THE DAILY CLIPS

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Irons receives public service award
Monday, October 10, 2011

GREENSBORO — Dr. Thomas G. Irons, associate vice chancellor for health sciences and professor of pediatrics at East Carolina University, on Friday received the Award for Excellence in Public Service from the UNC Board of Governors.

The award, announced on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro during the board’s regular October meeting, was established in 2007 to encourage, identify, recognize and reward distinguished public service and outreach by faculty across the university system. The 2011 award, which carries a $7,500 cash prize, was presented by UNC President Tom Ross and Public Service Award Committee Vice Chairman Phil Dixon of Greenville.

A member of ECU’s medical faculty for three decades, Irons has devoted his professional career to providing clinical care to under-served children and improving access to quality health care for the people of eastern North Carolina. He has focused his time, medical expertise and consensus-building skills on addressing the needs of abused children, disabled children, at-risk teens, farm families and the rural uninsured.
A Greenville native and the son of primary care physicians, Irons is a graduate of Davidson College and the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine. From 1975-78, he served in the U.S. Army in West Germany, where he developed a child abuse prevention and management program that involved clergy, social services and military police. In 1989, he accepted the position of associate dean of the medical school and later became senior associate dean.

Irons was named associate vice chancellor for health sciences in 1995. In these roles, he worked to grow and retain the base of primary care physicians in under-served communities across the region.

Irons carries a significant teaching and patient care load while serving as medical director of the Bernstein Center, HealthAssist and the N.C. Agromedicine Institute, a collaboration among ECU, N.C. State University and N.C. A&T State University.

In addition to chairing the boards of Access East, the Lucille Gorham Intergenerational Center and the Eastern Carolina Community Health Consortium, he serves on the boards of the N.C. Care Share Alliance, the N.C. Foundation for Advanced Healthcare Programs, the N.C. Medical Society Foundation and the N.C. Community Practitioner Program.

Irons has earned numerous awards and recognitions, including the Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award from the East Carolina Council Boy Scouts of America, the Champions of Change in Medicine Award from the N.C. Institute of Medicine, the Alumni Merit Award and the Medical Alumni Distinguished Service Award from the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine, and the Dean’s Choice Award and Legacy of Leadership Award from the ECU College of Human Ecology. He also is a four-time winner of the Clinical Science Faculty Award presented by graduating students at ECU’s Brody School of Medicine. The medical Class of 2006 created the annual Thomas G. Irons Award in Medical Professionalism in his honor.
Hurricane Irene caused severe damage to Highway 12, pictured Aug. 30. It’s the only road to Hatteras Island in North Carolina. (Chris Seward, newsobserver.com/ Oct. 9, 2011).

Ready to stick a fork in Hatteras Island road

As crews wrap up work on the hurricane-battered highway, some are calling North Carolina's efforts to keep rebuilding the exposed road on the unstable barrier island a huge waste of time and money.

By David Zucchino, Los Angeles Times Reporting from Stumpy Point, N.C.

Six weeks after Hurricane Irene severed the only road to Hatteras Island, North Carolina's long struggle to reconnect the barrier island’s 3,300 stranded residents to the mainland is almost over. The badly battered Highway 12 is finally due to reopen early this week.

The reopening has required much more than just fixing a road. Highway 12, a slender ribbon of asphalt, is built on shifting sand. The island it serves refuses to stay in one place, buffeted by powerful tides and punishing storms.

And Hatteras Island is no longer even an intact island. Irene severed it in two places, and waters from the Pamlico Sound now flow unimpeded into the Atlantic Ocean.

But even as crews wrap up road repairs and erect a temporary 662-foot bridge over the worst-hit section, some environmentalists and geologists are calling the effort a colossal waste of time and money. It's pure folly, they say, to keep repairing a vulnerable, exposed highway on the shifting sands of a rapidly eroding barrier
island.

Some suggest building a 17-mile alternative, dubbed the "long bridge," over the sound to bypass Highway 12's most vulnerable sections; they also propose expanding the state’s ferry system. Such measures would let nature take its course as the islands form and reform.

"The state is just filling those holes in the road with money," says Dorothea V. Ames, a geologist at East Carolina University, who favors ferries over bridges.

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Spending huge sums to ensure automobile access to unstable barrier islands has long been a contentious issue along the East Coast. But the fight is especially intense on North Carolina's Outer Banks, which jut into the Atlantic like an elbow, narrower and more exposed than most other East Coast barrier islands. With its tourism and sport and commercial fishing, the area is crucial to North Carolina's economy.

The state has poured millions into holding back the seas. Officials say road repairs — along with dredging and man-made groins and berms — preserve property and livelihoods, and ensure public access to beaches and the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

The state is pushing ahead with pre-Irene plans to build a 2.8-mile, $216-million bridge that ties into the most badly damaged sections of Highway 12. It would replace the 2.7-mile Herbert C. Bonner Bridge, built in 1962, which lost its crucial link to Highway 12 when Irene severed the highway five miles south.

Yet the bridge is rendered useless whenever storms rupture Highway 12, which has happened many times since it was built in 1954. Irene has forced most road repair crews and vehicles to take a two-hour ride on the state's lumbering emergency ferry to Hatteras from Stumpy Point.

The state Department of Transportation says it is proceeding with road repairs and bridge work while experts come up with long-term recommendations for Gov. Bev Perdue.

The Southern Environmental Law Center sued the state in July, saying its plans for the bridge did not comply with federal environmental laws. Derb S. Carter Jr., a director at the center, said the state's own hired consultants had warned that constantly re-repairing Highway 12 is an expensive and never-ending battle.

The state said the allegations were not substantiated and asked a judge to dismiss the suit.

Warren Judge, chairman of the Board of Commissioners in Dare County, which includes almost all of the Outer Banks, accuses environmentalists of "obstructing the
progress" of a badly needed bridge and crucial road work. Several hundred island homes were flooded by Irene.

"It's easy for naysayers to say there will always be problems with that highway, but you have to take care of your assets," Judge said.

Judge said the "long bridge" would cost far too much, and cause environmental damage to Pamlico Sound and its fisheries and migratory birds. Some cost estimates for the long bridge have exceeded $1 billion.

A new scientific paper by geologist Ames and research partner Stanley R. Riggs says the state has spent at least $100 million since 1983 to repair Highway 12 and its Bonner Bridge links. The cost for the temporary bridge and current Highway 12 repairs has been estimated at $13 million.

The state will have to spend at least $930 million to keep the road open for the next century, the geologists estimated.

"The state is just kicking the can down the road," Ames said.

The geologists say the island is inexorably drifting west toward the sound at 13 feet per year at the 12-mile-long Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, fatally undermining Highway 12. The state’s efforts to stabilize Hatteras actually make the island more unstable by interfering with its natural migration westward, they said.

"It is virtually impossible to maintain a fixed road on a constantly shifting pile of sand," they wrote.

Disagreement over access to Hatteras Island extends even to terminology.

Local officials call the severed road sections "breaches," which implies temporary damage. Geologists say the two biggest ruptures are new inlets, nature's way of replenishing the islands as they shift.

"They call it a breach because it doesn't sound so bad," Ames said. If water runs freely between the sound and the ocean, she said, it's an inlet.

"It's a breach," said Judge, the commissioner. "If you want drama, call it an inlet."

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Whatever they're called, the ruptures continue to cut off Hatteras Island's seven villages. Many residents are trying to repair damaged homes and businesses when the only access is via ferries.

Martha Weigel and William T. Draper waited in punishing midday sun at Stumpy Point recently to board the ferry for Hatteras. Weigel was on her first post-Irene
visit to the house her father built in 1932, which was flooded by the storm.

Most islanders favor the "long bridge" solution, she said: If the bridge had been built when first proposed years ago, when costs were lower, it would have paid for itself over time.

Draper, a longtime coastal resident, said Hatteras natives had adapted to storms and road closures. Most are self-sufficient and can survive for a while if cut off from the mainland, he said.

"People would love that long bridge and have guaranteed access, if there was just a way to pay for it," Draper said.

In the meantime, he said, the winds will blow and the sands will shift as the island creeps inexorably toward the sound.

"It's an unstable place," he said. "That's the nature of the beast."

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Council to consider new site for transit hub
By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector
Monday, October 10, 2011

The Greenville City Council will be asked tonight to suspend property acquisition for an intermodal transportation center in one area of downtown so an alternative site a few blocks away can be considered.

Two blocks between Reade and Cotanche and Eighth and Ninth streets were selected in 2008 to accommodate a transit station serving city, county and East Carolina University buses, as well as taxis and potentially rail service. The federal government approved environmental clearance for that site this year.

City staff wants the council to instead consider property at the intersection of Dickinson Avenue and Reade Circle, which was originally slated for private development. The owner has told staff it is available.

The agenda cites concerns expressed by council members, ECU and redevelopment nonprofit Uptown Greenville as factors motivating the change of plans. Staff report $230,568 has been spent on the project, with more than $200,000 of that funded by the federal or state government.

Tonight the council also will consider allowing dining and entertainment establishments to have “amplified audio entertainment” past 11 p.m. on weekdays if they are located in commercial areas.

The establishments — developed by City Council ordinance in 2009 as a hybrid between a restaurant and a club — must stop any band, karaoke or other musical event at 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday and at 2 a.m. Friday through Sunday.

Councilman Max Joyner Jr. argues that music played later at locations not in or near residential areas would not impact anyone negatively. Planning staff drafted a text amendment that would allow music until 2 a.m. on Thursdays for establishments 500 feet away from a single-family residence or
neighborhood. Only one of the city’s five dining and entertainment businesses — Christy’s Euro Pub on Jarvis Street — would not qualify.

Establishments downtown already can have audio entertainment until 2 a.m. on Thursday, following an amendment last year at the request of the Phoenix Redevelopment group.

Also on tonight’s agenda:
- The proposed appropriation of $27,105 from the city’s general fund for playground improvements on Kristin Drive;
- A presentation by the city’s external auditor on its annual examination, which the agenda states found no internal control weaknesses or violations of laws and regulations relative to federal programs;
- Review of an “inclusive community statement” developed by the city’s Human Relations Council and a plan to hold town hall-style, community meetings on race at a cost of $2,500.

The City Council meets at 6 p.m. on the third floor of City Hall, 200 W. Fifth St.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or 252-329-9566.
A section of N.C. 12 at the edge of Rodanthe was destroyed by Hurricane Irene.

The road ahead on the Outer Banks

BY ORRIN H. PILKEY

DURHAM—Hurricane Irene has clarified what was already obvious to many: A highway through the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge on an unstable barrier island across a bridge over the constantly shifting Oregon Inlet is not a reliable route for access to the villages on the Outer Banks.

Residents of the villages south of Oregon Inlet are learning from state Department of Transportation's mistakes the hard way. They have been stranded for more than a month, linked to the mainland by an outdated emergency ferry with very limited capacity.

The hurricane blew out new inlets in the Pea Island Refuge, destroying N.C. 12 in the exact places that East Carolina University geologist Stan Riggs predicted. (Riggs is the author of just-published "The Battle For the North Carolina Coast," which discusses the management alternatives in detail.) The DOT is scrambling to fill those inlets and re-establish the highway - latest word is that the road will reopen soon - but in the longer term it is racing a relentless ocean that will repeatedly wash away its efforts.

For now, the aging Bonner Bridge over Oregon Inlet remains unreachable from Hatteras Island and unusable. And with its proposed bridge
replacement project, the DOT would tie Hatteras residents to this broken route another 100 years, even as new breaches and inlets sever N.C. 12 on a regular basis, probably at a rate of one or two times per decade.

Had DOT officials made a responsible choice years ago, those stranded on Hatteras Island would have been spared their current predicament. In 2003, all involved federal and state agencies agreed that building a longer replacement bridge and causeway, bypassing the refuge to make landfall at the wider, more stable part of Hatteras Island, was the best, most viable, and least environmentally damaging choice to replace the ailing Bonner Bridge. But politicians stepped in and derailed that project, as well as any genuine consideration of a new ferry system.

There can be no legitimate debate regarding certain facts.

First, Hurricane Irene is not the last storm that will hit the Outer Banks. Hurricanes, nor'easters, spring high tides and sea level rise will all continue to occur. This storm pattern is now routine, having happened in 2003, 2009, and 2011 and is likely to increase in frequency as the Earth warms. The question is, how many times do we have to get hit over the head before the DOT learns?

Second, the Pea Island stretch of the Outer Banks (the northern end of Hatteras Island) is thinner and particularly unstable (as are the stretches north of Buxton and east of Hatteras village) and these stretches of N.C. 12 will inevitably be breached again and again at predictable locations during storms.

Third, each time that these breaches occur, the DOT will spend millions of tax dollars on emergency repairs trying to re-connect Rodanthe and other villages to the mainland.

Fourth, the DOT's efforts to maintain N.C. 12 in place with a combination of dune building, sand relocation and emergency reconstruction are, in fact, making the island even thinner, lower in elevation and more unstable by halting the natural processes that would allow sand to be deposited on the Pamlico Sound side of the island and enable the island to slowly migrate in that direction. If the DOT does not change its methods soon, the island will continue to narrow to the point that it can no longer hold a highway at all, and the replacement Oregon Inlet bridge will become a "bridge from nowhere to nowhere" within its lifespan.

Clearly, a long bridge that connects to Rodanthe - or, better yet, a modern, high-speed, high-capacity ferry system - would not suffer the same
drawbacks as the current proposed configuration of replacement Bonner Bridge and N.C. 12. Either of these alternative options to replacing the Oregon Inlet bridge would allow natural processes to resume. And even the DOT's own estimates show that a long bridge or system of ferries would ultimately cost taxpayers less than the current plan to replace the Bonner Bridge in its present location and then keep trying to hold off the ocean to maintain N.C. 12 in place.

Isn't it time for DOT officials to face the facts, take the long view and rethink their approach to the Outer Banks?

Orrin Pilkey is the James B. Duke professor emeritus of geology at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment. He is the author, with Rob Young, of "The Rising Sea."
Aaaarrgh! We are Pirates and proud of it. We relish the fall, when students, faculty, alumni and friends muster in Greenville for pigskin activities: Freeboot Friday, tailgating and, of course, the gridiron battle.

We exhibit our pride with lavish displays of purple and gold and fly our skull-and-cross-bones flags to highlight our conquests. We have a flagship stadium and use purple smoke, loud music, a pirate impersonator and impressive video montages to instill fear into opposing teams. We long for touchdowns, after which we celebrate by sounding a tremendous boom.

But alas, after the great shot is fired, fans and foe turn their heads to gaze upon ... a very little cannon. It is hardly intimidating to watch a crew of strong ROTC students get down on their hands and knees to pack powder into our whimpy-looking weapon.

Fellow pirates, we need to invest and build something that commands the respect of a real cannon.

It is time to get our talented faculty in maritime history, physics, art and construction management together with ECU supporters to create an impressive relic-cannon-resembling mount into which we can place (and hide) our puny half-pound Pirate pistol.

J.P. WALSH

Greenville
RALEIGH — As competition intensified for coveted spots on the Carolina Hurricanes hockey team, East Carolina University physical therapy faculty and students helped assess players’ readiness the first day of training camp Sept. 16.

ECU clinical assistant professor Kevin Youngs and eight students evaluated 56 players from at least six countries invited to camp. There were a range of tests to measure strength and endurance, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness. The Hurricanes have set their NHL roster at 23. Others are going to the Hurricanes’ American Hockey League affiliate, the Charlotte Checkers, or other minor league assignments.

At training camp, students had a rare opportunity to work with professional athletes and trainers. Two students, Lee Welch of Greenville and Matt Lisk of Mount Airy, will serve as game day assistants during the upcoming season. Both are interested in working with athletes after graduation.

“I did some athletic training as an undergraduate,” Lisk said. “This will definitely be a good experience.”

At a station labeled “glute strength,” players stretched out on an exam table where Youngs used a handheld dynamometer to measure force and strength in the players’ outer and inner thighs. He also checked range of motion. Doctoral student F.J. Goodwin of Winterville recorded the numbers.
The muscles are important because of the explosive side-to-side movement of skating. Injuries to the hip and hamstrings can be debilitating.

“It goes back to stability,” Youngs said. “If they have a weakness in the hip, we will see asymmetry. We really want to see if there is major asymmetry, and how it correlates to any injury in the past, and what they can work on in season and the off season to prevent injury in the future.”

**Keeping players healthy**

This is the second year ECU physical therapy has worked with the Hurricanes as part of a research study on risk factors and prevention of groin injuries. Athletes were tracked last season and followed during the off season with recommendations to improve performance and prevent injury. Data from this year’s pre-season will be added, analyzed and given to Carolina Hurricanes Head Trainer Peter Friesen.

He likened hockey players to “skating on high heels” because of the blade height.

Agility, speed and balance are the upmost importance,” Friesen said. Some hits compare to a car crash, with opposing players reaching skate speeds close to 30 mph. Keeping players healthy is critical since they have three to four games per week — a total of 82 in the regular season — and travel 75,000 miles a year across 13 time zones.

“It is a long season,” Friesen said. “I think this is the hardest sport to train for because of the body contact and physical demands of the league.”

Jaime Holt (ECU ’99) is a physical therapist at Athletic Performance Center, part of Raleigh Orthopedics, who works with the Hurricanes team and helped facilitate the ECU-Hurricanes partnership.

Gone are the days when players could show up at camp and get in shape.

“They train a lot in the off season,” Holt said. “My job is to keep the injuries down.”
In season, he sees groin pulls and lower back pains, and the occasional shoulder dislocation or concussion. The pre-season allows time to identify players with a weakness or imbalance and get the player on a program to prevent injury on the ice.

“It’s a physical sport,” Holt said. “A lot of times injuries happen when they are worn out. So the better conditioned they are, the less prone to injury they are. When you’re tired, technique and form break down, and you get mentally lazy.”

Off-season conditioning means dry land training. Players can’t continually train on ice because of stress to the knees. “Cardio, strength and flexibility are all done off ice,” Friesen said, adding hockey players do cross-training with weights, bikes and balls to maintain sharp hand and eye coordination.

A new season
ECU students Welch and Lisk are already preparing for the start of the regular professional hockey season.

Brandon Sutter, a center and assistant captain of the Hurricanes, said having the ECU students around the rink is a positive experience.

“They help us out in a lot of ways,” Sutter said. “When a guy helps you take care of your body, it helps you with your performance, which is first and foremost.”

Friesen said the strong relationship with ECU helps him stay on the cutting edge of research. ECU values the partnership, too.

“The Department of Physical Therapy is very pleased to have a relationship with the Carolina Hurricanes,” said Dr. Walt Jenkins, chair of ECU physical therapy.

“It is most beneficial to our students who are interested in working with professional athletes and faculty with research interests in sports injury rehabilitation and prevention. In particular, the experience gained by our students is invaluable.”
**Seminars link leadership and music**

A series of seminars focusing on leadership in music-based careers will be held this month at ECU and is funded by a $7,500 grant from the BB&T Leadership Institute.

The seminars will focus on educating students and teachers in leadership in a variety of musical fields, including music therapy, teaching choral ensembles and music global diplomacy.

The ECU School of Music working with the College of Fine Arts and Communication and the student chapters of the American Choral Directors Association, Collegiate Music Educators National Conference and the Music Therapy Association of North Carolina will present the Lighted Torch Leadership Series in Music Oct. 14-26 at the School of Music.

The first seminar on Oct. 14 will focus on leadership and business practices for music therapists. Entitled “Looking for a New Leader? It’s YOU!,” the workshop will cover business plans, marketing and advertising, ethical concerns, and other issues related to music therapy in a community private practice, and is open to practicing music therapists and students. Barbara Reuer, CEO & founder of the non-profit music therapy companies MusicWorx and Resounding Joy, will lead the event.

The Choral Leadership Conference on Oct. 21-22 will feature Joshua Habermann, music director of the Santa Fe Desert Chorale and Dallas Symphony Chorus. He will present a series of events that will focus on creating leaders within the choral classroom.

On Oct. 21, ECU undergraduate students, graduate students and church and community conductors will collaborate with him as he works with their ensembles; a Q & A session for students and conductors in attendance will follow. On Oct. 22, high school students will participate in reading sessions of choral literature and learn skills in musicianship, ensemble building and methods for leadership in choral ensembles.

The final seminar, “Becoming a Cultural Diplomat: Global Leadership in Music,” will be held Oct. 25-26 and will focus on encouraging music students to become global leaders in cultural diplomacy.
Facilitated by John Ferguson, founder and director of American Voices, these four sessions will expose students to American Voices’ mission of cultural engagement and diplomacy through music in nations and regions emerging from isolation or conflict. Ferguson will train students to engage in cultural diplomacy to enrich the lives of people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds globally.

All three leadership seminars are free and open to the public. For more information, visit the Lighted Torch series website at http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cfac/artsed/index.cfm or contact Jay Juchniewicz at 328-1251.

**Campus dining ‘TOGO’ initiative launched**
ECU and Campus Dining have launched a new sustainable dining initiative that should reduce the amount of waste in landfills.

The TOGO program at Todd and West End Dining Halls replaces the disposable Styrofoam containers formerly used for take-out meals with a new reusable container and beverage bottle.

The program will substantially reduce waste, keeping an estimated 300,000 items out of the landfill each year, said Bill McCartney, associate vice chancellor of Campus Living and Dining Services.

“If you laid these 300,000 items down end to end, you would form a line that goes from Greenville to Kinston and back,” he said. “This is a staggering amount of waste to annually throw into our landfills when there is a sustainable alternative.”

Organizers also hope the program will encourage responsible dining habits, build community in the dining halls and reduce overall costs.

Students who sign up for the program receive a reusable container to take lunch or dinner out of the dining halls. When they return the used container at either dining hall, participants may receive either a clean, reusable container or a key tag they can present for a new container on their next visit.
Participants also receive a free 17 oz. aluminum TOGO beverage bottle for taking beverages from the dining halls. The bottles may also be refilled with a fountain beverage for 99 cents at any Campus Dining location.

Styrofoam containers and paper cups will no longer be provided as take-out options.

“As Pirates, we bleed purple and gold but we have also kept our focus on sustainability and being green,” said Dr. Virginia Hardy, vice chancellor for student affairs.

“Everyone is seeking ways to be more effective and efficient but we must always consider what is best for the environment as well.”

On average, dining services gave out 630 Styrofoam containers each day. The daily average number of to-go meals this semester is 85. So far, more than 1,200 students, faculty and staff have joined the TOGO program.

For additional information about the program, contact Joyce Sealey at 328-2822 or visit www.ecu.edu/dining (click on “Sustainable”) for instructions and a “How To” video.

**Upcoming Events:**
- **Tuesday:** Screening of “The Wise Kids,” part of the Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers, 7 p.m., Greenville Museum of Art. This is a free event.
- **Saturday:** Educators Hall of Fame induction, 10 a.m., Fletcher Recital Hall. The College of Education will induct new members into the Educators Hall of Fame. Call 737-4162 for more information.
- **Saturday:** Adaptive Recreation & Wellness Day, 1-4 p.m., Student Recreation Center.

*See [www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm) for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.*
Two family physicians join Brody staff
Monday, October 10, 2011
WorkWeek

Family physicians Dr. Aaron Lambert and Dr. Brian Budenholzer have joined the Brody School of Medicine and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Lambert joined the Department of Family Medicine as a clinical assistant professor. He has a medical degree from Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va., and completed residency training in family medicine there. His clinical interests are obstetrics, pediatrics, and rural and wilderness medicine.

Budenholzer joined the department as a clinical associate professor. He has a medical degree from the University of Southern California and completed residency training in family medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. His clinical interests are evidence-based medicine, obstetrics, pediatrics, health promotion and screening, and cardiovascular disease.
Lambert and Budenholzer are board-certified in family medicine. They see patients at the ECU Family Medicine Center at 101 Heart Drive. Appointments with Budenholzer are available by calling 744-5517. Appointments with Lambert are available by calling 744-4611.
Summers: Casting call for ECU after rout
Monday, October 10, 2011

A week-long casting call is very likely under way at the East Carolina football practice facility, with the team’s coaches seeking to cast the roles in the production of a winning football team.

The benches were emptied on Saturday night inside Houston’s Robertson Stadium, with almost everyone in uniform on both sidelines seeing action in the Cougars’ 56-3 destruction of the Pirates.

The host team watched its starters craft a massive 35-3 edge by halftime, then spent the second half observing its youngsters as they logged valuable real-game repetitions. For ECU it was the same, though it was much more a necessity than a choice.

The differences between the two teams couldn’t have been more vast despite the similar late-game philosophies.

The Cougars kicked back on the laurels of their sixth win in six tries. The Pirates spent the same time still searching for their 2011 identity.

When unbeaten Houston returns from its bye week to take on Marshall in two Saturdays, all the usual starters will be back in place for a team that could lose every game the rest of the season and still go to a bowl. ECU, on the other hand, will go to Memphis this weekend staggering at 1-4 after the
team’s worst-ever loss in Conference USA and might feature a roster that reflects some rethinking.

At numerous positions, there are no more guarantees for the Pirates, and the benches inside Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium might be occupied by some unseated starters.

From quarterback to special teams coverage units, the Pirates are a team in turmoil after absolutely nothing went right against the Cougars. No one played a leading role on the field.

The team that led the nation in lost turnover average entering the game piled on four more, running its season total to 21. The ECU offensive line gave way to nine sacks as Houston ramped up the pressure more than three previous big conference opponents had.

On the other side of the ball, the ECU defense allowed touchdowns on five of seven first half drives, and even as the substitution swarm occurred in the second half, UH visited the end zone three more times and the Pirates didn’t find it at all for the first time in roughly two years.

Sophomore quarterback Rio Johnson’s first foray into real-game action — replacing senior starter Dominique Davis after his third interception of the night — was perhaps the most visible personnel change against Houston. It was far from the only one, though.

Dozens of backups came to the forefront and whether or not it was just for one night or for the long term must now be decided.

Lesser-used players like receivers Torian Richardson, Reese Wiggins and Mike Price (two catches apiece) and running back Torrance Hunt (team-high 65 rush yards) joined Johnson in the offense and got appreciable minutes.

On defense, linebackers Brandon Williams (six tackles) and Jacob Geary (five tackles, 0.5 sack) got their share as well, and the rotation on the front seven featured heavily the team’s reserves for much of the latter stages of the game.
Head coach Ruffin McNeill stopped short of saying anyone’s job was up for grabs after the game, but contended some of the team’s backups were simply playing better than the players ahead of them.

In order to make their sixth straight bowl trip, an ECU team that is 2-9 in its last 11 games must now finish 5-2 or better the rest of the campaign.

At 1-1 in C-USA, however, there is still plenty left to win for the Pirates, including a chance to return to the Liberty Bowl a second time at season’s end, but whether or not this story ends as a triumph, a tragedy or even a dark comedy is up to the cast and the directors.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or 252-329-9595.
Fewer dollars for financial aid

The UNC system has $35 million less than last year for grants to needy students. An estimated 5,500 fewer students will receive financial aid from the state.

Dropouts increase as aid falls

BY JANE STANCILL - jstancill@newsobserver.com

A few nights a week, Ashley Williams stocks shelves and runs the cash register at Big Lots in Laurinburg. She's excited about the second part-time job she just landed, decorating cakes at Walmart.

Williams, a 22-year-old computer science major at UNC-Pembroke, lives in Laurinburg with her unemployed parents and commutes to campus. She helps out with the family grocery bill and pays for her cellphone, car and gas.

Her financial aid package dropped significantly this fall, when she lost about $1,000 she used to get from state grants. After tuition, fees and health insurance were paid from her federal aid, she had $45 left - not enough to buy her books, which cost nearly $400. The university helped her find two small grants to bridge the gap.

"I cannot stop. I can't give up," Williams said. "I've been talking about going to college since I was 5, and so I can't give up. I've got to do what I've got to do to make my ends meet."

Williams is one of the lucky ones. She was able to stay in school.

More than 500 of her fellow classmates left campus, or did not return this fall, because they couldn't pay their tuition bill, UNCP officials say. The students who dropped out were academically eligible, but the money wasn't there.

"It was tragic, almost, to see that many not able to continue," said UNCP Provost Ken Kitts.

A cycle of financial woe is beginning to show at UNC campuses, where the system's overall state funding dropped by 15.6 percent this year.

Tuition and fees rose $400 on average across the UNC system, while some sources of financial aid are drying up.

Tuition and fees for North Carolina residents are $4,668 this year at UNCP, and the total minimum cost is $12,366, including room, board and health insurance.
At the same time, more students are qualifying for aid because a parent lost a job. They are often taking on bigger loans to stay in school, while worrying that when they graduate they'll end up in a dismal job market.

There is no statewide data on the college dropout phenomenon, and it appears to be playing out unevenly. Flagship campuses - UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State - have not seen a major impact so far, partly because they have more pots of money to tap to help students. Some campuses have noticed a slight dip, mainly in out-of-state students who have higher costs.

Others saw a significant decrease and began to contact students to inquire why they weren't coming back.

"The message was clear," said Steve Roberson, dean of undergraduate studies at UNC Greensboro, where 125 students left. "It's the economy over and over again in ways we just haven't seen in the past."

Undergraduate enrollment has dipped by about 200 students at UNCG, which has a student body of more than 17,000. Some of the decline can be attributed to the university raising admissions standards, said UNCG Chancellor Linda Brady. But students and families are also having to make difficult decisions about whether they can afford a university education.

"Some of them indicated they were transferring to a community college because it was cheaper," Brady said.

**Debt keeps growing**

Even though there are fewer students, the overall loan debt of UNCG students has grown to $76 million, from $74 million last year, Roberson said. Tuition and fees for North Carolina residents are $5,493 this year; room, meals and other expenses bring the costs above $12,000.

Jasmine Igbedion, a UNCG sophomore from Washington, D.C., didn't know whether she would be able to return to campus until the week classes started. Her financial aid package had decreased, and her mother was unable to qualify for a federal loan. At the last minute, Jasmine was able to get an additional $4,000 loan.

"I spent almost the whole summer crying because I didn't think I could come back," she said.

Last week, she and two friends strolled outside the campus student center, where the food court offers Mexican fare, sushi, burgers and Chick-fil-A at lunchtime. They said they had cut their meal plans from $1,050 to $750 for the semester, and the money is going fast.
Kiarra Johnson, a UNCG junior from Washington, D.C., shares a textbook with a friend to cut costs. "Sometimes he will read it one day, and I'll read it the next day," Johnson said.

Johnson, who wants to be a teacher, gets discouraged about the debt she's accumulating. Every day, she wonders, is it worth it?

"I understand that eventually - it may take years - it'll pay off," she said.

**Declines in aid**

UNC President Tom Ross, in his inaugural speech last week, said the university system should keep its historic commitment to affordability but not sacrifice academic quality as state money declines.

"Still, maintaining high quality and raising educational attainment amid rising costs will require a dependable, adequate stream of need-based financial aid, lest we deny many economically disadvantaged - and middle class - students opportunities that the world of the future will make available only to the college-educated," he said.

More than half of the UNC system's 220,000 students receive some form of need-based financial aid; a little more than a third receive federal Pell Grants, the primary source of aid for low-income students. Some turn to loans, while others can't or won't borrow more.

This year, the system has $35 million less in state financial aid dollars for grants; an estimated 5,500 fewer students will receive financial aid from the state.

The situation could get worse for students. Some members of Congress have suggested cutting the Pell Grant as part of a deficit reduction plan. And interest rates on subsidized federal loans are expected to double next year after the expiration of a four-year span of reduced rates. The interest rate will jump to 6.8 percent next year unless Congress takes action.

Meanwhile, student loan default rates are on the rise nationally, according to a government report last month. In 2009, the default rate rose to 8.8 percent, up from 7 percent the year before. Defaulting on a student loan can be a disaster for a young person's credit rating, said Molly Broad, president of the American Council on Education, a national organization that represents 1,600 campus leaders across the nation.

"It's stunning, the level of unemployment of recent college graduates," said Broad, former UNC president. "So they're unemployed, they have had significant student loans because tuitions went up when state support went down, and the interest rate goes up on top of it. We're sending a generation of
college graduates to decades of difficulty in getting out from under that. We owe them better."

**Gut-wrenching losses**

UNCP Chancellor Kyle Carter said turning students away because of money is gut-wrenching.

The problem at Pembroke also threatens the university's bottom line. Enrollment has dropped from 6,900 last year to 6,200 this year, Carter said. That means the university collects less tuition revenue, leading to a $2 million budget hole in addition to the state budget cut of $9 million this year.

Carter said one idea on the table for 2012-13 is raising tuition and devoting all of the revenue to financial aid. He's not sure it's workable, but it's one approach being studied.

The university is in contact with the former students and is working to help them look for private scholarships and other sources of financial help.

"We have a full-court press to try to get students back in the spring," Carter said.

Williams, the UNCP student, has noticed that one of her friends didn't return this fall. But she understands all too well that college students have to adjust.

In 2009, Williams arrived at UNCP after a year and a half at UNC-Charlotte, where she amassed almost $24,000 in debt. She knew she couldn't keep that up, so she packed up and moved home, where she could save money on living expenses.

"I couldn't afford it. I wasn't getting enough financial aid," she said. "I loved that school."

But she's also happy at Pembroke, where she has enjoyed the small classes. So far, she has managed with no additional loans.

Her dream is to save up, eventually go to a culinary arts school and open her own restaurant. She expects to start her second job soon and get her degree in the spring.

"I feel like what doesn't break me, it makes me stronger," she said. "It just shows me that after I graduate and get out on my own, I can't expect for everything to be easy. Things don't come to you easy. You have to work for what you get."

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The University of North Carolina Wilmington Faculty Senate has taken issue with a proposed cost-saving effort that will merge two departments.

On Tuesday, the Faculty Senate approved a set of resolutions opposing the merger of the Geology and Geography Department with the Physics and Physical Oceanography Department and also how the merger was handled.

During the summer, administrators made the decision to merge the two departments. Little advance notice was given to faculty members in the departments, who strongly opposed the move.

Administrators said there will not be any cuts to faculty in the $80,000 cost saving, but faculty members worry how the two departments will function together.

"The department faculty feel the university did not manage the merger correctly and we feel they have a point," said Jennifer Horan, a faculty senator and professor. "We are representing them in this issue."

Even the strong opposition by the faculty governing body might not derail the merger, but administrators say they will change the way the university communicates with the faculty in the future.

"They are legitimately making a point that the Faculty Senate should be in the discussion, and they should be," said Dean of Arts and Sciences David Cordle. "We had a situation in spring where we knew there would be budget cuts, and we reached a certain level of cuts (in the summer) where steps were taken. No proposal was brought to them at that time because we did not anticipate that high of a cut."

Faculty Senate members say they understand cuts must be made, but not consulting them sets a bad precedent.

"The plan wasn't a plan that was well circulated," Horan said.

One change to rectify that is a recommendation by the University Curriculum Committee that asks for a policy allowing closed sessions for Faculty Senate committees. That would facilitate future considerations of proposed mergers while still protecting sensitive personnel information.
"I think one of the positive outcomes is ... we see the need to have a clearer understanding among us on how we should work together to manage budget cuts, if there are additional cuts in the future," Cordle said.

As for this merger, Cathy Barlow, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, said there is still time for the faculty to review the decision, and talks will continue.

"This merger doesn't take place until January if it is implemented," she said. "They can review and recommend before then."

But she said finding another way to save the $80,000 would be difficult. She said that is one of the reasons the university had to cut faculty positions to meet a 15.8 percent budget cut required in July.

"We don't have large amounts of money to pull from anymore," she said.

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