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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
East Carolina University plans to demolish the Stratford Arms apartment complex by the end of this year once its purchase is complete.

The university expects to close on the property by the end of October, according to Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Rick Niswander. All tenants already have moved out of the 13 buildings.

“We’re drawing up the documents,” Niswander said following a meeting of the Board of Trustees facilities committee on Thursday morning.

The university is purchasing the 12-acre complex on South Charles Boulevard for just a bit more than $3 million from the ECU Real Estate Foundation, which purchased the property for the same price earlier this year.

Demolition is planned for the end of this year or the beginning of 2012. The university plans to keep several old trees standing in the complex, which was built in 1965.
No state appropriations are going toward the purchase, Niswander said. As adjacent properties become available, the university tries to acquire them with funding set aside to do so, he said.

“It’s such a large piece of land so close to the university we had to buy it; it was a very strategic purchase,” Niswander said. “Something is going to happen there, we’re just not sure what.”

Earlier discussions had the complex slated for athletic parking for nearby Dowdy-Ficklen and Clark-LeClair stadiums.

The area is included in the university’s master plan, which the facilities committee discussed Thursday.

The document, developed during the past year, outlines planned expansions for the next 20 to 25 years. A final draft is being prepared to be presented to the trustees in December. Projects are grouped into phases based on near-term and long-term priorities. Each project would have its own plans, done as funding is available.

One of the first priorities is a new student center. Mendenhall no longer is large enough to serve as a student center and would be re-purposed. The new center would be built on the adjacent parking lot, with plans for a deck to maintain parking space.

Project plans should be approved at the April or July trustees meeting once the university gets permission from the state to hire a company to draw them up.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
ECU's Literary Homecoming ranks high
Friday, September 23, 2011
Editorial

Expect Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium to be in full voice Saturday as East Carolina takes on the University of Alabama at Birmingham in an afternoon football game. The potential of conference realignment puts Pirate athletics under additional scrutiny and the purple-and-gold faithful will be out to show that they deserve to be ranked among the most passionate fan bases in the country.

Yet, despite the revenue generated by the action on the field, it is in the classroom where East Carolina demonstrates its true value to the region and the state. This weekend’s Eastern North Carolina Literary Homecoming is one such program that speaks to the school’s educational and cultural benefit, additional evidence of what East Carolina offers.

Less than a week has passed since the Atlantic Coast Conference roiled the world of college sports by raiding the Big East Conference for two additional members. Thus began the latest round of conference realignment, leading to East Carolina filing a formal application to join the Big East. Acceptance would mean a financial windfall for the university and the region, since local businesses earn millions from each home football game.

Obscured by the talk of television markets and potential rivals is the mission of a university to provide a thorough education to students and apply its intellectual curiosity to research. Even the ACC, which purports to seek academic partnerships between member schools, expended its ranks in the interest of new media markets rather than classroom study. It is shameful that academics receives only passing mention when conference alignment is discussed.

Look, then, to East Carolina and the program open to the public this week. The eighth annual Eastern North Carolina Literary Homecoming begins tonight and celebrates the authors, poets, photographers and other artists born of this region and who reflect the traditions of the east in their work. This year’s theme, “Rewriting Nature: Impacting Change in the
Environment,” intends to focus on the landscape of the coastal plain, an excellent selection for so unique a place.

It is but one of the countless eclectic and dynamic programs that enrich this community and all of eastern North Carolina. These events may not generate the revenue collected when the Pirates take the field, but they reflect the university’s commitment to regional service and make this a more attractive place to live. Decision makers leading the major conferences would do well to take note as they are sure to emerge with the same affinity for East Carolina shared across the region.
Contributed photo Ara Gregorian founded the Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival 12 years ago. The new season begins Thursday.

Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival begins Thursday
Friday, September 23, 2011

The East Carolina University School of Music’s Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival will bring world-renowned guest artists from England, Finland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Poland, Taiwan and throughout the United States to Greenville for performances and outreach.

This year’s season — the festival’s 12th — begins Thursday.

Four sets of concerts with two shows will be held Sept. 29-30, Dec. 8-9, Jan. 12-13 and April 26-27. All concerts will be held in A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall.

“Each of these residencies includes back-to-back nights of concerts and numerous master classes, open rehearsals and children’s concerts, and this year the festival will pay special tribute to the master composer Johannes Brahms by featuring one of his pieces on every concert,” said festival founder and artistic director Ara Gregorian.

In addition to Gregorian on viola, next week’s season-opening concerts include Jesse Mills and Hagai Shaham on violin, Melissa Reardon on viola and Edward Arron on cello. They will perform Brahms’ String Quintet in F

The 2011-2012 Next Generation Concerts will feature violist Nicholas Cords on Oct. 23 and cellist Michael Kannen on Jan. 22.

Other notable guest artists this season include Benjamin Hochman (piano), Maria Lambros (viola) and Amit Peled (cello) in December; Thomas Sauer (piano) and Colin Carr (cello) in January; Soovin Kim and Axel Strauss (violin), Hsin-Yun Huang (viola) and Ani Aznavoorian (cello) in April; and Robert McDonald and Keiko Sekino (piano), Elina Vähälä (violin), Krzysztof Chorzelski (viola) and Raman Ramakrishnan (cello) for a special festival-supporter celebration on Feb. 19.

“Our February celebration, with a special performance by some of chamber music’s current stars, is a great way, in addition to our concert season, for the festival to express its appreciation,” Gregorian said.

Additionally, the festival will present Children’s Residency V, a series of concerts March 19-21 for Pitt County Public School students, and a free Four Seasons Family Night, an interactive concert and event for children and families on March 20.
The first East Carolina Board of Trustees Athletics and Advancement Committee meeting had perhaps the most important Pirate in attendance.

ECU director of athletics Terry Holland was on hand for the committee’s first get-together Thursday at the East Carolina Heart Institute, and he heard mostly good news about the state of Pirates athletics from the five-member board, which was formed last summer and is chaired by Danny Scott.

After the introductory portion of the meeting, they moved to a closed session, with Holland and executive associate AD Nick Floyd present, before re-opening the session approximately a half hour later.

Facilities
Floyd said the team support building located next to the renovated women’s soccer stadium and one-season-old ECU softball stadium is scheduled to be completed in the spring. The building will house coaches offices and locker rooms for Pirate athletes.

Floyd also gave an update on the ECU basketball practice facility, saying $12 million of the $15 million goal for the Minges Coliseum expansion has been raised.

“(We’re) 80 percent there, and we all know that last 20 percent is the toughest to get,” Floyd said. “Everything is going extremely well on that end. ... Our focus is to complete that campaign over the next 6-to-8 months.”

Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring following ECU’s 2011-12 men’s and women’s hoops seasons. Floyd said the construction timeline is in the 13-14-month range, meaning the renovations, which include a new East Carolina athletics Hall of Fame, should be complete by the late spring or early summer of 2013.
“What we’re hoping is that it transforms that end of our athletic complex just like the Olympic sports venue has done to that end,” Floyd said, referring to the soccer, softball and track and field upgrades.

**Finances**
While the nation’s economy continues to struggle, ECU’s athletic revenue is showing no signs of slowing down, particularly football season ticket sales, which reached an all-time high of 24,188 this season.

With talk of a possible move to the Big East, Holland said selling the gameday, and overall ECU, experience to people who don’t know about it will be key if East Carolina athletics hope to continue moving forward on the field and in their profit margins.

“We’re trying to make contacts with everyone who can help us,” Holland said. “The real problem for us is telling our story. Most people do not know what we have here. ... We have to get them here. You have to experience a Pirate gameday, you have to walk around this medical complex, you have to walk around the campus to truly understand what this university’s all about.”

Contact Tony Castleberry at tcastleberry@reflector.com or 252-329-9591.
East Carolina's Michael Dobson (35) dives over Virginia Tech's J.R. Collins (42) for a touchdown during the first half in Greenville on Sept. 10, 2011. Photo by Associated Press

**East Carolina prepared for offense to grow up in CUSA**

**ECU stays patient with young starters as Conference USA opens**

By Brian Mull  
Brian.Mull@StarNewsOnline.com

East Carolina's inexperienced offensive line and backfield faced physical, athletic defenses in the first two weeks of the college football season, and the running game struggled, managing a paltry 1.6 yards per carry.

Second-year ECU coach Ruffin McNeill isn't concerned with his personnel after the losses to South Carolina and Virginia Tech. In particular, he's confident his offensive line, which features four sophomores, will develop into a "special group" together.

"They'll be fine. They've just got to hang in there," McNeill said in a phone interview Tuesday. "If we had some 'warmup games' against some directional schools it might have helped build some continuity, but our first two games were against top 12 competition. We didn't have much room for error."

The Pirates should find more room to run when they open Conference USA action against winless UAB on Saturday (3:30 p.m., WAAV-AM 980).
The Blazers allowed Florida and Tulane to rack up 5.4 yards per carry and 33 rushing first downs, and were outscored 88-10.

ECU spent its bye week focusing on fundamentals and technique, with the starting offense and defense often battling head-to-head. McNeill believes in infrequent substitutions during games on the offensive line, feeling it builds chemistry, similar to what a successful basketball team possesses.

The Pirates are big up front, averaging 302 pounds, but young.

Grant Harner, a 6-foot-6, 287-pound right tackle, started 12 games and made the Conference-USA All-Freshman team last season. Doug Polochak, in his sixth year of an injury-riddled career, emerged as a starting left guard in the final three games in 2010. He's the starting center now. The other three sophomores saw their first starting collegiate action in the first two games.

And the men they're opening the holes for are still feeling their way as well.

Jonathan Williams and Giavanni Ruffin combined for 1,231 yards last season. They're both gone. The leading returning running back is Michael Dobson, who had 62 yards in 2010.

So far, all those new faces have produced 35 rushing yards per game, 119th of 120 FBS teams in the nation.

Still, McNeill feels his team is playing hard, smart and fast. A year ago, the Pirates were penalized 103 times for 879 yards. Through two games this season, they're the least-penalized team in the nation (3 for 30 yards), including a penalty-free game against Virginia Tech, a first in school history.

"We just have to continue to press on and stay the course. I'm proud of the young men and the coaches, we just have to stay steadfast," McNeill said. "No plays matter this week from those first two games, whether they were negative, or whether they were positive plays."

Brian Mull: 343-2034
A half dozen university leaders from North Carolina have joined dozens of others in a plea to members of the congressional super committee crafting a plan for deficit reduction.

In a letter dated Sept. 21, more than 130 university leaders urge a balanced approach, including economic growth, tax reform and cuts to entitlement programs. It's no surprise that the presidents and chancellors warn about cuts to higher education.

"Imprudent additional reductions in domestic discretionary expenditures and other federal programs that train the next generation risk undermining our nation's human capital, infrastructure, and technological and scientific needs," the letter said.

North Carolina signers were Linda Brady, chancellor of UNC Greensboro; Richard Brodhead, president of Duke University; Philip Dubois, chancellor of UNC Charlotte; Gary Miller, chancellor of UNC Wilmington; Tom Ross, president of the UNC system; and Holden Thorp, chancellor of UNC-Chapel Hill.

The leaders point out that the country's past focus on education and research has paid big dividends. That's more important now than ever, they write.

"Education, scientific research, and innovation underpin our nation's economic growth in this era of enhanced global competitiveness," the letter said.

Two higher education groups joined in the plea: the Association of American Universities, and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities.

**UNC makes appeal on Rex**

The UNC Health Care System made a plea to lawmakers Thursday asking them not to sell Rex Healthcare after WakeMed's unsolicited $750 million bid this year.
A legislative panel looking to identify and sell surplus state assets considered the contentious issue but took no action.

In his presentation, Dr. Bill Roper, the CEO of UNC Health Care, listed all the reasons why a UNC committee rejected WakeMed's takeover bid, suggesting that Rex is critical to its mission.

Rep. Bill Brawley asked Roper whether UNC needed to own a hospital to train future doctors.

"We don't have to own a hospital," Roper responded. "There are some medical schools that don't. Those med schools that don't own a hospital are in much worse shape than we are."

Roper did make it clear that selling Rex could cost the state more money in the long run. The system gets $18 million in state appropriations in the current budget.

"I can promise you ... if, God forbid, you force us to sell Rex, we would definitely be back here next year asking for a whole lot more money from the state," he said.

WakeMed did not get a chance to present its case to the committee. "WakeMed is not a government property," committee Chairman Harold Brubaker explained afterward.

jane.stancill@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4559
Thorp: Football still a priority at UNC

Thorp, trustees still want a “highly competitive program” at UNC in wake of NCAA investigation, violations.

BY KEN TYSIAC - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL University of North Carolina chancellor Holden Thorp and Board of Trustees chairman Wade Hargrove said Thursday that the school remains committed to success in football, NCAA rules compliance and academic integrity.

Hargrove's opening speech at a regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting followed Monday's news that UNC gave itself two years of probation and other sanctions after admitting nine major NCAA violations.

"I wish to assure everybody that the Board of Trustees and this chancellor are fully committed to having a highly competitive football program," Hargrove said. "There is no plan, no talk, no designs of any kind whatsoever of de-emphasizing football at Carolina."

Hargrove said those overseeing the football program made mistakes, and that the university, its faculty, alumni and the taxpayers of North Carolina deserve better.

He also vowed that the school's review of academic issues related to the NCAA probe will be deliberate, thorough and fair. UNC recently concluded a study of its Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes and made a number of recommendations for improvement, including increasing staff and expanding faculty oversight.

Impermissible academic assistance by undergraduate tutor Jennifer Wiley was one component of the NCAA's investigation into academic fraud and impermissible agent benefits.

UNC also has announced that it is probing irregularities in independent studies courses as the fallout from the NCAA investigation continues. Julius Nyang'oro has stepped down as chair of the African and Afro-American Studies Department after failing to catch plagiarism in one football player's paper and teaching another player in an upper level course before that student took remedial English. Nyang'oro also hired a sports agent, Carl Carey, to teach a summer class.
"You have my pledge that we will do what it takes to correct any problems," Thorp told the Board of Trustees on Thursday.

Thorp also praised the job interim coach Everett Withers has done since taking over for Butch Davis, who was fired in July. Last week, Withers sent an e-mail to faculty members informing them of his commitment to have players succeed in the classroom and the community.

The team has won its first three games heading into Saturday's visit to No. 25-ranked Georgia Tech.

"We're moving forward with our program," Thorp said. "We're gaining momentum and we have every reason to believe that we will be nationally competitive and successful both academically and on the field."

The scandal and Davis' firing have divided fans, though, with some calling for Thorp's removal because Davis was not personally cited in the NCAA's Notice of Allegations.

But the UNC system's Board of Governors has reaffirmed its support of Thorp.

"It is the hope of the board that the differences of the past will be put aside," Hargrove said, "and that the Carolina family will continue to give its unqualified loyalty and support to the university and to all of its athletic and academic programs."

UNC on Monday announced that it is self-imposing two years of probation, reducing three scholarships in each of the next three years, vacating its eight wins each in the 2008 and 2009 seasons, and paying a $50,000 fine.

The Committee on Infractions, which is holding a hearing for UNC on Oct. 28 in Indianapolis, will decide whether to add more punishment as a result of the football program's nine major violations. Fourteen players missed at least one game and seven missed the entire season in 2010 in connection with the investigation, which began in June of last year.

UNC's probe of independent studies courses throughout the College of Arts and Sciences followed reports in The News & Observer and Charlotte Observer about Nyang'oro.

Last summer, athletes accounted for nine of the 10 independent study enrollments under Nyang'oro. Although the NCAA visited campus again last week, it's not clear if the NCAA is interested in the probe of African and Afro-American Studies.
But Hargrove said he expects a full review of any academic irregularities by UNC.

"Chancellor Thorp has assured the board that he will be no less diligent in identifying and correcting deficiencies in the university's academic programs than has been the case in the university's football program," Hargrove said.

ktysiac@charlotteobserver.com or 919-829-8942
Virginia Tech dorm becomes a learning experience

By Jenna Johnson

During his first week at Virginia Tech, Frank Shushok Jr. toured a 1960s-era residence hall that was being renovated as a resortlike facility, complete with movie theater, gym, gaming room and a salon with affordable spray-tanning. He was shocked.

“I am operating under a completely different mental model of what residence halls are supposed to be,” said Shushok, the associate vice president for student affairs who is entering his third year at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. A residence hall should be “a place where students live so they can learn.”
Shushok instead proposed creating a “residential college” where undergraduates, graduate students and faculty could live together in a facility dedicated to learning. It’s a time-tested idea, having debuted at Oxford and Cambridge universities hundreds of years ago and then been adopted at Ivy League and small liberal arts schools.

So in 2009, Tech officials halted the renovation of Ambler Johnston Hall for a month so they could revisit the design. The salon was one of the first things to go, replaced by a suite of faculty offices. Meeting rooms became classrooms. Eighteen revenue-generating student rooms were turned into two rent-free apartments for live-in professors.

The movie theater was allowed to stay, but it became “The Theater of Learning” where faculty lead discussions about foreign films and popular culture. The building also has “The Gaming Room of Learning” and “The Library of Learning,” where the door is kept open with a wedge labeled “The Doorstop of Learning.”

It might sound like some New Age gimmick, but simply pointing out learning opportunities can change the way students think about their living environment and invite faculty members to get involved, Shushok said.

“Where else at a college or university is a student going to spend more time than a residence hall?” he said.

Many universities have adopted elements of the residential college model in an effort to connect dorm life to the classroom, but most don’t mix freshmen with upperclassmen. Nearly all schools offer living and learning communities so students can enroll in classes with their dorm neighbors. Many schools, including American and Georgetown universities, encourage faculty members to live in dorms.

The University of Virginia established its first residential college in the 1980s, and many honors dorms operate this way. Recently, some large research universities, such as Baylor University in Texas and the University of Mississippi, have begun incorporating the idea into housing for all students.

This fall, the east wing of Tech’s Ambler Johnston Hall is home mostly to honors students: 150 freshmen; 170 sophomores, juniors and seniors; two graduate students; two professors; and a dog named Liam. A west wing will open next fall to house 800 students of all majors and another professor or two. Students will have to apply for a spot, and room-and-board rates are comparable to regular dorms.
**Documenting the experience**

Although the learning-focused environment is a natural fit for students in Tech’s honors program, some wonder whether it will fall apart when hundreds of regular students show up next year — or when the newness wears off. Some officials have questioned whether the university can afford to cut the number of student rooms to make way for free housing for professors or build dorms that don’t cater to what some students want, like salons and gyms, Shushok said.

Leaders of the project are carefully documenting the experiment in hopes of proving residential colleges can have a payoff, such as increasing retention rates or helping attract high-caliber students.

“There is some pressure on us because we have to show that this transforms the lives of students and the lives of faculty and the life of the university,” said Terry Papillon, director of Virginia Tech’s University Honors program.

Shushok hopes that students return to their rooms or floors year after year, creating a “multi-generational” neighborhood where seniors live next door to freshmen. Research has found that students often learn the most from their slightly older peers, he said.

The idea diverges from the norm of cloistering freshmen in their own buildings so they can awkwardly figure out college without annoying upperclassmen. After all, what junior or senior would want to be part of that process?

**An academic family**

The program is an opportunity for participants to feel like part of an academic family and to mentor younger members, said some of the students living in East Ambler Johnston. They gushed about the feeling of community they’ve built in just a month.

“I couldn’t tell you the names of my neighbors freshman year,” said Grace Mulholland, 19, a junior biology and psychology major from New Jersey. In most residence halls, students make an effort to make new friends the first few weeks of classes and then stop. “Here, everyone is still going out and meeting people.”

Plus, the students are united in wanting an intensely academic experience. They say they are less likely to hide their personalities, ambitions or crazy ideas, such as a proposal for “pant-less Fridays” so male students can strut around in makeshift kilts.
“People want this to be a place where’s it’s safe to be weird,” said Patrick Goley, 28, a junior electrical engineering major from Gaithersburg, who is co-president of East Ambler Johnston, along with Mulholland.

“It’s not that they’re weird, it’s that they are unique,” said Papillon, the honors director. “We want the students to feel like they can be who they will be.”

It can be hard to find that environment at a large public university like Tech, where some instructors are overloaded with the stresses of teaching, research and trying to get tenure.

The spirit of learning has been refreshing for Heather Gumbert and Robert Stephens, history professors who have been married for 13 years and live in Ambler Johnston with their dog. They attend most hall events, invite students over for dinner and find themselves staying up past midnight, discussing such things as quantum mechanics with students.

“This is why I decided to become a professor,” said Gumbert, an assistant professor of history who as an undergraduate lived in a residential college at Trent University in Canada.

Gumbert and Stephens said some faculty can’t even locate residence halls on campus, so this could be their gateway to meeting with students where they spend most of their time. Already more than 30 faculty members have volunteered to guest lecture at the hall, lead discussions and mentor students. They also donated most of the cookware in the “Kitchen of Learning,” where students gather to make soup on Friday nights and pancakes on Sunday mornings.

The real challenge for Tech will come next fall, when the second wing opens for 800 students who don’t have the honors program to rally around.

It will work as long as “we remain very clear and committed to the environment we’ve created,” Shushok said. “Let’s not let the shiny stuff get in the way of what we do here.”

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More college admissions officials are looking up potential students on Facebook and searching their names on Google, a new Kaplan survey finds.

More college officials learn about applicants from Facebook
By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY
Updated 21h 8m ago

The number of college admissions officials using Facebook to learn more about an applicant has quadrupled in the past year, underscoring the effect social media has on U.S. culture and academic life, a survey shows. Googling is nearly as prevalent.

The rise suggests a growing acceptance of the practice, despite concerns that it invades student privacy.

"This is the world we live in now," says Paul Marthers, vice president for enrollment at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. "If you were able to find out that somebody misrepresented themselves in their application, I think it could be used to help you make a decision."

Nearly a quarter (24%) of admissions officials at 359 selective colleges say they used Facebook, up from 6% the previous year, and 20% used Google to help evaluate an applicant, says the survey, conducted by Kaplan Test Prep. Kaplan, which did not identify participating colleges, queried 500 colleges listed in U.S. News & World Report rankings and in Barron's Profiles of American Colleges.
Of survey takers who went online, 12% say what they found "negatively impacted" the applicant's chances of admission. That's down from 38% in 2008, when 10% said they consulted social networking sites while evaluating students. Among offenses cited: essay plagiarism, vulgarities in blogs and photos showing underage drinking.

Marthers and others say such checks are not routine — it's too time-consuming, for one thing. But "if ever a post is brought to our attention, you can be certain we'll check it out," says Ray Brown, admission dean at Texas Christian University. He says he rejected one applicant who, he discovered through an anonymous tip, had posted pornographic images of herself online.

The debate over whether it's appropriate for colleges to look beyond what prospective students submit in their applications remains unsettled. Kenyon College explicitly forbids such activity. "We are not Luddites, mind you. We are trying to practice ethical admissions," says Admissions Dean Jennifer Delahunty. "Reading their Facebook pages is like, in another era, wire-tapping applicants' phones and reading their diaries."

Marthers notes, though, that information students post online is "fair game." Others offer a more positive reason for checking an applicant's Facebook profile. Wake Forest University Admissions Dean Martha Allman says her younger staffers like to see (an applicant's) "digital personality."

Although Syracuse University School of Information Studies professor Anthony Rotolo discourages efforts by admissions officials to "catch" applicants misbehaving online, he encourages them to evaluate a student's digital literacy skills. Given the importance of social media in society, a student with a strong online presence "could be considered a highly qualified applicant by a reviewer who understood the potential value."