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ECU applies to Big East

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector
Thursday, September 22, 2011

Director of athletics Terry Holland confirmed on Wednesday that East Carolina has officially sought membership in the Big East.

His statement, released jointly with ECU chancellor Dr. Steve Ballard, came on the same day that the Big East announced it would begin actively seeking replacements for Pittsburgh and Syracuse, which agreed earlier in the week to join the Atlantic Coast Conference.

“East Carolina University will always maintain a proactive approach in regards to positioning itself for future success, and the fluidity of current conference realignment possibilities is no exception,” Holland said in Wednesday’s statement. “While we have formalized our interest in Big East Conference membership as a viable option, ECU will remain focused on competing at the highest level through the efforts of Conference USA.”

UAB-ECU

Not much has gone right for the UAB Blazers in their first two games this season.
Although plenty has gone right for East Carolina, the Pirates have been pinned with an 0-2 record identical to that of UAB, their Conference USA debut opponent Saturday.

Two weeks have passed since the Pirates held Virginia Tech to a 10-10 tie until late in the fourth quarter, so it would seem they would welcome a matchup with the Neil Callaway’s Blazers, who have failed to score an offensive touchdown yet this season. Despite the marked Pirate progress, ECU head coach and veteran defensive staffer Ruffin McNeill knows a good offensive line when he sees one, and he knows this weekend will be another challenge for his team, which has upped the pressure on quarterbacks but has just a single sack to its credit so far.

“When you have an experienced line like they do, a Rimington candidate at center, an all-conference guy at tackle, they have some guys and coach Callaway is an offensive line guy, so he’s going to have a very well-coached and solid offensive line,” said McNeill, referring to UAB center Darion Smith and left tackle Matt McCants, both seniors. “Sacks are a little bit overrated sometimes, but to cause pressure is key and to make sure a quarterback has to hurry his throws.”

Already ECU has gotten solid mileage out of six players up front in the 3-4 scheme.

Starting sophomore ends Derrell Johnson and Matt Milner have shown great adjustment from the 4-3 setup of last season, and junior nose guard Michael Brooks has returned from last year’s season-ending injury to anchor the middle. But behind them, ends Antonio Allison and Lee Pegues have seen plenty of action along with redshirt freshman guard Terry Williams.

Pegues credits the steady rotation favored by defensive line coach Marc Yellock for keeping morale and energy at a high level.

“I’m happy with the rotation because it keeps you fresh and keeps you going,” said Pegues, a sophomore. “If you get tired out there you’re just a wasted body. I like the way coach Yellock is rotating us in and out, and the way we’re conditioned now, you don’t get nearly as tired anyway.”
Misleading or not in terms of overall statistics, sacks can stall a drive as fast as an interception or a fumble.

Last season in the traditional 4-3, ECU’s porous defense managed 15 sacks, or a little more than one per game.

Whether the Pirates can get to UAB quarterback Bryan Ellis or not, they are bent on getting in his face.

“Sacks don’t tell the whole picture, and sacks take the whole defense, not just the defensive line, not just the linebackers, but also the guys in the back end covering everything,” said Milner, who tied linebacker Justin Dixon for the lead in sacks last season with three. “I think we’re doing a lot better this year getting pressure, and I think we’ll just continue to get better.”

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For more than a decade, East Carolina University officials have worked to position the school’s athletic programs for admission into a conference that makes sense geographically, economically and competitively. On Tuesday, the school leveraged that investment and those years of hard work into an application for membership in the Big East Conference.

It is reassuring that in this critical hour East Carolina has not only its very capable leadership team but the assistance of elected officials like Gov. Beverly Perdue. This is very much East Carolina’s moment to secure a tremendous financial windfall for the entire region and one it must not squander.

Unlikely as it may be, decisions by Syracuse University and the University of Pittsburgh may well determine the fortunes of intercollegiate sports at East Carolina. The Greensboro-based Atlantic Coast Conference admitted both as members last week, thereby starting a round of conference realignment that threatens to leave few Division I schools unaffected.

For East Carolina, the situation is a critical chance to gain entry into the lucrative Bowl Championship Series, the coalition of conferences that determine the national champion of college football. It could allow the Pirates to play their sports in a more cohesive regional setup, reducing travel time for student-athletes and costs for the university. Hopefully it would also foster academic partnerships between East Carolina and nearby member schools, such as those among ACC members.

Toward that end, East Carolina has aggressively poured money into the construction, improvement and expansion of its athletic facilities. Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium now holds 50,000 spectators, allowing the Pirates to have the highest attendance among all programs outside the Bowl Championship Series. Its baseball and softball fields rank among the nicest in the country. The new soccer field and outdoor track are top of the line, and officials hope a proposed basketball practice facility will follow suit.
On Tuesday, the governor met with Chancellor Steve Ballard and Athletic Director Terry Holland to discuss the Pirates’ prospects, prompting Perdue to pledge her assistance. That should be a common sentiment given the economic benefit of an event like a Pirate home football game, which injects an estimated $3.5 million into the local and regional economy.

Holland often preaches that Pirate fans should focus on the things they can control, and East Carolina has done what it can to position itself. It has been waiting for this opportunity and cannot afford to fall short.
GREENVILLE—East Carolina has sent a letter of application to join the Big East.

In a joint statement Wednesday, Chancellor Steve Ballard and athletic director Terry Holland said the school will "maintain a proactive approach" in dealing with uncertainty about conference realignment.

The school sent its application Tuesday and it arrived at the Big East offices Wednesday, athletic department spokesman Tom McClellan said.

East Carolina's interest in the Big East has simmered in the background in recent years, though the announced departures of Pittsburgh and Syracuse from the Big East to the ACC might finally open the door for such a move.

The Pirates would bring a football program with five straight bowl appearances and a strong fan base, while giving the Big East a presence in media markets in both Carolinas and Virginia.

Meanwhile, The Associated Press reported Navy and Air Force are the top choices for Big East expansion, but as football-only members, a person with knowledge of the discussions said. The person spoke on condition of anonymity.
Many students and parents wish reading a good book or playing outside were part of their nightly homework. Some families at Creekside Elementary School got their wish this year.

Second grade teachers at Creekside started a new homework policy in their grade focusing on reading and family time.

“We will no longer require nightly homework including worksheets, spelling, and math problems. We simply ask that each student read for 20 minutes each night,” the policy begins.

“I’m so proud of this policy and the courage it took for these teachers to step out there and do this,” said Creekside mother Nicole Mitchell, who spoke in support of the new policy at the Board of Education meeting Monday night.

The school board and superintendent are reviewing the policy that first came to their attention at the meeting. Normally specific homework assignments are left up to teachers and principals, but district policy states that “homework shall be part of the instructional experiences of each student” limited to 30 minutes in grades K-3.

“Since we believe that reading is the most important kind of homework, we’d like all 20 minutes to be devoted to reading and discussion,” the policy states.

The new policy is part of an effort to better prepare students for when state testing begins in third grade, according to Creekside Principal Carla Frinsko. Traditional homework assignments haven’t been leaving enough time for reading, and since the school can cover more ground during class after a recent switch to accelerated math and read 3D programs, educators at Creekside decided to allow more time for reading at home.
“We just felt we needed more of a balance,” Frinsko said.

While the policy does away with assignments and worksheets, it’s not a “no homework” policy, Frinsko said.

“It’s simply saying we want to focus on reading,” she said.

Students and parents are required to document the date and title of the book. Books can be chosen from home or borrowed from school, as long as they are at the student’s reading level. Comprehension questions pulled from the Read 3D program used in class are included for home discussion.

The new policy also is geared toward students’ mental and physical health to support learning and encourages physical activity, family meals, early bedtime and limited TV and video games.

“We’re certainly not trying to tell people how to run their families,” Frinsko said. “We’re just trying to give suggestions for what seems to help students in school down the road.”

Reading on grade level is “a growing concern for all of us,” said Sam D. Bundy Elementary School fifth grade teacher Katie Parker, the elementary level representative for the Pitt County Association of Educators. “Adopting Read 3D was an eye-opening experience, with how many students are not reading on grade level.”

Parker said while she assigns more than just reading to her classes, “I don’t think we have to overwhelm kids with lots of homework at home.”

Research supports that more reading leads to higher reading achievement and motivation, according to East Carolina University associate professor Elizabeth Swaggerty, and Creekside’s policy has potential to do so.

“Spending time reading is going to have more impact than memorizing spelling words,” Swaggerty said.

Parents were “overwhelmingly” supportive of the policy, Frinkso said.

“It’s not the rigorous busywork everybody is used to, but reviewing reading comprehension is still homework — it’s productive homework,” said second
grade Creekside parent Rob Barbee. “Reading is the basis of our kids doing well in the future. They’ve got 10 years left to do all the busywork they want.”

“For young children, learning is a wonderful, active, hands-on process that happens best in the context of play,” said Mitchell, an early childhood instructor at Pitt Community College.

School board member Sean Kenny said at Monday’s meeting he was opposed to the policy, questioning the studies cited and remarking that several populations were left out, including parents disabled or on night shift work.

“My intent for taking the policy to the board was to celebrate that these teachers have stood by the idea that school success is about more than skill-drills,” Mitchell said.

“I wish more conversations could start in our school and community about how to best ‘balance’ curriculum so that the whole child is valued.”

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It looks as if the ACC may have done East Carolina a huge favor after all.

While an invite to the conference looks unlikely for the Pirates, the ACC’s decision to bring in Pitt and Syracuse — coupled with the Pac-12’s decision Tuesday night to remain at 12 teams — may put ECU in its best position ever to join a BCS conference.

With the Pac-12 standing pat, it looks like the Big 12 and Big Ten will continue to exist. The possible defections of Texas, Texas Tech, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State to the Pac-12 would have devastated the Big 12 and forced the Big 12 and Big East to merge or try to harvest teams from one another.

But the Pac-12’s decision to stay at 12 means those four schools will stay put in the Big 12 for the time being. Big 12 presidents were slated to talk today about ways to stabilize the league.

Big East officials met on Tuesday night and commissioner John Marinatto said afterward that the remaining football-playing members have pledged to stay and are committed to recruiting replacements for Syracuse and Pitt.

That’s where the Pirates come in.

Already often mentioned as a candidate if the Big East had opted to expand its ranks before the recent conference realignment talks, ECU is even more prominently mentioned as a contender.

ESPN’s Joe Schad has reported that the Big East will target Army, Navy and Air Force with ECU and Central Florida being “second-tier possibilities.”

One question that’s still up in the air is how many teams the Big Ten will add. With Pitt and Syracuse gone, the Big East has six football schools left
— West Virginia, Louisville, Rutgers, South Florida, Connecticut and Cincinnati — and TCU is slated to join next season.

The league could decide to add three schools to reach 10 or even expand to 12 which would allow the conference to hold a conference championship game for the first time.

And there’s always the possibility that the Big East could lose another team or two if the ACC decides to expand past 14, or if the SEC or Big Ten comes calling.

A move to the Big East would mean big dollars for ECU as long as the league maintains its automatic BCS bid. In 2010, the BCS paid out $17.7 million to the Big East, while Conference USA received $2.8 million.

The numbers were even higher after last season’s bowl games with the Big East receiving $21.2 million from the BCS compared to $3.34 million for C-USA.

The Big East’s six-year television deal with ESPN runs out after the 2012 season, opening the door to even more revenue.

Earlier this year, Conference USA agreed to a TV deal with Fox running through the 2015-16 season. That contract, along with a secondary TV deal with CBS College Sports, is expected to net the league about $14 million annually.

Recently the Big East turned down a TV offer worth a reported $110-130 million annually with the hopes of getting even more money.

The Pirates have made it clear they crave a spot in the Big East. Along with becoming one of the haves and have-nots in a financial and national-stage sense, the Big East makes much more sense geographically for ECU.

But if the last few weeks have taught us anything, it’s that the college football landscape can drastically change from day-to-day.
UNC classes under review in wake of NCAA probe

BY DAN KANE - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL Independent study classes and other courses within a University of North Carolina department popular with athletes will undergo an "in-depth" review, the dean of the university's College of Arts and Sciences told trustees Wednesday.

Addressing questions of academic integrity raised in the wake of an NCAA investigation into the Tar Heels football program, UNC dean Karen Gil has ordered the review, which will reemphasize the need to set new standards for syllabuses and required course work for the classes under scrutiny.

"I take these matters very seriously, and we are going forward looking to strengthen our policies and practices within the department," Gil said.

In recent weeks, UNC's Department of African and Afro-American Studies has come under scrutiny after former department chairman Julius Nyang'oro was found to have missed plagiarism by one football player, allowed another to enter an upper-level class as an incoming freshman despite needing a remedial writing course, and hired a sports agent to teach a summer class.

Last week, the university released information showing that football players account for more than 20 percent of the UNC students enrolling for independent studies. The university confirmed that the use of independent
studies by football players was among the possible "irregularities" they found within the department.

This past summer, athletes accounted for nine of the 10 independent study enrollments under Nyang'oro.

**Independent abuse**

Independent study classes are courses in which no class sessions are held, but students are typically required to produce an end-of-term project, usually a paper. They have been tied to numerous athletic scandals at top college football programs such as Auburn University and the University of Michigan. The classes are open to abuse because of the absence of class time and little oversight of the course work produced.

According to data produced by UNC in response to a News & Observer records request, football players accounted for 68 of the 327 enrollments in independent study courses offered by the department over the last five years. One men's basketball player accounted for one of the 327 enrollments.

In that same time period, UNC football players accounted for 724 enrollments in all classes offered by the Department of African and Afro-American Studies, with independent studies courses representing 9 percent of that total.

Of the independent study courses taken by Tar Heels football players, university records indicate that Nyang'oro taught 32, or nearly half of the football enrollments. The rest were largely spread among several other faculty members.

Nyang'oro, who has declined to comment, resigned as department head earlier this month after N&O reports tied him to other academic issues with the football team. Plagiarism in a term paper submitted by former UNC player Michael McAdoo went undetected by Nyang'oro until the term paper was submitted this summer in court papers related to McAdoo's suit against the university and the NCAA. (Fans of rival N.C. State pounced on the plagiarized passages after the court filings were posted online.)

Nyang'oro also allowed former UNC player Marvin Austin to take an upper-level Afro-American Studies class as an incoming freshman, even though he was in need of a remedial writing class.

**Agent as teacher**

Most recently, Nyang'oro hired Carl Carey Jr., a sports agent - and former UNC academic advisor to Tar Heels football players - to teach a summer
course. At the time, Carey, who has a doctorate, was representing two former UNC football players.

These issues came to light after an NCAA investigation had already found academic fraud related to a football team tutor and impermissible benefits offered to football players from agents, their go-between and others. It is unclear whether the new issues are triggering further NCAA investigation.

UNC chancellor Holden Thorp and other university officials are scheduled to appear before the NCAA’s Committee of Infractions on Oct. 28 in Indianapolis before a final ruling on penalties.

University data also shows that the football players enrolled in independent study classes taught during the summer, when semesters are compressed into five weeks, and in the fall when they would have been competing on the football field. During several of the summer semesters, they accounted for the majority of enrolled students in independent study classes.

Only five enrollments were recorded for spring semesters, when football players have much lighter athletic schedules.

The Department of African and Afro-American Studies offers two independent study courses for seniors who are majoring in bachelor degrees offered by the department. A minimum grade-point average of 3.2 is required. No athletes were enrolled in those classes.

Gil said last week that the college-wide review of independent studies classes requires administrators to offer recommendations that set student workloads and minimum required contacts students must have with professors and teaching assistants. She also wants them to suggest standards for courses that involve lectures and seminars that are not delivered in the traditional classroom format, as well as what steps should be taken to convert directed readings courses to permanent courses.

New Standards

Gil said the review of the department also reemphasized the need to set new standards for syllabuses, which explain what courses are about and the work expected of students. University officials have had difficulties producing syllabuses for some classes within the African Studies department, including the one in which McAdoo submitted a plagiarized paper. University officials said that has been a longstanding concern across all departments that they began looking into before the NCAA investigation.
Jan Boxill, chairman of the university's faculty council, told trustees the African Studies department faculty understands the need for the university's investigation and is "confident that they will emerge a stronger and more effective unit."

Trustees asked administrators about a planned revamping of the academic advising program for student athletes. Changes include gearing up a largely dormant faculty advisory committee that would evaluate academic progress, increasing staff to make sure athletes are getting the help they need and moving away from hiring undergraduate students to tutor athletes.

Trustee Alston Gardner was particularly concerned about undergraduate students tutoring athletes. Jennifer Wiley, the tutor who became a focus of the NCAA investigation in Chapel Hill, was an undergraduate student who UNC officials later acknowledged had become too friendly with football players.

In the fall of 2010, eight UNC undergraduates worked as tutors, 14 in the spring semester of 2011. Four undergraduates continue to serve as tutors, but the university is hiring public school teachers from the area to tutor athletes.

"Are we going to continue to have undergraduate students serve as tutors in this program?" Gardner asked.

"We hope that number is going to go down," said Bobbi Owen, the senior associate dean of undergraduate education in the College of Arts and Sciences.

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**UNC's self-imposed sanctions**

The University of North Carolina self imposed football sanctions on its football program Monday as a result of an NCAA investigation. The penalties were:

Two years of probation.
Loss of three scholarships in each of the next three years.
Vacating all wins in the 2008 and 2009 seasons.
A $50,000 fine.

What's next?

UNC is scheduled to appear in front of the NCAA's Committee on Infractions on Oct. 28 in Indianapolis. The committee is judge and jury in the case and will decide whether to accept UNC's self sanctions or add to them.
UNC-CH classes grow, staff shrinks

BY LANA DOUGLAS - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL The decrease in state appropriations for several programs and budget cuts at UNC-Chapel Hill will mean larger class sizes, a decline in the campus's appearance, and staff layoffs.

UNC-CH is cutting $80.7 million in fiscal 2011-2012. The cuts affect administrative and support units, health affairs, academic affairs, centers and institutes.

Arts and Sciences class sizes have increased by 23 percent, with an additional 40-50 students, and some class sizes are larger than the number accreditation officials recommend.

The increase in class sizes "is the best indication that we've cut everything we can think of because we wouldn't do that unless we absolutely have to," Chancellor Holden Thorpe said. "We have done everything we can do to keep those cuts away from the classroom, but we're running out of magic beans when it comes to doing that."

Because of budget cuts, schools will now have to pay for educational services at Morehead Planetarium and the Science Center. In health affairs, half of the instructional technology staff, 7 percent of the faculty and most teaching assistants positions have been cut.

More cuts next year

Even with the extensive budget cuts, UNC-CH is looking at cutting an additional $20 million in fiscal 2012-2013.

UNC-CH's administrative units will be at risk if more cuts are necessary, said Bruce Carney, executive vice chancellor and provost.

"North Carolina needs dentists, and they need nurses and teachers, and we're starting to see our ability to produce those erode," Thorpe said. "So this is getting serious."

The cuts were a part of UNC system officials' previously announced $414 million in state budget reductions for this fiscal year.

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The Wilmington Star News

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**Report outlines mistakes made following July 29 shooting near UNCW**

By Jason Gonzales
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The failure by UNCW's emergency system to notify the campus of a shooting on July 29 at Seahawk Square could have been avoided, according to a 13-page report released Tuesday by the UNCW Police Department.

The report lists a number of factors as to why its emergency alert system failed to notify the campus as police tried to hunt down Reginald Gagnier Jr., 18, who allegedly shot 42-year-old David Carol in a nearby apartment complex. Gagnier was charged with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill.

The report also lists a number of ways to correct the problems.

"The bottom line is when all is said and done, the communication did not go out how it should have, and we are taking the necessary steps to correct it," said Cindy Lawson, assistant to the chancellor for marketing and communications.

UNCW Police Chief David Donaldson said he instructed the staff to send a campus-wide alert via phone, text message and email to warn about the armed man on the loose.

The alert was never sent, however. The first message the campus received was a description of the suspect about 6:35 p.m., followed by an announcement 40 minutes later that Gagnier was found by campus police and being handed over to the Wilmington Police Department.

Donaldson said there were a number of factors playing into the delay that caused him to abort the warning.

He said the hardware and software the department uses to send out the messages caused a delay in the response. When trying to initiate the message system, many pop-ups and messages directing dispatchers in their daily jobs slowed sending the message, he said.

"That hardware is used for other things as well," he said.
Another factor was the lack of precedent for an event that was not on campus. He said the system is web-based, and all of the templates the system uses are tailored for on-campus events.

The system is "unacceptably reliant on message templates," the report says. Last, personnel played a part in not sending out the message, he said.

Another factor involved the Wilmington Police Department's use of a radio frequency for that incident that campus police couldn't access, Donaldson said.

"We are going to provide additional training and a possible change in policy and procedure," he said.

Some of the changes recommended in the report include a separate computer system for sending out emergency messages, additional training for personnel and increased measures on how the system addresses off-campus events.

Also in the recommendations are policy changes in how the campus police assess threats and a protocol that would put in place a warning to the campus police by New Hanover County dispatchers of all safety-related incidents in close proximity to the school.

"We all realized with this how close is too close," Lawson said.

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Brunswick, Pender tourism officials optimistic about survey results

By Shannan Bowen
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Like permanent residents, owners of vacation or part-time homes in Brunswick and Pender counties think the tourism industry is an important economic engine and one reason they live or vacation there.

Tourism officials in both counties hope those sentiments, expressed in surveys by East Carolina University's Center for Sustainable Tourism, encourage more tourism development, such as businesses and attractions.

In Pender County, where there's a mix of rural areas and beaches such as Surf City and Topsail Beach, developers have been cautious about building hotels and other tourism businesses, said Monique Baker, director of the Pender County Tourism Department.

"We need to get some serious development as well as attractions," she said.

County planners and tourism officials can use the study – called the Tourism Impacts and Second Home Development: A Sustainable Approach – to show potential developers that both full-time residents and those with second homes want the industry to grow, Baker said.

"It seems to me they were very friendly to tourism development as long as it didn't have an impact on the environment," she said.

Full-time and part-time residents, selected at random, were asked to participate in the study and to rate their satisfaction of land use, government services, jobs, infrastructure and other areas related to tourism.

Pat Long, director of the Center for Sustainable Tourism, said the report gives government and tourism officials an idea of concerns homeowners have and the types of development they want to see.

In Brunswick County, for example, full-time residents were more supportive of tourism facilities to attract more tourists to the county. And more second homeowners than full-time residents thought they received more environmental benefits from tourism, but they also were more concerned about sea level rise and coastal flooding than full-time residents, according to the study.
Second homeowners in Pender County were more concerned about weather and climate conditions when deciding to own property in the county, but they also expressed greater satisfaction than full-time residents with the relationship of tourism to cultural opportunities. They also appreciated costs of living in the county.

"I think they're coming here because it's affordable, but they don't want it to get too pricey," Baker said.

The survey also showed residents thought it was important that the county's tourism industry attracted jobs and development as long as the environment was protected – something the Center for Sustainable Tourism aims to teach local planners.

"We hope to be a partner in all the years to come on just doing tourism right," Long said, adding that the center's staff is available to advise government and tourism officials on sustainable approaches to tourism.

The Center for Sustainable Tourism, like most tourism centers, provides research on visitor impact and marketing. But it's also the only center in the country that focuses on sustainable, or environmentally friendly, practices in the industry.

"If we do not manage our resources effectively, and if we do not plan effectively going into the future, we will not have a sustainable environment," Long said.

The study's findings can be found at www.ecu.edu/sustainabletourism, and the survey is now open to the public, including any renter or homeowner in the counties.

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Enrollment of new students at graduate schools in the United States dropped slightly from 2009 to 2010, despite an 8.4 percent increase in applications. It was the first decline in first-time graduate enrollment since 2003, according to the Council of Graduate Schools, and came after a 5.5 percent increase the previous year.

The decrease in new graduate students was particularly noticeable in business, education and public administration programs, according to Debra W. Stewart, the council’s president. And while the number of new Hispanic students grew by almost 5 percent, new enrollment by black students declined by more than 8 percent.

“Both historically and in recent years, there’s been an inverse relationship between the economy and graduate student enrollment,” Dr. Stewart said. “But now, they’re both down, so the question is, why?”

“With this recession going on for so long,” she said, “people who have a job are less likely to want to leave it to go back to school, because it’s not at all clear that there will be a job for them at the other end.”

The cost of graduate school was also a significant factor, Dr. Stewart said.

The number of students starting graduate school shrank only among domestic students, according to the council’s report. The number of new international graduate students coming to study in the United States rose 4.7 percent from 2009 to 2010, while first-time enrollment of domestic students declined 1.2 percent.

“The decline in domestic students is very bad news for the nation’s economic future,” Dr. Stewart said. “Higher education and, increasingly, graduate education are what drives prosperity, and if we get to the point where only people with significant bank accounts can afford graduate education, the country is doomed.”

At Ohio State University, a huge public research university with thousands of graduate students, there was a slight increase in first-time graduate students from 2009 to 2010. But even there, graduate business programs
contracted slightly, to 240 entering business students in the fall of 2010, compared with 256 the previous year.

“Employers usually pay a lot of that, and with times being tight, that’s probably a decline in the percent sent by their companies,” said Patrick S. Osmer, the dean of the graduate school at Ohio State. “Our projections are for a slight decrease for the academic year that begins in fall 2011, in master’s level programs, but it’s hard to say, because we have no official numbers yet; it’s the first day of classes, and as of this date compared to the first day last year, we’re up a little.”

While new graduate enrollment nationwide declined slightly, overall graduate enrollment, 1.75 million students, was up by 1.1 percent.

Doctoral programs are growing faster than master’s and certificate programs, the council’s study found, both among newly enrolled graduate students and the overall graduate population.

In fall 2010, about three-quarters of all graduate students were in programs leading to a master’s degree or graduate certificate, and education and business programs alone account for about 40 percent of graduate enrollment.

More than 60 percent of the 445,000 first-time graduate students were enrolled at public institutions, and about 58 percent of them were women.

Women earned about two-thirds of the graduate certificates awarded in 2009-10, as well as 60 percent of the master’s degrees and 52 percent of the doctorates.
A $42 Million Gift Aims at Improving Bedside Manner

By DIRK JOHNSON

CHICAGO — Carolyn Bucksbaum still bristles about an arrogant physician who brusquely dismissed her intuition about her ailment decades ago. It turned out she was right. The physician was wrong.

“We all make mistakes,” she said. “But he never even apologized.”

Years later, Ms. Bucksbaum and her husband, Matthew, would come under the care of Dr. Mark Siegler at the University of Chicago Medical Center, a doctor they found compassionate and humble. “He goes by Mark,” Ms. Bucksbaum noted approvingly, “not ‘Doctor.’ ” Medical students, they thought, could do well to emulate him.

Now, the Bucksbaums are donating $42 million to the university to create an institute devoted to improving medical students’ handling of the doctor-patient relationship. The Bucksbaum Institute for Clinical Excellence, to be announced Thursday, will be led by Dr. Siegler.

“To care for a patient,” Dr. Siegler said, “you have to care about a patient.”

If it seems like a lot of money for teaching good bedside manners, researchers point to many studies that indicate a good rapport between doctors and patients strongly correlates with favorable health outcomes.
Nearly all medical schools teach the importance of listening to patients and showing empathy. But the Bucksbaum Institute is an ambitious effort to put compassion and empathy, as Dr. Siegler puts it, “on the same pedestal as science and technology.”

Medical education experts say the human dimension is sometimes crowded out by discussions of the latest technological innovations. Practicing doctors face their own pressures, said Dr. Laura Roberts, chairwoman of the psychiatry department at Stanford University.

“The modern world of medicine,” Dr. Roberts said, “has become bureaucratized, distant, regulated.”

In Dr. Roberts’s view, the University of Chicago initiative will be unparalleled in its goal to “preserve the sense of kindness” in medical students before those attributes “get beaten out of them” during training and practice.

The institute will develop new courses on the patient-doctor relationship and rely heavily on junior faculty members and older practicing clinicians as mentors. It will also offer electives in the doctor-patient relationship to those students who are not scholars in the program.

With almost a third of University of Chicago Medical School students going on to careers at academic medical centers, the innovations will “pollinate medical care across the country,” said Dr. Holly Humphrey, the dean.

The subject has stirred passions and debate for as long as people have been treated by doctors. Some 2,500 years ago, Plato complained about the paternalism that characterized some doctors. “He gives off some empiric treatment with an air of knowledge in the brusque fashion of a dictator,” the philosopher wrote, “and then rushes off in haste” to the next ailing subject.

Medical experts say it will be a challenge to find more time for doctors and patients to bond, because every moment costs money. But Dr. Humphrey said the need was clear. She pointed to research showing that patients who had good relationships with their doctors were more likely to follow health regimens and to overcome illness.

She said studies had found that patients provide important clues about their health status during leisurely conversations with doctors. As one adage among doctors has it: If you listen long enough, patients will tell you exactly what is wrong with them.
Dr. Wendy Levinson, chairwoman of the department of medicine at the University of Toronto, has written that tone, or the way a doctor says something, can be as important as the substance. Primary care physicians who use humor, she noted, are less likely to have been sued.

That comes as no surprise to Robert Kreisman, a medical malpractice lawyer in Chicago. “In good relationships, folks don’t call lawyers,” he said. “What I hear a lot is that doctors were rude or uncaring.”

The Bucksbaums are Iowa natives who moved to Chicago 11 years ago. Mr. Bucksbaum made a fortune by building shopping malls. Both attended Grinnell College, where Ms. Bucksbaum was the editor of the school newspaper.

Sitting at a glass table in their 70th-floor apartment, Ms. Bucksbaum reminisced about the people she had known over the years who entered medical school with a burning desire to comfort others, only to somehow lose their gift for the human touch.

“I have wondered, ‘What is it that changes them?’ ” she said. “And can something be done about it?”

The Bucksbaums were inspired by Dr. Siegler, a leading medical ethicist who has been a general practitioner for more than 40 years. He still makes house calls. His business card includes his cell and home telephone numbers. And, not least, as Ms. Bucksbaum tells it, he treats his clerical workers and others in his office as colleagues, not underlings.

“You know how it often is: the aide is just ‘Mary’ and then there’s ‘The Doctor,’” Ms. Bucksbaum said. “When the doctor is decent to the person who is working the desk, that worker is more likely to be courteous to the patient who calls in.”

She said that perhaps the most telling moment about Dr. Siegler came when Mr. Bucksbaum needed exploratory surgery for what doctors feared was lung cancer. As the general practitioner, Dr. Siegler was not needed for the surgery, but he showed up anyway in his scrubs.

When the medical team found signs of infection, not cancer, Dr. Siegler led the stunned and delighted medical team in a spontaneous burst of loud applause, Ms. Bucksbaum heard later. He soon rushed out to see her.

“He was beaming,” she recalled. “It showed he really cared.”