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First Lady Michelle Obama speaks to a crowd of over 6000 at Minges Coliseum on the East Carolina University campus Wednesday night during a campaign rally for President Barack Obama.

**Obama: Every vote will count**
By Ginger Livingston
Thursday, September 20, 2012

First lady Michelle Obama electrified a crowd of 6,000 supporters on Wednesday with the message that every vote will count on Nov. 6.

Obama urged the audience in a 30-minute speech at Minges Coliseum to get family and friends to vote and to visit gottavote.com to register. Her visit was part of a campaign swing through Greenville and Durham.

“This election will be even closer than the last one. It could all come down to what happens in a few key battleground states like North Carolina,” Obama said.

President Barack Obama won North Carolina by 14,000 votes in 2008. While it sounds like a lot, she said, it actually broke down to five votes per precinct.

“That could mean just one vote in your neighborhood, one vote in your apartment building or one vote in your dormitory,” she said. “If there is anyone here thinking their vote might not matter, thinking that ordinary folks can’t make a difference, think about those five votes.”
Obama surprised the audience by starting her speech 15 minutes before scheduled start time. She often was drowned out by the cheers of “We love you Michelle.”

Nearly 15 minutes after she ended her remarks, she continued shaking hands and taking pictures.

Before discussing the election, the first lady appealed to the crowd’s Pirate pride.

“I was told if I said something I would get a response,” she said. “Purple!”

The crowd roared, “Gold!”

Then she talked about her early romance with the president.

“He was handsome, charming, talented and oh so smart,” she said. “But ladies, that’s not why I married him. So fellas listen up, what truly made me fall in love with Barack Obama was his character.”

Her husband turned down high-paying jobs because he was committed to community development, giving people the environment and skills needed to pursue a better life and jobs, she said.

That commitment stemmed from the years he watched his mother pursue her education while supporting her two children, watching his grandmother take the bus to her job and get passed over for promotions because she was a woman, Obama said.

Obama said her parents were hard-working and that both families believed the American dream that hard work would lead to success.

“They also believed that when you have worked hard and done well and you’ve walked through that doorway of opportunity, you don’t slam it shut,” she said.

“We learned that no one gets where they are on their own,” she said. “They have a community supporting them. ... We are all part of something bigger than ourselves.”

She said accomplishments of her husband’s presidency began while the country was in its greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression.

“We still have a long way to go to build our economy, but we have had 30 straight months of private job growth. We have 4.6 million in new jobs.” she said.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, senior citizens are paying hundreds less in prescription drugs, young adults have continued access to health insurance
through their parents’ policies, and people can longer long be denied coverage because of pre-existing conditions, she said.
The president also worked to lower interest rates on student loans and expand Pell Grants, she said, earning cheers from the audience.
Obama asked the audience to give the campaign a few hours to make telephone calls, knock on doors and to have simple conversations about why they believe the president should return to office.
She said when people ask what he has done, remind them about health care reform, improved college affordability, the end of the war in Iraq and the death of Osama bin Laden.
“Tell them how our brave men and women in uniform will never have to lie about how they served,” she said. “Tell them Barack Obama knows the American dream because he has lived it, and he is fighting everyday so everyone in this country can still have that same opportunity.”
The speech drew warm reviews from the audience.
Julia Hurley, an ECU sophomore from Michigan, said Obama reiterated some of the points made at the Democratic National Convention.
“She spoke beautifully, and it helped to refocus everybody,” she said.
“Thoughtful and amazing” is how Alex Sanchez of Winterville described her comments. “... It doesn’t matter if you’re Republican or Independent, they want to help you anyway ... that’s a great leader.”
ECU sophomore Shanekia Blackshear of Fayetteville got close enough to touch Obama’s arm.
“It was a great blessing to have the opportunity to be here and to be on the floor,” she said.
Vietnam veteran Joseph Randolph of Greenville said he appreciates what the Obamas are doing for veterans and those still serving in the military.
“I had to come out here and just breathe the same air she breathes,” he said. “We’re going forward.”

Cherie Speller contributed to this report. Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or 252-329-9570.
Supporters energized by campaign stop
By Ginger Livingston
Thursday, September 20, 2012

A campaign appearance by Michelle Obama in Greenville energized supporters who want to re-elect her president husband and want four more years for her as first lady.

Thousands filled Minges Coliseum for Obama’s visit on Wednesday, many waiting in line for hours to get a good seat.

“It’s been a blast,” Rogerline White of Raleigh said. “I can feel the energy here, and President Obama will be president for four more years.”

Moses Bond of Colerain and Mary Arrington of Nashville were among the first people in line, arriving just before 10 a.m.

“I want to get a good spot and get close to the first lady, Michelle Obama, who will continue to be the first lady for the next four years,” Bond said.

Arrington and a number of the people in line with her said Mrs. Obama’s intelligence, grace and charisma would make her an ideal president, too.

“She cares about all Americans, not just the 47 percent,” Bond said.
Some people in line criticized statements in a video that surfaced of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney at a fundraiser. Romney said Obama supporters were dependent on the government and did not pay taxes.

“We don’t consider ourselves privileged or mooching off the government,” Gloria Goodwin of Jacksonville said. “We pay taxes.”

Goodwin is a patient representative and a cancer survivor.

It makes her angry that so many people criticize the president for the Affordable Care Act. It’s passage will ensure Americans will has access to the care they’ll need to battle illnesses such as cancer, she said.

Matt Paske, East Carolina University Student Government Association vice president, welcomed the crowd as many were continuing to file into Minges. He urged students continue the support young adults gave to Obama in 2008.

“We have a president whose job is not done,” Paske said. “We need you in North Carolina to stand up.”

Retired Marine 1st Sgt. Ben Ruffin of Greenville said he suffers from back, knee and ankle problems and uses a cane to walk, but he didn’t mind standing nearly three hours before entering Williams Arena. He also did not like Romney’s comments.

“It’s a very sensitive issue. Everyone is hurting financially,” Ruffin said. “For someone who sent so many jobs to China (which Romney is accused of doing while working for Bain Capital) to be commenting on that. If he doesn’t want unemployment (Romney) should bring those jobs back to the U.S.”

Adrian and Joyce Shepard and two friends drove from Wilmington for the event. They are active in the Obama re-election campaign in New Hanover County.

“I have a tremendous appreciation for the first lady, and I think it’s a privilege to hear her speak,” Adrian Shepard said.

James Lovett said he has voted in previous elections, but this the first election he has followed closely. He was impressed by the first lady’s speech during the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte earlier this month.

“She really motivated the crowd, and I want to partake in that,” Lovett said.
Mark Whedon, an ECU senior from Raleigh, said he still is unsure who he will support in November. This is his first presidential election, and he is concerned about finding a job when he graduates.

“I want to hear what she has to say about jobs,” he said. “I think you can find a simple job, but I think it will be difficult to find a job in my field (economics).”

The 2012 presidential election is the first one in which Johnny Signorelli of Winfall will vote.

While still undecided, the ECU senior education major said he was excited to hear Obama.

“Education is important for me. My major is health education, and I think that she is active in fighting childhood obesity because it is something I am interested in,” Signorelli said.

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Michelle Obama's road-tested in NC

By Rob Christensen - rchristensen@newsobserver.com

DURHAM—When First Lady Michelle Obama takes the podium, she is many things – character witness for her husband, defender of the anemic economic recovery, and exhorter-in-chief for the Democratic faithful.

Which is why Michelle Obama has become one of the most traveled political spouses in recent memory. Her campaign stops Wednesday at N.C. Central University in Durham and East Carolina University in Greenville were part of her 11th visit to North Carolina since 2009, according to the campaign.

There is little mystery why.

While North Carolinians are very divided about the president and his nearly four-year tenure in office, there is much broader support for his wife. A recent survey by Public Policy Polling, a Democratic-leaning firm based in Raleigh, found that she had a 55 percent favorable rating and a 37 percent unfavorable rating.

“She is his most effective surrogate along with former President Clinton,” pollster Tom Jensen said. “She is very popular with independents. She can help (President Barack Obama) with women voters.”
The Republican ticket also has begun using Ann Romney as a way to humanize GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney. Although she has made only two campaign visits to the state, the GOP ticket has begun using her in satellite interviews with Tar Heel TV stations.

Last week, Ann Romney gave interviews to WCNC in Charlotte and WFMY in Greensboro, and on Tuesday she gave an interview to NBC-17 in Raleigh. Ann Romney is also well thought of, with a 53 percent favorable rating and a 29 percent unfavorable rating, according to Public Policy Polling.

“In both cases, the wives are more popular than their husbands,” Jensen said.

Michelle Obama is hardly the first political spouse to hit the hustings in North Carolina. During the 2008 Democratic presidential primary here, Bill Clinton campaigned so extensively for his wife, Hillary, that the Obama campaign joked that former president seemed to be running “for mayor of small-town North Carolina.” Elizabeth Dole campaigned several times in her native Tar Heel state for her husband Bob Dole in 1996.

But except for the singular case of Bill Clinton, it seems unlikely that any presidential spouse has spent so much time in North Carolina. (President Obama has visited the state 12 times since 2009, according to the campaign, more times than his wife.)

One reason why Michelle Obama has spent so much time in the state is because she has adopted as one of her issues the improvement of care for military families – a powerful issue in a state laden with military bases, said Kerry Haynie, a Duke University political science professor. It is an issue, Haynie said, that goes beyond narrow partisan political appeal.

She also has an ability to talk about her husband and about national issues, Haynie said, in a way that does not seem overtly political.

In her talk to 3,100 people Wednesday at NCCU’s McClendon-McDougald Gymnasium, Michelle Obama did not once mention Mitt Romney.

Her criticisms are oblique. She tells the audience that the country must continue moving forward under the policies of the past three and half years. “We have to step back and ask ourselves,” she said, “are we going to turn around and go back to the same policies that got us into the hole in the first place?”

“Nooo,” responds the audience.

“Are we going to just sit back and watch everything we’ve worked for and fought for to just slip away?” Obama asks.

“Nooo,” the audience responds again.
The first lady later spoke to 6,000 people at ECU.
Despite her overall popularity, views on Michelle Obama are mixed. A focus group held in August in Raleigh of Walmart moms found several people who felt the first lady spent too much money on vacations, or too much on clothing, or considered her push for better nutrition as intrusive.
But that was not the view Wednesday at the rally in Durham.
Her swing through North Carolina on Wednesday was designed to encourage get-out-the vote efforts. She noted that President Obama defeated John McCain by only 14,000 votes in 2008 in North Carolina, or by an average of five votes per precinct.
“If we win enough precincts, we will win this state,” Obama said. “And if Barack wins North Carolina, we will be well on our way to putting Barack back in the White House for four more years. Think about that – five votes.”
Gail Jennings, 61, a retired TV production manager from Durham, was among those impressed that Michelle Obama has devoted herself to veterans issues. Jennings said she had a number of veterans in her family, and providing quality care for veterans was important to her.
“I felt good that Laura Bush dealt with literacy,” Jennings said. “But I feel really good that Michelle Obama has taken up veterans issues.”
Martina Blackwell, 28, an NCCU student from Burlington, said Michelle Obama is able to talk about woman’s issues – and vouches for her husband.
“When it comes to understanding the lives of women – ladies right?” Michelle Obama says, “when it comes to standing up for our rights and our opportunities, we know that my husband will always have our backs.”
There is also a matter of race.
Angelique Stallings, 37, an entrepreneur from Durham, said when she looks at Michelle Obama, she sees someone with whom she can connect: a professional woman, a mother, and an African-American.
“I can see myself in her,” Stallings said. “She’s educated. She’s down-to-earth. I love it that when I look at her I see an African-American woman. And that has never happened before in the White House.”
Researcher Teresa Leonard contributed to this story.
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ECU student paper names new adviser

BY KATHERINE AYERS
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University has hired Seth Effron as interim adviser for The East Carolinian student newspaper.

Effron replaces Frank Barrows, who left July 26 to be closer to his family in Charlotte. Burrows had replaced Paul Isom, who was fired as the newspaper’s adviser in January after the paper published a photo last November of a streaker who ran across ECU’s football field during a halftime program honoring the military.

Effron works as the communications director for the N.C. Energy Office, but he said he was able reduce his hours there to take the position at ECU. In a phone interview, Effron said he commutes from Raleigh on Mondays and Wednesdays for production, but also is available at other times when needed.

Before joining the energy office, Effron was a speech writer and press aide to Gov. Beverly Perdue, executive editor of State Government Radio, and worked at the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, where he spent part of his time advising undergraduates on journalism issues.

Chris Stansbury, ECU’s executive director for student affairs marketing and communications, said the university was hoping to have a full-time adviser in place by the start of the fall semester, but when the search committee realized that was not going to happen, it began to look for another interim adviser.

The search for a permanent newspaper adviser is ongoing.
Clayton McCullough, front, led the Vancouver Canadiens to the Northwest League championship earlier this month. (Vancouver Canadiens photo)

**McCullough has 'special summer'**

By Ronnie Woodward  
Thursday, September 20, 2012

Clayton McCullough and his clan of “low-maintenance” baseball players recently completed a summer to remember.

McCullough, a former East Carolina baseball player who has found quick success as minor league manager, managed the Vancouver Canadians to a Northwest League championship earlier this month. The Canadiens, a short-season Single-A affiliate of the Toronto Blue Jays, clinched the title on Sept. 9, about a week after McCullough was named the league’s Manager of the Year.

McCullough said his players’ approach to the game was a big reason why the Canadians were crowned champions for the second straight season.

“Those guys were pretty easy (to manage),” said McCullough, who played at ECU from 2000-02 and played three seasons in the minors before taking his first pro gig as the hitting coach for the Pulaski (Va.) Blue Jays in ’06. “They came to play and that’s what they were about. It really made for a special summer.”
The location of the team also made it special for McCullough. The J.H. Rose graduate had managed teams in Florida and Michigan, but this was his first extensive stay north of the border.

“I had visited Toronto a few times, but this was my first time as a lengthy stay and Vancouver was a great city,” McCullough said. “The people there were very friendly with us, the baseball front office was great and it was such a neat city to work in for three months. All in all, it was a terrific time.”

McCullough’s ECU highlights include helping the Pirates win their first-ever Conference USA tournament championship in 2002, his senior season. ECU made the NCAA tournament in all three of McCullough’s campaigns.

McCullough just completed his sixth season as a manager and four of his last five clubs made playoff appearances. In addition to being named Northwest League Manager of the Year, he was the Florida State League Manager of the Year in 2011.

In his first season as a manager back in 2007, McCullough managed against Atlanta Braves standouts Jason Heyward and Freddie Freeman when they were young prospects. In 2011, he was in the dugout opposite New York Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez when Rodriguez was on a injury rehab stint.

With minor league rosters being so fluid because of such situations, McCullough said there’s no one recipe for success. He said his goal is to create a winning environment.

“(Player) development is the No. 1 thing, but throughout our entire organization we preach to have these guys win because we feel like that’s when guys develop quicker,” said McCullough, who should find out his next assignment from the Blue Jays in the coming months. “That was a big focus for us — put your ego aside, show up for work, get better and let’s see how many games we can win.”

Contact Ronnie Woodward at rwoodward@reflector.com, 252-329-9592 or follow @RonnieW11 on Twitter.
Holden Thorp spent two of his four years as chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill investigating scandals involving the athletics department and answering questions about academic integrity at the state’s flagship school. Ultimately, that task was overwhelming, leading to his decision to resign that position, effective at the end of the spring semester.

The UNC faculty, which still considered Thorp one of their own, begged him to stay at a meeting on Wednesday, but Thorp’s decision is what’s best for the school, the system and the state. That university sets the tone for higher education in North Carolina and, though many of the chancellor’s initiatives were thoughtful and well intentioned, Thorp’s resignation provides the clean slate needed at this critical time.

East Carolina University will renew acquaintances with UNC-Chapel Hill this weekend when the two schools face off on the football field. The Pirate faithful relish every opportunity to knock the Tar Heels down a peg, with many longtime fans quick to recount the slights both real and perceived delivered at the hands of their in-state foe. They see games like Saturday’s as a chance to deliver a deserved comeuppance.

East Carolina fans might therefore delight in the trouble endured by the UNC football program, which lost scholarships and postseason eligibility due to players accepting improper benefits and academic assistance while Butch Davis was the Tar Heel coach. Setbacks to an athletic department are commonplace in major college sports these days, and it can be satisfying to see a rival penalized.

That said, no Pirate fan should be pleased to see their UNC counterparts suffer through the academic scandal still under investigation. Allegations of fraud in the African and Afro-American Studies Department are serious and undermine confidence in the university. And since UNC is the flagship on the university system, it operates under greater scrutiny and with greater responsibility since its actions reflect on other member institutions.

Thorp contends his resignation will afford him the opportunity to install needed reforms and put the school back on track. He must be successful in those efforts, and there is ample reason to believe he will be. Much of his
time as chancellor will be remembered fondly, since he managed UNC deftly in difficult financial times, but the scandal will almost certainly overshadow that work.

The university needs a clean slate and all of North Carolina should be hopeful that Thorp’s resignation provides it.
UNC Chancellor Holden Thorp addresses an emergency faculty meeting Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2012, at the FedEx Global Education Center in Chapel Hill, N.C. After Thorp's remarks, the faculty adopted a resolution calling for the chancellor not to resign, and for UNC system President Tom Ross to not accept Thorp's resignation.

**UNC-CH trustees ask Holden Thorp to stay**

By Jane Stancill - jstancill@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL In a unanimous vote Wednesday, the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees asked Holden Thorp to remain in the chancellor’s job, saying, “we think it is in the best interest of the university.”

Trustees passed a resolution saying that “Carolina is better today because of him” and “emphatically requests that Chancellor Thorp reconsider his decision” to resign in June.

The resolution came during a conference call meeting in what has been a tumultuous week at the university. The board also approved the hiring of an interim chief fundraiser to replace Matt Kupec, the former vice chancellor for advancement who resigned last week because of improper travel. It was that controversy that may have been the last straw for Thorp.

With its action Wednesday, the board became the latest group on campus to implore Thorp to stay on as chancellor. Others include the executive branch of student government, three faculty groups and the Employee Forum, which represents thousands of staff at the university.
But it’s unclear whether the trustee action will make Thorp change his mind. Trustee Chairman Wade Hargrove seemed to indicate the chances are slim, when he said the board will begin to discuss the search for a new chancellor at its regularly scheduled meetings next week.

Thorp was on the trustee conference call Wednesday, but he left the phone meeting before the resolution came up. His staff said he was traveling. He could not be reached for comment.

On Tuesday, when more than 200 faculty gathered for a similar resolution, Thorp told them he appreciated their support, but that he is ready to return to the life of a chemistry professor.

The chancellor on Monday announced his intention to step down in June, leaving behind the turmoil that has engulfed him in the past two years as several athletic-related scandals unfolded.

**Travel scandal**

The latest was last week, when Kupec resigned because of what Thorp called “personally driven” travel with Tami Hansbrough, a fellow fundraiser who is the mother of former UNC basketball star Tyler Hansbrough. The two fundraisers were dating, and their travel sometimes included destinations where Ben Hansbrough, Tyler’s brother, was playing for Notre Dame.

The couple traveled to at least 20 cities over two years, according to records reviewed by The News & Observer. Thorp flew on university planes with Kupec and Hansbrough on several occasions to New York; Thorp said this week those trips were for university business.

Kupec, who helped raise $4 billion during his Carolina career, resigned when confronted about the travel by Thorp, who ordered an internal audit.

On Wednesday, the university’s auditor and attorney were present at the trustee meeting, where the board met in closed session for a little more than an hour to discuss personnel matters.

**A sincere expression**

Hargrove declined to talk about what happened in closed session.

The resolution for Thorp, he said, was a sincere expression of the sentiment of the board. “It’s our hope that he’ll reconsider,” Hargrove said. “There’s much work to be done.”
Thorp had launched a wide-ranging strategic planning process with the board about how education should be delivered, what should be taught and how it should be paid for at the 21st-century university.

“All of that was initiated at the urging of the chancellor,” Hargrove said. “His leadership in terms of advancing the core academic mission of the university has been overshadowed by the unfortunate incidents that happened on his watch but were not of his making.”

Hargrove said bringing in a new chancellor will undoubtedly slow down the university’s progress on creating a long-term vision. As for the search, Hargrove said, “I haven’t even begun to think about that yet.”

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hlynch@newsobserver.com / Plaintiff Maria Isabel Prudencio-Arias, a UNC-Chapel Hill housekeeper, stands by as Spanish defense interpreter Maria Palmer and defense attorney Al McSurely prepare her papers Wednesday Sept. 19, 2012. Prudencio-Arias has a sex harassment case against UNC-CH. The case is being heard this week in the Moot Courtroom in the UNC-CH School of Law.

**UNC official testifies she knew nothing about sexual harassment complaints**

By Tammy Grubb - tgrubb@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL—A top UNC-Chapel Hill official testified Wednesday she wasn’t aware of sexual harassment complaints against a housekeeping supervisor when his accuser was transferred to another part of campus.

Vice Chancellor for Campus Services Carolyn Elfland said she also didn’t know about the allegations when the university hired PRM Consultants to review the housekeeping department in March 2011. That review found about two-thirds of housekeepers believe management does not promote an environment free of harassment, attorney Al McSurely said.

Elfland testified about the university’s handling of harassment claims Wednesday in the Moot Courtroom at the UNC-CH School of Law.
The first harassment claim was made by Maria Isabel Prudencio-Arias, who says the university mishandled her 2010 sexual harassment case against her former supervisor, Bill Burston. She said Burston, the former director of Housekeeping Services, retaliated against her for speaking out, but a formal investigation could not confirm that.

While the claim was investigated, Burston was placed on leave but continued to make his roughly $85,000 salary, Elfland said. She transferred him after the investigation because the administration thought reinstating him during the PRM survey period “might have a chilling effect on people willing to speak out,” she said.

Burston later resigned.

McSurely, Prudencio-Arias’ attorney, said Burston made her the target of his unwanted sexual attention multiple times and ignored the work restrictions her doctor ordered at the time because of a fall at work that had hurt her back and hands.

Elfland testified that Prudencio-Arias was transferred to the Kenan Charitable Trust to lighten her workload. However, Kenan Trust officials complained about her performance, Elfland said, and she also found issues with Prudencio-Arias’ work at the School of Government.

The only other option was to move her where she could work with others on the Hinton James residential crew, she said, but that crew also had a heavier workload.

At the time that Burston and his supervisor, Facilities Services Director Van Dobson, decided to transfer Prudencio-Arias again, Elfland said, she did not know about her complaints.

Dobson left the university in December 2011.

McSurely told Elfland that employees with the School of Government donated 344 hours of their own sick time to Prudencio-Arias after she tried to kill herself because of what was happening to her and had used up her vacation time.

“I don’t know who donated to her or how they felt about her,” Elfland said.

McSurely also asked how Prudencio-Arias’ harassment claim was handled.

University attorney Katherine Murphy contends the N.C. Whistleblower Protection Act, which protects workers who file complaints against their employers, does not apply in this case because the complaint wasn’t filed with the university’s Office of Human Resources.
A UNC-CH employee reporting harassment can request an administrative review or file a grievance.

Prudencio-Arias is seeking damages for emotional distress. The case continues at 9 a.m. Thursday.

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Penn State: Process in Works to Settle Lawsuits

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) — Penn State is developing a process for settling civil lawsuits filed against the university by people who claim they were sexually abused by former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky, university president Rodney Erickson said Wednesday.

Erickson said after a student forum the university wants to develop a process "fair to everyone and much so (that) the victims are dealt with in a just manner." He said the university hopes to release details soon.

Any settlements won't be paid with money coming from tuition, state appropriations or private donations but will come from other internal sources including insurance funds, Penn State has said.

Sandusky, an assistant under coach Joe Paterno, was convicted in June of sexually abusing 10 boys, some on campus. He's jailed awaiting sentencing and maintains his innocence, acknowledging he showered with boys but denying he molested them.

Erickson had said the night Sandusky was convicted that the university planned to contact the lawyers for the victims and invite them to participate in a program to "facilitate the resolution" of claims against it.

Lawyers for Sandusky's accusers and other potential claimants said last week they had very limited contact with the university and, if that continues, more lawsuits may follow the four now under way.

Penn State Board of Trustees chairwoman Karen Peetz said last week the trustees "don't want to put these victims, who have been through so much already, through anything more in terms of what we need to do to get it resolved."

Ten months after Sandusky's arrest, the massive scandal and its aftermath remain a sensitive topic.

About 60 students attended a forum Wednesday organized by student leaders, the third in a series of town hall-style events to interact with Erickson and other administrators. The forum was broadcast on a state
public cable network, and questions were submitted by email from other Penn State campuses throughout the state.

Most of the roughly 20 questions asked, including those from the audience in a student union auditorium, were related to the scandal. Interactions were civil.

Senior RJ Fazio, an architectural engineering major, grilled Erickson about whether a university-sanctioned report by former FBI director Louis Freeh into the abuse scandal will be reviewed in response to NCAA sanctions against the university.

Freeh's report accused Paterno and three university officials of hiding abuse allegations to protect the university and its football program, claims denied by the family of Paterno, who died in January, and by the officials. The NCAA slammed the university with a four-year postseason ban, steep scholarship cuts and a $60 million fine.

Fazio said he doesn't believe all the findings in Freeh's report are true and the sanctions hurt the school.

"(NCAA President) Mark Emmert has the audacity to blame our culture, which is a very scary statement," Fazio said. "Academics and athletics have been so evenly paired."

Erickson reiterated that agreeing to the NCAA sanctions was one of the hardest decisions he's ever had to make.

"When you belong to a membership organization, you play by the rules established," he said. "I would say the NCAA would say, 'If you don't want to play by house rules, you're free to drop out at any time.'"

Senior Kevin Berkon, a criminal justice major, said university leadership has tarnished Paterno's reputation by removing a bronze statue of him from outside Beaver Stadium.

"All I can say is you guys have pretty much torn this university apart," he said. "I cannot be more disappointed in the leadership here."

Trustee Marianne Alexander responded by saying trustees have to take into account decisions that will benefit the university and can't make decisions based on what would be popular.
Republicans Push Bill to Help Foreign Science Graduates Stay

By JULIA PRESTON

Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, hoping to pass a measure before the November elections to improve legal immigration, are pushing for a vote this week on a bill that would increase the number of permanent resident visas for foreigners graduating from American universities with advanced degrees in science and technology.

The largely partisan bill was introduced on Tuesday by Representative Lamar Smith of Texas, the Republican chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. It would allocate up to 55,000 visas, known as green cards, each year to graduates with master’s or doctoral degrees from American universities, by means of a trade-off. The bill would abolish a lottery run each year that distributes the same number of green cards randomly to applicants from countries that do not have large immigrant populations in the United States.

The nearly 50 other sponsors of Mr. Smith’s bill include only one Democrat — Representative Henry Cuellar of Texas. Mr. Smith and Representative Eric Cantor of Virginia, the majority leader, have said the House will vote on Thursday.

A partisan fight broke out over Mr. Smith’s approach, which would not increase the overall number of green cards issued annually. On Friday Representative Zoe Lofgren of California, a Democrat whose district is home to many technology companies, introduced a measure that would create 50,000 new green cards for advanced graduates in the so-called STEM fields: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. That bill would not reduce the visas available to the lottery.

On Tuesday, Charles E. Schumer of New York, the Democrat who is chairman of the Senate Judiciary immigration subcommittee, introduced a bill that was close to Ms. Lofgren’s measure, creating a two-year pilot program to give 55,000 new green cards each year to foreign graduates.

Democrats in both houses, especially Hispanic and black lawmakers, are reluctant to end the lottery without some compromise, for example giving additional green cards to family members of legal immigrants already here.
Many winners of the lottery, which was created in 1990, come from African countries.

Behind the partisan maneuvering over details, there was notable bipartisan accord — rare in this polarized Congress — on the broad goals of the legislation: to offer visas so science and technology graduates could remain here and start businesses to create jobs.

“In a global economy, we cannot afford to educate these foreign graduates in the U.S. and then send them back home to work for our competitors,” Mr. Smith said on Tuesday.

Currently, when foreign students finish their graduate studies they either have to leave or head into a labyrinth of temporary visas, where it can take years to get a permanent green card.

Last week, 165 leaders of American universities sent a letter to President Obama and to Congress warning that the lack of visas for advanced science graduates was “a critical threat to America’s pre-eminence as a global center of innovation and prosperity.” Among those signing were presidents of Stanford, Harvard, Cornell, the California Institute of Technology and M.I.T.

According to the university leaders, in 2009 foreigners made up about 45 percent of all graduate students in engineering, math, computer and physical sciences, and they earned 52 percent of all new doctoral degrees in those fields.

All three of the new proposals include labor market tests that would require employers to show they could not find a qualified American worker before they sponsored a foreign graduate for a green card and a job.

With Congressional lawmakers expecting this to be their last week in session before they head out to campaign, Republicans said they want to show they are working to make good on pledges made at their convention last month. The Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, said he would focus on fixing the system for legal immigration.

President Obama has also said he supports more green cards for science graduates.

Technology groups watched the partisan jockeying with worry, fearing that no legislation would pass.

“We have a new class graduating in December and we don’t want to lose those people,” said Keith Grzelak, a vice president of the Institute of
Electrical and Electronic Engineers, a group with more than 200,000 members. “If we bring one superstar from another country who starts a company here, there could be thousands of jobs that didn’t exist before.”

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York, a strong advocate of high-skilled immigration, urged lawmakers not to miss the moment. “There are real options for immigration reform on the table now, and from both sides of the aisle,” he said on Tuesday.

It was not clear Republicans had enough votes to pass the bill this week. “Republicans are only willing to increase legal immigration for immigrants they want by eliminating legal immigration for immigrants they don’t want,” said Representative Luis Gutierrez of Illinois, a leading Hispanic Democrat. But if Mr. Smith’s bill passes, Mr. Schumer’s measure may point to a compromise in the Senate when Congress reconvenes after the Nov. 6 election.