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East Carolina probing possible noose at dorm

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University is investigating the appearance on campus of pieces of rope that may have been a noose.

On Sept. 19, a student reported finding what appeared to be a noose in the basement of Belk Hall, ECU Interim Vice Provost Todd Johnson said. ECU police removed a severed piece of cord or rope from the basement and are investigating whether it actually was a noose, Johnson said.

“There is some question about it, but we want to make sure that the police do a thorough investigation,” he said.

Police have surveillance video from the Belk basement and are interviewing students to determine whether there was a noose and, if there was, how it got there, Johnson said.

Police declined to release the Sept. 19 incident report on the finding, which Knight said is now evidence in the investigation.

The investigation should be complete by early next week, Johnson said.

The noose incident has been a subject of campus discussion for the last two weeks, said Black Student Union President Patrick Dixon.

Whatever the ECU police probe uncovers, Dixon said he hopes the matter will spark an open debate about race at ECU.

“I think the biggest problem with the campus is we don’t talk,” he said. “We don’t focus enough.”

The rope appeared on campus one day before protests supporting the “Jena six.”

ECU students rallied on Sept. 20 for six Jena, La., teenagers charged with counts ranging from assault to attempted murder after a December 2006 fight there. The fight followed months of racial strife in Jena, catalyzed by the hanging of nooses from a shade tree on the Jena High School campus.

Dixon said he hasn’t made up his mind about whether he thinks the ECU students did find a noose on Sept. 19. The appearance of suspicious rope the day before the Jena six rally is hard to chalk up to coincidence, he added.

“I’m hoping that that’s not the case,” he said. “At the same time, I’m going to be open to what the university investigation finds out.”

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NOOSE
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The Daily Reflector, Friday, October 5, 2007
The findings fuel growing concern that national weight-gain guidelines for pregnant women are outdated and don't take into account the nation's obesity epidemic.

By Cheryl Wittenauer
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Obese women can gain little or no weight during pregnancy — and even lose a few pounds — without harming their babies, new research suggests.

Obese mothers who put on less than the recommended 15 pounds were less likely to develop pregnancy-related high blood pressure or deliver by Caesarean section and more likely to have a normal-weight baby, the study showed.

The findings, in the October issue of Obstetrics & Gynecology, fuel growing concern that national weight-gain guidelines for pregnant women are outdated and don't take into account the nation's obesity epidemic.

The Institute of Medicine, which issued the weight guidelines in 1990, is about to consider changing them.

Dr. Raul Artal, one of the study's authors, said the fear has been that not gaining weight would hurt the fetus. “Not only were there no deleterious effects, but there are benefits,” said Artal of Saint Louis University School of Medicine, who supports changing the weight guidelines.

In an accompanying editorial, Dr. Patrick Catalano of Case Western Reserve University, noted that the current guidelines were written when the concern was low birth weights. Now it's shifted to rising obesity, he said.

Artal said pregnancy is one of the main causes of obesity in women.

Using information from birth certificates, the study analyzed the pregnancies of more than 120,000 obese women from Missouri to see how weight gain affected their blood pressure, C-sections and the baby's birth weight. Obesity increases a woman's risk of miscarriage and other serious complications such as gestational diabetes.

The study found that 23 percent of the obese women gained less than 15 pounds, 31 percent gained 15 to 25 pounds and nearly half gained more than 25 pounds. Those who gained less had better outcomes.

The researchers considered three levels of obesity based on body mass index, or BMI, and came up with optimal ranges of weight gain. For a BMI of 30-34.9, the best outcomes came with a weight gain of 10 to 25 pounds; gaining less than 9 pounds was best for a BMI of 35-39.9 and losing up to 9 pounds was best for those with a BMI over 40.

The study's strengths are its size — drawing from an entire state — and that it is the first to look at different levels of obesity, “not a lumping of all obese women together,” said Dr. Emily Oken, a Harvard Medical School professor and researcher on obesity, nutrition and weight gain in pregnancy.

The Missouri study found that the least-heavy obese women who lost weight were at somewhat higher risk to have a low birth-weight baby. However, they still benefited by having fewer other complications. Obese women who gain too much are also at risk for low birth-weight babies, Oken said, adding “It is a balance.” Artal said that occurs predominantly in obese women with high blood pressure.

Catalano said that because almost half of pregnant women gain more than the recommended amount of weight, encouraging them to stay within the current guidelines is a significant challenge. But Artal said he has found women are more likely to modify their behavior during pregnancy because of concern for their child.

Catalano suggested advising pregnant women to eat a balanced diet low in sugars and saturated fats and to get moderate exercise. He also recommended referring obese women to a nutritionist and urging patients to lose weight after they give birth to avoid problems in future pregnancies.

In the coming weeks, the Institute of Medicine, a private organization that advises the federal government, is expected to begin the lengthy process of gathering scientific evidence to decide whether the guidelines should be changed, said spokeswoman Christine Stencel.

Under the institute's 1990 guidelines, those with a "normal" body mass index — a combination of height and weight — are encouraged to gain 25 to 35 pounds. Women considered overweight have a lower target: 15 to 25 pounds. Women with a low BMI should gain more weight during pregnancy — up to 40 pounds.
ACC keeps high-tech eye on football officials’ performance

By Aaron Beard
The Associated Press

GREENSBORO — Jerry McGee has officiated enough college football games to know that he’s probably missed a few calls. No matter how much he prepares to get it right on plays decided by inches and over in a split second, he knows it could happen again.

But should he miss a call, McGee won’t have to wait long before he hears about it from the ACC and its high-tech officiating review team.

“We’re like players and coaches,” said McGee, whose day job is serving as president of Wingate University. “We want to be perfect on every single play and every single call. That has to be our goal and any tool that helps us get better is welcome.”

The league’s 12 teams are scattered across a 1,500-mile footprint, but an ACC Big Brother is watching almost every call — from false-start flags to no-calls on apparent holding penalties to rulings on whether acrobatic catches in the back of the end zone are touchdowns.

The work takes place in a room that’s tucked away on the second floor of the ACC headquarters and filled with high-definition televisions, DVRs and computers. The league records televised games and charts penalties and controversial plays, then forwards them for evaluation as part of a midweek compilation that is eventually sent to officials and coaches.

The idea is simple: The league wants to correct mistakes and reinforce positives as it works to standardize calls and increase accountability.

“What we now have is really a tool to be utilized like a coach utilizes video,” commissioner John Swofford said. “When you can see something immediately, whether it something you’ve done or someone else has done, you can learn from it.”

“The desired result is we continue to get better and better in terms of officiating. It’s what our players and coaches want, what our fans want and what we want.”

The program has its fans among the league’s 12 coaches. Maryland coach Ralph Friedgen said the ACC should do “anything we can do to make our officials the best in the country.” Wake Forest coach Jim Grobe said the work fosters trust between coaches and officials.

“I think we have a caring group, a group of guys that want to get it right,” Grobe said. “They’re just like coaches: they make mistakes and they’re trying to learn from mistakes each week. It’s good for a football coach to be able to get the same information they’re getting from week to week and see their points of emphasis and how they’re getting better. I think it makes us more comfortable on Saturday when we know that they’re really working at it.”

In past years, the ACC looked at footage it had on videotape or whatever league coaches submitted for review or clarification. But the league, as it renovated its offices, invested in technology aimed at providing faster feedback after each week’s games.

Doug Rhoads, who became the league’s coordinator of football officiating in January, scouted similar setups in the NFL and the Big Ten and Big 10 conferences before the ACC designed its command center. It includes $36,000 worth of flat-panel TVs and other video gear — even a telestrator used to critique the 30 or so plays reviewed each week and sent to both coaches and officiating crew chiefs.

“With all of these games being televised, let’s capture all of it and build a library of how we want it done,” said Rhoads, a former FBI agent who spent about 30 years as a game official. “It’s a teaching mechanism that’s outstanding. It’s visual feedback of how we want it to work.”

McGee, who has officiated more than 350 games, is eager to review each week’s release.

“The minute we get it, I shut down what I’m doing and watch it,” he said.

On a recent Saturday afternoon, college interns sat at three workstations to monitor the game broadcasts and log key plays and penalties. Plays flagged by the interns or the official are retained in a computer that compiles them throughout the day and added to footage submitted by coaches each week. Rhoads eventually culled the footage into the week’s key points.

“It’s not a matter of coming down there on Saturday afternoon and having fun watching football games,” Rhoads said. “When we see a guy come in and put his foot to mark the spot and he’s in the wrong spot, maybe nobody knows. But we know.”
Classic musical to play before sold-out audience at ECU

By Kristin Day
The Daily Reflector

One of America's most well-known classic musicals is showing in Greenville — and you won't see it.

Unless, of course, you were one of the hasty fans able to score a ticket before its Thursday opening.

The ECU/Loessin Playhouse production of "Hello, Dolly!" continues on the McGinnis Theatre stage today through Tuesday. Shows begin at 8 p.m., except for Sunday when the curtain rises at 2 p.m. This is the first production from the playhouse of the fall semester.

Jeff Woodruff, managing director for ECU's School of Theatre and Dance, confirmed that tickets were sold out Wednesday afternoon.

Woodruff said "Hello, Dolly!" is a "classic piece of American musical theatre" appropriate for all ages.

Set in New York during the turn of the 20th century, the play follows a clever woman named Dolly Gallagher Levi, played by Ashley Burke. Working as a matchmaker, Dolly confesses in the very first scene that "Some people paint, some sew...I meddle."

The subsequent scenes follow Dolly as she strives to marry half-a-millionaire Horace Vandergelder, played by Greg Funaro, in order to spread his wealth among the people.

After all, as she says, money is like manure: "It's not worth a thing unless it's spread around encouraging young things to grow."

Even though she is hired to match Horace with someone else, her crafty plan is a success, and Horace chooses Dolly.

"Hello, Dolly!" features some memorable songs including "Put On Your Sunday Clothes," "Ribbons Down My Back," "Before the Parade Passes By" and "Hello, Dolly!"

Other actors in this production include Tim Price as Barnaby and Kyle Langworthy as Cornelius, Horace's store clerks; Rachel Saad as Ermengarde, Horace's niece; Erin Nelson as Ambrose Kemper, Ermengarde's beau; Katie Wilson as Irene Malloy, the owner of a hat shop; and Erica Tavarozzo as Minnie Fay, Irene's shop assistant.

And the students have been hard at work trying to perfect their first show of the semester. "They're doing an extremely good job," Woodruff said.

"Hello, Dolly!" first came to the Broadway stage in 1964 and won 10 Tony Awards including best musical.

This production is directed by John Shearin and choreographed by Tomi Overcash Gelaska.

The ECU/Loessin Playhouse is produced by the School of Theatre and Dance, part of the College of Fine Arts and Communication.

Contact features writer Kristin Day at 323-9679 or kday@coxnc.com.
Friends in the right places helped Campbell find home

BY DAVID BRACKEN
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH – When a well-known philanthropist decides to sell a downtown Raleigh building he had no intention of selling, chances are there's more than money at work.

Sure enough, the back story to Campbell University's official announcement Thursday that it is moving its law school from rural Harnett County to 225 Hillsborough St. is as much about values as it is price.

"As Barney would say to Andy, going to Raleigh is big," Dr. Jerry Wallace, Campbell's president, said during a news conference Thursday in front of the home of the N.C. Supreme Court.

The origins of the deal date to March 2005, five months before Campbell officials formally began looking to move the Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law from Buies Creek to Raleigh.

That month, Variety Realty bought the 107,000-square-foot brick building known as Hillsborough Place for $11.125 million. Variety is owned by Art Pope, a powerful patron of the political right in North Carolina and a strong supporter of Camp-

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CAMPBELL
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Campbell's convocation center is named in honor of graduate John W. Pope Jr., Art's brother, and the Pope family has given generously to the business school and law school over the years.

The Pope family bought Hillsborough Place as a long-term investment, however, and had no intention of selling it so soon.

"When we came to Raleigh in the latter part of 2004, we saw that commercial real estate in downtown Raleigh is something the company should be looking at," said Phil Pope, Art Pope's cousin and a senior vice president with Variety, who represented the family at the news conference.

Although the building was an investment, it quickly became the center of the Pope political machine with a roster of tenants that includes the legislative monitoring, political and legal arms of the organization: The John William Pope Civitas Institute, the N.C. Institute for Constitutional Law and Americans for Prosperity, respectively.

Law firms also set up shop inside Hillsborough Place, and the building was 89 percent occupied at the end of June, according to a Highwoods Properties market survey.

Campbell officials, meanwhile, were busy looking for potential sites in downtown that would meet the needs of the 350-student law school. With the help of Adrienne Cole, director of Raleigh Economic Development for the city's chamber of commerce, the university looked at several locations, including the Wachovia Capitol Center tower on Fayetteville Street.

Mayor Charles Meeker said the city offered Campbell no financial incentives to relocate, other than promising to consider giving students legal internships in the city attorney's office and possibly improving the streetscape in front of whatever building the university purchased.

Hillsborough Place entered the discussion only in the last few months, after NAI Carolantic Realty owner Steve Stroud called Art Pope, a longtime friend, on Campbell's behalf.

Pope's initial response offered a glimmer of hope.

"I want you to know this building is not for sale, but for Campbell University we will consider it possibly for sale," Pope told Stroud.

From that, a deal was hatched out and approved unanimously by Campbell's board of trustees this week. The sale of the building won't be completed until late February or early March, though Campbell officials say they will divulge the sale price in the coming weeks.

"Art saw the importance of Campbell law school coming to downtown Raleigh," Phil Pope said. "It was the civic thing to do."

The sale also fits neatly into Raleigh's revitalization plans for downtown, and specifically Hillsborough Street. The city wants the east end of Hillsborough to become an extension of Fayetteville Street, with high-rise buildings providing a more seamless transition from downtown Raleigh to the Glenwood South entertainment district.

Two hotel towers are already planned for that end of Hillsborough, and the law school, which is expected to open in the fall of 2009, will deliver a steady stream of young people to downtown.

"Universities tend not to go out of business," notes Mitchell Silver, Raleigh's planning director.

Melissa Essary, the dean of Campbell's law school, said the school's relocation to downtown Raleigh was never in doubt. It was just a matter of figuring out where.

"This was a perfect fit," she said. "This is the right place for us."
UNC system plans forum

The UNC Tomorrow Commission wants to hear from you.

The panel will hold a community forum at 4 p.m. Wednesday at the McKimmon Center at N.C. State University.

The commission was established by UNC President Erskine Bowles and the UNC Board of Governors to come up with ideas for how the university system can serve future needs of North Carolina.

The commission is asking the following questions:

■ What are the most important challenges facing your community, and how can universities help?
■ What programs and services should the universities offer, and how can the universities better serve you?
■ What knowledge and skills do our students need to be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow?
■ How can the universities help improve economic opportunities in your area?
Easley pushes Web-based early college initiative

Governor says students could leave high school with degree

BY LISA ZAGAROLI
McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — Gov. Mike Easley has a message for North Carolina students discouraged by the cost and time commitment of getting a college degree.

"You don’t have an excuse not to any more," he said Thursday.

Easley said the state and the College Foundation of North Carolina plan to air a public service announcement within days announcing the official launch of the Learn and Earn Online Web site, www.nclearmandearn.gov.

The Web program, a variation of the Learn and Earn initiative that has already begun in 41 locations in the state, would essentially transform high schools into simultaneous college classrooms. Students stay in their high schools while taking some online college classes with teachers nearby to help.

Participants can spend five years in high school and leave with both their diploma and an associate degree.

Easley discussed the program in Washington at a national conference of educators working to double the number of low-income and minority students who get a diploma and earn a college degree.

"North Carolina is leading the way in this important experiment in high school redesign and education redesign," said Richard Kazis, vice president of Jobs for the Future, which organized the event.

Easley applauded the effort to prevent dropouts but noted that high school is no longer enough education for jobs that require just enough skill that they can’t get shipped overseas.

"High school does not have a product the consumer wants," Easley said.

"If you had 35 percent of the people who came into your [retail] establishment walk out without buying a product, you would change your inventory. Now, how about if it was free and they left without taking something? That’s what we’ve got going on in high school.

"So we want to take every high school in North Carolina and we’re going to make it a college, and we’re going to do it through e-learning, online."
Overall NCAA graduation rates hold steady

By Jack Carey, USA TODAY

Graduation success rates for baseball and men's basketball, while improving, still lag behind other Division I sports, according to data released Wednesday by the NCAA, but association President Myles Brand is hopeful that improvements will be evident in coming years.

Brand was encouraged by the overall graduation rate for male and female student-athletes entering college from 1997 to 2000, which at 77% is unchanged from last year and up from 76% two years ago.

GRAD RANKINGS: How Top 25 teams fare academically

"It's very heartening,... I think we're moving toward a key measure of 80%," Brand said. Brand last year had identified 80% as an "aspirational" goal for Division I schools and believes the benchmark can be met "in the near future."

Brand, who spearheaded an academic reform movement shortly after assuming the NCAA presidency, believes the results of that movement are now being exhibited by member schools.

"In the athletic culture, the idea of academic performance is taking hold. It's getting traction, getting into the culture, and changes are beginning to take place," he said.

The graduation success rate (GSR) gives a more accurate account of how schools and athletes are doing than the federal graduation rates the NCAA previously used, and which the U.S. Department of Education still subscribes to, Brand said. The GSR counts transfers into and out of a college, the federal method does not.

"An institution gets credit if a transfer student graduates, and if you transfer out in good academic standing, (the previous school) is not penalized," Brand said of the GSR.

The rate for men's basketball players who graduated within six years, which is the time frame used in factoring the data, rose from 59% to 61% in data released Wednesday. Baseball improved from 65% to 66%.

There was also an improvement for football, from 85% to 87% in I-A (now Bowl Subdivision) and 82% to 85% in I-AA (now Championship Subdivision).

Women's basketball dropped from 82% to 81% but is still higher than the rate for men's basketball, which is the lowest among 17 men's sports.

Lower-than-hoped-for rates in previous years for baseball and men's basketball prompted the NCAA to appoint working groups to identify issues that affect those sports and come up with proposals for improvement.

The baseball panel, formed in the spring of 2006, amended transfer restrictions for players and guidelines for scholarships and roster sizes in an effort to reduce roster turnover. It hopes that will improve players' academic
performance.

The basketball panel, including university presidents, athletics directors, coaches and conference commissioners, has not begun formulating proposals, Brand said.

"Baseball changes are in progress. It will probably take two to four years to expect a dramatic turn," Brand said, although he believes some incremental improvements might be evident in about a year.

The basketball panel, Brand said, is about a year away from proposing recommendations, and it probably will be about 18 months before those proposals work their way through the NCAA governance structure. Two to four years after that, he said, he hopes to see resulting GSR improvements.

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