THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU Police are investigating a reported sexual assault inside one of the residence halls.

Assistant Police Chief Dawn Tevepaugh, tells WITN the alleged assault occurred Saturday morning between 1:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. inside Tyler Hall.

We're told the victim, a woman, is a student and lives on campus, but not in that particular dorm.

Officers say it happened inside a room with a person the victim may have been familiar with.

Right now there is no information on a possible suspect, but officers say they're still investigating the claim. ECU police say alcohol is factor in this case.
ECU Notes: Researchers discover pattern of mimicry evolution in local millipedes

ECU News Services

Saturday, September 26, 2009

An intriguing example of evolution by natural selection has been demonstrated in a study involving Southern Appalachian Mountain millipedes, conducted by East Carolina University biologists Drs. Paul Marek and Jason Bond.

This summer, Bond, director of the newly formed ECU North Carolina Center for Biodiversity, published an article with his former doctoral student, Marek, in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA. Their study demonstrates that a large group of millipede species, located in the mountainous regions of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, has evolved a set of defense mechanisms and color patterns that serve as a warning to potential predators.

Over many years of evolution, the millipedes now have bright red and yellow colors and complex patterns that potential predators consider a danger signal. These blind millipedes also produce a dangerous, very toxic, hydrogen cyanide gas.

Bond notes that a single millipede "can secrete 18-fold the amount of hydrogen cyanide necessary to kill a pigeon-sized bird."

The study documents a form of mimicry known as "Müllerian mimicry" in seven species that vary considerably in their warning coloration and distribution. Named for the German naturalist Fritz Müller, this form of mimicry involves a biological system in which two or more species are harmful or dangerous and have evolved similar warning coloration or patterns in an effort to maximize the signal to predators.

"This is a remarkable example of natural selection and Müllerian mimicry," Bond said. "Most examples of this are found in the tropics and are limited to taxa like butterflies and frogs."

Marek is now a National Institutes of Health PERT postdoctoral research associate at the University of Arizona.

Author of 'The Last Samurai' to speak Oct. 6

Dr. Mark Ravina, author of "The Last Samurai: The Life and Battles of Saigo Takamori," will present the second lecture in this season's Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series at ECU.

Takamori was the inspiration for the character Katsumoto in the 2003 film titled "The Last Samurai," starring Tom Cruise. The film, which opened shortly after Ravina's book was published, was, as Ravina explains, "pure coincidence." Nevertheless, the Warner Brothers film piqued interest in Ravina's biography of Takamori, resulting in his appearance as a "guest expert" on CNN and on two History Channel programs: "History vs. Hollywood" and "The Samurai."

On Oct. 6, Ravina will give the North Carolina Lecture, co-sponsored by the ECU Asian Studies Program. He will discuss "Reflections on The Last Samurai," at 7 p.m. in Wright Auditorium.

Complimentary tickets for the lecture are available to ECU students, faculty and staff, and are $10 for the general public. Tickets are available through the ECU Central Ticket Office by calling 328-4788 or (voice/TTY) 252.328.4736. Copies of Ravina's books will be available for purchase in the lobby of Wright Auditorium before the lecture and may be signed immediately following the presentation.
Ravina is an internationally recognized authority on early-modern Samurai history and culture. He is associate professor of history and director of the East Asian Studies Program at Emory University, where he has taught since 1991.

In addition to "The Last Samurai," Ravina is the author of "Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan." Ravina focuses his research in the area of Japanese history, especially 18th and 19th century politics, and he is exploring the idea of transnational history, emphasizing interactions between nations and cultures.

For additional information, visit www.ecu.edu/voyages.

"Rebel" magazine nominated for award

ECU's student-run literary magazine, Rebel, is one of six national finalists for the prestigious Associated Collegiate Press (ACP) Magazine Pacemaker award.

The American Poetry Journal judged nearly 80 entries from all over the country in the category of four-year literary magazines. ECU's Rebel, an eight-time winner of the Pacemaker award, is the only finalist from North Carolina.

The winner will be announced before more than 2,500 students attending the 88th Annual ACP/College Media Advisers National College Media Convention set for Oct. 28-Nov. 1 in Austin, Texas.

The 2007-08 Rebel was also a Pacemaker finalist, and in addition won the 2009 Gold Crown Award, the top honor given to student publications by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. Rebel is a part of the ECU Office of Student Media.

The student staff of the 2008-09 Rebel included graphic design majors Amber Josey, Courtney McAuley and James Porter, and editor Christopher Schwing. ECU graphic design faculty member Craig Malmrose and Student Media director Paul Isom were advisers.

Content was generated through a juried competition and the works of 51 ECU students were chosen for inclusion in the publication. Winning entries included works of graphic design, sculpture, photography, ceramics, book arts, illustration, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, music and animation.

The Associated Collegiate Press is a nonprofit education membership association and a division of the National Scholastic Press Association.

Engelke named Eakin professor

Dr. Martha Keelher Engelke has been named the Richard R. Eakin Distinguished Professor in the College of Nursing.

Engelke will be a leader, role model and educator for baccalaureate, master's and doctoral students, mentor junior faculty and doctoral students in research, secure external funding and lead an interdisciplinary research team.

"Dr. Engelke shares her expertise and passion for community health nursing with nursing students in all program areas," Dr. Sylvia Brown, acting dean of the college, said. "She champions research activity in the College of Nursing by mentoring junior faculty, master's and doctoral students through grants, publications and the direction of theses and dissertation committees."

Engelke, professor and associate dean for research and scholarship in the college, was recognized in 2008 for her research in school health nursing when she received the Outstanding Research Award from the National Association of School Nurses. She currently holds a Kate B. Reynolds Healthcare Trust grant for her project "School-Based Interventions for Children with Chronic Illness." During her career, Engelke has secured more than $1.1 million in funding for the college of nursing.

Eakin, chancellor emeritus at ECU, served as chancellor from 1987 to 2001 and has been a longtime supporter of nursing. He was honored last year with the namesake of the College of Nursing's first endowed professorship. The endowment was made possible by a grant from the C.D. Spangler Foundation Inc. and matching funds from the state's Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund.

Road race to benefit breast cancer services
Runners and walkers of all ages can lace up their sneakers Sunday, Oct. 4, for the inaugural Pink Ribbon 5K and Fun Run/Walk to benefit the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center at ECU.

The events start at 1:30 p.m. at Metrics in Indigreen Industrial Park in Greenville. There will be a 5K road race and 1-mile walk for all ages and a dash for young children.

Entry fee for the 5K is $20 if postmarked by Monday, and $25 afterward and on race day. Entry fee for the 1-mile walk is $15 and $5 for the dash. Entry fees include a T-shirt for the first 100 entrants.

For more information or to register, contact Kip Sloan at 355-3180 or visit ecrun.org. Online registration is also available at http://active.com.

Upcoming Event:

Friday through Oct. 6 — “The Crucible” by Arthur Miller, presented Oct. 1-6 in McGinnis Theater by the ECU Loessin Playhouse. Performance times are as follows: 8 p.m. Oct. 1-3 and 5-6; 2 p.m. Oct. 4. Website: www.ecuarts.com Contact: McGinnis Theatre Box Office, 328-6829; ECU Central Ticket Office 1-800-ECU-ARTS.

See www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.

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Monday, September 28, 2009

Our tendency is to outfit our sports heroes with impenetrable armor.

Whether they’re great players or great coaches, our habit is to take what we see and hear from them and multiply it tenfold to make them seem invincible and otherworldly.

Yet we don’t truly appreciate them until something real, something off the field and outside the stadium, challenges that indomitable aura and transforms our heroes into regular people again.

Even though East Carolina football assistant Thomas “Rock” Roggeman has never sought the spotlight or the tag of hero, he has been quietly idolized by ECU football players for five years. Rock has his own suit of armor, a throwback football mentality that makes him appear untouchable.

His diagnosis with cancer a few months ago challenged that notion, replacing his armor with a reminder that even the toughest of football men are, in fact, human beings.

The ECU football team which has been more lackluster than brilliant in its start to the 2009 season got its call to arms on Saturday, and it came from Rock.

The Pirates’ defensive tackles coach who refused to leave his post through summers drills and the opening leg of the regular season is now forced by his illness to concentrate on his own battle, not the one inside the hashmarks of the gridiron.

Players are programmed to forget losses like those suffered by the Pirates at West Virginia and North Carolina in recent weeks, but being human beings themselves, ECU players will not likely forget about Rock until he’s back in his football comfort zone again.

Because no one knows yet when that will be, the man born in South Bend, Ind., and who played at Notre Dame as a nose guard in the early 1980s, gave his players a season’s worth of Roggeman intensity and passion before the Pirates beat UCF over the weekend.

After enduring the combination of coaching and chemotherapy for a couple of months, the pregame speech Rock delivered to ECU players very likely required every ounce of energy in his body, but that probably isn’t far from one of Rock’s regular football days anyway.

Cancer doesn’t care about football. It won’t wait around for anyone. There is never a good time for it to show up in anyone’s life.

That doesn’t mean it can’t be an inspiration.

The disease is a part of everyone’s life, whether they like it or not, and at one time or another it will change everyone, directly or indirectly, but not always for the worst. My family watched helplessly as it claimed the life of my father, but a decade later the same family was strengthened immeasurably when my mother survived it.

Right now, the disease is changing the entire ECU football family.

The way it changes that family is still up to the men who wear the jerseys, the uniforms which Roggeman urged the players to appreciate and respect before they charged onto the field inside Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, where
the coach was undoubtedly proud of the uncompromising effort it took to break a two-game losing streak.

With the words of the man quite literally ringing in their ears, ECU won one for the Rock. It might have been the greatest rallying cry in ECU history.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9595.

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Roggeman, who's battling cancer, inspires Pirates in victory

By Nathan Summers

Sunday, September 27, 2009

East Carolina entered Saturday’s game with emotions so high that even some veteran players admitted to taking the field with goose bumps before the Pirates took on UCF.

Though they might not have outwardly said they played for defensive tackles coach Thomas “Rock” Roggeman, many of them undoubtedly did. Roggeman, diagnosed last summer with cancer, has been coaching through his treatments all season.

But word came after the Pirates’ 19-14 victory that Roggeman’s situation is serious enough to likely require the coach to be hospitalized Monday.

The assistant coach, who has been with head coach Skip Holtz since the beginning of Holtz’s tenure in 2005, didn’t leave the team without making one big impression before Saturday’s game. Roggeman gave what players described as a stirring pregame speech, one that reminded the team what it meant to be a part of ECU football.

“Passionate is not even one-tenth of what describes coach Rock,” tight end Rob Kass said. “His whole life, his whole being is football. We appreciate every ounce that he gives us. We appreciate the emotion that he gives us. A lot of people know that he’s going through a tough time right now, but we know that he’s fighting.”

Kass said he couldn’t say if there was ever a game he was more charged up to play in following the speech, saying Roggeman challenged the team to remember what it means to play the game for one another.

Holtz described the game as highly emotional because of the undercurrent of Roggeman’s illness.

“With everything that Rock Roggeman is going through right now, I had Rock speak to the team before the game, and it was a really emotional game,” a choked-up Holtz said after the game. “He’s got a tough fight.”

According to Holtz, Roggeman will require more aggressive treatment.

ECU quarterback Patrick Pinkney called Roggeman and his speech an inspiration.

“A lot of people don’t get the opportunity to do what we do,” Pinkney said. “Coach Rock, what he’s going through is an inspiration to us. He’s fighting for his life, and that’s more than the game of football. We’re playing for him.”

Pinkney’s big block

When wide receiver Dwayne Harris lines up in the wildcat formation, Pinkney must often take on more of a role than just observer, and that showed in Saturday’s win.

With the Pirates having driven to the UCF 25-yard line Saturday, Pinkney stepped aside when Harris lined up under center, but Pinkney kept his head in the game. As Harris rumbled toward the end zone on a run play, Pinkney turned blocker, pinching his man toward the inside as Harris bounced out to the left toward the end zone for a key touchdown.

“He set the block up,” Pinkney said of Harris. “When he made the cut, they didn’t see I was out there, so when he came on the outside, I had the advantage to get a good block.
“When you think about it, they always make blocks for our running backs, so to make a block for a score, it’s very big.”

Red zone

ECU once again found the toughest yards to get on offense against UCF were the last couple.

The Pirates made five trips to the red zone Saturday and scored three times, but two of those were field goals, including a drive in which the Pirates had a first-and-goal from the UCF 2-yard line and could not find the end zone.

“I don’t know if it’s a thing where the more you talk about it the more you start to stress about it,” Holtz said of his team’s 3-for-5 night in the red zone. “From a passing game standpoint, we can’t get the ball inside the 5-yard line twice without getting a touchdown. You can’t keep doing that to your football team. We’re making this too hard on ourselves.”

Holtz noted the near 300-yard game from quarterback Patrick Pinkney, the big day from receiver Dwayne Harris, the 88 rush yards from running back Brandon Jackson and a 10-of-17 effectiveness in converting third downs, but said there are still many questions to be answered about the character of the ECU offense.

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ECU debates public-private partnerships

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Friday, September 25, 2009

The ECU Board of Trustees is considering the possibility of public-private partnerships for future capital projects.

The board briefly discussed the idea, which has been a priority of trustee Mark Tipton, at its regular meeting Friday at the East Carolina Heart Institute.

Public-private partnerships could give the university the opportunity to start projects before funding would be available from the General Assembly. Few capital projects are expected to be funded in the coming years, as the state budget continues to be extremely tight.

Tipton wants the facilities and resources committee to study the possibilities available to the university for working with the private sector to erect buildings that likely would be leased to the university for a period of time and ultimately signed over to ECU.

A priority project for administrators has been a new life sciences and biotechnology building to house a diverse set of programs from several colleges. The building has been denied funding from the Legislature for three straight years.

Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies Deidre Mageean said the facility would allow for partnerships between the various colleges of the university to produce students who would be primed for the workforce. The building and the projected programs that would be housed there would create jobs for the region, she said.

The university received preliminary planning funds for the building.

Tipton wants the board to establish working relationships with the private sector that would allow the university to expand without having to wait for state funding on certain projects.

"We have to stop thinking on the historical side of how we get money," Tipton said.

The board also briefly discussed a new initiative from the University of North Carolina system that will place more emphasis on retention and graduation rates.

UNC System President Erskine Bowles said this week that enrollment growth funding, a huge source of funding for ECU, will be tied to retention and graduation rates at the state's public universities in the future. Exactly how the funding will be tied to those rates is unclear.

ECU's retention rate of 78.7 falls short of the UNC General Administration required rate of 79 percent, Associate Provost Austin Bunch said at a meeting of the academic affairs committee Thursday.

Bunch said the retention rate required by UNC General Administration is expected to increase from 79 percent to 81 percent next year and ECU has to be prepared for it.

Trustee Robert Brinkley pointed out a study that concludes that ECU graduates more students than would be expected based on the SAT scores and GPAs of entering freshmen. UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State graduate fewer students based on their requirements than they should, he said.

This idea should be presented to General Administration to illustrate that ECU is doing a good job with the kind of
students it accepts due to its mission of access, Brinkley said.

A new retention task force is working on ways to keep students at the university, including a plan for more tutoring opportunities, better advising practices and more diverse classes for freshmen.

Administrators are considering changes to living arrangement requirements for freshmen as well.

Due to an overabundance of students, some freshmen have been assigned to housing off campus and those students have not done as well as students assigned to live on campus.

Freshmen students who were assigned to off-campus housing had a retention rate of 63.7 percent in 2008 compared to an 80.1 percent retention rate for students who were assigned to live on campus.

The average GPA of freshman students on campus was 2.59. Students who were assigned to off-campus housing had an average GPA of 2.02.

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In the spotlight, rabbi gets to work

GREENVILLE -- It's 9 p.m. on a Thursday night, and Rabbi Alysa Stanton still has nine phone messages to retrieve from her office answering machine.

She began her day at a 7 a.m. breakfast sponsored by the city's Human Relations Council and has been working in her half-unpacked office at Congregation Bayt Shalom since. Over the course of the day, she met with synagogue members, taught an adult education class and planned for today's Yom Kippur service.

As the world's first black female rabbi, Stanton, 45, has been inundated with publicity. The London Guardian wrote a story about her. All the Israeli papers featured her. So did The New York Times, the Cleveland Plain Dealer and the Denver Post.

Stanton, who was ordained after completing her studies at Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in June, dismisses the buzz.

"If I was the 50,000th African-American woman rabbi, I would still be doing what I'm doing," she said. "I keep my eyes on my job and on what God has called me to do."

Instead of talking about herself, she prefers to talk about a new Jewish year and a renewed commitment to community involvement -- themes that echo the reflection and introspection that Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are known for.

But as she works to provide a meaningful Jewish experience for Greenville's 60 or so Jewish families, Stanton also offers proof that the South, and the Jewish presence within it, is no longer what it used to be.

Finding a faith

Stanton was born in a Pentecostal family in a mostly Jewish suburb of Cleveland. She began her own spiritual quest beginning at age 9, trying various Christian denominations and exploring some Eastern religions.

At 11, her family moved to Denver. Stanton continued her spiritual quest, eventually picking up an undergraduate degree in psychology and a master's of education in counseling and multiculturalism from Colorado State University.

There was no defining moment that led her to become a Jew, Stanton said. Rather, it was a long and winding journey. In 1987, she converted, and despite a busy private practice as a licensed psychotherapist, she found herself involved in the multiple ways Judaism forms a way of life.

In Colorado, she served as a part-time chaplain and cantorial soloist and taught religious school.
"Over the years, people would say, 'You should apply [to rabbinical school],'" she said. "But one doesn't just uproot their life and start a new career."

Eventually, though, that's exactly what she did.

Alongside her now 14-year-old adopted daughter, Shana, Stanton moved to Cincinnati for rabbinical school and spent one year in Israel.

She took on piles of student debt, and, in Israel, threw her daughter into an alien environment where she endured racial taunting. But the two pulled through.

As a student rabbi, Stanton served for a while in Dothan, Ala.'s Temple Emanu-El. The Southern Jewish experience -- Jews have lived in the South since at least 1695 -- appealed to her. When Jews from Greenville's only synagogue posted a job opening, she applied.

Growing a synagogue

Until 1975, Greenville's six Jewish families traveled to Kinston, Rocky Mount or New Bern to worship in a synagogue. That year, they decided to form their own.

With the growth of East Carolina University and its medical school, more Jews began arriving from all corners of the country. Members of the nascent synagogue bought a house and recruited a rabbi.

By 1992, the community had outgrown the house and sold the building to the next new community in town: a group of Hindus. Meanwhile, members of Bayt Shalom bought a funeral home near the campus and refurbished it into a synagogue.

Hiring a leader

As the only synagogue in town, Bayt Shalom affiliated with both the Reform and Conservative branches of American Judaism. Last year, when its rabbi announced he was leaving, the congregation set up a search committee and looked at candidates from both denominations.

The congregation could only offer a 20- to 25-hour-a-week position. But it was a relaxed place where people viewed other members as extended family.

Two finalists were flown in. Stanton, a Reform Jew, impressed the congregation most.

She brought two qualities the synagogue wanted: She was adept at dealing with a diverse group of people of different ages and backgrounds, and she was really good with kids.

"The issue of her being an African-American was not discussed," said Michael Barondes, president of the synagogue. "It was a non-issue."

New face of Judaism

American Jews were once an exclusive group of European immigrants. But of the 6 million American Jews today, about 200,000 to 250,000 are non-white, said Ira Sheskin, director of the Jewish Demography Project at the University of Miami. And the numbers of non-whites are increasing.
"American Jewry no longer comprises an ethnicity," said Leonard Rogoff, a Chapel Hill historian. "If you go into any synagogue, you're going to see Asian Jewish kids, Hispanic Jewish kids."

Recently, another black rabbi made the news because of his family ties. Rabbi Capers Funnye is first lady Michelle Obama's cousin and leads an Ethiopian Jewish community in Chicago.

And while Stanton might have taken other jobs, she wanted to live in a smaller-sized city and liked being part of a tight-knit community. She hopes to continue her counseling work to supplement her income.

What members of the congregation did not anticipate was the flood of media inquiries their small, otherwise sedate congregation suddenly received.

Immediately following Stanton's ordination, members were inundated with calls and e-mails from family and friends all over the world asking for the back story on how Stanton was hired.

"We didn't realize it was going to be such an event," said Ann Schreier, vice president of Bayt Shalom. "The hype wasn't what we were expecting."

Keeping busy

By the time she started her job on Aug. 1, Stanton already had a to-do list.

On Fridays, she visited homebound Jews at nursing homes with her "Shabbat kit," a portable bag with two electric candles, a flask of sweet wine and a miniature loaf of challah bread traditionally eaten on the Sabbath.

During her first month, she met with three interfaith groups working in Greenville. She told them she was interested in breaking barriers and building bridges of cooperation, within her congregation and outside of it.

And she started planning for the High Holidays, with their hours-long litany of prayers and chants.

The synagogue has no other paid staff, so Stanton serves as rabbi, cantor, religious school director, adult educator and administrative assistant.

By Thursday of last week, Stanton acknowledged she didn't get any sleep the night before and spent only five minutes with her daughter, Shana.

"I have to practice what I preach and take care of myself," she acknowledged.

But Stanton is eager for the challenge and obviously wants to succeed.

"It's a new day for growth and change and honing what's already good," she said.

And with that, she went on to retrieve her phone messages.

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Pandemic flu kills N.C. child

RALEIGH -- For the first time since the outbreak began in May, a North Carolina child has died of pandemic H1N1 flu.

State health officials said today the child had an unspecified medical condition that heightened the risk of complications. The child’s age, gender and hometown will not be released because of privacy concerns.

“Obviously, this is a very sad announcement and a tragic case,” said Dr. Zack Moore, a medical epidemiologist with the state Division of Public Health.

Moore said the youngster’s death is a reminder of the dangers posed by the H1N1 virus, which generally inflicts mild to moderate illness, but can be much more dangerous for pregnant women and people with chronic illnesses such as asthma or diabetes.

Early next month, Moore said, the state expects to receive its first batch of H1N1 vaccine, which will initially be targeted to children and people at high risk of complications.

Supplies for seasonal flu vaccine are already available at doctors’ offices, public health clinics, pharmacies and other stores, and Moore encouraged people to get that protection now.

“Flu is impossible to predict, and the best thing we can do is get people to prepare themselves,” Moore said.

The state generally marks the start of the regular flu season on Oct. 1, with a peak of sickness in February or March.

Already this fall, H1N1 flu cases have far outpaced the typical February peak, and health officials are bracing for a double-whammy when seasonal flu starts circulating.

As of this week, 11 people have died from the pandemic flu, and 255 people have been hospitalized. Moore said the state will begin reporting all flu deaths — not just those confirmed by lab tests as H1N1 — starting Oct. 1.

He said the current count has under-reported the influenza death toll, because it has required the lab confirmation of H1N1 infection.

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College policy clouds gather

At first, some Latino advocates celebrated news that North Carolina community colleges would open their doors to illegal immigrants. Last week, they lamented that the opening was no more than a crack.

The Sept. 18 decision from the State Board of Community Colleges allows undocumented students to enroll in degree programs at all of the state's 58 campuses, but it won't take effect until at least next fall because of a slow-moving administrative rules review process. And if enough people object, the rule could face a vote by the General Assembly, which has the power to kill it.

If the rule is approved, undocumented students will get last priority for classes at a time when surging enrollments have filled classrooms to capacity. And out-of-state tuition of $7,700 per year will be out of reach for many of the children of low-wage workers.

"We cannot call this a victory," said Andrea Bazan, a longtime activist who has pushed for in-state tuition for illegal immigrants. "We are continuing to shut the doors for bright kids."

Last week, the rule began its journey through an administrative process that requires a 60-day public comment period. Once that is complete, citizens can make formal objections to the rule. If at least 10 do so, the rule must be voted on by the General Assembly when it convenes in May.

House and Senate Republican leaders said last week that they would organize an effort to oppose the rule. They said they weren't sure they would be successful, in light of past bills on the issue that have been killed by Democratic leaders.

But this time, Democrats such as Gov. Beverly Perdue and Lt. Gov Walter Dalton have publicly opposed the rule. And at the board meeting where it was approved, a crowd of protesters gathered, saying illegal immigrants should not get public resources during a recession.

"Next year's an election year, and the new rule is not a thing that the people of the state appear to want," said Sen. Phil Berger, an Eden Republican.

While the rule waits in limbo, some say the colleges should begin admitting undocumented students now. In May 2008, the decision to bar illegal immigrants took effect immediately. And the board has established that no state or federal law bars their admission.

"If overnight they can say, 'You can't come in,' why does it take so long to say you can?" said Tony Asion, head of the statewide Hispanic advocacy group El Pueblo. "We can't understand that."

Many changes

Board members say they want to make sure that the decision is legal and enforceable before they put it into practice. In the past few years, the colleges have changed their policies on admitting illegal immigrants several times.
"We have been so embarrassed by the multiple changes of course that we don't want to take any risk," said Dr. Stuart Fountain, a board member from Asheboro who led the effort to craft the new policy.

If enrollment growth continues at its current pace, however, many classes will be filled before undocumented students can enroll.

Under the proposed rule, illegal immigrants can be given seats only after legal residents get spots.

Last academic year, the state's colleges added about 15,000 full-time students, about 7 percent growth. System-wide numbers for this year are not yet available, but at Wake Tech, more than 18,000 students applied this fall, 20 percent growth over last year.

Of those, only about 8,000 actually registered for classes. "What happened to the other 10,000?" said Wake Tech spokeswoman Laurie Clowers. "Many of them, we believe, just couldn't get the classes they wanted."

Clowers said 14,000 students are on a waiting list for the nursing program.

'A federal issue'

Board members said they did the best they could with a contentious issue. They said they could not ignore concerns that illegal students would take spots from legal residents.

Board member Allen Wellons, a Smithfield lawyer, said he would have liked to do more for undocumented students, many of whom came here as young children. He said he hoped for a policy at least in line with the state's university system, which does not give illegal immigrants lower priority, and would eventually like to offer in-state tuition to undocumented students under 21.

But Wellons said the issue is too complex, and too emotional, for the board to make much headway.

"This is a federal issue," he said. "Our country should stand up and do what is right. We have used the labor that Hispanics have provided without repaying them. It's not something that can be addressed by a community college board."

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