THE DAILY CLIPS

October 2, 2009

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
ECU School of Education receives $1 million grant

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, October 01, 2009

The East Carolina University College of Education was awarded a federal Department of Education grant this week to improve teacher preparation and teacher residency programs.

The grant of more than $1 million is to boost support for new and prospective teachers.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the award of $43 million for 28 new five-year Teacher Quality Partnership grants to universities across the country to improve instruction in struggling schools. The grants are intended to reform traditional university teacher preparation and teacher residency programs.

“The Teacher Quality Partnership grants will improve student academic achievement by strengthening teacher preparation, training and effectiveness and help school districts attract potential educators from a wide-range of professional backgrounds into the teaching profession,” Duncan said.

ECU will use the grant, which is expected to reach $9 million over a five-year period, to fund a partnership between the College of Education, the College of Arts and Sciences, Greene County Schools and Pitt County Schools.

Ellen Dobson, interim director of communications and marketing in the College of Education, said the program will be aimed at prospective and new teachers for various activities that will improve clinical experiences.

The program will begin with prospective teachers at ECU and continue as they begin teaching if they get positions in Pitt or Greene counties.

Research shows that teacher quality is the most important factor in improving student achievement, according to the Department of Education.

Through an additional $100 million provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a second slate of Teacher Quality Partnership grants will be announced early in 2010.

ECU was the only North Carolina university to receive the grant in the first round of announcements.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxn.com or (252) 329-9565.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
N.C. college students face health insurance mandate

By Josh Humphries  
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, October 01, 2009

Public university students in North Carolina will be required to have health insurance next year.

Students across the University of North Carolina system will have to prove coverage or participate in a UNC insurance program.

Beginning in the fall of 2010, around 5,400 students at East Carolina University are expected to participate in the “hard waiver” program that will cover students who do not have individual policies or are not covered by their parents, said Julie Poorman, director of financial aid at ECU.

Officials are still developing the program and the cost has not been determined but it is expected to be in the range of $500-$700 per year for each student. The cost of the insurance will be added to the overall cost of attendance to each UNC school, much like a residence hall fee or a meal plan fee, Poorman said.

The current standard annual cost of attendance at ECU is $16,405 for in-state students and $27,239 for out-of-state students, according to materials distributed to the ECU Board of Trustees last week.

“The point of a hard waiver is if a student cannot prove that they have insurance we will sign them up for insurance and they will be charged for it,” Poorman said. “It has been my experience after doing this for 27 years that it only takes one unexpected accident, and you are in deeper than you can climb out.”

The cost of the insurance, with benefits to be announced later, is expected to remain relatively low since most of the subscribers will be healthy young adults.

UNC administrators are working with vendors and a final plan is expected by mid-January.

The plan is expected to provide up to $100,000 in coverage and would be similar to employer-based plans. It would cover students at any time, whether they’re at school or away.

ECU was one of five UNC system schools to participate in a voluntary model where students could purchase the insurance. The cost for twelve months of health insurance coverage at ECU will decrease from the 2009-10 voluntary plan of $1,294 and the charges will be divided across two semesters.

In 2008-09 a total of 424 students purchased the plan. So far, 240 students have purchased the voluntary plan for 2009-10.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.
'The Crucible' staged at ECU

By Kelley Kirk
The Daily Reflector

Friday, October 02, 2009

McCarthysim and accusations of witchcraft appear to be an incongruous comparison, but author Arthur Miller disagreed.

He felt the two were appropriately paired, especially since Miller was accused of un-American activity — a modern-day witch hunt — during the years of Sen. Joseph McCarthy in the early 1950s. Miller, and more than 300 actors, directors and writers were blacklisted by the U.S. Government, many of whom never worked again.

Miller wrote his play "The Crucible" about the 17th century witch trials in Salem, Mass., as a comparison to what was happening in the United States with the accusations of communism.

The ECU/Loessin Playhouse presents Miller's "The Crucible" at 8 p.m. daily through Tuesday in McGinnis Theatre. The Sunday show will be at 2 p.m.

In the play, several young girls are caught conjuring the dead. To avoid punishment, they accuse each other of witchcraft, which leads the village into a paranoid frenzy. Arrests are made and convictions are upheld, resulting in the deaths of several people.

"The Crucible" is based on those real events in Salem but was a direct response to McCarthy's "witch hunt" for communists in the United States.

"I tried to de-emphasize that. Miller took a lot of liberties with the facts," said the play's director Greg Funaro.

Funaro did considerable research into the historical events of Salem, only to discover that Miller's allegorical reference to McCarthyism was erroneous. The House Committee on Un-American Activities did discover communists in the United States, but there were no witches ever discovered in Salem. Therefore, drawing the parallel between the two events isn't accurate, according to Funaro.

The ages of the girls in "The Crucible" also were changed to allow for a love interest between Abigail and John Proctor. During the actual events in Salem, Mass., Proctor was more than 60 years old and Abigail was just 11.

"So, that there is any love story was entirely the playwright's contrivance. But it's a given that the playwright is going to take some liberty and license," Funaro said.

Despite the historical misrepresentations, Funaro said that "The Crucible" is always relevant. A threat to our society, whether real — as during the McCarthy years — or imagined — as during the Salem Witch trials — is a fair portrayal of events today.

"It doesn't matter what your political or social leanings are, the audience can read into it what they will," Funaro said.

Deputy Governor Thomas Danforth plays a pivotal role in the "The Crucible's" events. When he's presented with the possibility that the girls may be lying, he must make a decision on how to handle that information.

Professional actor and New York resident David Aston-Reese has returned to ECU to play Danforth.

"It's just one of those roles you dream about. Usually the bad guys are the best roles in plays. And I guess you could call the Judge a bad guy. He's, at the very least, misguided," Aston-Reese said.
Judge Danforth secretly seems to know that the witch trials are a lie but is unwilling to release any of the prisoners for fear of being viewed as weak.

"In the way, he has a problem, which is presented by John Proctor. There is the uncomfortable prospect that the children are lying and he has to deal with this problem," Aston-Reese said.

Regular patrons of ECU's productions have seen Aston-Reese as The King in this summer's "Big River" and Prospero in "The Tempest" in 2007. His off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway credits include leads in "Peer Gynt" and "King Lear" at Classic Stage Company and "Julius Caesar" at the American Globe Theatre.

Aston-Reese and his wife, Eli Michaels, own the Bird-on-a-Cliff Theatre Co., a nonprofit theater organization in Woodstock, N.Y. The company also has been performing and producing the Woodstock Shakespeare Festival in New York since the early 1990s.

The students in "The Crucible" are afforded the opportunity to learn through example with Aston-Reese as part of the cast.

"He's a terrific colleague. When you have an actor like that, who is so gifted technically and such a good person, it teaches students to develop their craft and their generosity of spirit by watching how he works," Funaro said.

Contact Kelley Kirk at kkirkswindell@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9596.

If you Go!

What: "The Crucible"

When: 8 p.m. today through Tuesday, except Sunday when the show will be at 2 p.m.

Where: McGinnis Theatre

Cost: $8-$12

Call: 328-6829

Visit: www.ecuarts.com

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
Marching orders

For those who are inclined to believe the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has too many highly paid bureaucrats doing too little work, Exhibit A might now be a well-meaning program to help deployed soldiers of the National Guard and the Army Reserves. U.S. Rep. David Price of Chapel Hill undoubtedly believed he was doing a good day's work when he slipped $10 million into the federal budget for an effort called the Citizen Soldier Support Program.

The idea was that the university would develop ways to help soldiers in the guard and the reserves and their families cope with the challenges of service. That kind of support is available for full-time military personnel, but it's not so easy to find for part-time soldiers, whose lives are disrupted when they're called to duty. Jobs are put on hold, children are often confused because of the absence of a parent, marriages are disrupted. And when that soldier returns, adjustment is difficult.

Price even thought the program might set a national example. As indeed it should.

Yet after four years, and some $7.3 million spent, the head of the state's National Guard says he recently received the first service from the program -- a database of mental health care providers in the state who have helped people with problems such as post-traumatic stress that are associated with the military.

Maj. Gen. William Ingram, the head of the guard, says he's been to a lot of meetings and listened to a lot of jawboning and seen a lot of paperwork. But not much else has happened. Well...some things have happened. A quarter of the funding is going for overhead. Four employees out of eight full-time are making more than $100,000 a year, and travel and expense reimbursements have run to $76,000 for a deputy director who works out of northern Virginia but comes to Chapel Hill sometimes. Oh, and there was the $300,000 plus for an outside consultant.

UNC-CH Chancellor Holden Thorp is appropriately attentive, saying in an understatement that the program is "seriously flawed." And then there's the comment of one of the associate vice chancellors on the campus, who said, "In six months to a year, we'll be in the right place." Such a pace cannot be what Price had in mind, not given that so many of these service members are in need of help right now.

Hurry up and wait

It must be said that some training advances have been made, as a News & Observer letter-writer noted in an impassioned defense of the program. Price also believes the expenditure is one that will have dividends. But there should have been more results by now.

In the military, soldiers used to call this kind of thing "situation normal, all fouled up," or a snafu. The university's internal review found that not much has been done directly related to the program's mission. That review follows recent findings that many schools in the UNC system are top-heavy and over-titled, with duties under-defined. In this case, because this program is supposed to help the men and women in our military, the inefficiency is all the worse.
The university doubtless is operating with good intentions, but without an appropriate sense of urgency pointing toward concrete results. Thank goodness the soldiers they are supposed to serve don't share that attitude. Let us hope the UNC officials charged with this mission begin to stand at attention.
Colleges learn to live with social media

Each entering class more connected than last, but some schools worry about privacy, inappropriate contacts

By Childs Walker | childs.walker@baltsun.com

September 30, 2009

The newly admitted Johns Hopkins freshman discovered that he was the only member of this year's class from Arkansas. So he joined the university's Facebook site for recently enrolled students, where he mentioned often that he loves sweet tea. By the time he reached campus in late August, he had a first-night sipping date with three fellow tea lovers.

For admissions counselor Daniel Creasy, that story sums up how social media have changed the way colleges recruit, enroll and orient new students.

"Before they ever get to campus they can put their shoes into what it feels like to be a Hopkins student," said Creasy, who steers the university's use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media in admissions. "I hear from people all over campus that with every progressive year, the newest class is the most together and connected group that has ever showed up. They've already known each other for months."

Facebook and other social media sites have invaded college admissions in a big way. But the great rush to use social media also raises questions about privacy and appropriate relations between administrators and students. Desperate applicants might attempt to improve their admissions chances by "friending" counselors. Conversely, counselors might use social media profiles to search for red flags on certain candidates or to assemble information for targeted recruiting pitches. In 2008, a company created false Facebook sites for many universities in hopes of grabbing personal information for marketing purposes.

Though counselors agree that such uses aren't the norm, they don't always agree on what is appropriate and what isn't.

Admissions counselors see Facebook as a means to get information to prospective students but say it's more powerful than a virtual brochure. By attracting applicants and admitted students to fan pages, colleges hope to give them an early push toward building communities. The logic is that if students
make friends with fellow prospective students and get a sense of life on campus, they're more likely to enroll when the time comes.

For a college trying to improve its image and woo top students from more established competitors, one-to-one contact over Facebook might be a smart risk. For a selective and long-established university such as Johns Hopkins, those contacts are more trouble than they're worth.

Creasy said he receives personal friend requests from applicants but does not accept and instead nudges them to join the university’s fan page for prospective students. "My role is not to create a relationship at that stage," he said. "There are definitely students trying to game the system, but I think it's a small minority. Most of them are doing it as a way to get as much information as possible."

Type in the name of a university on Facebook, and dozens of pages - some official, some not - will pop up. Most Maryland colleges maintain some presence on Facebook and Twitter. The University of Maryland, Baltimore County is about to unveil a new social networking site for students that will incorporate their Facebook or MySpace profiles. At Stevenson University, Wild Stang, the school mascot, has its own Facebook page and serves as chief dispenser of information for prospective students.

In a survey of 401 colleges released recently by Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions, 71 percent of admissions officers said they or a colleague had received friend requests from students on MySpace or Facebook. More than 30 percent of colleges said they have or are developing policies on the use of social media in admissions.

Jessica Kraus, a junior public health major at Hopkins, said some of her peers have sent friend requests to admissions counselors, but she thinks it's a bad idea.

"I think this is crossing a barrier in college admissions that shouldn't be crossed. The admissions process should remain one that stays 'official,' not necessarily secretive, but definitely one that should be based on official documents and personal statements, rather than based on Facebook profiles," she said.

In a survey of students by Noel-Levitz, a Colorado-based higher education consultant, 70 percent said colleges should create some presence on social media sites and about 50 percent said they were comfortable with admissions representatives' contacting them through social media.

Hopkins does its best social media work between the time students are admitted and the time they arrive on campus, Creasy said. That's when Hopkins builds a new community through its restricted Facebook page and through other media such as blogs from current students. If the university does its job, top students will feel comfortable choosing Hopkins over other schools like Cornell or Brown.

Social media experts equate the process to reading online customer reviews of a new camera. They say it's simply the way young consumers are used to shopping.

"They're scrutinizers," said Mark Greenfield, director of Web services at the University of Buffalo and a popular speaker on the subject. "And they trust the network, what their social connections have to say, more than any institution."

Facebook provides a sense of comfort, students agreed.
"It is a great starting point for the students looking to find out more, and for others it's just a fun way to learn more about their future classmates and university," said Mandy Stein, a Hopkins junior who helps run the university's Facebook site for admitted students. "As one of the current students who answers their questions, I've enjoyed getting a little preview of the incoming classes and remembering when I was in their shoes, entirely confused about everything college-related. It's great to help calm those worries and get them excited about their school."

Stein said she hasn't encountered privacy concerns from students.

That's hardly surprising, said Brad Ward of BlueFuego, an Indiana-based Web consultant that works with colleges. Ward encourages admissions counselors to be informal.

"You can certainly take your tie off when you're talking on Facebook," he said. "I've never seen a student say, 'Can you be more professional with me on Facebook?'"

When Ward worked as a counselor for Butler University, he sent messages to individual recruits, wishing them luck on that night's game or inviting them to on-campus events if they lived nearby.

"You will find kids who feel like you've entered into their space," he said of privacy concerns. "But then there might be nine other kids who want that kind of interaction. Right now, I err on the side of serving those nine kids rather than the one."

Counselors who worry about sharing private information can create professional-only profiles or adjust safety settings so students can't see personal materials, he said.

Colleges are still experimenting with social media, so data on their effectiveness remain scarce. Many admissions officers are simply trying to keep up, but some say they've already seen tangible benefits.

David Burge, associate dean of admissions at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and an expert in using social media, said 91 percent of admitted students who create a profile on his campus' private network end up enrolling.

Creasy noted that 1,220 of the 1,350 members of Hopkins' freshman class joined the university's Facebook page. Though it might be a coincidence, admitted students from the class enrolled at a significantly higher rate than predicted by the university's statistical models.

College officials have to accept that once they establish a Facebook destination for students, they forfeit control of what's said in the space. Students are as apt to trade dirt on poorly managed programs or boring social scenes as they are to promote a college's virtues.

"It's a double-edged sword, because you can't control the messaging," said Bob Herr, an admissions officer at Stevenson.

But admissions counselors seem to agree that Facebook is such a relentless force that they might as well create the places for students to gather.

"It's all about stimulating a conversation," Burge said. "If you can harness authentic talk about the positives and the negatives of your brand, then you'll be successful. If people say bad things, well, at
least they're interested."

Facebook has become so prevalent in admissions that a San Francisco company called Inigral has created an application, Schools on Facebook, that sells for $50,000 to $100,000. The application helps colleges to create central Facebook sites where students can post pictures, track on-campus activities and ask questions. It even culls through class schedules, living arrangements and club memberships to offer each student a list of potential friends.

"Facebook is the place to get an authentic representation of what college is all about," said Inigral President Mark Triest. "I think this generation of students lives life on Facebook. For them, it's simply a natural way to seek an authentic sense of the college experience."

Forget awkward get-to-know-you mixers on freshmen residence halls. If the software takes off, students could forge friendships with dozens of like-minded peers before ever setting foot on campus.

If that sounds eerily inhuman, you probably don't have a grasp on the elaborate social lives teenagers maintain without meeting face-to-face.

"They're on Facebook to develop a sense of belonging and community," Triest said. "They're just out there saying, 'Who's like me?'"

The one thing counselors seem certain about is that we'll all take social media for granted in the near future.

"I can see a world in four or five years where a Twitter account is a basic promotional tool for applying students," Creasy said. "I fear that world a bit, but really, who knows what's going to happen in five years?"

Copyright © 2009, The Baltimore Sun
October 2, 2009

M.I.T. Taking Student Blogs to Nth Degree

By TAMAR LEWIN

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Cristen Chinea, a senior at M.I.T., made a confession in her blog on the college Web site.

“There’ve been several times when I felt like I didn’t really fit in at M.I.T.,” she wrote. “I nearly fell asleep during a Star Wars marathon. It wasn’t a result of sleep deprivation. I was bored out of my mind.”

Still, in other ways, Ms. Chinea feels right at home at the institute — she loves the anime club, and that her hall has its own wiki Web site and an Internet Relay for real-time messaging. As she wrote on her blog, a hallmate once told her that “M.I.T. is the closest you can get to living in the Internet,” and Ms. Chinea reported, “IT IS SO TRUE. Love. It. So. Much.”

Dozens of colleges — including Amherst, Bates, Carleton, Colby, Vassar, Wellesley and Yale — are embracing student blogs on their Web sites, seeing them as a powerful marketing tool for high school students, who these days are less interested in official messages and statistics than in first-hand narratives and direct interaction with current students.

But so far, none of the blogs match the interactivity and creativity of those of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where they are posted prominently on the admissions homepage, along with hundreds of responses from prospective applicants — all unedited.

Not every admissions office has been so ready to welcome uncensored student writing.

“A lot of people in admissions have not been eager for bloggers, mostly based on fears that we can’t control what people are saying,” said Jess Lord, dean of admissions at Haverford College, which posted student bloggers’ accounts of their summer activities this year, and plans to add bloggers this spring to help admitted students hear about campus life. “We’re learning, slowly, that this is how the world works, especially for high school students.”

M.I.T.’s bloggers, who are paid $10 an hour for up to four hours a week, offer thoughts on anything that might interest a prospective student. Some offer advice on the application process and the institute’s intense workload; others write about quirkier topics, like warm apple pie topped with bacon and hot caramel sauce, falling down the stairs or trying to set a world record in the game of Mattress Dominos.

Posting untouched student writing — and comments reacting to that writing — does carry some risks. Boring, sloppily written posts do nothing to burnish an institutional image, college admissions officials say, and there is always the possibility of an inflammatory or wildly negative posting.

Pomona has considered having student bloggers, but so far has felt that the risks outweigh the benefits, said
Art Rodriguez, senior associate dean of admissions.

"Blogs can certainly help humanize the process," Mr. Rodriguez said. "The flip side is that a few anxious high school students may think and worry too much about what someone wrote on their blog, and present themselves in a slightly different way than who they really are. And there's always the concern about the political ramifications, that bloggers may open up an issue or topic that starts something negative."

But Mr. Lord of Haverford said prospective students’ interest in the summer bloggers calmed his worries.

"High school students read the blogs, and they come in and say 'I can't believe Haverford students get to do such interesting things with their summers,' " he said. "There's no better way for students to learn about a college than from other students."

Many high school seniors avidly follow student blogs at the colleges they are interested in, and post comments. Luka, one of dozens responding to Ms. Chinea, for example, wrote: "I didn't know about the anime club. I would have never guessed that people at M.I.T. are interested in anime. Oh well ... +1 on my 'Why should I go to M.I.T.' list."

M.I.T.'s student bloggers said they had read the blogs when they were applying, posted comments and connected with other applicants.

"I was blogging myself, almost every day, when I was in high school, and I read the M.I.T. blogs all the time," said Jess Kim, a senior blogger. "For me they painted a picture of what life would be like here, and that was part of why I wanted to come."

Ben Jones, the former director of communications at M.I.T.'s admissions office, began with a single blog by a student five years ago, at the dawn of the Facebook era, and noticed high school students responding right away. "We saw very quickly that prospective students were engaging with each other and building their own community," said Mr. Jones, who now works at Oberlin College, where he has added blogs to the Web site.

The M.I.T. student bloggers have different majors, ethnicities, residence halls and, particularly, writing styles. Some post weekly or more; others disappear for months. The bloggers are sought out as celebrities during the annual "Meet the Bloggers" session at Campus Preview Weekend.

M.I.T. chooses its bloggers through a contest, in which applicants submit samples of their writing. "The annual blogger selection is like the admissions office's own running of the bulls," said Dave McOwen, Mr. Jones's successor in the admissions office, in his message inviting applications.

This year, 25 freshmen applied for four new spots, and, Mr. McOwen said, it was hard to choose.

"You want people who can communicate and who are going to be involved in different parts of campus life," he said. "You want them to be positive, but it's not mandatory."

And not all posts are positive. Ms. Kim once wrote about how the resident advising system was making it impossible for her to move out of her housing — expressing enough irritation that the housing office requested that the admissions office take her post down. Officials refused, instead having the housing office post a rebuttal of her accusations; eventually, the system was changed.
But most of the blogs are exuberant, lyrical expressions of the joys of M.I.T. life, like last month’s post on returning as a sophomore:

“Something’s changed,” wrote Chris Mills. “Now you know what you’re in for, you know the sleepless nights and frustrations are never far away, but this knowledge can’t seem to remove the exhilarating smile on your face. And it’s in that masochistic moment that you realize who you are. That this is what you’re made for.”