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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 FAX: 252-328-6300
Former governor speaks at ECU’s Floyd symposium

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, September 17, 2009

Response and recovery topped discussions during the first day of East Carolina University’s Hurricane Floyd Symposium, an event designed to commemorate North Carolina’s worst natural disaster on record.

Former Gov. Jim Hunt and former Secretary of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety Richard Moore highlighted Thursday’s lineup of speakers. Both reflected on their experiences 10 years ago when Floyd passed through the state, leaving catastrophic flooding in its wake.

Other presentations Thursday included an emergency preparedness demonstration, a look at emerging technology for hazards risk reduction and a discussion of the storm’s impact on humanity.

“An event like Hurricane Floyd is a focusing event,” said Jamie Kruse, director of ECU’s Center for Natural Hazards Research, which organized the symposium. “We all know of examples where people came together and showed the very best in humanity. But researchers also looked at the event and thought, ‘How can we get better? How can we use the technology to have a better understanding of human behavior? How can we use information systems to make an event like Floyd have a less severe impact than it did?’ This symposium is dedicated to that.”

Following a pair of public forum discussions regarding emergency preparedness and human dimensions of the storm, Hunt addressed the crowd of about 100 gathered at the City Hotel and Bistro.

Hunt reflected on his efforts helping the state during the aftermath of Floyd. He noted that there are four phases to managing a disaster: preparedness, response, hazard mitigation and recovery.

Much of Hunt’s speech focused on the recovery aspect, which he said most agencies manage the worst of the four. He said many of the plans in place for recovery didn’t help North Carolina after Floyd’s destruction.

“The thing I think is most important now is that we become very committed and effective in confronting the challenges of disaster recovery,” Hunt said.

“We need to figure out how we can do a better job. Typically, communities, governments of all kinds, nonprofits and so on do not develop a clear plan to deal with the challenges of disaster recovery. That has been true in North Carolina, and boy is it true across the country.”

Hunt discussed several state initiatives that were created in response to the flooding of Hurricane Floyd such as new floodplain mapping and a supplemental buyout program that gave homeowners pre-disaster fair market value for their homes.

He said the state spent $836 million of its own money to supplement what federal agencies provided.

“I want you to understand that your state has done some special things that you ought to be proud of,” Hunt said. “If you are a taxpayer, you helped with it. We solved the problems. We figured out pretty quickly that the federal funding and programs were not going to deal with it, not begin to deal with it. And so this state stepped up with the help of a lot of you in this room.
"I question if anybody has ever spent as much state money as we did in recovery."

The Hurricane Floyd Symposium will continue today with experts from various fields of hazards research discussing broader issues related to mitigation, response and recovery.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.
‘Guiding Light’ actor has local connection

By Kelley Kirk
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, September 17, 2009

Television’s longest running soap opera, “The Guiding Light,” will exit stage right permanently at the end of the show today.

What began in 1937 as a radio program focusing on the Spaulding, Cooper and Lewis families in the fictional town of Springfield moved to CBS in 1952.

Characters have come and gone, but one starring in the final episode today has a tie to eastern North Carolina.

“One of my dearest, oldest friends is Justin Deas,” John Shearin said. Shearin is the director of the School of Theater and Dance at East Carolina University.

Deas has played the role of Buzz Cooper since 1992. He will have appeared on close to 400 episodes of “The Guiding Light” when the final show airs.

Shearin and Deas met while both attended William and Mary College in Williamsburg, Va., where they were theater majors.

“It was a very small program, and in fact, he and I took director classes together and we were always in each others’ plays,” Shearin said.

Both graduated in 1970 and have continued their friendship through the years.

Prior to working at ECU, Shearin held numerous television roles. His resume includes roles on "Loving," "The Doctors," "Young and the Restless" and most recently "Surface."

Shearin said that while soap opera audiences are diminishing there will always be a place for the “stories.”

Because of Shearin’s long-standing friendship, Deas has made two summer theater appearances at ECU.

“He’s a brave, excellent and interesting stage actor and that emboldens him on ‘The Guiding Light,’” Shearin said.

Deas played the vampire Count Dracula in “Dracula” during the 1992 summer theater productions and the King of Siam in the “King and I” in 2000.

“I love working with Justin with me directing and him acting,” Shearin said.

Shearin said that he tried to bring Deas back with his wife, Margaret Collin, a few years ago for a production of "Lion in Winter," but scheduling conflicts marred that plan.

Now that his role on “The Guiding Light” has come to an end with the show’s cancellation, Shearin inquired what his friend’s plans were.

“Justin said that he’s really looking forward to working in the theater and credits doing our show here with getting him rejuvenated into theater again,” Shearin said.

Deas began his soap opera career on “Ryan’s Hope” as Dr. Bucky Carter, a role that included 255 episodes from 1975-78, which was followed by 163 episodes on "Santa Barbara" as Keith Timmons from 1986-88.
He first appeared on "The Guiding Light" in 1992 in the role of Frank Achilles "Buzz" Cooper Sr., which will come to an end today.

"I believe he's won at least six Emmys," Shearin said.

In fact, Deas has won eight Daytime Emmy Awards, three for "The Guiding Light."

He also won two for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series in 1997 and 1995 and one for Outstanding Support Actor in a Drama Series in 1994.

Deas has also won two Soap Opera Digest Awards fro Outstanding Support Actor in 1994 and Outstanding Villain: Daytime in 1988.

Contact Kelley Kirk at kkirkwindell@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9596.

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Floyd spawns new flood maps and awareness

BY MARTHA QUILLIN, Staff Writer

GREENVILLE - A decade after Hurricane Floyd flooded thousands of homes that officials didn’t even know were in flood plains, emergency planners are using $5 million in federal money to create maps that will show the value and vulnerability to disaster of every building in North
Carolina over 1,000 square feet.

When finished next year, the maps will be used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as a model for the rest of the country in preventing loss of lives and property to floods, winds, fires and other disasters.

"It really will change hazard mitigation," said John Dornan, director of the GEO-Spatial and Technical Management Office for the N.C. Division of Emergency Management, which is doing the work.

Dornan was one of about 150 state and local emergency managers, politicians, researchers and others who gathered for a public forum Thursday to discuss Hurricane Floyd. The storm came ashore in North Carolina on Sept. 16, 1999, with drenching rains that filled towns and neighborhoods in Eastern North Carolina with water waist-deep and worse.

The storm was blamed for the deaths of 52 people and about $6 billion in damage.

"It was a terrible time," recalled former Gov. Jim Hunt.

The battle for help

After the storm, Hunt said, his administration constantly pestered FEMA, then-President Bill Clinton and anyone else who would listen for money to help victims recover. Of the nearly two dozen state recovery programs, Hunt said he was especially proud of the flood-plain mapping after the hurricane.

North Carolina had flood plain maps, but they were outdated and did not account for development, which both worsened runoff into rivers and creeks and put more homes and businesses in the way of all that water.

New flood maps have been complete for some time and are now used by local planners to determine what to build where. With the $5 million the state received about six months ago, Dornan said, it will now be possible to layer those maps with aerial photography showing each of the 7.5 million buildings in the state of 1,000 square feet or more, along with their value from property-tax records, and maps showing the risk of wildfires, hurricane-force winds, storm surges, dam breaks and landslides.

In addition, Dornan said, the state got another $5 million in the 2009 federal budget to map the effect of sea-level rise in North Carolina.

The maps will be on the Internet. Homeowners could use them to make decisions about building materials, safety and insurance. Local officials could use them for zoning plans and decisions about flood insurance programs and the placement of fire departments and other resources.

It's the kind of preparation Hunt admonished the people at Thursday's forum to devote themselves to.

"We can do a lot of things so we don’t get in the fix we’re in so often," Hunt said. "We know how to do it. We have great skill, great knowledge, great hearts. I want to ask you to use all of it."

martha.quillin@newsobserver.com or 919-898-8989

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Triangle to lose 430 UNC jobs

About 96 percent of the 900 UNC system positions being cut across the state are administrative.

BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL - Public universities in the Triangle will eliminate about 430 positions this year as part of a massive UNC system budget cut.

N.C. State University is eliminating 205 administrative jobs, and UNC-Chapel Hill is cutting 202 positions, according to a report released Thursday that gave the most detail to date on how the system will slash its operating budget 10 percent. N.C. Central University in Durham is cutting 21.5, including four at its law school.

UNC system President Erskine Bowles had said he expected administrative positions to account for 75 to 80 percent of the cuts. That number has subsequently risen to 96 percent, officials now say -- an acknowledgment that administrative job growth swelled out of control over the last several years. Few cuts have been made to academics.

"We reduced where we had duplication; we reduced where we had overlap, and we reduced where we had great strength," Bowles said. "Did we do it perfectly? No."

While a campus breakdown was unavailable Thursday, officials said 600 of the 900 or so positions being eliminated statewide were filled at the start of this year. At UNC-CH, 102 people have lost their jobs, Chancellor Holden Thorp said Thursday.

"These jobs aren't just cuts. They're real people who were in them, and real families who were depending on them," Bowles said. "They were folks who were working hard at this university trying to do their part to provide the students the education they need."

At NCSU, the 205 job cuts will help reduce the campus budget by $57 million. They include dozens of directors and assistant directors of centers and institutes, some of which may still be funded from other sources.

"When you cut this many jobs, you do cut services, and you do reduce oversight," Chancellor James Woodward said. "But we tried to reduce services least important to the core mission."

At UNC-CH, the 202 administrative job cuts are part of a plan to cut $67 million. They include a handful of high-ranking posts in the chancellor and provost offices. The cuts also include more than 20 positions at the Renaissance Computing Institute, a 5-year-old high-tech computing center that also employs workers at Duke University and NCSU, and had offices on other UNC campuses as well.

"We're not closing them down, but we gave them a very large cut -- 35 percent," Thorp said. The institute was receiving $11.8 million in taxpayer money.
Eighteen workers have lost their jobs, and the institute's leaders are trying to adapt, spokeswoman Karen Green said. "You can call it reorganizing, strategic planning for the future," she said. "You cut down to the core mission."

Some areas took far heavier cuts than others. The UNC system was reluctant, for example, to push campuses to cut public safety officers or internal auditors.

At NCSU, Woodward didn't cut development. "We have got to do a better job of private fundraising," he said.

One popular area for cutting: information technology. On many campuses, IT grew rapidly over the last several years and became, officials now say, far too decentralized. NCSU and UNC-CH are eliminating dozens of IT support positions.

"It was a very fertile ground for us," Bowles said.

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008.

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City will host crime summit

The Daily Reflector

Thursday, September 17, 2009

A panel discussion and comments from the state’s leader in crime control are the featured events at a city-sponsored crime summit to be held next week.

The event is scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday and will be held in the Greenville City Council chambers, third floor, Greenville City Hall.

Reuben F. Young, secretary of the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, is the scheduled keynote speaker.

In addition to Young’s presentation, there will be a panel discussion featuring Greenville Police Chief William Anderson, Pitt County Sheriff Mac Manning, District Attorney Clark Everett, Kim Williams of North Carolina Probation and Parole, the Honorable District Court Judge Joseph Blick, and the Rev. Tyrone Turnage. Dr. Virginia Hardy with the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University will moderate.

The panel discussion will include questions from the public, according to a Greenville Police Department news release.

Light refreshments will be served in the Gallery Room beginning at 6:30 p.m. Call the police department at 329-4333 for more information.

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Colleges may take illegal immigrants

But tough restrictions are likely, including out-of-state tuition.

BY KRISTIN COLLINS, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - Illegal immigrants may be allowed back into the state's community colleges, but under restrictions likely to exclude all but a handful.

A committee of the State Board of Community Colleges recommended Thursday that undocumented students be admitted to degree programs, but they would have to pay
out-of-state tuition, be denied financial aid, and be enrolled in classes only after legal students are given slots.

The full board will vote on a final policy today, capping nearly two years of controversy over whether to allow illegal immigrants to enroll in degree programs at the state's 58 community college campuses.

For 16 months, the community colleges have taken one of the most restrictive stances in the nation, barring illegal immigrants from all degree programs while they deliberated.

Dr. Stuart Fountain, the policy committee chairman, said the committee had crafted a fair policy that would allow in only the most motivated illegal immigrants, and would not hurt the colleges' ability to serve legal residents. He said out-of-state tuition is about $7,700 per semester, compared with $1,600 for in-state students.

"That is an enormous hurdle," Fountain, a retired dentist from Asheboro, said after the meeting. "It provides an opportunity for an education for people who are very determined."

A decision to admit them is not likely to cause an enrollment rush. Before last year, when many campuses admitted students regardless of immigration status, fewer than 150 illegal immigrants were enrolled.

Fountain said he wasn't sure whether the full board would approve the policy, but he said none of its 21 members has told him they oppose his position.

Among those on the board are two elected leaders, Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton and State Treasurer Janet Cowell, both Democrats. Most of the remaining members are appointed by the governor and legislature.

A spokeswoman for Dalton said he was "carefully considering the issue." Cowell also declined to say how she would vote.

Protesters on hand

The committee made its decision unanimously Thursday, and without discussion, as nearly 50 protesters waved flags and shouted through bullhorns outside the building, calling for a ban on illegal students. Police scanned those attending the meeting with metal detectors and checked bags for weapons.

Protest organizer William Gheen said he opted for a sidewalk gathering because the committee did not allow public comment Thursday.

"If illegals are in colleges, they're being trained in jobs that Americans really need," say Ray Bodall, a computer programmer from Raleigh who was protesting with his 25-year-old son.

He was among several who said their admission to community college was another way illegal immigrants are sponging public resources and taking opportunities from native-born residents.

"Where are they getting the money to pay the tuition?" said Devin Norris, a Web hosting provider from Raleigh who said he plans to run for president in 2012. "They're getting it from our paychecks. Our paychecks are getting raped."

A study conducted by the board, however, showed that out-of-state tuition covers more than the cost of instruction, and that most colleges profit from students who pay out-of-state rates.

Admitting them would put the community colleges in line with the UNC system, which admits illegal immigrants who attended high school in the United States.
The board also commissioned a $75,000 study to outline the approaches taken by other states. The study showed that all but one other state, South Carolina, allow undocumented students to enroll in community colleges.

kristin.collins@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4881

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Key dates

November 2007: Community colleges begin a new practice of admitting illegal immigrants at all 58 campuses.

December 2007: Public uproar forces colleges to seek legal opinion.

May 2008: The State Board of Community Colleges bars illegal immigrants on the advice of the state Attorney General’s Office.

July 2008: Federal officials say no law bars the admission of illegal immigrants; the AG’s office reverses its advice.

August 2008: The board votes to continue the ban while it hires a consultant to study the issue.

April 2009: The consultant returns a report saying colleges would profit from students paying out-of-state tuition.

Thursday: The board’s policy committee recommends that the colleges admit illegal immigrants at out-of-state rates.

At a glance

The 21-member State Board of Community Colleges will vote today on whether to admit illegal immigrants with these caveats:

• Illegal immigrants must pay out-of-state tuition.

• They're not eligible for financial aid.

• They must have graduated from a U.S. high school.

• Legal residents have priority when class space is limited.

• Illegal immigrants may be denied entry into a program if federal law prohibits them from getting a professional license in the field.

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Check-out time

The practice of college football teams in the Atlantic Coast Conference checking into local hotels on the nights before home games is a waste of money and an unnecessary indulgence at a time when the universities these teams represent are laying off people. University academic leaders need to quit treating athletic programs like independent kingdoms and put an end to the custom immediately.

This is not to say coaches' reasoning to justify the hotel stays is entirely baseless. UNC-Chapel Hill's Butch Davis notes to The News & Observer that players live in all sorts of situations, from apartments to houses, some a distance from campus, and that bringing everyone together in a hotel the night before a game helps players be "mentally rested" for the next day, which starts early. Tom O'Brien of N.C. State says players in a hotel will not be kept awake by the distraction of something like a late-night party.

OK, but is this practice really justifiable in these economic times? It is not. In 2008, NCSU spent roughly $86,000 in lodging and transportation to and from local hotels. UNC-Chapel Hill spent approximately $79,000. Clemson University in South Carolina, also an ACC member, spent over $100,000.

Yes, that $86,000 spent by N.C. State is a low number when stacked against an overall athletics budget of $40 million.

But athletics should not be exempt from the belt-tightening that all other parts of a campus are having to do in response to the need for frugality in a recession. Campuses as a whole have had to cut some classes or put more students into classes that already exist.

Why should sports programs be spared from a step such as eliminating these hotel stays, which may have become customary but are nevertheless extravagant? Players who are properly motivated will come to a game ready to compete even if the coaching staff doesn't have them under their collective thumbs the night before.

And let's not have the claim that all the schools need to do it in order to entice recruits, as if a high school senior would be swayed toward one school over another because he gets to stay in a hotel a few nights a year. That's a weak excuse. Also, the reasoning that the athletics department makes big money doesn't work, either. They make money. They also spend money -- tons of it.

Here's one place where the economizing can start.

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Men set free in Hofstra rape hoax

Video turns up; story changes

BY FRANK ELTMAN, The Associated Press

MINEOLA, N.Y. - A Hofstra University freshman who had claimed she was raped by five men in a dormitory bathroom changed her story after prosecutors confronted her with the revelation that a video of the encounter may have been recorded, a prosecutor said Thursday.

The recantation Wednesday night led to the immediate release of four men, including one student at the Long Island college, who had been arrested on rape and other charges. Police had been seeking to arrest a fifth man when the charges were dropped.

The sex did occur in a bathroom but was consensual, a prosecutor said. Authorities could decide within weeks whether to charge the 18-year-old woman for making up the story.

Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice said Thursday that the woman, whom she would not identify, was interviewed Wednesday night by two senior prosecutors as a routine part of a follow-up investigation.

The woman first told police she was lured to the dormitory and raped early Sunday after her cell phone was stolen by a man she had met at a dance party, Rice said.

The woman had said she was bound with rope while the five men took turns sexually assaulting her in a men's bathroom stall.

Almost immediately, Rice said, the woman's story began to unravel with "significant inconsistencies," but she declined to elaborate. "The turning point was when she was confronted with the fact that there may exist a video of some or all of the incident," Rice said.

"Her actions and demeanor depict a very troubled young woman in need of much help," the prosecutor said.

An attorney for one of the accused men, 20-year-old Kevin Taveras, said he was shown a copy of the cell phone video and said it confirmed reports that the woman was not attacked.

The woman has been suspended from school until a disciplinary hearing is held, a Hofstra spokeswoman said. Melissa Connolly also said a suspension against Rondell Bedward -- the only Hofstra student among the five men implicated -- had been lifted.

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UNC Charlotte shows off new master plan

The Associated Press

Friday, September 18, 2009

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The University of North Carolina at Charlotte has released a master plan with the main goal of showing how the school will handle a projected enrollment of 10,000 more students by 2020.

The Charlotte Observer reported the plan unveiled Thursday shows how many new classrooms, residential beds and parking spaces the school will need to handle a projected 35,000 students in 11 more years. The school now has about 24,700 students.

The plan shown to trustees includes other ambitions, including a football stadium and an arts center. Campus leaders say the plan is still preliminary and designs could change.

The proposal doesn't include a cost estimate. No money has been allocated for most of the projects.


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Easing From Combat to Classroom
GI Bill's Growth Fuels a Rush of On-Campus Advisory, Advocacy Services

By Emma Brown
Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, September 18, 2009

During his second tour of duty in Afghanistan, Sgt. Chris Day made a habit of wearing a Terps T-shirt under his uniform. He planned to enroll at the University of Maryland as soon as he got out of the Army.

Last fall, three months after Day returned to the United States, he moved into a freshman dorm at College Park and traded the Terps shirt for a pair of sunglasses. The glasses helped him cope, sliding through the days feeling invisible to fresh-out-of-high-school 18-year-olds with whom he suddenly shared a life.

"I felt real isolated, like I didn't belong," said Day, 23, a physical education major who still keeps his hair cropped military-style. "I'm not super-old, but I spent 27 months in Afghanistan, and I feel super-old because of that."

As more veterans such as Day return to school, drawn by a new GI Bill that offers more-generous benefits than its predecessor, colleges and universities in the Washington region and across the nation are launching efforts to ease the daunting social, psychological and logistical transition from combat to classroom.

"There's this renewed sense of obligation to the men and women who voluntarily served to defend our country," said Jim Selbe of the American Council on Education. The D.C.-based association published a nationwide survey in July showing that 57 percent of institutions have veteran-specific programs and services.

Student veterans are a singular population: They are older and more likely to be married than traditional students, and they are more likely, as reserve members, to be called up for deployment in the middle of the semester. Some return from combat needing help dealing with the emotional aftermath of war; many, like Day, feel isolated.

And all deal with the frustrations of navigating bureaucracies in their schools and the Department of Veterans Affairs, both of which have rules and procedures that can be overwhelming. Tuition is due the first of the month, but the GI Bill payment arrives much later. Academic credits earned in military training won't transfer. Call the federal government, and it's impossible to get a human being on the line; call the university, and no one is quite sure who can help.

"The military is so structured and organized, and when you get on a college campus, it's chaos," said Michael Johnson, a Marine who served in Iraq in 2005. "What we don't want to see is that guy get so
frustrated with the system that he quits -- or doesn't even start."

Johnson was hired by George Mason University last year, at the behest of student veterans, to be the school's first full-time veterans' liaison. He reviews academic policies to make sure they are not discriminatory (if you deploy mid-semester, do you risk getting an F?), and his office is a one-stop shop for the school's 425 veterans. He's building a Web site for them, helping organize a peer mentoring group and, with a grant, this year hired a transitions adviser and counselor specializing in post-traumatic stress disorder.

"Mason's diversity is one of the things that has made it into a draw," said David Alpher, who teaches courses in conflict resolution at the school. GMU is pushing to attract veterans not only because it's the right thing to do, he said, but also "for the usual mercenary reasons."

The number of student veterans receiving benefits is expected to climb as much as 25 percent this year to 460,000, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and schools that can attract them will share in the $78 billion the federal government will spend in the next decade on educational benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which took effect Aug. 1. The law offers allowances for housing and books and covers in-state tuition at public institutions; more expensive private colleges can also opt in to the Yellow Ribbon Program, in which the federal government will match, dollar for dollar, any additional tuition aid provided by the school.

Many schools, ranging from community colleges to four-year public and private institutions, have resource centers to make information more easily available, created positions for internal veteran advocates and strived to connect student veterans with one another and other students.

Often, the changes have come in response to requests from veterans themselves.

"The government will pay you to be there, but will the community support you?" said Brian Hawthorne, 24, a senior at George Washington University who is legislative director for Student Veterans of America. The national organization, founded in 2008, has grown to 199 chapters, becoming a strong voice for recognition of veterans' needs on campus.

Hawthorne, a medic with the Army Reserve since 2003, co-founded George Washington's student veterans group last year after returning from his second deployment to Iraq and finding that there was no system for raising issues with the administration. When the school's certification officer -- whose job is to help process paperwork for students to get GI Bill payments -- was moved to an office in Virginia, "we burned the house down," said Hawthorne, a geography major.

The school's decision to move the official dedicated to helping veterans suggested to Hawthorne and other students that their welfare was not a priority. "That's when our group got our strength, in that fight," he said.

University administrators, including some who are veterans, heeded the group's concerns. They pledged $18,000 a year to as many as 350 eligible undergraduates; the federal government matches that under the Yellow Ribbon Program. Together with the District's education benefit under the GI Bill, the aid package means that the $40,000-a-year private school is now effectively free to veterans. The university also launched a Web site for veterans and hired two graduate students to staff a veterans office, augmenting the certification officer based in Virginia.

American University also held its first veterans orientation recently. The University of Maryland created
an office to better help the school's 400 student veterans in response to complaints that their needs were being overlooked. The office is staffed by two graduate students, both veterans. Administrators at College Park also jump-started a long-dormant student group, Terp Vets, and are putting together a semester-long veterans transition course, which will begin next year.

"It's gone from nothing to having every resource someone could need at our fingertips," said Laurissa Flowers, 24, who served with the Army in Iraq and is president of Terp Vets.

Two-year schools are ramping up services as well. Last fall, Montgomery College created the Combat2College program, which includes streamlined registration, academic advising and counseling for veterans, staff training in vet-specific needs and vets-only gym hours. In November, Northern Virginia Community College will hire three people to staff a new office to help veterans transition into the school and to four-year colleges.

Such efforts, along with new student clubs, create ways for veterans to find others who understand their experiences. And those personal connections could save lives, said Larkin Harris, who heads Student Veterans of America's efforts to improve mental health services. Nationwide, five student veterans have committed suicide in the past six months, she said.

For Day, the U-Md. student, talking about the past stirs feelings he would rather not confront. "I'm still getting back on my feet," he said. But when he attended a brown-bag lunch put on by the new Veterans Programs Office in November, he was grateful to meet men and women who made him feel less old, he said, and less tired -- especially three leaders of Terp Vets, all seniors.

"They did time overseas, they're graduating and they're not super-crazy," he said. "It lets me know that going to college is possible."

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