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Vandals destroy sculpture on ECU campus

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

East Carolina University police are investigating a weekend vandalism at the Jenkins Art Building on Trustees Way. Someone shattered the recently donated sculpture, Song of the Sirens, in reference to the creatures in Homer’s The Odyssey. The piece was valued at $12,000.

The sculpture was created by former graduate student Adam Caleb Buth as part of a larger exhibition and was left in the school’s sculpture garden on loan by the artist, ECU sculpture professor Carl Billingsley said.

Buth expressed disappointment but not surprise Tuesday from his Wisconsin home, where he continues his work as an artist.

“I expected this would happen at this university, with all the debauchery and excessive alcohol consumption that goes on there,” Buth said. “It’s not the first time artworks have been destroyed or vandalized at the sculpture garden and on the campus.”

Buth first modeled the sections of the artwork in wax, then fabricated them from specialized concrete to give them the appearance of rock. The sections were then attached to a steel base topped with a bronze plate, he said.

Billingsley also expressed disgust at the destruction of Buth’s work. He said disregard for artworks happens fairly regularly, particularly following homecoming football games. He said another piece was destroyed two years ago on homecoming weekend.

“People in this community should understand that this was not just childish vandalism, like knocking down a street sign,” he said. “This took Buth a year to create as part of his thesis exhibition, and he is trying to establish his career. It was a very labor-intensive work of art.”

The piece was one of a series that Buth has been creating on mythology and mysticism. The entire collection is devalued by the loss of the one work, he said.

The artist said he is filing an insurance claim through the university.

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Changing landscape: Reduction in school field trips hurting some businesses

By Kim Grizzard
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Busloads of children spent an autumn day picking pumpkins and getting a feel for cotton Tuesday at Briley's Farm. They fed farm animals in the petting barn and went on a hayride the way children have done for years, but there were signs that the landscape is changing.

Since state budget cuts prompted public schools to cut back on travel, Briley's tourists are getting younger. More preschoolers than grade schoolers are now taking a turn at milking a make-believe cow. And picnickers are more likely to come from private schools than public ones.

Jeffrey Briley remembers when as many as 4,500 children might take a field trip to see his family's fields. Last year, the crop of children was about half that.

"It has been cut back the past couple of years because the county's cut them back to one field trip," he said.

Briley's isn't the only place reaping smaller yields since the restrictions went into effect. From Fremont's Charles B. Aycock Birthplace to East Carolina University's Arts Smart series, many programs that cater to kids have seen their numbers cut in half.

There was a time when Arts Smart, which provides professional theater for young audiences, packed Wright Auditorium.

"Now we're looking at maybe 45 percent attendance," said Michael Crane, assistant dean of ECU's college of fine arts and communication. "We're looking at about half the house.

"Of the schools that are coming now, we find that we have private schools that attend," he said. "We're still pulling from as far away as we ever have; we just don't have the local public schools."

That will change Friday, when about 2,000 Pitt County public school students will take a field trip to see "Chasing George Washington," a musical about kids on a field trip to the White House.

Pitt County Schools Arts Education Director Jane Austen Behan said Arts Smart is more than a field trip for many students; for some it is a first exposure to the arts.

"Many students have only been to a movie theater," she said. "They've never seen live theater on stage. ... It's a great experience."

Apparently, officials at the James and Mamie Perkins Charitable Trust agreed. A Perkins grant paid for local fifth-graders to see "Chasing George Washington," which is being performed by the Kennedy Center for Young Audiences on Tour and co-produced and co-commissioned by the White House Historical Association.

It is not the first time grant funds have been used to bring local students and performing arts together. In 2007-08, before the travel restrictions were enacted, Perkins Trust funds were used to bring second- and fifth-grade students to ECU to see "Teddy Roosevelt and the Treasure of Ursa Major" and Katie Couric's "Brand New Kid." Last year, grant money paid to bring local students to ECU for a program with the Philadelphia Dance Company.
When students can’t come to shows at ECU, the university has been known to take shows on the road. Storybook Theatre, a student theater group which uses stage productions to promote literacy to young audiences, travels to perform at schools throughout the region.

“For (Storybook Theatre students) to hop in a minivan or two and take off ... is pretty easy,” Crane said. “The cost is gas money. Unfortunately, the cost of presenting something like a Kennedy Center production, there’s just no way we can take it into the schools.”

Aycock Birthplace Site Manager Leigh Strickland learned the hard way that getting a traveling field trip program off the ground can be costly. Last year, when the state historic site near Fremont began seeing a decline in visiting school groups, Strickland began offering to visit classrooms instead. She soon learned that a state budget shortfall meant travel restrictions for her as well.

With school tours down from about 30 to 15 a week, Strickland began seeking ways to draw more visitors to the site at a time that should have been a banner year for the Aycock Birthplace. This is the 50th anniversary for the historic site and the 150th anniversary of the birth of the former governor. Events planned range from the showing of movies from 1959 to antique car shows, a Civil War trivia contest and a sheep shearing demonstration.

Events at the site are free, so it is not profit that drives the effort; it is preserving history. With fewer school groups touring the site, Strickland said, more children are missing out on a chance to see part of the state’s agricultural heritage.

“Most children now do not grow up on a farm,” Strickland said. “Many children nowadays have never even seen a live chicken. I really think they miss out on that.”

Briley sees it on his Pitt County farm as well, children who don’t know that eggs come from chickens and milk comes from cows.

“Cotton … a lot of them, to be honest with you, think they’re supposed to eat it (like cotton candy),” Briley said, explaining that many children have never seen the crop growing in the field.

“A lot of them, asphalt’s all they know,” he said. “It’s really sad.”

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First-term senator provides his views on state’s economy

By Nicholas Kalapos
The Farmville Enterprise

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

FARMVILLE — North Carolina Sen. Don Davis issued a report on the recession and the state's budget crisis during Farmville's Town Hall on Monday night.

Nearly $80 million has been appropriated for Pitt County under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), according to Davis.

North Carolina still faces a $4.7 billion budget shortfall, he said. The state will receive $1.4 billion overall from the ARRA program, and state legislators are imposing $990 million in new taxes and $510 million in fees and transfers. That leaves $1.8 billion that still needs to be cut from the budget.

"What a time that you thought to send me to Raleigh," Davis said, drawing a laugh from the crowd of about 50 people attending the event. "We have had to cut and cut and cut and cut. It took strong leaders that had to make hard decisions."

The tax increases include a temporary 1-cent increase in sales tax. It will come back before legislators on June 30, 2011, at which time they must decide whether to extend it, Davis said when asked about the tax's "temporary" status. The state also will increase so-called "sin taxes" on items such as beer, wine and cigarettes.

"We haven’t been here since the Great Depression," Davis said. "We were facing a major economic meltdown."

Davis said the budget was designed to avoid massive layoffs across the state and to sustain schools.

When asked what will happen to the state's budget next year when stimulus money likely will not be available, Davis said he was uncertain how North Carolina would make up the shortfall.

"I can’t tell you how we are going to replace $1.4 billion in stimulus funds," he said. "I can’t honestly tell you."

Davis explained that most experts believe the economy will be back to pre-recession levels by 2014. The state budget provided East Carolina University partial funding of its dentistry school at $5 million, compared to the $14 million it was seeking over two years, Davis said.

Davis also reported:

The ECU Heart Institute went unfunded. It had requested $600 million over two years.

The ECU and University of North Carolina medical school expansion funds both went unfunded despite requesting a total of $4 million over two years.

The ECU Life Sciences and Biotechnology Building Fund was not funded. The school had requested $15.1 million.

The ECU Indigent Care Medical School fund was partially funded. The school will receive $4 million of the $8 million requested over two years.
Pitt County will receive $760,832 in grants for criminal justice and victim services. That includes $135,190 to promote safer communities in Greenville and Pitt County, $93,167 for the investigation of prescription fraud and $75,000 for crisis intervention domestic violence services.

The Pitt County Development Commission and the City of Greenville will receive a total of $505,000 in grants. Of that, $25,000 will go to assist Greenville with a theater restoration study.

The City of Greenville will receive a $13,500 grant for a Community Forest Sustainability program.

Winterville will receive a grant for $8,900 for depot site planning and tree planting.

Pitt County will receive a total of $163,000 in grants for various arts programs. Farmville’s Community Arts Council will receive $8,759 for programming and expenses.

Pitt County public libraries were awarded $194,933 in grants.

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Class gives students tools to impress at a party

By Kristin Day  
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Not everyone puts as much thought into a glass of wine as Chef James Chandler.

By observing the color, texture and aroma of a partially filled glass, he can tell the approximate age and origin of a wine, in what kind of soil the grapes grew and in what climate. And each week during a special series of classes, he’s teaching his new students how to do the same, as well as how to pair the perfect wine with a particular meal.

Chandler, associate professor in the Department of Hospitality Management at East Carolina University and a self-professed wine snob, is the instructor of "The Art and Science of Wines: An Introduction," held in the university's new Golden Corral Culinary Center.

"Since we had this facility given to us, we decided to make use of it," Chandler said before class on Friday, the fifth of a six-class series, "and something different than your garden-variety wine tasting."

Chandler guides students through pairing wines with foods using an aroma wheel, an atlas and, last week, four bottles of red wines, all bought for less than $20. Participants sampled and discussed how Columbia Crest Grand Estates Shiraz, Pont d'Avignon Cotes du Rhone, Beringer Founders' Estate Merlot and Christian Moueix Encore Merlot affected the taste of beef tenderloin, with a side of Worcestershire sauce.

But before sipping from each glass, they learned the basics: The younger the wine, the more purple the hue. If there is an orange ring at the edges, there was clay in the soil. Burning nostrils indicate a higher alcohol content.

"It goes to the difference of terroir," Chandler told his students. That is "the atmosphere, the soil condition, the amount of sunlight, the amount of rain and also how the grapes are pruned in the field, and then beyond that, into the winery. Europeans more typically will try to celebrate the complexity of the grapes much more so than just creating big, bold, fruity, jammy wines."

More importantly is how the wine affects the meat — whether it drowns out the beef's taste or complements the flavor.

"All of these experiences are very subjective," Chandler said.

Chandler said students are a mix of regulars and newcomers from week to week, but Ralph Forbes has attended every class.

"I've always wanted to know more about wines," he said. "A lot of times I'd get invited to parties and asked to bring a wine, and I wanted to make a good decision. ... Mr. Chandler has been exceptionally helpful and extremely knowledgeable."

After a few classes, students have more than ammunition to impress a party. Students can receive a certificate in white wines, red wines or both.

"Really what he (Chandler) wants you to learn is to tell the difference between the old-world and new-world (wines)," said Corina Jury, an associate with the division of continuing studies.

The new culinary center opened in February and is mainly used by hospitality management and nutrition
students.

"We're just hoping to build up the clientele now that we have the culinary center," Peggy Novotny, director of marketing and communications, said.

Chandler says he hopes to repeat the introductory course this winter before progressing into more complex sessions. The last class of this series will be held Friday.

"We're going to pull out the big guns next week," Chandler said.

By then, Forbes and the other students, too, will put as much thought into a glass of wine as Chandler.

"However, it is not overly complicated," Forbes said. "It's just something you need to practice — like everything else."

For more information on classes during the spring semester, contact the ECU Division of Continuing Studies at cpe@ecu.edu or call 328-9198.

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College tuition is up sharply

Tuition at East Carolina University increased by about 2 percent from $2,445 in 2008 to $2,491 in 2009.

BY JUSTIN POPE
The Associated Press

With the economy struggling, parents and students dared to hope this year might offer a break from rising college costs. Instead, they got another sharp increase.

Average tuition at four-year public colleges in the U.S. climbed 6.5 percent, or $429, to $7,026 this fall as schools apologetically passed on much of their financial problems, according to an annual report from the College Board, released Tuesday. At private colleges, tuition rose 4.4 percent, or $1,096, to $26,273.

"Every sector of the American economy is under stress and higher education is no exception," Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, said. "It's regrettable, and it's yet another piece of disappointing economic news that affects families."

The price increases came despite painful cost-cutting by colleges on everything from faculty to cafeterias and sports travel. As usual, the rise in tuition outstripped the overall inflation rate.

In fact, during the period covered by the report, consumer prices declined 2.1 percent. So the latest tuition increase at public colleges was closer to 9 percent in real terms.

"It's only natural for parents to question why colleges are raising their prices yet again, while the rest of our economy is inflation-free," James Boyle, president of the group College Parents of America, said.

The news isn't all bad.

The estimated net price — what the average student actually pays after financial aid is taken into account — is still much lower than the list price, about $1,620 at public four-year colleges and less than $12,000 at private ones. Both figures are up slightly from last year but still lower than five years ago.

Community colleges, home to about 40 percent of college students, raised prices, too, but tuition still is essentially free to many after financial aid is factored in.

A companion report also out Tuesday shows financial aid from Uncle Sam is surging and reliance on often-expensive private loans has plummeted. And while students in states such as California, Florida and New York have seen double-digit tuition increases, some other states have held the line.

Maryland and Missouri froze tuition.
Ahoskie lands ECU Learning Center
John Durham

Published Tuesday, October 20, 2009

GREENVILLE - East Carolina University officials announced Monday that Sylva, Ahoskie and Elizabeth City are the first three locations for community service learning centers that will be part of the university's new dental school.

The university plans 10 of these centers in rural and underserved areas throughout the state. Dental school faculty members will be based in the centers, along with advanced dental residents and senior students who will receive enhanced dental education in real practice settings. The students and faculty will offer much-needed dental care to citizens in the areas surrounding the centers.

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard said the community service learning centers represent an important step toward increasing access to dental care in North Carolina. The state is below the national average in the ratio of dentists to population, and that ratio has declined recently as the population has increased faster than the supply of practitioners.

Four North Carolina counties have no dentists at all, and five more counties could soon be without dentists because their dentists have reached retirement age. In addition, 39 mostly rural counties had a decrease in dentists between 1997 and 2007.

"ECU's motto is 'to serve,' and these centers we are announcing today will provide a true service to the citizens of North Carolina," Ballard said. "ECU is pioneering a national model with these community centers and we are absolutely committed to its success."

Dr. James Hupp, dean of the dental school, said the communities that will have the service learning centers are being selected on the basis of access.

"We are looking for the areas where dental care is in short supply and difficult to obtain," he said.

Exact locations for the centers in the first three communities have not been identified. University officials are continuing discussions with local leaders to determine the best places to locate the centers in the selected communities.

Sylva is in Jackson County, in the mountains west of Asheville, while both Ahoskie and Elizabeth City are in the northeastern part of the state.

ECU's dental school plans to admit its first students for the fall semester of 2011. About 50 students will
be admitted every year. The North Carolina General Assembly has provided about $90 million in funding for construction.

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Old Well adorns design for rifle

CHAPEL HILL -- The Old Well, a campus landmark and symbol of UNC-Chapel Hill, appears on neckties, jewelry and other products, but a Colorado company's plans to put it on the stock of a rifle has raised concerns.

Historical Armory, a small company based in Fort Collins, Colo., is advertising a "Historic Orange County" special edition of a .22-caliber rifle. The stock is engraved with images, including the state flag, the American flag, the Confederate flag, a deer, a cannon and the Old Well.

Carrboro Mayor Mark Chilton, a 1993 UNC-CH graduate, said placing a university symbol on a gun is not appropriate, especially in light of cases of violence on or near college campuses around the country. Chilton was living in Chapel Hill when law student Wendell Williamson shot and killed two people and injured two others in 1995.

"It sends the wrong message to the public to see university symbols used in that way," said Chilton, who learned of the gun when someone interested in local history e-mailed him an advertisement for it. He wrote to Linda Convisor, UNC-CH's director of local relations, to complain.

The Old Well, which has a water fountain surrounded by white columns and a dome, is a popular destination for campus tour groups as well as students and visitors posing for pictures. The well is among the federally registered trademarks held by the university, said Derek Lochbaum, director of trademarks and licensing at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Lochbaum said UNC-CH has not given Historical Armory permission to use the Old Well image.

"They're not a licensee of the University of North Carolina," he said. "After hearing about this, I passed that along to our legal counsel."

The Collegiate Licensing Co., the university's licensing agent, is investigating.

Paul Brunswig, the owner of Historical Armory, said he had not heard from the university or Collegiate Licensing as of Monday, about a week after the university got word of the advertisement.

"Nobody's contacted us at all," he said. "That's interesting that they could trademark an object."

Brunswig said the company designs special-edition rifles for areas across the country. He said artists on staff develop the images that appear on the guns based on local history.

"If we have to redraw something, we can redraw something right easily," he said. "We're very abiding."

He said no Orange County editions have been produced or sold yet, but the edition would cost about $400. He said the artists design a montage to reflect high points of local history.

"It's all done with the best of intentions," he said. "We just love history."
He said his company included the Old Well as a historical structure and that its image is different from the university symbol.

"If a painter went out there and did a painting of that structure, would they be upset by that?" he said.

"I doubt it."
College tuition up again this fall
Increases are bad news for students who don't get financial aid
The Associated Press
updated 1:40 p.m. ET Oct. 20, 2009

Average tuition prices rose sharply again this fall as colleges passed much of the burden of their own financial problems on to recession-battered students and parents.

Average tuition at four-year public colleges rose 6.5 percent, or $429, to $7,020 this fall, according to the College Board’s annual "Trends in College Pricing" report, released Tuesday. At private colleges, the average list price for a year of coursework rose 4.4 percent to $26,273.

Those figures hide wide variations — public college students in California, Florida, New York and Washington have seen double-digit percentage increases, while the University of Maryland used federal stimulus funds to freeze tuition this year.

More importantly, the estimated net price — what the average student actually pays after accounting for financial aid — was much lower, at about $1,620 at public four-year colleges, and under $12,000 at private ones. Both figures are higher than last year but still lower than five years ago, thanks to recent increases in financial aid both from the government and from colleges themselves. The figures do not include room, board and other living expenses.

Still, this year's increases were bad news for students who pay full price, and confirm that despite cost-cutting on everything from faculty to cafeterias and sports travel, higher education once again failed to keep its own price increases anywhere near the overall inflation rate.

In fact, during the period covered by the College Board report, consumer prices declined by 2.1 percent. So accounting for inflation, the latest increase at public colleges felt closer to a 9 percent jump.

"Every sector of the American economy is under stress and higher education is no exception," said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education. "It's regrettable, and it's yet another piece of disappointing economic news that affects families."

More aid
Hartle said the report showed some good news: a companion report on financial aid documented substantial increases in aid, especially from the government, that ease the price increases for low-income students. And community colleges, home to about 40 percent of college students, remain essentially free to the average student after factoring in financial aid.

The reports come as many colleges face their most challenging economic climate in memory.

On the public side, state appropriations to public colleges declined nearly $4 billion in 2008-2009 from the previous year, even as enrollment grew, and state dollars are falling further this year. Private colleges had fewer students who could afford to pay full freight, forcing schools to offer more financial aid even as their endowments fell by record amounts in the stock market crash.

Worst hit is California, whose giant public university and community college systems educate about one in six American college students. Facing unprecedented state funding cuts, public colleges have boosted fees, raised class sizes, furloughed faculty and turned away students. On top of the current year's 9-percent fee increase, the University of California system is considering increases of more than 30 percent by next year.

Taking out loans
The reports also offer a glimpse of what has become a significant expansion of the federal government's role in trying to help students pay for college.

In 2008-2009, 65 percent of the $180 billion spent on higher education expenses came via the federal
government in the form of grants, loans and work-study programs, up from 58 percent the year before. Overall, the report estimated federal grant aid rose almost 11 percent last year. That trend will likely continue because the maximum Pell Grant — the government’s main college aid program for low-income students — rose by over $600 this year to $5,350.

Students also borrowed more to pay for college — but much more from the government and much less from nonfederal lenders such as banks. Estimated private borrowing collapsed from around $24 billion in 2007-2008 to under $12 billion last year, the aid report estimates.

That sharp decrease came after years of rapid expansion in student borrowing from the private sector — a trend that worried some experts because private loans generally have higher interest rates and fewer borrower protections than federal ones.

But a range of factors have quickly turned the tide: Students can get larger Pell Grants and borrow more from the government, and private lenders have become much more selective in making student loans.

On average, about two-thirds of bachelor’s degree recipients borrow money, and their median debt is about $20,000 by graduation.

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Chancellor at U. of Illinois Quits in Admissions Scandal

By EMMA GRAVES FITZSIMMONS

CHICAGO — The chancellor of the largest campus of the University of Illinois announced Tuesday that he was resigning, a move that university officials said they hoped would bring an end to the scandal over admissions at the state’s premier public university.

The chancellor, Richard H. Herman, was under pressure to step down after an outside commission, appointed by Gov. Patrick J. Quinn, found that the university gave admissions preference to unqualified applicants with connections. Mr. Herman, who led the university’s campus of more than 41,000 students in downstate Urbana-Champaign, was the “ultimate decision-maker” to help favored students, the state commission said.

Mr. Herman is the latest of several officials to leave as details of the scandal have come to light. The university’s president, B. Joseph White, resigned last month after the Faculty Senate approved a resolution supporting his removal and that of Mr. Herman. Most of the members of the university’s board have also resigned.

In his letter of resignation, Mr. Herman, 68, did not mention the controversy, and he was not available for comment Tuesday, university officials said. In the past, however, he has acknowledged making mistakes but said he hoped to keep his job.

In its report, the state commission cited several instances in which Mr. Herman lobbied successfully on behalf of politicians to have certain students admitted, including honoring a request by Rod R. Blagojevich, the indicted former governor.

The interim university president, Stanley O. Ikenberry, said he hoped Mr. Herman’s decision would signal the end of a “challenging time.”

“I think this does close that particular chapter,” Mr. Ikenberry said in an interview, “and move us forward on our new agenda.”

Mr. Herman is expected to remain at the university as a special assistant to the interim president until next June, university officials said, and then as a mathematics and education professor.