.

Overall, graduation rates in U.S. colleges are rising, slowly — but not in community colleges. The public two-year campuses are over-enrolled, courses are oversubscribed and students take ever longer to finish.

Some economists say America should reorder its priorities to stress short-term professional degrees and certificate programs alongside baccalaureate degrees. That, they say, was the clear message from Obama when he challenged every American to commit to one more year of higher education or job training — not four more years.

“He was trying to say to people, ‘You don’t need to get a BA,’ ” said Anthony Carnevale, director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. “He was saying, ‘You need a degree with labor-market value.’ ”

The link between level of degree and earnings has broken down, Carnevale said. Years of education matter less, and field of study matters more. Canada, Japan and many European nations were quick to recognize that change and have organized around delivering associate-level degrees. U.S. community colleges, by contrast, devote much of their energy to preparing students for transfer to four-year colleges.

Many students leave college without any degree. That, said Merisotis, of the Lumina Foundation, is why “37 million Americans have gone to college and have nothing to show for it.”

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