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Researchers cite drop in cancer deaths

By Lauran Neergaard
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Good news on the cancer front: Death rates are dropping faster than ever, thanks to new progress against colorectal cancer.

A turning point came in 2002, scientists conclude Monday in the annual "Report to the Nation" on cancer. Between 2002 and 2004, death rates dropped by an average of 2.1 percent a year.

That may not sound like much, but between 1993 and 2001, deaths rates dropped on average 1.1 percent a year.

The big change was a two-prolonged gain against colorectal cancer.

While it remains the nation's No. 2 cancer killer, deaths are dropping faster for colorectal cancer than for any other malignancy — by almost 5 percent a year among men and 4.5 percent among women.

One reason is that colorectal cancer is striking fewer people, the report found. New diagnoses are down roughly 2.5 percent a year for both men and women, thanks to screening tests that can spot precancerous polyps in time to remove them and thus prevent cancer from forming.

Still, only about half the people who need screening — everyone over age 50 — gets checked.

"If we're seeing such great impact even at 50 percent screening rates, we think it could be much greater if we could get more of the population tested," said Dr. Elizabeth Ward of the American Cancer Society, who co-wrote the report with government scientists.

The other gain is the result of new treatments, which are credited with doubling survival times for the most advanced patients.

In 1996, there was just one truly effective drug for colon cancer.

Today, there are six more, giving patients a variety of chemotherapy cocktails to try to hold their tumors in check, said Dr. Louis Weiner, medical oncology chief at Philadelphia's Fox Chase Cancer Center and a colorectal cancer specialist.

"I can tell you the offices of gastrointestinal oncologists around the country, and indeed around the world, are busier than ever because our patients are doing better," he said.

Among the report's other findings:

- Cancer mortality is improving faster among men, with drops in death rates of 2.6 percent a year compared with 1.8 percent a year for women.

- Lung cancer explains much of the gender difference. Male death rates are dropping about 2 percent a year while female death rates finally are holding steady after years of increases. Smoking rates fell for men before they did for women, so men reaped the benefits sooner.

- Overall, the rate of new cancer diagnoses is inching down about one-half a percent a year.

- New breast cancer diagnoses are dropping about 3.5 percent a year, a previously reported decline due either to women shunning postmenopausal hormone therapy or to fewer getting mammograms.

The report includes a special focus on cancer among American Indians and Alaskan natives.

Overall, cancer incidence is lower among those populations than among white Americans, except for cancers of the stomach, liver, kidney, gallbladder and cervix.

The annual report is a collaboration of the American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and North American Association of Central Cancer Registries.
College funds face scrutiny

By Justin Pope
The Associated Press

Colleges and universities raked in money by the billions last year. But their investing success now has a price — a movement in Congress to force the wealthiest schools to spend more of their money to keep down tuition.

In recent weeks, a string of colleges and universities have announced enviable investment results. Leading the way was Yale, which earned 28 percent over the year ending June 30, increasing the school’s endowment to $22.5 billion overall. Harvard, the world’s wealthiest university with $34.9 billion, beat the market with a 23 percent return.

But while those numbers were coming out, some members of the Senate Finance Committee in Washington were wondering aloud why the rise in endowments isn’t stemming tuition increases.

“At a hearing last month, lawmakers batted around the idea of forcing wealthier colleges to spend more savings on reducing costs. “Senators, what would your constituents say if gasoline cost $3.15 a gallon?” Lynne Munson, an adjunct fellow at the Center for College Affordability and Productivity in Washington told the committee. “Or if the price of milk was over $1.15? That is how much those items would cost if their price had gone up at the same rate that tuition has since 1980.”

In the mid-1990s, a billion-dollar endowment was a mark of the financial elite, a club with just 17 schools in its ranks. Within a few years there will likely be 100.

Private foundations are required by law to spend at least 5 percent of their endowments each year on their missions, but public charities — a category that includes colleges — face no such requirement. Holding colleges to the same standard interests Iowa Republican Sen. Charles Grassley, the minority leader of the Senate Finance Committee.

“It’d be good to see the very elite institutions, with the richest endowments, take the lead and create a ripple effect throughout higher education to make college more affordable for everyone,” he said in a statement. It’s unclear right now, both Republicans and Democrats say, whether the proposal will make it out of the committee.

In fact, colleges spent about 4.6 percent from their endowments last year, according to the latest figures from the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

But if the billionaire colleges alone spent the full 5 percent, that would mean an extra $1.5 billion available annually for financial aid, calculates Michael Dannenberg, director of education policy at the New America Foundation, a Washington think-tank. He says such a requirement would be fair, given that colleges are allowed to invest tax-free. That perk has boosted endowments by billions and carries an obligation to public service.

Higher education officials were angry they weren’t allowed to speak out against the proposal at a hearing last month, but submitted their own testimony last week, arguing they spend plenty on public service and that endowments aren’t simply savings accounts that can be tapped at any time for any reason.

Many funds come with strings attached by donors on how they can be used.

Colleges also have to budget prudently, taking market swings into account, and they try to avoid big jumps in spending just because the market did well one year. But by sticking to gradual adjustments, they can look stingy.

For instance, Yale is slated to get more than third of its annual budget — $945 million — from its endowment this year. But because its investments did so well, that’s only about 3.7 percent of the endowment.

But the underlying issue is that the proposal would represent a major encroachment by Washington into university affairs. Colleges would not take kindly to Congress directing them how to spend their money.

“We don’t think as a general matter the federal government ought to be telling private philanthropic organizations, that have been around in some cases since before the federal government, how to spend their money,” said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, the main group representing colleges and universities in Washington.

Still, Hartle acknowledges colleges will have to take seriously the complaints about colleges costs with which constituents are deluging lawmakers.
ECU fest to serve plenty of laughter

The Daily Reflector

What do a Romanian public radio poet, a Jewish cowboy and a Southern lady novelist have in common? They are the keynote speakers for East Carolina University's HumorFest, Nov. 1-3.

Author and North Carolina native Jill McCorkle, poet Andrei Codrescu, and rock-a-roll Texas novelist Kinky Friedman will speak at the event.

Codrescu and dancer Claire Porter will present "Stretching Muscles and Words" at 7:15 p.m. Nov. 1. Friedman will talk satire and sing at 8 p.m. Nov. 2.

A luncheon and reading with McCorkle is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. Nov. 3.

"Humor as an art form rarely attracts the serious attention it deserves," said Tom Douglass, an English professor and event co-chairman. "The East Carolina HumorFest intends to correct this omission and provide performers, scholars, and students an opportunity to enjoy humor in all of its forms."

More than a dozen panels with scholars from five countries will present papers in humor and all its forms including: taboo and Southern literature, political satire, medieval and renaissance humor, satire in popular culture, humor and healing, among others.

Joke tellers, punsters, instigators, musicians, improvisers, impersonators, dancers, jesters, actors, village idiots and storytellers who also happen to be ECU students, will participate in a "Joke-Off" planned during the weekend. A campuswide cream pie toss will wrap up events Nov. 3.

The entire HumorFest conference and tickets for these events are now available for sale at the ECU Box Office at 1-800-ECU-ARTS or 328-4788, or by visiting http://www.ecu.edu/humor. Individual tickets for each event are $15 in advance or $20 at the door. Full conference access is free for ECU students, $25 for students of other campuses, and $80 for all other participants.

Collections for the first-ever National Registry of Laughter have already begun. Those interested in becoming part of the growing body of laughs are asked to e-mail a 5- to 20-second MP3 recording of laughter to ecuhumorfest@ecu.edu.

Provide the name of the laughter, the date laughed, and the location. Participants also can send a photo and up to 150 words about both the person laughing and the laughter.

Visit http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/news/humor-laugh-page.cfm to find out more and to listen in on a few good laughs. "The registry will be a human record of vocal joy," Douglass said. "The best presence we have in the world is a good laugh. You know you're present when you're laughing."

The HumorFest is a partnership of ECU's English department, Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences and the Office of Co-Curricular Programs and Cultural Outreach.

Komen tour stops locally

A nationwide initiative to educate young women about breast cancer will stop at ECU Thursday.

The Susan G. Komen for the Cure's community education and outreach tour will be held 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Wright Plaza, behind Messick Theater.

The local event is one of more than 150 stops Komen On the Go is making across the country to heighten awareness of breast health and breast cancer and to encourage young women to commit to everyday health habits to reduce their risk for the disease. The Komen On the Go pink trailer converts into an interactive learning center featuring computer kiosks, breast cancer educational materials, breast self-examination guides and other information.

There also will be an 8-foot "graffiti wall" for students to share a memory or pledge their personal support in the cause to end breast cancer.

14 honored by Education

The Alumni and Friends ceremony honored individuals who contributed to the College of Education becoming a leader in preparing professional educators for North Carolina schools.

This year's honorees were Emily Stewart Boyce, Frances Bryant Bradburn, Phyllis Broughton, Charles R. Cobbie, Frances Daniels, Meghan Sweeney Doyle, Robert Joyner, Floyd Elliott Mattheis, William Charles McClammy (posthumously), Robert Sterling Rippe, Ronald Brooks Singletary, Kenneth W. Smith, Margaret Cude Ward, and Marle Stallings Williams.

"This event was a fitting tribute to our honorees profession and the College of Education that continues to prepare more professional educators for North Carolina schools than any other university in the state," said Marcy Romary, the college's major gifts officer, adding that this inaugural event came at the perfect time.
ECU News Services

LT. COL. STEVE DELVAUX used to run to stay in shape and as part of his training as an Army officer. Now Delvaux, who served two tours of duty in Iraq, is running with a bigger mission — for fellow soldiers.

Delvaux will run in the 32nd Annual Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 28 to raise money for wounded soldiers in military hospitals across the country.

He has set a personal goal of raising $10,000 for the Azalea Charity's Aid for Wounded Soldiers project.

Azalea Charity is a nonprofit organization that raises money to provide comfort and relief items to servicemen sick or injured from service in Iraq or Afghanistan.

In addition to providing items to soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where many injured soldiers are sent when they first return to the U.S., after being injured, the group assists the Durham VA Medical Center and the Wounded Warriors Barracks at Camp Lejeune.

Delvaux took over as professor of military science and battalion commander of East Carolina’s Army ROTC program after spending four years serving in the 199th Infantry Regiment, the Army’s “Iron Rakkasans,” as part of the 101st Airborne Division based at Fort Campbell, Ky.

Delvaux ran in his first marathon in April — the Country Music Marathon in Nashville. After five months of intensive training, he told his wife the morning of the marathon that it would be his first and last. But the next day, he realized he liked the challenge and having a goal to work for, so he signed up for the Marine Corps marathon.

“It struck me that if I was going to be running in it then I should make it mean something,” Delvaux said. “Right now, I feel kind of helpless since I'm not in a unit deployed, I felt there was something I could do for those men and women wounded.”

A native of South Dakota, Delvaux joined the Army immediately after high school and earned an appointment to West Point. After graduating in 1990, he received his commission as an infantry officer and was assigned to the Berlin Brigade in Berlin, Germany.

He was later stationed at Fort Campbell as part of the 101st Airborne Division, earned his master’s degree in military history from Florida State University, taught military history at West Point and was stationed in Korea for a year before being reassigned to the 101st Airborne.

With that division, he deployed to Iraq in 2003 for eight months and returned for another year in 2005, returning home Sept. 12, 2005.

Delvaux said that ECU was number one on his wish list for his next assignment as a ROTC program director.

He admits that recruiting for military service during wartime isn’t easy, but he said that he has found the ECU cadets to be outstanding and the region very supportive of military service.

The ECU program typi-
"All donations go to providing aid in some form to the soldiers, whether it's a phone calling card or an electric razor for guys who can't use a blade razor due to being on a blood-thinning medication."

Delvaux said he has been humbled by the contributions from family, friends and some strangers, who have received the address to his fundraising Web site from someone else.

"The response has been overwhelming and the humbling part for me is to read the messages that people leave saying their donation is in honor or memory of a soldier," he said. "One man donated $101 in honor of the 101st Airborne Division, which he served in, and in memory of his brother who was also in the 101st and was killed in Vietnam."

"When I was out running recently, it was hot and I started feeling tired and miserable and sorry for myself. Then I started to think of the guys in these military hospitals, some of whom may never be able to run again because of the devastating injuries they received while serving us and our great nation. I didn't stay tired very long. This is something I can do to help and honor our brave servicemen and women at the same time."

To learn more about Delvaux's run for Azalea Charity's "Aid for Wounded Soldiers Project," visit www.active.com/donate/Run4WoundedSoldiers/rakkasan

**LT. COL. STEVE DELVAUX** trains for the upcoming Marine Corps Marathon. His efforts will raise funds to provide comfort items for wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to military hospitals, such as Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.
State Views

Smithies' Nobel work

The News & Observer, Raleigh

Medical researcher Oliver Smithies is no stranger to News & Observer readers. The UNC-Chapel Hill professor has lived in the Triangle since 1988, and in 1992 was the subject of a Tar Heel of the Week profile. It observed that "Some at UNC, where Smithies accepted a distinguished professorship four years ago, speculate he may someday win a Nobel Prize." Someday arrived early Monday — a great day for the British-born Smithies, for the university and the state. The UNC scientist will share the Nobel in medicine with Mario Capecchi of the University of Utah and Sir Martin Evans of Cardiff University in Wales. The three, working independently, made pathbreaking discoveries in genetics during the 1980s. The value of their achievement has been apparent for years, and Smithies, who presses ahead with his research at age 82, has previously received some of science's highest honors. This Nobel Prize involving research with mice has special meaning for humans. The discoveries are widely employed in biomedicine, where researchers are already on the trail of cures for numerous diseases. And the prize committee predicted that the "benefits to mankind will continue to increase over many years to come."

Over a long career, Oliver Smithies has combined the best qualities of a hands-on tinkerer and a fundamental thinker. Now all the world can say it has discovered him.
NAACP, East Carolina discuss alleged noose

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University officials continue managing fallout from the recent appearance of what at least one person thought was a noose.

Chancellor Steve Ballard met Thursday with members of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People chapter to discuss the incident and its aftermath. Each side came away convinced of the need for more diversity discussions, ECU and NAACP officials said. NAACP leaders believe the noose incident needs more scrutiny.

"We feel that it is a step in the right direction by the organization and the university, coming to the table today," NAACP President Calvin Henderson said Thursday. "We feel that it's one of the tools that can be used in addressing the issues of racism that seem to be rebirthing throughout our state."

Henderson requested a parley with Ballard after the university closed its investigation of the alleged hanging of a noose on campus. On Sept. 18, a student found the rope in the basement of Belk Hall and reported he'd seen a noose to university police. On Oct. 5, ECU officials announced that student interviews and surveillance video hadn't yielded conclusive proof of whether the rope was a noose.

The incident has created a "cloud of fear" for black students on campus, regardless of the investigation's conclusion, Henderson said. While he applauded Ballard and others for their commitment to diversity, Henderson said the noose matter isn't closed.

"We feel that it goes further than just an alleged noose," he said.

See ECU, A11

ECU
Continued from A1

said. "We feel that what they found was the making of the noose. We're just not accepting the statement of alleged."

Henderson hopes to see the rope next week, something interim ECU Police Chief Janice Harris consented to during the meeting, he said.

For the university, the meeting Thursday advanced a campuswide conversation about race and diversity, said interim Chief Diversity Officer Virginia Hardy, who was one of five ECU administrators present at the gathering. Officials also discussed the incident with Belk Hall residents earlier this week and will hold diversity forums for students later this year.

At the end of this month, a conflict resolution expert from Durham will train students and employees in how to discuss difficult issues constructively. Most of the diversity efforts were already in place, but the September incident offers a teachable moment for ECU students, staff and faculty members, Hardy said.

It also opens the door for discussions with off-campus groups, she added.

"We were very happy to have the opportunity to converse with members of the NAACP and welcome those conversations, not only with that group but with the community at large," she said.

Jimmy Ryals can be contacted at jryals@coxnc.com and 329-9568.
Students' birth control cost up

Law made it harder for colleges to get deep drug discounts

BY APRIL BETHEA
THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

Last year, a package of Ortho Tri-Cyclen Lo birth control cost about $15 at N.C. State University. Now, students have to pay $46 a pack.

The price of hormonal birth control, such as the pill or patch, has more than doubled or tripled in recent months at colleges and universities across the country. A provision in the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 makes it hard for colleges to get steep discounts from drug manufacturers on medications such as birth control, as they did in the past. Mary Hoban of the American College Health Association said she thinks colleges were unintentionally hurt by the act, which went into effect in January.

The group has unsuccessfully tried to get a federal agency to restore the college centers' eligibility for the discounts and is appealing to lawmakers. The higher prices mostly affect students at schools such as UNC-Chapel Hill or NCSU, which don't require medical insurance. Some schools require insurance for full-time students, so students are charged only their health plan's co-payment for birth control.

Colleges have long dispensed contraceptives at their health clinics to help prevent pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, with condoms often being offered free.

In a 2006 American College Health Association survey, about 70 percent of college students reported having at least one sex partner during the past school year. Nearly 40 percent of those surveyed said they or their partner used birth control pills, Depo Provera shots or the Norplant implant. Thirty-seven percent used condoms.

Many drug companies were willing to offer hormonal birth control to colleges at a discount to help reach new customers. The colleges also benefited, Hoban said, by marking up the price of the drugs and using the profits to pay for other health programs.

At Winthrop University in Rock Hill, S.C., where prices have risen each of the past five years, generic pills cost $25, while brand names go for $40 or $45 a pack. That's up from $7 in 2003.

UNC-CH stocked up on contraceptives before the price increases but is close to running out of its extra supply, said Rita Proctor, director of pharmacy.

Winthrop freshman Katie Burkett wanted to fill her Ortho Tri-Cyclen Lo prescription on campus because she figured prices would be better for students. But now her mother is footing the bill for her to get the pills elsewhere. And soon, Burkett will have to start paying for them herself.

Burkett figures she'll "not eat as much fast food or skimp on other things" to afford the payment.

But she said she'll make it work. "I think it would be more of a risk to get off it and chance getting pregnant," she said.
Students' debt burden

The line of logic goes, and it's not a bad line, that borrowing money to attend college is an investment and should be viewed as such. College grads make much more money in a lifetime than do those without degrees. And opportunities are greater — horizons are broader and deeper. Lives are enriched. Children of grads tend to be grads themselves. Thus, attending and graduating from college starts a life cycle that is productive.

All true. But what if a student graduates with tens of thousands of dollars of debt that he or she or parents have to cover? Then, debt payments can take a huge chunk of take-home pay, affecting lifestyles and career choices.

College expenses, after all, have almost doubled over the last 10 years. Inflation is one thing, but doubled? Institutions of higher education may argue that competition and various expenses — increasing faculty salaries, investing in technology — have driven up their costs, too. That's true enough — but schools both public and private ought to ask themselves if some of the expenses passed on to students are fair.

And here's another point: in fat times, when the economy booms and jobs are plentiful, students may not think about debt as much. But as one professor told the Associated Press: "Once the economy starts to slow, you're going to see a large increase of these people (students and grads carrying debt) in bankruptcy court."

One student cited by the AP earned a law degree from Michigan State University. That's something with good earning potential, but this student has a monthly debt payment of $660, which is about a quarter of her income.

Already, Americans are carrying too much credit debt. Many are mortgaged to the limit; others are supporting their children or their parents. The housing market is in a slump, and merchants are worried about the immediate future. If college grads are buried under debt, and have to go under, that will hurt them for a good chunk of their careers.

The students, and their parents, can do something. They can be careful about the terms of their loans. They can negotiate rather than grab the first deal that comes along.

Presumably, students could take advantage of work-study programs. And yes, the colleges and universities themselves could explore other options for helping middle-class students avoid deep, deep debt. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has its Carolina Covenant for the poorest students, ensuring they will graduate debt-free. What a wonder it would be if something like that could help middle-class kids as well.

It must be said that the UNC system overall remains a fairly good bargain — it's doubtful that graduates are carrying debt comparable to those at private or other public institutions.

College is an investment and there's something to be said for people paying for it. It does give a return. But the question now is whether some students have to dig themselves so deeply in debt that they don't see outside that ditch until their working lives are pretty far along.
Colleges may be forced to hold down tuition

BY JUSTIN POPE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Colleges and universities raked in money by the billions last year. But their investing success now has a price — a movement in Congress to force the wealthiest schools to spend more of their money to keep down tuition.

In recent weeks, a string of colleges and universities have announced enviable investment results. Leading the way was Yale, which earned 28 percent over the year ending June 30, increasing the school's endowment to $22.5 billion overall.

Harvard, the world's wealthiest university with $34.9 billion, beat the market again with a 23 percent return. There also were good returns for smaller schools such as Bowdoin (24.4 percent) and William & Mary (19.2 percent).

But while those numbers were coming out, some members of the Senate Finance Committee in Washington were wondering why the rise in endowments isn't stemming tuition increases. At a hearing last month, lawmakers batted around the idea of forcing at least some of the wealthier colleges to spend more savings on reducing costs.

"Senators, what would your constituents say if gasoline cost $9.15 a gallon?" Lynne Munson, an adjunct fellow at the Center for College Affordability and Productivity in Washington told the committee. "Or if the price of milk was over $15? That is how much those items would cost if their price had gone up at the same rate that tuition has since 1980."

Private foundations are required by law to spend at least 5 percent of their endowments each year on their missions, but public charities, which include colleges, are not.

Holding colleges to the same standard is an idea that clearly interests Iowa Republican Sen. Charles Grassley, the minority leader of the Senate Finance Committee and Capitol Hill's closest scrutinizer of nonprofit groups.

"It'd be good to see the very elite institutions, with the richest endowments, take the lead and create a ripple effect throughout higher education to make college more affordable for everyone," he said in a statement.

It's unclear right now, both Republicans and Democrats say, whether the proposal will make it out of the committee, which is considering several ideas related to taxes and higher education.

$1.5 billion more

In fact, colleges spent on average 4.6 percent of their endowments last year, according to the latest figures from National Association of College and University Business Officers.

But if the billionaire colleges alone spent the full 5 percent, that would mean an additional $1.5 billion available annually for financial aid, calculates Michael Dannenberg, director of education policy at the New America Foundation, a Washington think tank. He says such a requirement would be fair, given that colleges are allowed to invest tax-free.

Higher education officials were angry they weren't allowed to speak out against the proposal at a hearing last month, but they submitted their own testimony last week, arguing that they spend plenty on public service and that endowments aren't simply savings accounts that can be tapped at any time for any reason.

Many endowment funds come with strings attached by donors on how they can be used. Colleges also have to budget prudently, taking market swings into account, and they try to avoid big jumps in spending just because the market did well in a particular year.

But the underlying issue is that the proposal would represent a major encroachment by Washington into university affairs. "We don't think, as a general matter, the federal government ought to be telling private philanthropic organizations, that have been around in some cases since before the federal government, how to spend their money," said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education.
ECU, police broaden efforts to rein in students' drinking

BY JERRY ALLEGOOD STAFF WRITER

GREENVILLE - Over and over, East Carolina University students hear about alcohol abuse in mandatory classes and in warnings from peers and police officers.

But campus and community officials say the party isn't over among underage drinkers.

Police dispatch "party patrols" into neighborhoods around the Greenville campus to crack down on noise and drinking. Campus police say there is "zero tolerance" for underage drinking, especially at football games. And university officials who have long discounted ECU's reputation for hard partying — some say it's a myth — have stepped up education and counseling programs aimed at freshmen.

"You have 4,000 students at risk every year," said Robert J. Morphet, an ECU counselor. "You're continually starting over."

High-profile arrests this year brought attention to ECU, but police and school officials say those incidents reflected stepped-up enforcement rather than an unusual prevalence of underage drinking.

Morphet said that ECU, which has about 26,000 students, has about the same incidence of alcohol use and abuse as other universities. Studies show that nationwide about 85 percent of high school students have consumed alcohol.

In college, that drinking takes on new intensity and the results are worse than missed classes and disorderly conduct. In 2004, N.C. State University moved to curb student drinking before football games after two young men were fatally shot in a student tailgating area outside Carter-Finley Stadium. At UNC-Chapel Hill, a female student fell from a ladder and died after a night of heavy drinking in 1995.

ECU, like colleges across the nation, is intensifying its efforts to punish drunken behavior

SEE DRINKING, PAGE 8A
and encourage moderation among students who choose to drink.

ECU and Greenville police issued about 20 citations for underage drinking in August, one of them to ECU quarterback Rob Kass. In addition, Greenville police and state Alcohol Law Enforcement agents raided a party at a fraternity house off campus and charged 77 people with underage drinking.

Maj. Frank Knight of the ECU Police Department said enforcement at home football games, has been increased but most citations are issued to those who are most visible, such as those who stumble around in parking lots or urinate in public.

Knight said stricter enforcement of campus resulted from law enforcement response to such alcohol-related crimes as physical assault, vandalism, sexual assault and strong-arm robbery.

Knight said police actions are intended to protect students, not harass them. Many victims are inebriated students attacked while stumbling home.

"We feel that by reducing the underage drinking, we'll reduce the crimes against the students," Knight said.

Police patrols added

Maj. Kevin Smeltzer of the Greenville Police Department said this year police began patrolling areas near the campus rather than waiting for a call. Six to 12 officers work overtime, at a cost of $2,500 to $5,000 a week, to monitor private parties.

Smeltzer said the department encounters more underage drinking at private parties than at downtown bars and restaurants. "Now most people drink before they come downtown," he said.

When a student is charged with a drinking violation, police turn over the information to campus officials. If the charge is a simple violation with no aggravating factors such as assault, a student is referred to a campus judicial system. Penalties include community service work and counseling.

Parents are notified in some cases such as a second offense or a more serious charge.

Sipping a beer can cost some-one under 21 about $850. The tab includes about $400 for a lawyer, a $200 fee for the community service work, $100 court costs and $150 for alcohol evaluation.

Students contacted at random on campus have mixed reaction to the rationale for targeting young people, and its effectiveness.

Mike O'Brien, 22, a senior from Wilmington, Del., said some controls are needed because 18 is too young. He suggested lowering the legal drinking age to 19 or 20.

But he said the current approach penalizes some who attempt to avoid harmful or dangerous behavior, such as driving after drinking.

"A lot of people getting in trouble are not doing that much, just trying to have a good time," he said.

O'Brien acknowledged that he drank alcohol before he turned 21.

"I did," he said. "You've just got to be careful."

Tyler Bronzino and Taylor Hardee, both 18-year-old freshmen, were eager about whether they drank, but they said it was common among their peers. Access to alcohol is not a problem, they agreed.

Bronzino said drinking is often a part of socializing.

"Sometimes if you go to a party and you're the only one not drinking you're not going to have any fun," he said.

Hardee said he thought the publicized arrests at the first of the year had put a damper on some partying.

Morphet, the ECU counselor, said the university takes a "harm reduction" approach in its education and prevention programs dealing with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Just telling students not to drink doesn't work, he said, so the idea is to help them understand the consequences.

"I think we're having an impact, but the impact is on individuals," he said.

University's role

Younger students, especially freshmen, are the primary focus, Morphet said, because they are most at risk. Many are away from home and the influence of parents for the first time.

The university offers scores of programs ranging from presentations by counselors to alcohol-free events.

All incoming students are required to participate in an interactive presentation on alcohol, tobacco and drugs during orientation. In addition, health classes required for graduation include drug prevention education.

Students learn about legal and health risks. They receive a red pocket-size card that tells how to deal with alcohol poisoning as well as a card for the transit system's "safe ride" program. Buses run late on weekend nights to get students back to campus or homes.

"It is simply a safety tool," Morphet said. "Most students call it 'the drunk bus,' but we call it Pirate Express."

Morphet said a key component is educating students on what is normal consumption or drinking behavior. For example, he said, a student who has not been exposed to drinking may think that binge drinking is normal.

Zach Pochon, 21, a senior, said he was an underage drinker but thought he "always did it responsibly." He said the current programs are needed because some people will get in trouble if they don't know about the consequences of drinking.

Pochon said he had friends at other universities and didn't think ECU had more of a problem than UNC, N.C. State or Duke.

"It depends on who you talk to," he said.

Steven M. Fisher, a Greenville lawyer who has represented students in drinking cases, said more alcohol education is needed. He said the current approach is ineffective.

"It doesn't appear to curtail the drinking," he said. "What it appears to do is encourage them to do it privately."

Fisher said it makes more sense to target the most serious activities, such as driving under the influence, with stiff penalties rather than treat all young people as incapable. He said it's inherently unfair to treat an 18-year-old as an adult in some ways and not others.

"Every individual I talk to says that if they are old enough to go to Iraq and get shot... why can't they have a beer?" he said.

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Curb credit-card marketers, colleges told

WASHINGTON — With small incomes and big bills, college students make a prime market for credit cards. But critics say the card companies take unfair advantage, luring students with free T-shirts and food — then snaring them with high interest rates.

Last week, a national consumer group backed by several educational organizations launched a campaign to persuade more colleges to crack down on credit-card marketing to students. The coalition wants schools to take steps ranging from prohibiting card company giveaways to blocking their access to student lists.

Organizers also promised to do their own consumer education and counter-marketing, setting up tables near where cards are being hawked and giving away their own trinkets and food, like lollipops with the message “don’t be a sucker.”

“College students are vulnerable, they’re already hammered by the high cost of education,” said Ed Mierzwinski, consumer program director of the U.S. PIRG Education Fund, which is leading the effort. “Cards seem like a solution, but they can become a trap.”

Ken Clayton, managing director of the card policy council of the American Bankers Association, which represents card-issuers, said his organization shares the goal of better educating students about credit but said that overall, students use credit responsibly and pay their balances in full at the same rate as the general public. He also said three-quarters of students get cards through general advertising, not campus promotions.

Credit cards serve a very valuable function, whether it’s to buy books, airline tickets home, or pay for emergencies like when your car breaks down,” he said.

Organizers said many students need credit cards, but they still want colleges to take a more protective stance.

Many colleges have affinity agreements with credit card companies that give schools money or a share of transaction revenue in exchange for an official stamp of approval and access to names. Generally, such arrangements are with separate alumni associations, but in some cases they give companies marketing access to students. The Des Moines Register recently detailed one such arrangement between Bank of America and the University of Iowa.

The coalition portrayed credit card debt as a growing problem in an era of rising tuition and expenses for things like textbooks, though some research suggests students may be handling debt more responsibly now than they did in recent years. The latest national survey from Nellie Mae, a student loan company, reported that 76 percent of undergraduates had credit cards in 2004, down 8 percent from 2001.

The average outstanding balance was $2,169, down 7 percent from 2001. More than half carried balances of less than $1,000. However, by their final year, 91 percent of students had cards, and the balance had risen to $2,864.
Bowles lists ideal chancellor traits

BY JANE STANCIL
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL - The committee charged with finding the next UNC-Chapel Hill chancellor launched its work Friday with advice from UNC President Erskine Bowles, plans for public forums, and mandatory confidentiality agreements for the panel's members.

The search for a successor to retiring Chancellor James Moeser is expected to take months. Moeser announced last month that he will step down June 30.

The search committee's first meeting focused on procedures, with a review of laws governing public meetings and instructions from Chairman Nelson Schwab to keep candidates' identities confidential. "We're dealing with human beings and their careers," he said.

The 21 members of the committee were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement that stipulates that Schwab will be the only one to speak publicly for the panel and confidential personnel information cannot be shared with anyone. A violation of the agreement could result in "immediate dismissal" from the panel, the document said.

Schwab told panel members, "If you don't sign it, it's going to be difficult to be on the committee."

Other campuses in the system have conducted more open chancellor searches in the past decade, including UNC-Asheville and Appalachian State University. But a consultant assisting the state's community college system in a more open search for a new president said the secrecy isn't unusual.

"They're a little more tight-lipped than community colleges are," said Bob Barringer, a consultant with Gold Hill Associates.

Despite the confidentiality, the search is likely to draw interest across the country.

Bowles told the panel to find "a great chancellor for my alma mater" and reviewed a long list of attributes he'd like to see: leadership, fundraising and administrative skills; passion for North Carolina, UNC and public universities; appreciation for liberal arts as well as research; an understanding of intercollegiate athletics and its place; and a willingness to be a leader and partner with other universities in the UNC system.

Forums for members of the community to tell the panel what kind of chancellor they want are scheduled for Oct. 26 and 30.

Bowles said he wants to be able to choose from a list of three finalists. Those names will have to be approved by the campus Board of Trustees. Then Bowles will take a final candidate to the UNC system's Board of Governors, which will formally elect the chancellor.

Schwab said that he has already received a flurry of recommendations and that he expects to draw good candidates.

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Little rise foreseen in UNC tuition

Bowles credits General Assembly

BY JANE STANCELL
STAFF WRITER

North Carolinians attending UNC campuses may get a bit of a break on tuition next year — thanks to the generosity of the General Assembly.

The campuses are just now formulating tuition proposals for next year, but President Erskine Bowles said Friday he expects the increases for in-state students to be significantly less than the 6.5 percent cap set last year.

Tuition increases will vary by campus, and fees are likely to rise, too. But the overall outlook is good, Bowles said, pointing out that UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor James Moeser has already indicated he will recommend no increase in tuition for in-state undergraduates.

"When the legislature is generous to you, as they have been this year, then it takes a lot of pressure off our need to raise tuition," Bowles said. "My best bet is when I get the recommendations back from the chancellors, I'll be very pleased with them."

The university system had a spectacular year in the legislature, receiving an overall 10.6 percent increase in operating appropriations, plus $35 million in financial aid money from the state's escheats fund. Included in the budget this year was a cancer research fund for UNC-CH, which will grow eventually to $50 million a year.