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ECU group rallying area's young voters

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, October 06, 2009

An East Carolina University student group hosted a candidate forum Tuesday night in hopes of rallying an informed and active young electorate before November's Greenville municipal election.

College Libertarians founder Jesse Mignogna said he knows that turnout — especially student turnout — is low for local election years.

"I can't stress how important it is to get involved in local politics," he said. "It's often overshadowed by state and national issues. These people here are going to have the most impact on your day-to-day life.

"But that's why we're having this. Most students don't know there's elections going on this year."

Candidates Marion Blackburn and Howard Stearn from District 3, Councilman Calvin Mercer and Matt Smith from District 4, Mayor Pat Dunn and challenger Minnie Johnson-Anderson, and at-large candidate Zeke Jackson fielded questions from the Libertarian group and the 50 students assembled in the Batie Building. Councilman Bryant Kittrell was invited but did not attend.

Support for three proposed ordinances affecting public and private clubs was one of the questions posed. There have been fliers throughout campus and Facebook groups that caught students' attention.

Dunn did not give a direct answer but said the strategies still are under discussion. Jackson and Johnson-Anderson said they don't support any of them. Blackburn and Smith were against all but the ordinance prohibiting hiring bouncers with certain criminal records. Stearn and Mercer said they were in support of the bouncers ordinance and a zoning change that would require a 500-foot separation between existing clubs and new establishments.

Mercer added his mind could change based on public input, and did not directly support or oppose the ordinance that would require clubs to hire off-duty law enforcement or security officers.

Dunn and Johnson-Anderson got into a brief side debate when the latter said the City Council is not working to protect all the people. Dunn disagreed, noting that this case — when a child was killed in west Greenville in 2005 — was not a dispute that led to a death but the killing of innocent bystanders. That, she said, was what attracted all the attention and calls for action.

The economy, city budget and job creation were hot topics. The candidates agreed cuts to public safety are off-limits, though Smith said he doesn't think programs for at-risk youth are working — one of Mercer's funding priorities. Stearn advocates ensuring costs and quality for public works services are appropriate and hiring a grant writer. Dunn said the city has gotten more than $6 million in stimulus funds without one. Blackburn said if economic conditions don't improve the city won't be able to fill vacant staff positions.

Jackson said he advocated moving to a 10-hour, four-day workweek for the city. Smith agreed, standing up to address the audience each time he spoke, while all other candidates answered from their seats. Candidates cited Wayne County as a successful model. Mercer said the City Council had looked at this several months ago and didn't find it to be that profitable. Some services can't close, he said, but added he'd be willing to explore the idea anew.

Dunn noted citizens expect services to be open on Fridays, and Johnson-Anderson said city staff would still be
working from home.

Both young candidates, Jackson and Smith, also spoke about using vacant city-owned land to develop micro farms. The produce could be sold at a more central Greenville farmers market, both said, which Jackson said he envisions downtown.

The candidates supported opening communication with students by town hall meetings and appointing students to boards and commissions.

District 1 candidate Kandie Smith stopped by shortly before the close of the more than two-hour event to let students know that residents of Clement and White halls, as well as First Street Place apartments, live in her district.

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Letter: Promoter of chamber music lauded

Wednesday, October 07, 2009

I would like to pay tribute to Ara Gregorian of the ECU music faculty for the work he is doing to promote chamber music in eastern North Carolina.

He is the artistic director of the Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival, which gives concerts throughout the east. He had a 10th Anniversary Celebration Concert on Sept. 27 at the ECU's A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall, and this was followed by a reception at an Uptown Greenville restaurant.

The concert artists consisted of Gregorian, his sister Ani Gregorian, his younger sister Alicia Gregorian and pianists Paul Tardif and Keiko Sekino. They played selections by Brahms, Bach, Mendelssohn, Moszkowski, Massenet and Kreisler. It was a wonderful concert and, for all those attended, it was a treat that we do not often have the privilege to hear.

Gregorian works with younger children in the area and certainly does a wonderful job in promoting the ECU School of Music. As a violinist, Gregorian has performed throughout the United States, Canada and China. He has recorded for WQXR and NPR. Another thing that made the concert so special was that his parents were in attendance and he acknowledged them at the concert.

Gregorian is certainly deserving of being honored.

GRAYDON W. TRIPP
Greenvilleee_SPgB
Editorial - Doctors in the house

Possible ECU medical school partnership could be a feather in UNCW’s cap

Published: Tuesday, October 6, 2009 at 3:30 a.m.

The spirit of partnership hasn’t always characterized the relationship among our state universities. Competition for programs has been fierce, to the point that the flagship universities sometimes actively oppose another school’s academic plans.

But when North Carolina’s state universities can work together, they should. The budget crunch could nudge the schools in that direction – when money is tight, a more creative approach is necessary to get the job done.

One intriguing possibility that’s still very early in the talking stage is what could become a partnership between the University of North Carolina Wilmington and East Carolina University’s medical school. UNCW Chancellor Rosemary DePaolo dropped that little detail during a media luncheon last week to preview her “state of the university” presentation.

To be fair, this prospective partnership was in the works well before this year’s budget ax began to fall on state university programs and jobs. Last year the UNC Board of Governors endorsed a $450 million expansion plan for the medical schools at ECU and UNC-Chapel Hill. Needless to say, the budget predicament has put that plan on hold.

But the state’s rural areas need more doctors, and the medical schools have to expand their enrollment to make it happen. As planning continues, it would make good financial sense to make use of existing resources to help train physicians.

Part of that plan calls for ECU to work with Area Health Education Centers to groom doctors who will practice in eastern North Carolina. Wilmington has the South East Area Health Education Center, and New Hanover Regional Medical Center already has several residency programs. The idea is to have med students do a significant portion of their clinical training in rural communities served by the AHECs. The presence of a university in Wilmington should only add to the appeal.
Virginia Hardy, senior associate dean for academic affairs of ECU’s Brody School of Medicine, says ECU is talking with several communities, not only Wilmington, and stresses that any such partnership(s) could be years away.

In the meantime, however, ECU and UNCW are moving ahead with discussions of partnerships in allied health and nursing, and the medical school is working with UNCW administrators to ensure that students interested in medical school get the right courses and understand the admissions process.

UNCW already has a joint engineering program with N.C. State University that allows students to take some of their course work here. Recently it’s been expanded to provide more offerings on the Wilmington campus. The concept for a medical school and other health programs is much the same.

And who knows? Maybe the state’s budget crunch will inspire North Carolina’s universities to collaborate more often.

Better cooperation can only benefit the state and its students.
Shipment of H1N1 vaccine reaches N.C.

The first batch of H1N1 vaccine has rolled into North Carolina and is making its way to county health departments, but it's a tiny shipment aimed at some of the people most vulnerable to complications from the pandemic flu.

State epidemiologist Dr. Megan Davies said Tuesday that 52,000 doses of nasal spray vaccine have arrived and will mainly be targeted to healthy people ages 2 to 49 -- particularly children -- and people who tend infants.

"We're really pleased we got doses already," she said, noting that original predictions for delivery were mid-October.

Because this first batch of vaccine is the nasal spray, however, it will not be targeted to pregnant women or people with asthma and compromised immune systems -- groups the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said should be protected early.

Like seasonal FluMist, the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine is made with an altered form of the live virus that can cause problems for people with those conditions.

Additional shipments, which should arrive weekly, will include the normal flu shots that are considered safe for most populations.

The doses have been divided among the state's 100 counties based on population. In addition, four large health systems throughout the state were given small shares to distribute through their doctor networks: Duke University Health System, East Carolina University in Greenville, Novant in Charlotte and Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem.

"We got 1,800 doses, which is less than 1 percent of our requested allotment," said Dr. Monte Brown, vice president of administration with the Duke health system.

He said the doses will be available for patient use rather than for health-care providers, who are among those the CDC wants to vaccinate early.

In Wake County, which received 3,500 doses, the vaccine will be available to eligible patients Thursday at the county's four health clinics. About 500 doses will be reserved for emergency responders and health-care workers.

Durham County has about 1,400 doses, said public health director Gayle Harris. She said staff will decide today how and where to distribute the cache of vaccine, and patients will likely be able to get doses by the end of the week.

"When you have such a small amount, it's hard to move forward," Harris said.

Harris noted that supplies of seasonal flu vaccine, which met high early demand, are dwindling and that
orders are backing up. Manufacturers have been taxed by the unusual year, having to churn out two rounds of vaccine -- one for seasonal flu and another for the H1N1 pandemic strain.

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Unc students to get 24-hour news forum

Chapel Hill -- For decades, much of the reporting done by journalism students has simply been graded and shelved.

Jean Folkerts, dean of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Journalism and Mass Communication, thinks it's "fake" journalism -- work no one ever sees.

With a new, $3.5 million gift from an alumnus, the journalism school now plans to put more of its student work into the public realm. A new 24-hour newsroom project will give students a place to work with new technology, tap into the advice of faculty members and try new methods of innovative communication without fear of failure.

This working laboratory, which will be created in a current classroom, is funded by a gift from the estate of Reese Feltz, a 1952 UNC-CH graduate who spent nearly 30 years in radio and television broadcasting in Winston-Salem.

This project will produce news, though not in the traditional sense. There will be no news "paper," but Web sites will feature the audio, video and written journalism that students produce.

The lab will also be used by students studying advertising, marketing and public relations.

There are still plenty of details to work out, including the hiring of a new director -- and what title that person should hold.

Folkerts spoke with The News & Observer this week about the new project.

Here are excerpts from the interview:

Q: The person who directs this venture will be called an "executive producer," rather than an editor or professor. Explain that.

We wanted somebody who really understands they had to work with bringing many different pieces together; technology, software, platforms. It couldn't just be a word editor. They had to really think multidimensionally.

Q: So where does a person like that work right now?

That's debatable. There are people coming out of print newsrooms who are being very creative. A person in our faculty now came from the South Florida Sun-Sentinel and did a lot of media and digital projects. Others are coming out of broadcast. Look at the work WRAL is doing with multiple platforms. What we're really interested in is a person's capability and vision. This is a new project that does not have all the details worked out.

Q: Is this something a school can do that a news organization can't afford to do?
We have more time because we're not on a day-by-day deadline. We don't have to be the community newspaper, so we can take more time. And we don't have to bring in revenue, which lets you look at it differently. But we'd like to make models that are useful to the industry.

Q: It's dubbed a "24-hour" newsroom. So set the scene: What's going on at 3:30a.m.?

We've had a lot of issues with students who would love 24-hour access to work on projects. So it may be a kid building an interactive game. It's not that news is breaking at 3 in the morning. We just want it to be as accessible as we can.

Q: Is it more newsroom or laboratory or totally different?

We hope it's different than putting it into a standard niche.

My goal is to have everything a student does in any class be in competition for being published on the site. If it's a marketing class, it's an idea that has a chance to be tested.

One thing that happens in a school where the daily newspaper is totally independent of the journalism school, you can end up with people doing things in class that was fake. That's not a good thing.

Our whole goal is to make sure everyone in these classes is competing to get work showcased or experimented with.

It's a project that will evolve over time. But I think it's just a wonderful combination of news experience and laboratory and research that a journalism school can provide that is very hard to provide in the outside world right now.

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