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Obama tickets draw a crowd
By Ginger Livingston
Tuesday, September 18, 2012

Hundreds of people waiting for tickets to see first lady Michelle Obama in Greenville lined the sidewalks of several office complexes along West Arlington Boulevard all day Monday.

Obama is visiting Greenville and Durham on Wednesday to encourage volunteers to promote voter registration through GottaVote.com.

The event begins at 5:45 p.m. in Williams Arena at Minges Coliseum on the East Carolina University campus.

The first people seeking tickets Monday arrived about 6 a.m. By 11 a.m., the line stretched one-tenth of a mile along several office complexes.

John Graves, an Alabama native who lives in Greenville, got in line shortly before 9 a.m., a few hundred feet from the door. Two hours later, he still was waiting.

“It’s one of the biggest events in Greenville,” he said. “However it’s more than that. I believe in Barack Obama. I think he is one of the better presidents we’ve had, and I think the alternative is horrible.”

Tracy Steed of Vanceboro arrived shortly before 10 a.m. and found herself near the back of line.
“We knew it was going to be a line, we just didn’t think (the wait) would be this long,” she said.

The line moved slowly because Obama campaign officials were asking people to fill out forms with names, addresses, email and phone information to build their volunteer base.

Ella Battle said she did not mind the wait.

“You get to meet new people. It’s not all that bad,” she said.

The chance to see the first lady is worth the inconvenience, she said.

“She’s a wife and has children, and she can understand where we are coming from,” Battle said.

Samuel Cannon likened Obama to former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy because both women have charisma and grace. The Obamas, like the Kennedys, also encourage people to work as volunteers to make their communities better, Cannon said.

Organizers tried to speed up the process by handing out forms to people as they waited in line. They also handed out bottles of water and moved up senior citizens and people with disabilities.

While supporters waited for tickets, ECU officials were finalizing preparations.

Public parking will be made available at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium and the lots near Clark-LeClair Stadium beginning at noon on Wednesday, said Lt. Chris Sutton, special events coordinator with ECU Police Department. Parking also will be open at the former Stratford Arms apartment complex and the Belk Building. Handicapped parking will be available in the Purple and Gold parking lots.

Sutton encouraged people to arrive early, noting that entry is being granted on a first-come basis. The arena is expected to hold 6,000.

Sutton said people should also note that nothing will be allowed in the arena except cameras and diaper bags, which will be searched.

Banned items include bags and purses, umbrellas, signs, balloons, banners or anything attached to a pole, artificial noisemakers, confetti and silly string. No pencils or ink pens will be allowed.

People have to enter through metal detectors, and the fewer items that have to be searched, the faster people can enter the building, Sutton said.
Morning classes at Minges will continue as scheduled on Wednesday, Sutton said. All classes beginning at noon or later will have the option of meeting at another location. Students should consult their instructors.

Sutton said he was not expecting the heat-related issues that arose during Republican vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan’s visit on Labor Day. Seven people were treated for heat-related illnesses at that event.

Sutton said water will be available to the waiting crowd, and concessions will be sold inside Minges.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or 252-329-9570.
A cannon that was used by the Confederate Army during the Civil War will be rest on a concrete plot in front of the N.C. Museum of History. The unveiling ceremony will be Tuesday, September 18, 2012. Photographed Monday, September 17, 2012.

Civil War cannon to be dedicated Tuesday at N.C. history museum

By Jeanna Smialek - jsmialek@newsobserver.com

It once played a loud, fiery role in the combat between Confederate and Union forces at Fort Fisher.

But the relic of North Carolina’s history has waited silently in front of the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh’s Bicentennial Plaza recently, wrapped in gray plastic sheeting and ringed in bright caution tape.

After it is unveiled Tuesday, museum Director Ken Howard hopes the artifact will serve as a clue to the cultural wealth the building behind it has to offer.

The item, a cannon that was used by the Confederate Army at Fort Fisher during the Civil War, will rest on a concrete plot in front of the museum’s entrance. Howard said it’s an appropriate entry piece, because it represents a pivotal period in North Carolina’s past.
“If you think of something you put in front of a museum that says, ‘We’re history,’ what do you think of? For me, it’s a cannon,” he said.

“The connection for us is that it’s a Confederate cannon that was captured in the Civil War. Now we’ve brought it back to North Carolina to display.”

Called the Blakely Cannon, the weapon was manufactured in 1862 by Fawcett, Preston and Co. in Liverpool, England. The Confederate Army stationed the cannon at Fort Fisher to protect commerce vessels, called blockade runners, as they traveled along the shoreline past waiting Union ships. The runners delivered supplies from Bermuda or Nassau to the Confederate forces.

The gun was used to defend the crew and supply load of one such vessel, the Hebe, that ran aground. But the U.S.S. Minnesota and other Union gunboats overtook the Confederates defending the Hebe, and on Aug. 18, 1863, they captured the cannon and shipped it to Washington, D.C., as a trophy.

The cannon sat in a Navy shipyard for decades, until the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras requested it for a display involving the U.S.S. Minnesota. When museum staff realized that the cannon had not been aboard the ship during the time period on which they were focused, they got in touch with their colleagues in Raleigh.

The N.C. Museum of History secured a five-year, renewable loan on the artifact and sent it to East Carolina University, where a preservation group spent months cleaning and preparing it.

After working through layers of paint and rust, the team made an exciting discovery, said Jennifer French, objects conservator at the N.C. Museum of History, who coordinated with the team at ECU. A previously undiscovered maker’s mark on the weapon’s carriage waited underneath the grime, filling in details about the cannon’s origin.

“It allows people to see what it was like,” French said.

The cleaning also made clearer an inscription on the cannon commemorating the capture.

“It’s a good indication of what we are,” French said. “The cannon reflects that outside of our four walls.”
housing initiative to face review

By Wesley Brown
Tuesday, September 18, 2012

New controversy in an ongoing housing debate likely will resume tonight at City Hall as the Greenville Planning and Zoning Commission reviews a proposal to open up certain homes in the university area to a fourth renter.

The developing plan, a product of changing times, new government goals and dissatisfaction among property developers, has been proposed by Greenville City Councilman Max Joyner to “encourage investment” and “facilitate preservation, restoration and revitalization” in the historic community near the Tar River.

The plan, called the University Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, will apply to a two-mile stretch of homes between Elm, Fifth and Reade streets to the Tar River with at least four bedrooms, 1,500 square feet of heated floor space and three off-street parking spaces.

It establishes new zoning regulations, a crime-free rental addendum and a temporary civilian work group to perfect a parking permit plan, launch a community watch and pursue revitalization funding.

But the key component the housing law lacks, Planning and Zoning Chairman Godfrey Bell said, is “stability,” which historical records show is the main reason the city in 1981 capped at three the number of unrelated people who can share a home.

“The homeowners of this area paid for ‘total enjoyment and quality of life’ when they purchased their home,” Bell, who will be absent from the 6:30 p.m. meeting due to a prior commitment, wrote to his fellow commissioners. “No one likes change, but when change is not necessary, it’s a horse of a different color.”

Bell urged the commission to not recommend the City Council change the language of city zoning laws to accommodate Joyner’s proposal.

The chairman argued such an action would make the Tar River neighborhood an unattractive area to live, raise a family or retire.
“Single-family homes result in stronger and safer neighborhoods,” Bell said. “There’s already enough adequate housing for ECU students with ample vacancies existing in student apartments.”

City staff has not taken a stance on the issue. Instead, they coached the commission to approve or reject the initiative based on the Horizons plan, Greenville’s blueprint for growth, which they said it meets.

More than 80 percent of local residents have opposed the largest overhaul to Tar River neighborhood’s housing laws since 2005, when large-scale rezoning in the area effectively eliminated both duplex conversion and new multi-family development in a historically single-family neighborhood.

Now, only 4 percent, or 6 acres, is zoned for commercial or office use, and the people and historians of the area, for the most part, want to keep it that way to ensure what is left of the area’s charm is not lost.

The proposed district includes 1,260 dwellings, with the total being split almost evenly between single-family homes and larger developments. A majority of the properties that make up the College View neighborhood, the city’s only locally designated historic district, are within the initiative’s path.

Twelve percent are owner-occupied, and 87.5 percent is rental property. The citywide owner occupancy rate is 38 percent, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Only 5 percent of housing stock is 50 years old or newer, reports state.

City staff said it seems “intuitive” that increased occupancy could increase code violations, but it is impossible to predict the actual effect.

In the last month, 10 new violations to city occupancy standards have been investigated, including a four-bedroom house owned by Joyner on East 14th Street that The Daily Reflector revealed was not in compliance.

Joyner declined comment but told a local radio talk-show host the property was zoned commercially and did not apply to residential housing laws. City attorney Dave Holec said the code applies to all property “regardless of zoning classification.”

City Code Enforcement reported no violation last week after finishing its investigation.

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Editorial: Hold 'three-unrelated' change
Tuesday, September 18, 2012

A proposal to allow more than three unrelated people to share a dwelling in the Tar River-university neighborhood faces its latest test before a public board tonight when the measure is considered by the Greenville Planning and Zoning board. Officials’ debate on the issue will be preceded by a hearing in which citizens can weigh in on the change.

While the planning board is likely to forward the measure to the City Council for its review, strong opposition from homeowners in affected neighborhoods, coupled with questions about the motivation behind the proposal, continue to cast doubt on the prudence of this decision. Residents should take every opportunity to wade into that debate, tonight and in ensuing hearings, to make certain that city policy accurately reflects the public will.

Since the installment of the new council following last year’s election, potential changes to the so-called “three-unrelated” rule have been a topic of intensifying discussion. Members voted to include it on the list of council initiatives during their annual planning meeting, that led to a proposal that would see the rule lifted and replaced with a permitting process in order to add a fourth tenant under certain circumstances.

The council voted 4-2 in August to change the rule, following weeks of soliciting public opinion on the subject. Though the responses were overwhelmingly against elimination of the rule, the council proceeded
undaunted, ignoring voices of dissent in the community. Councilman Max Joyner acted as the most prominent advocate for allowing additional renters, pushing his Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative that would significantly change the Tar River-university neighborhood.

This month it was discovered that Joyner had property on 14th Street that he rented to four unrelated people in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of that law. He has yet to provide sufficient explanation for this apparent infraction, and the absence of that information has called into question his motivation for aggressively advancing this proposal.

Changing the “three-unrelated” rule lacks significant support within the neighborhood most affected should the measure ultimately win approval. The public does not have a thorough understanding that resolves concerns over Councilman Joyner’s apparent conflict of interest in regard to this city code. Without those two critical elements addressed to sufficient satisfaction, the city’s planning and zoning board should look warily on this proposal, recognizing the significant impact that an incorrect decision could have for one of the city’s key residential districts.
ECU's lumberjack mentality
By Nathan Summers
Tuesday, September 18, 2012

In the aftermath of a big win at Southern Miss, the East Carolina football team is hearing a phrase that’s been known to produce some great football results in Greenville and numerous other football towns in America.

Keep chopping wood.

It’s how third-year ECU head coach Ruffin McNeill described his team’s comeback win in Hattiesburg, Miss., that made the Pirates 2-1 despite their usual unforgiving early schedule, and also how he described the plan for this weekend’s new test waiting at North Carolina.

“I was proud of the way they stayed the course, kept pounding, kept chopping wood,” McNeill said at Monday’s weekly press conference, referring to his team’s rousing 24-14 comeback victory after ECU trailed 7-3 at halftime.

The win, which propelled the Pirates to a 1-0 start in Conference USA play against a key East Division opponent, featured a bright start from sophomore quarterback Shane Carden, a defense that routinely gave ECU great field position and special teams that locked down return beast Tracy Lampley.

The Pirate defense enjoyed its most complete performance of the season.

“There were some defensive things that gave us some advantages,” McNeill said. “The 12 tackles for loss and five sacks and three turnovers, three
takeaways on defense, and count the two fourth down stops and that’s five. Whenever you stop somebody on fourth down and you get the ball back immediately, that’s a turnover in my mind.”

In a tough environment, Carden threw for 171 yards passing with a touchdown throw, a TD run and no interceptions.

Most of the Pirates’ offensive highlights, including Justin Hardy’s 55-yard touchdown reception, came in the second half.

“We started slow in the first half, but Shane did a good job of maintaining his composure on the sideline, and the entire team did and I was proud of that,” McNeill said. “In the second half we came out and did some things that helped us win the game, and made some plays and controlled the clock very well.”

The Pirates hope to carry their momentum to Chapel Hill, where UNC is reeling after a 39-34 loss at the hands of Louisville, the second consecutive loss for the Tar Heels and first-year head coach Larry Fedora.

“Larry’s had a tough couple of weeks, but he’s done a good job with them and he’s (still) getting his systems installed over there,” McNeill said of Fedora, the former Southern Miss coach whose team also lost to Wake Forest two weeks ago.

Special shutdown

The Pirates effectively erased Golden Eagles return specialist Lampley, who returned a kick 100 yards for a touchdown against Nebraska in his team’s season opener.

Against the Pirates, Lampley’s only return went 21 yards, and the other kicks and punts that came his way were covered well enough for him to signal fair catches on them. It capped a solid day for ECU’s special teams units, which also got big games from kicker Warren Harvey and punter Trent Tignor.

“I thought our special teams did a good job of being the glue that holds the entire group together,” McNeill said. “It’s the personality of our team and I like the way that group is developing. They did a good job in the return games and coverage games against one of the top returners in the country. I thought our specialists did a good job, Trent and Warren, of giving us great coverage and great placement kicks and exchange of field position.”

Injuries
The Pirates are remarkably healthy for the fourth week of the season, though McNeill confirmed that junior defensive end Justin Dixon will miss the rest of the campaign with his knee injury.

The offense has no significant injuries entering the UNC game week, though three other defenders remain on the disabled list.

Senior corner Jacobi Jenkins will miss his second consecutive week with a leg injury that kept him at home for the Southern Miss trip. McNeill said he expected it would be another week until Jenkins is back, but fellow senior corner Leonard Paulk will make his second return this season from an ongoing leg injury.

Also in the ECU secondary, senior and top reserve corner Kris Sykes (left knee) is questionable.

Senior nose tackle Michael Brooks (left knee) is probable to return for the first time since the opener against Appalachian State.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or 252-329-9595.
UNC-CH Chancellor Holden Thorp, during a Monday afternoon Sept. 17, 2012 interview in his office in Chapel Hill, NC speaks about his decision to resign his post at the end of the coming academic year effective June 30, 2013. The past two years have revealed athletics scandals and an academic fraud investigation as well as a UNC fundraising flap that have led to Thorp's decision to step down as Chancellor at UNC and return to teaching at the university.

Thorp: My resignation right for UNC-Chapel Hill

UNC-CH Chancellor says no one asked him to step down

By Jane Stancill - jstancill@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL—UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp, beleaguered by two years of athletics-related scandals, will resign the position at the end of the academic year and return to a role that he always loved: chemistry professor.

“I will always do what is best for this university,” he said, in making the announcement Monday morning to the surprise of the university community. “This wasn’t an easy decision personally. But when I thought about the
university and how important it’s been to me, to North Carolinians and to hundreds of thousands of alumni, my answer became clear.”

Thornton, 48, said no one asked him to resign. Over the weekend, he said, he thought of everything that had happened and decided that stepping aside would be best for the university and for his family.

“As you know it’s been a tough couple of years,” he said in an interview. “I’ve been through a lot of things I didn’t imagine I’d have to go through.”

Others tried to change his mind, including trustees and key faculty leaders who met late Monday to figure out a way to get him to stay.

Thornton was praised for steering the university ably through a budget crisis, boosting fundraising during a down economy and overseeing strides in student quality and research funding. Student applications were up 24 percent this year, and UNC-CH moved from 16th to ninth among research universities in federal research support.

He emphasized innovation and entrepreneurship in education, and made steps to improve town-gown relations with Chapel Hill.

But the chancellor, who rose through the faculty ranks to the top job at age 43, was consumed with what seemed like a constant stream of damaging revelations – improper benefits for football players, academic misconduct involving a tutor and academic fraud in the African and Afro-American Studies Department.

Along the way, he fired football coach Butch Davis, prompting anger from some boosters and howls from others who thought the action was too little, too late. This year, the NCAA punished the program with a postseason ban, the elimination of scholarships and the extension of UNC’s self-imposed probation to three years.

A shock to UNC-CH

The trouble demoralized and shocked UNC-CH fandom, who had long bragged of doing athletics the right way, “the Carolina way.”

Thornton repeatedly and earnestly pledged to get to the bottom of the problems and clean them up. But the bad news kept coming. The problems in the African studies department included dozens of no-show classes heavily enrolled by athletes, poorly supervised independent study courses and forged faculty signatures. An internal probe identified two people who were responsible – Professor Julius Nyang’oro, who was forced to resign, and a department manager who retired a few years ago.
The situation is still the subject of scrutiny from the State Bureau of Investigation, a panel of the UNC Board of Governors and an independent review led by former Gov. Jim Martin. Thorp himself called for the outside study.

Then last week, another embarrassment dominated the news. The university’s top fundraiser, Matt Kupec, resigned following the discovery of improper travel by him and Tami Hansbrough, another university fundraiser who is the mother of former UNC basketball star Tyler Hansbrough. The two fundraisers were in a romantic relationship, and the creation of Hansbrough’s job became an issue.

On Friday, Thorp explained the latest black eye to the UNC Board of Governors in a closed-door session. Members of the UNC system governing board publicly supported him, despite the ongoing controversy.

UNC President Tom Ross said Thorp notified him about his decision on Sunday afternoon.

“It’s been a hard time on him and on his family, so I understand why he has made the decision,” Ross said. “I’m disappointed because I think the potential that he brings to the job is great, and it’s always difficult for a university to go through a leadership change.”

Wade Hargrove, chairman of the UNC-CH trustees, said the university is complex and difficult to oversee under the best of circumstances.

“I think the chancellor has spent two years trying to get to the bottom of the problems and identify those responsible,” Hargrove said. “I believe he’s genuinely committed, sincerely committed, to finding the proper balance between athletics and academics.”

**UNC ‘needed a scapegoat’**

The reaction on campus was mixed, but many expressed sadness that the athletic mess had claimed a brilliant academic leader who struggled to manage it all.

Joe DeSimone, a chemistry professor and longtime colleague, said Thorp had made many advances but the turmoil had taken a toll on him.

“The need for strategic planning on this campus is past due,” DeSimone said. “The campus has been distracted for a long time, and the ability to do these things that are important has been tabled for awhile. I think it’s going to be really important for us to start plotting our path forward here.”

Some thought Thorp’s departure was inevitable.
“I don’t think any of the scandals were his fault, but the university needed a scapegoat,” said Veronica Koven-Matasy, a graduate student in library science. “I don’t think he had a choice but to resign.”

Jackson Sutton, 21, a senior from Winston-Salem, said many on campus were disappointed.

“Holden Thorp genuinely cares about people,” Sutton said. “I think he’s done a lot of good for this university. I guess that any time a scandal comes to a university, it’s the person at the top under fire.”

Raised in Fayetteville, Thorp spent most of his career at UNC-CH, as an undergraduate, a chemistry professor, a department chairman and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences before becoming chancellor in 2008. He got his start as an assistant professor at N.C. State University.

He will return to the faculty, where he holds a Kenan professorship, one the highest endowed chairs. As a professor, he developed technology for electronic DNA chips and founded spinoff companies.

“I’m excited about going back to chemistry,” Thorp said. “It’s where I spent most of my career. It’s going to be great.”

Popular with students, Thorp was known for his musical talent, whether playing piano at a fundraising event, jamming on electric guitar or cheering on a student band at Cat’s Cradle, a rock club in Carrboro. He relished his time with students. Last week, he led a candlelight vigil for Faith Hedgepeth, a student who was found dead in her apartment, the victim of a homicide.

**Changes to be made**

With nine months to go until his departure, Thorp said, there is time to enact about 70 recommendations to tighten procedures and oversight to prevent a recurrence of the problems. “This will be a better and stronger place,” he said.

But will he be at Kenan Stadium on Saturday, when the Tar Heels take on the East Carolina Pirates?

“ Heck, yeah,” he said. “I’m the chancellor.”

Dan Kane, Jeanna Smialek and Memet Walker contributed to this report.

Stancill: 919-829-4559
Holden Thorp

Born: Aug. 16, 1964, in Fayetteville

Education: Bachelor’s degree with highest honors in chemistry, UNC-Chapel Hill, 1986; doctorate in chemistry, California Institute of Technology, 1989; postdoctoral work, Yale University, 1989-1990.


Family: Married to Patti Worden Thorp. Two children.
Chancellor Thorp flew with former UNC fundraisers

Chancellor didn’t question the fundraisers’ trips

By J. Andrew Curliss - acurliss@newsobserver.com

UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp flew multiple times on private planes with former UNC fundraisers Matt Kupec and Tami Hansbrough, trips that university records show took place after Thorp stopped Kupec from hiring Hansbrough because the two were dating.

Thorp said Monday he didn’t question their travel at the time, even though Kupec, the chief fundraiser as vice chancellor for advancement, rarely flew with any of many other fundraisers at the university who had higher-ranking jobs than Hansbrough. Thorp said vice chancellors such as Kupec are in charge of their own travel.

The flights Thorp took with the couple weren’t the only red flag he missed in a controversy that led to resignations by Kupec and Hansbrough last week and contributed to Thorp’s resignation on Monday, effective at the end of the academic year.

Thorp has said he knew that Kupec and Hansbrough, the mother of former star player Tyler Hansbrough, were in a relationship since at least the fall of 2009. That knowledge, Thorp said, prompted him to quash efforts by Kupec in 2010 to create a fundraising position in Kupec’s office that seemed to be lined up for Hansbrough, who was then working for the dental school’s foundation.

Hansbrough eventually began work as a fundraiser in the university’s division of student affairs at a salary of $95,000. The News & Observer reported last week that the position’s creation was initiated by Kupec and that Kupec’s office also funded it. Hansbrough began that new job in February 2011 after working for the dental foundation from December 2008 to January 2011.

Thorp has said he was OK with the arrangement. It doesn’t appear that, until recently, he gave the matter any other oversight.

Flights on private planes

Records examined by The N&O show that Kupec and Hansbrough began traveling together aboard commercial and private planes in May 2010, while Hansbrough was still working for the dental foundation.
Their destinations would total at least 20 cities over two years.
Most of the flights taken by Kupec and Hansbrough together were on private planes operated by a university-affiliated entity called Medical Air Inc., now based at Raleigh-Durham International Airport. Before last year, the planes were based in Chapel Hill.

The primary mission of Medical Air is to ferry university doctors to rural parts of North Carolina to treat residents who cannot otherwise get high-quality medical care or to train doctors in those areas.

The planes are available on a limited basis for other state uses, including fundraising, athletics and for chancellors, according to Medical Air officials. They said medical flights take priority over others.

A review of Medical Air flight records indicates that Kupec traveled with Hansbrough more than anyone else, including Thorp or any of several fundraising officials who work with Kupec in the university’s advancement office.

The records also show that Kupec and Hansbrough flew on Medical Air planes at least three times to places where Hansbrough’s son, Ben, was playing basketball for Notre Dame. The university’s development office paid $5,220 to Medical Air Inc. for the use of the private planes for those trips, which were to Louisville, Ky.; New York; and Morgantown, W.Va.

The flight times correlated to the Notre Dame game schedule. For example, the two flew on a Medical Air plane to New York on Jan. 16, 2011, arriving at 10:22 a.m. Notre Dame played St. John’s University at Madison Square Garden that day at noon. The plane took off for Chapel Hill at 3:38 p.m., according to the flight manifest.

At least three other times, Kupec and Hansbrough took commercial flights that coincided with Notre Dame games, according to records and university officials.

**Help getting home**

Basketball flights weren’t the only ones the two took.

The records show that Kupec flew with Hansbrough to Kill Devil Hills; Charlotte; Greenville; Charlottesville, Va.; Asheville; Nashville, Tenn.; Wilmington; and Montana, among other places.

It is not clear why – other than their relationship – Kupec traveled with Hansbrough on all those trips instead of with other major gifts officers who work on the university’s advancement efforts.
According to the flight manifests, Kupec flew on Medical Air planes only one time each with the university’s director of major gifts or the director of corporate and foundation gifts. He flew with four other gifts staffers once each, according to the manifests. In all, the university lists about 40 staffers whose job is to help raise money.

The purpose of the trips Kupec took with Hansbrough isn’t clear, though some correlate to university gatherings that would be fundraising opportunities or appear to be related to a meeting with a possible donor.

The Montana trip is an example.

Kupec and Hansbrough flew to Montana on a roundtrip commercial flight on July 21 last year, a Thursday, with a return scheduled for July 25, a Monday. But something happened, and they wanted to change plans, according to an email message at the time. Kupec’s assistant wrote to Medical Air officials that week to request a private plane for part of the return trip home.

“Matt and Tami will be returning from a donor visit from Montana,” the assistant wrote. “There are some issues going on in the office so need to be back on Sunday. Flights are limited from Chicago to RDU.”

It was not clear whether it was Kupec’s office or Hansbrough’s office that had issues.

Based on that email message, a Medical Air plane went to Chicago on July 24 and brought the two back, arriving in Chapel Hill at 10 p.m. The university’s development office paid $4,059 for that trip, according to invoices and Medical Air Inc.

University officials have not provided detailed records or other information about any of the flights and billings, including reimbursement information or supporting material related to the purpose of the trip. They have cited an ongoing internal audit that is trying to determine whether any flights were inappropriate.

Kupec has declined to comment. The N&O has been unable to reach Hansbrough.

**NYC with the chancellor**

The Medical Air flight manifests show that Thorp was aboard planes with Kupec and Hansbrough in April, June and December of 2011 and then again in March 2012, which was the last time Kupec and Hansbrough were together on a Medical Air plane.
All their flights with Thorp were going to or coming from New York. On two flights, Thorp’s wife, Patti, joined them as the only other passenger on board the six-seat, propeller-driven planes.

Thorp said Monday in an interview that at the time, he had no reason to question the travel by Kupec with Hansbrough.

“The trips we went on were university business,” Thorp said.

Still, Thorp has acknowledged in several recent interviews that questions did crop up – two months after that last flight together.

In May, during a regular personnel review of Kupec, a review committee raised questions about Kupec’s relationship with Hansbrough and their travel, Thorp said.

“Matt had his five-year review this spring,” Thorp said, “and at the end of that, there were concerns raised about Matt’s travel and about whether it was appropriate and whether it was sort of personally driven or professionally driven.”

Thorp said he asked Kupec about it at the time of the review and Kupec told him the travel was for university business. Thorp said he did not take any other action at that time.

The N&O began seeking travel information related to Hansbrough in mid-August, but had been denied before appealing directly to Thorp.

Thorp said he asked a university lawyer “in recent weeks” to gather information about Kupec’s travel.

After he looked at it, Thorp said he concluded that some travel was personally driven and ordered the deeper review by an auditor. Kupec, a former Tar Heel quarterback whose university work had helped raise $4 billion, resigned.

Thorp was questioned about all this behind closed doors by the UNC system Board of Governors and by his boss, system president Tom Ross, late last week. The content of those discussions has not been publicly disclosed and officials issued statements with varying degrees of support.

Ross told reporters on Friday that Thorp acted decisively on the travel issue. Board of Governors chairman Peter Hans said that while Thorp has done well on some measures, he “needs to be successful in clearing up some lingering issues on campus.”

Staff writers Jane Stancill and Dan Kane contributed to this report.

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When it came to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, it seemed the chancellorship was almost Holden Thorp’s destiny. He’d been one of those people who demands the best of himself in whatever he does, whether it’s the most complicated research in chemistry or playing guitar and bass. He studied at the university, was tapped for a prestigious Kenan professorship at a young age and rose quickly as an administrator. Indeed, Thorp is now only 48 years old and has been chancellor of the Chapel Hill campus since 2008.

With his resignation (effective at the end of the school year) announced yesterday, Thorp hardly brings to an end what remains a viable career with potential for great achievement. He will be returning to the faculty. But his decision to step down does represent the turning of one page in the university’s recent troubled history.

Some problems Thorp inherited. He didn’t hire former football coach Butch Davis, who was the darling of athletics boosters because he showed signs of bringing the football program to national prominence. But as clouds gathered over Davis because of an agent-connected assistant coach and athletes receiving improper benefits and a tutor apparently helping too much with academic work, Thorp continued to stand by the coach – until the problems mushroomed into a scandal rooted in academic fraud.

Those difficulties have involved the African and Afro-American Studies department and special treatment for athletes, especially football players. Several investigations now are in progress and must continue regardless of Thorp’s status, as the university’s integrity is at stake.

But it may be that the recent resignations of two university fundraisers put Thorp in a position where he felt he had to resign. Now-former Vice Chancellor Matt Kupec tried to hire a woman with whom he was personally involved to work in his (fundraising) office, a clear conflict of interest which Thorp stepped in to stop. But then the woman, Tami Hansbrough, mother of former star basketball player Tyler Hansbrough, was hired as a fundraiser in another department, with money from Kupec’s budget. Thorp made a mistake when he signed off on that arrangement.
The UNC system’s Board of Governors and the campus Board of Trustees sounded support for the chancellor, but Thorp said in resigning that he always had done the best thing for the university and believed he was doing the right thing in leaving his job.

It was a gracious and honorable exit. And make no mistake: Holden Thorp’s tenure as chancellor has been troubled in some respects, but his service to the university has been, overall, exemplary. He believes in the university, its mission and its students, with whom he has seemed to connect.

That’s why it’s such a shame that his career arc has temporarily gone askew. As his last months as chancellor proceed, we trust Thorp will continue with his objectives of improving research and teaching and the overall experience for students. And we hope that he will indeed remain with the university as a scholar.

The circumstances that led Thorp to his resignation were not the result exclusively of decisions he made or didn’t make. Throughout these last months, Thorp has received much criticism, but no one has questioned his loyalty to the university or his intention to make sound decisions. And even now, no one should.
Like many university leaders, UNC's Thorp struggled with athletics scandals

By Dan Kane - dkane@newsobserver.com

Fourteen months ago, UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp drew derision from sports fans but high praise from academics for firing popular football coach Butch Davis after an NCAA investigation found agents offering perks to players and a tutor fixing up their papers.

Thorp’s explanation was simple: Academics come first at one of the nation’s top public universities, and the issues raised by the investigation had become too big a distraction for that mission.

But the athletics-related distractions didn’t end. An academic fraud scandal and, last week, a travel scandal, emerged that raised much deeper questions about how beholden UNC-CH had become to big-time college sports.

Like many university chancellors and presidents around the country, Thorp struggled to balance the competing demands of academics with a major
athletics program. Monday, he announced he would resign at the end of the school year and return to teaching as a chemistry professor.

Thorp did not expressly state why he was stepping down, but his prepared statement suggested that he thought he had become the distraction.

“I will always do what is best for this university,” Thorp said. “This wasn’t an easy decision personally. But when I thought about the university and how important it’s been to me, to North Carolinians and to hundreds of thousands of alumni, my answer became clear.”

An uphill battle

Big-time college athletics have long been a minefield for university administrators. They often find themselves at the mercy of highly paid coaches under intense pressure to recruit top players – who may struggle academically – and wealthy boosters who want successful teams.

“As I’ve told many chancellors, you are going to live by the sword and you are going to die by the sword with athletics,” said David Ridpath, an Ohio University professor who has testified before Congress about NCAA enforcement issues.

A 2009 Knight Commission survey of university presidents and chancellors found many of them feel powerless to stop or slow the financial arms race in athletic departments that has often brought scandal.

“(P)residents would like serious change but do not see themselves as the force for the changes needed,” the report said.

Thorp has announced dozens of changes in the wake of the various scandals, but his administration has had difficulty getting to the bottom of what went wrong. It also at times has been reluctant to release information related to the incidents. Thorp and the university were sued by a coalition of media groups, including The News & Observer, about UNC’s unwillingness to release some documents; the matter is still in court.

Last week, the executive director of the Dental Foundation of North Carolina declined to make public a report that details some of the travel spending that Tami Hansbrough, the mother of former basketball star Tyler Hansbrough, did while working there. He said the foundation did not have to produce the report because it is a nonprofit and not a governmental entity, and therefore not covered by the state’s public records law. The foundation raises money for UNC-Chapel Hill’s School of Dentistry.

An infamous tweet
The university’s problems began in May 2010 with a tweet by a former star football player, Marvin Austin. The tweet mirrored a rap lyric about partying, but the ensuing NCAA investigation found he had been doing just that – on a sports agent’s tab.

The yearlong investigation caused Austin and six other players to be kicked off the football team, while several others served suspensions. The NCAA hit the university with a one-year bowl ban and a loss of scholarships.

Davis’ firing, along with the early retirement of former athletic director Dick Baddour, seemed to indicate the university’s athletics issues were behind it.

But rival N.C. State fans discovered that one of the papers that contained improper help from the tutor also had several passages plagiarized from other sources. The professor listed on the paper, Julius Nyang’oro, hadn’t discovered the plagiarism.

On Aug. 21, 2011, less than a month after Davis’ firing, the N&O published a partial transcript of Austin’s grades. It showed that in the summer before he entered Carolina as a full-time freshman he had taken an upper level African studies class from Nyang’oro, who was the longtime chairman of the African and Afro-American Studies department. Austin received a B-plus in the class, despite needing to take remedial writing in the fall semester.

The N&O began asking UNC officials about classes in the department that never met, but in which a paper was required to be written. Within two weeks, the university had received Nyang’oro’s resignation as chairman of the African studies department, and announced an internal investigation into academic irregularities there.

In May, the university released a report that found 54 such classes over a four-year period, with all but nine of them tied to Nyang’oro. The instructors identified with the other nine had said they did not teach the classes, and added that it appeared their signatures had been forged on course records.

University officials insisted the academic fraud was not an NCAA issue, however, because nonathletes had also been enrolled in the classes and had been treated equally. But records later released to the N&O showed athletes made up nearly two-thirds of the enrollments, with football players alone making up more than a third.

The records also showed the scandal had reached UNC’s storied basketball team, with 23 enrollments in the no-show classes. Two classes each showed only a single basketball player enrolled. Another class Nyang’oro had
launched in the summer of 2011 – filled with nothing but football players – prompted an SBI investigation.

**Peppers transcript emerges**

Last month, the N&O found evidence suggesting the no-show classes could go as far back as a dozen years. A transcript the N&O discovered on a UNC website was later identified by N.C. State fans as that of former two-sport star Julius Peppers, who left UNC-CH after the 2001 football season to become one of the NFL’s top defensive stars. The transcript showed that Peppers would not have been eligible to play if not for the grades of B or better he received in classes that in later years had been identified as suspect in the internal investigation.

That revelation triggered more heat for Thorp, who later announced still another investigation, led by former Gov. Jim Martin, to try to determine how far back the no-show classes had been held. He is supposed to report back to the university next month.

Despite the mounting evidence that athletic eligibility was driving the academic fraud, NCAA officials allowed the university to announce on Aug. 31 that there continued to be no NCAA violations.

Roughly a week prior to that announcement, Thorp had no comment on whether the academic fraud constituted an NCAA violation.

Seven days after the NCAA announcement, the N&O contacted Thorp again to ask about allegations of improper travel by Tami Hansbrough and Matt Kupec, the vice chancellor for university advancement. Hansbrough had been hired as a fundraiser for the university during her son’s senior year.

Thorp said nothing about the allegations, but promised to call back the following week.

That was a week ago Monday, when he contacted the N&O and said Kupec had resigned and Hansbrough was on administrative leave after Thorp found evidence of personal travel at the university’s expense. Records later showed several trips to cities where Tyler Hansbrough, now a player for the Indiana Pacers of the NBA, and Ben Hansbrough, a star for the University of Notre Dame, were playing basketball games.

That brought Thorp before the UNC Board of Governors for a closed-door meeting Friday. But no one on that board or UNC-CH’s board of trustees called for Thorp’s resignation.
Art Padilla, a former UNC system vice president who has written a book about university management, said athletics often overwhelm chancellors and take away needed time for academic and budgetary issues.

He did find one possible cause for optimism in Thorp’s announcement. Thorp will remain in the job until next summer, and if he’s sincere in getting to the bottom of the problems and cleaning them up, he no longer has to worry about those who might stand in the way, Padilla said.

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Bomb Threat Empties a Fourth Campus

By CAMPBELL ROBERTSON and MANNY FERNANDEZ

Thousands of people were evacuated from the campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge on Monday after a bomb threat, the fourth such evacuation on a college campus in four days.

The threat to L.S.U. was called in to the 911 dispatcher for East Baton Rouge Parish at 10:32 a.m., and the campus was evacuated within an hour, said Herb Vincent, a spokesman for the university.

“No specifics given, but we deemed it necessary to evacuate,” Mr. Vincent said, adding that although the school has 29,000 students enrolled, it was difficult to say how many were on campus.

The authorities were still searching buildings late Monday but were allowing people into residential buildings and dining facilities, which had been cleared.

On Friday, bomb threats were called in to three other colleges around the country, including the University of Texas, Austin. In all three cases, campuswide evacuations were ordered and police officers conducted sweeps. Students and faculty and staff members returned hours later.

The F.B.I. is investigating whether the threats are related, a bureau spokesman in Washington said.

The threats on Friday began at 8:35 a.m. Central time, when a man with a Middle Eastern accent called the visitors’ line at the University of Texas, said Rhonda Weldon, the director of communications for university operations. “He says that he’s with Al Qaeda, and he says that bombs are going to go off in 90 minutes,” she said.

Roughly 50,000 to 70,000 people in 165 buildings north of downtown Austin fled the university.

The university has been criticized for delaying notifying students about the threat. Many students were instructed to evacuate in a campuswide text message sent at 9:48 a.m., more than an hour after the call. The university then posted an emergency alert on its Web site at 9:53 a.m. calling for an evacuation.
University officials defended the timing, saying they needed to evaluate the threat. “I think there has to be a lot of thought and careful evaluation before you make a decision to empty 165 buildings and put 75,000 people outside,” Ms. Weldon said.

At 9 a.m. Central time on Friday, a bomb threat was called in to North Dakota State University, a school of about 14,000 students in Fargo, and an evacuation followed within the hour.

That afternoon, shortly after 4 p.m. Eastern time, a bomb threat was sent by e-mail to various departments at Hiram College, a liberal arts institution about 40 miles southeast of Cleveland. The campus there was mostly evacuated by 5 p.m., affecting around 1,100 people.

In each of those cases, people were allowed to return after about five or seven hours.

While those threats have garnered the most attention, there have been others in areas near those colleges, the police say.

A bomb threat was called into the Fargo’s international airport last Tuesday, to the airport in nearby Grand Forks on Wednesday and to a hotel in downtown Fargo on Saturday.

On Sunday, a student at the University of Texas, Brownsville, was arrested after he called a national veteran’s crisis hot line and threatened to detonate a bomb on campus, university officials said. He had said that he was a Marine veteran in the process of converting to Islam, said the campus police chief, John Cardoza, and had been offended that a fellow student had made a derogatory comment about Islam.