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252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
East Carolina University needs new doors

The university has asked the UNC system to authorize a $564,000 new capital project to replace 310 doors on Aycock Residence Hall.

That's 300 doors to dorm rooms and 10 entry doors.

The doors on this dorm, which was built in 1960, are in poor shape and require some customization, according to a UNC system memo.

The work will include the installation of new hinges, new door closers and new, ADA-compliant hardware. Until the doors are replaced, the dorm won't meet state life safety guidelines set by the state building code.

Quoth the UNC system memo, in part: "ECU's maintenance history shows that residence hall doors must withstand slamming, kicking and general horse play by residents."

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Council to explore ways to aid displaced business owners

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, October 08, 2009

The city of Greenville will explore ways to compensate business owners who will be displaced by the Stantonsburg Road-10th Street Connector project.

A unanimous vote by the City Council directed staff to explore ways to compensate displaced business owners with the interested parties including East Carolina University, Pitt County Memorial Hospital and the city.

The City Council also delayed a discussion on launching an investigation into the Greenville Housing Authority.

The board heard from several business owners Thursday night who may be forced to move for the project. Many of them were concerned that the fair market value of the property, which will be offered by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, will not cover the costs of moving, being closed for an unknown amount of time, using employee time to move when no revenue is coming in and the loss of revenue for building owners who have income by renting their property.

“We need some help from the city,” Janet Cox, of Hardy and Cox Welding, said. “If the city is going to take on leadership on this project and is going to help homeowners then the city needs to help business owners. There has got to be a way to find some funds to help us as well.”

The city adopted a homeowner assistance program this year that will help displaced homeowners with finding new housing and other issues.

The city has not adopted any program to help displaced business owners and city staff could not find an example of any city in the state helping business owners who are forced to move for the construction of a road.

Public Works Director Wes Anderson described two possible options that would assist business owners. One would provide $10,000 to move and offer professional services to find replacement property. The second option would assist business owners on a fix-priced basis that would use an income formula to determine the amount of assistance.

Cox said $10,000 would not be enough to move the heavy equipment and tools at Hardy and Cox Welding, a business located on Farmville Boulevard for 60 years.

“We don’t have a problem with change but at the same time it’s got to be fair,” Cox said. “We can’t just get enough to pay off what debt we have and not have enough left over to rebuild.”

Cox also said that finding appropriately zoned property in Greenville is difficult. She is also concerned that the fair market value of her property will not pay for a new property somewhere else.

Council member Rose Glover said that business owners have unfairly been left out of the process for the project.

“My concern is that we didn’t bring the business owners in in the very beginning and I was on the council and I feel like I let you guys down,” Glover said. “We were looking at the housing and it never occurred to us that this is going to affect you too and that we will be in the economic situation that we are in today. I think the business owners have not gotten a fair shake.”
Glover then made the motion to explore ways for the city, ECU and PCMH to provide funding for the business owners who will be affected.

Following the discussion of the items on the agenda, Glover made a motion to investigate the fiscal operations of the Greenville Housing Authority. She listed several complaints on how the residents who deal with the Greenville Housing Authority have been treated.

"The people who are on the housing authority do not have any idea how the residents are being treated," Glover said. "They do not care how the people have been treated."

Glover said the board has spent time discussing ways to get her removed from office.

"I want to say to the people, 'did you put me in the office or the GHA board?"' Glover asked.

City Attorney Dave Holec said for the motion to be considered it would have to be placed on the agenda by a vote of the board.

The board rejected a motion to put the issue on the agenda Thursday but approved a motion to put the issue on the agenda for the first meeting in November.

The board also held brief public hearings on ordinances requiring the repair or the demolition of property at several locations throughout the city.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.
Reade Circle streetscape project remains on schedule

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, October 08, 2009

Construction creating traffic clogs but intended to improve the area from Reade Circle and Cotanche Street and back to Fifth Street is progressing on schedule, according to Greenville city staff.

City Planner Carl Rees said the work should be done by mid-January. The goals of the “streetscape improvements” are to beautify an older area that had been developed in an ad-hoc manner, improve access to downtown from East Carolina University’s campus in a safe way, and create additional parking. Sixteen flexible parking spaces — which will serve as loading zones during early morning hours — have been installed along Reade Circle.

Meetings with property and business owners before the work began indicated there was no “good time” to begin the improvements. Rees said they’re attempting to complete the work in phases to minimize disruptions to traffic and businesses in the area.

Changes at the corner of Cotanche and Reade Circle, including crosswalks and crossing signals, are nearly complete. They’re beginning to solicit artists to provide a sculptural work for the intersection, which will change on a regular basis. Unique benches and trash receptacles are also under development by ECU students as public art projects.

Reade Circle will have two lanes running from Cotanche to Fifth Street, Rees said. The lanes will be narrower, but he noted it’s intended as a traffic calming measure to ensure pedestrian safety at those crossings.

Next, they’ll add plants, repair a retaining wall and improve drainage before resurfacing the parking lot behind Chico’s restaurant, which must be completed in 45 days, according to the contract. Work along Cotanche Street will be completed last.

The total project costs $839,000, with funds coming from the 2004 General Obligation bonds for center city improvements.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9566.
Letter: Medical staff's care eased difficult days

Friday, October 09, 2009

My husband Joseph Paramore has been a patient at Pitt County Memorial Hospital many times over the past 12 years. From February of this year until May, most of his time was spent in the East Carolina Heart Institute on the fifth floor. This letter is to thank all of the nurses on the fifth floor that took care of him and who were so compassionate to him and to our family as we were going through a very difficult time.

Also to the doctors on the cardiology team headed by Dr. Joseph Babb, the doctors on the nephrology team headed by Dr. Susan Gurkin and to the doctors on the internal medicine team headed by Dr. Suzanne Kraemer, the family thanks all of you for taking such good care of our loved one.

And to the nurses in palliative care, thank you all for doing all you could to make him comfortable and for helping the family through those difficult last days. May God bless each one of you.

MAE PARAMORE

Greenville

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Dashboard Confessional headlines ECU concert

The Daily Reflector

Friday, October 09, 2009

Acoustic rock band Dashboard Confessional's new two-disc album, “Alter The Ending” is set for release Nov. 10, around the same time the band embarks on a North American tour with New Found Glory, NeverShoutNever and Meg & Dia.

But before the tour, Dashboard Confessional will be in Greenville helping celebrate East Carolina University’s annual homecoming.

Dashboard Confessional will headline ECU’s Student Activities Board’s homecoming concert at 7 p.m. Thursday in Minges Coliseum. Alternative-rock band Valencia will open the show.

Chris Carrabba founded Dashboard Confessional in 2000 as a side project from his main gig as the front man for Further Seems For Ever.

Carrabba recorded “Swiss Army Romance” as Dashboard and the following year he recorded Seems Forever’s debut album “The Moon Is Down.” On the heels of Seems Forever’s debut album release however, Carrabarra left the band and went on to record his sophomore Dashboard album “The Place You Have Come to Fear the Most,” and a follow up EP called “So Impossible.”

Three other musicians had joined Dashboard by 2002, ruling out the Boca Raton, Fla., band.

With Dashboard’s successful second album, Carrabba performed on MTV’s “Unplugged.” Also in 2002, Dashboard’s video for “Screaming Infidelities” won the MTV2 award at MTV’s Video Music Awards, beating out Norah Jones, The Strokes, The Hives, Nappy Roots and Musiq.

The following year, the band’s third release, “A Mark, A Mission, A Brand, A Scar,” peaked at No. 2 on the Billboard charts proving to be the band’s most commercially viable album yet.

The song “Vindicated,” recorded in 2004, was featured in the film “Spider-Man 2.” With this exposure, the band’s popularity grew and they gained a sizeable audience for their next release the following summer.

June 27, 2006, marked the date of Dashboard’s fourth release “Dusk and Summer” produced by famed music-industry mogul Daniel Lanois. That summer Dashboard went on a U.S. tour with Say Anything and Ben Lee, followed by a co-headlining arena tour with alternative rock band Brand New.

Carrabba is a prolific songwriter and said during a 2007 interview that he was 14 tracks into the band’s sixth studio album — the one set for release Nov. 10 — and planned to have 30 songs to choose from for that album.

As a Valentine’s Day 2009 gift to his fans, Carrabba released a free download on his Myspace page called “Even Now,” which will be included in their new album.

If you Go!

What: Dashboard Confessional and Valencia

When: 7 p.m. Thursday

Where: Minges Coliseum
Cost: $10 for students and $25 for other

Call: 328-4788

Visit: www.ecuarts.com
Health research hub

Genetic research already has produced helpful results with regards to cancer treatment. It has, for example, broken down the different kinds of breast cancer, which obviously affects the kinds of treatments offered and their effectiveness. UNC-Chapel Hill is considered a leader in the field, which is why it will be getting one of the largest grants from federal stimulus money to continue research into how cancer grows and spreads.

The university is one of 12 research institutions in the United States to receive a Cancer Genome Atlas Grant for such purposes. All this is part of the Human Genome Project, which seeks to determine a "blueprint" of human DNA. That could lead to advances in treating all kinds of diseases.

UNC-Chapel Hill received more than $60 million in stimulus money from the National Institutes of Health, allocated among 186 different grants. Duke University got more than $75 million for 181 grants. RTI International, a think tank in the famed Research Triangle Park, got 10 grants. It is fitting that UNC-CH has just opened a huge cancer center and Duke has announced plans for one.

It's important that despite a frustrating, even frightening, recession that has hit virtually every business and institution public or private, medical research that has been a hallmark of scientific advancement in this country must continue to march forward. Research builds upon research, after all, and one productive discovery leads to another.

In the case of cancer, some forms that not that many years ago would have had a dismal and even hopeless prognosis now are being treated. Some of those advancements are the results of new drugs, and some better treatments have come about because of more advanced surgeries. The same might be said of other diseases, and stem cell research, among other avenues, offers much potential for better treatment and even cures.

The point is that a country to which the world looks for cutting-edge research must maintain momentum. Stimulus money is a blessing in this area. And in the Triangle, so is the fact that our universities are so well-regarded that they can compete for life-changing grants.
October 9, 2009

Leaner Times at Harvard: No Cookies

By ABBY GOODNOUGH

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Gone are the hot breakfasts in most dorms and the pastries at Widener Library. Varsity athletes are no longer guaranteed free sweat suits, and just this week came the jarring news that professors will go without cookies at faculty meetings.

By Harvard standards, these are hard times. Not Dickensian hard times, but with the value of its endowment down by almost 30 percent, the world’s richest university is learning to live with less.

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard’s largest division, has cut about $75 million from its budget in recent months and is planning more. With the cuts extending beyond hiring and salary freezes to measures that affect what students eat, where they study and other parts of their daily routine, the euphoria of fall in Harvard Yard is dampened.

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences anticipates a deficit of $130 million over the next two years and is awaiting recommendations from groups of faculty members and students who have been weighing the options.

“Everyone is worried,” said George Hayward, a junior who lives on a part of campus, the Quad, that lost its library to the cuts. “It could be anything next; nobody really knows.”

Harvard is not the only elite university where student life is more austere this fall: Princeton has closed some computer labs, and one of its dining halls on Saturdays. At Stanford, the annual Mausoleum Party, a Halloween gathering at the Stanford family burial site, lost $14,000 in financing and might be canceled.

But many here assumed student life at Harvard, more than at any other institution, was immune from hardship. The loss of scrambled eggs, bacon and other cooked breakfast foods in the dorms of upperclassmen on weekdays seems to have stirred the most ire.

“Students generally feel that if you come to Harvard, for what you’re paying, you should probably have the right to a hot breakfast,” said Andrea Flores, a senior who is president of the Undergraduate Council. “They want to preserve the things that are at Harvard that you can’t get anywhere else.”

Some students are feeling the cuts more than others. Mr. Hayward said that those who live on the Quad, a 15-minute walk from Harvard Yard, were disproportionately affected because the library there was closed and shuttle bus service to and from the central campus curtailed. (Quad residents are touchy to begin with — “getting quadded,” or assigned to live in that area, is many a student’s nightmare.)

Varsity athletes have also suffered disproportionately, said Johnny Bowman, a junior who is monitoring the cuts for the Undergraduate Council, because they were the biggest devotees of hot breakfast. “It was a big shock,” Mr. Bowman said. “Athletes were accustomed to coming back from early morning practice and
getting their nutrients — a solid meal.”

On top of that loss, some club teams find themselves sharing space at the Malkin Athletic Center because it now closes earlier on weeknights. Khoa Tran, president of Harvard Taekwondo, told The Harvard Crimson that his team would have to share practice space with the Crimson Dance Team.

“It will be an interesting mix because they will be playing dance music while we do our routines,” he told the paper. “We ourselves yell every time we kick... and we kick a lot.”

Harvard’s endowment was $26 billion in June 2009, down from $36.9 billion in June 2008, a 27 percent decrease. The loss is especially hard on the Faculty of Arts and Science, which includes Harvard College, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering, because the endowment provides half of its budget.

Though faculty jobs have so far been protected, the university laid off 250 staff members this summer, said Jeff Neal, a Harvard spokesman. He said it was too soon to know whether future cuts would affect students.

“We are working hard to minimize the impact of the global financial downturn on any substantive aspect of student life,” he said in an e-mail message.

Mr. Neal pointed out that despite its budget problems Harvard had increased financial aid to students to $145 million this year, from $136 million last year. More than 60 percent of this year’s freshman class, a record number, is receiving financial aid, he said. The total cost of a year at Harvard is $48,868.

Ms. Flores said that after excluding students from conversations about what to cut last spring, the administration was now seeking their ideas. It scrapped a plan to end weeknight shuttle service at 1:30 a.m. instead of 3:45 a.m. after an outcry, she said, though it did cut service on weekend mornings.

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences has started an online “idea bank” where students can suggest savings. The 170 submissions so far include charging tour groups to enter Harvard Yard and having students clean their own bathrooms instead of paying other students to do it under a work program.

“We understand we have to give up something,” Ms. Flores said. “But students want to be able to say what they’re willing to give up and what they want to protect. As long as that’s part of the discussion, I think the process can hopefully be done peacefully.”
‘Red watch’ friends don’t let pals drink and die
Program trains college students to respond to alcohol intoxication
By Jacqueline Stenson
MSNBC contributor
updated 8:26 a.m. ET Oct. 9, 2009

Health advocates are hoping that a cheap red watch worn by college students like Alicia Nelson will become the new fashion trend on campus this fall.

The watches are part of the latest effort to counter the toll of binge drinking, a deeply entrenched problem at many colleges nationwide that appears to be getting worse.

While studies report that more than 80 percent of college students drink alcohol, latest statistics reveal that nearly half indulge in binge-drinking, generally defined as downing five or more drinks in about two hours for men and four or more drinks for women.

The number of students who binge drink rose from nearly 42 percent in 1999, to nearly 45 percent in 2005, according to a June report by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Alcohol-related deaths among college students increased from 1,440 in 1998 to 1,825 in 2005, the NIAAA reported.

Overall, efforts to intervene in binge drinking have been largely unsuccessful. But the main goal of programs such as the new “Red Watch Band” program at Stony Brook University in New York is to prevent students from dying of intoxication.

Bluntly put, Red Watch Band “is a death prevention program,” says Lara Hunter, the program’s national coordinator. “It’s targeted at the bystander,” she said.

The watches, which students receive after completing a training program on how to recognize and respond to alcohol emergencies, are meant to symbolize a band of students watching over each other when every minute counts.

Deadly drinking games
Dr. Suzanne Fields wishes that one of her son’s friends had been watching out for him on that night in June 2008 when he lost consciousness and died after binge drinking at Northwestern University in Chicago.

If someone had called 911, freshman Matthew Sunshine might have survived after a bout of drinking games. Instead, Sunshine was humiliated and written on after he passed out.

“Acute intoxication is not a laughing matter,” says Fields. “It’s a medical emergency.”

Some kids turned her son’s head in case he threw up, but it wasn’t enough. “They were worried about aspiration,” Fields says. “They weren’t worried about death.”

Fields is a professor of medicine at Stony Brook and the driving force behind the Red Watch Band program. “I realized at the time of my son’s funeral, in talking with other students, they really think they’re invincible,” she says. “No one realized you could die of acute alcohol toxicity.”

Alcohol poisoning generally occurs when the blood alcohol level reaches .25 percent to .39 percent. A 20-year-old student at Barnard College in New York, for instance, died with a blood alcohol level of .34 percent after ingesting six beers and 12 shots in two hours, the school reported.

If students understood the seriousness of alcohol poisoning and the basics of how to intervene, from performing CPR to alerting medical crews, more young people might survive, advocates say.

While that may help, other health experts say, it won’t solve the core problem of college kids drinking too much in the first place.
Preventing binge drinking has proven to be a huge challenge, experts say. That’s partly because of campus cultures that view drinking as a rite of passage; partly because of college bars and beer distributors that make alcohol plentiful and cheap; and other factors such as administrators and officials who toss up their hands or look the other way.

Add to that mix multi-million-dollar entertainment and advertising campaigns that glamorize drinking. Anheuser-Busch, for instance, recently launched a “Tailgate Approved” marketing campaign for its Bud Light “fan cans,” which are available in more than two dozen college color combinations and which critics say target students, many of whom are underage.

The firm insists it supports only legal drinking, but it may be hard for students to make that distinction. “Show your colors!” says their Web site. “Put your hand around a fan can!”

In addition to the very real risk of death, excessive college drinking is associated with a range of other problems, including at least 599,000 injuries and 97,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year, according to the NIAAA.

**Stepping up**

Still, the Red Watch Band program is hoping to help with one serious aspect of the problem. Since the program began last spring, about 140 Stony Brook students, including Nelson, have been through the four hours of training that requires learning CPR, says Hunter. About 30 other colleges and 10 high schools have requested the training curriculum from Stony Brook and are implementing or planning to implement the program, she says.

“A big problem with people dying from toxic drinking is that nobody will step up and intervene,” says Nelson, 20, a junior studying digital arts and business who also plays on the volleyball team. “It’s kind of a socially unacceptable thing to do.”

No college student wants to be labeled a buzzkill. And they certainly don’t want to get their friends or themselves in trouble for underage drinking. Too often, they don’t understand that people who pass out from drinking may not just “sleep it off.”

It’s unclear yet just how effective the Red Watch Band program will be — or if students on hard-partying campuses will even welcome the effort.

But Nelson says she’s received a positive response so far. “It stands out like the Lance Armstrong bracelets and it does provoke questions,” she says, noting that some of her friends are now involved, too.

Students clearly need to do their part to help curb binge drinking and its consequences, says Linda Major, who heads up the efforts to reduce high-risk drinking at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. The university’s program is often mentioned as one of the most effective college efforts because it attacks the problem from multiple angles, involving students as well as administrators and the community.

“We have visible and vocal leadership in the community and on campus,” Major says. Among its components, the program involves education about high-risk drinking; administration meetings with bar owners to curb excessive and underage drinking; increased police enforcement; and stiffer penalties for loud house parties.

The efforts have paid off. Binge drinking among University of Nebraska students declined from more than 62 percent in 1997 to 41 percent in 2007, Major notes, but there’s still work to be done.

“Binge drinking really doesn’t have to be part of the college experience,” she says.

*Jacqueline Stenson is a freelance writer in Los Angeles. A former senior health producer for msnbc.com, her work also has appeared in publications including the Los Angeles Times, Health, Shape, Women’s Health, Fit Pregnancy and Reuters Health.*

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