This week and weekend promise to be scarily fun for East Carolina University with homecoming and Halloween coinciding.

Several activities and events are planned on campus leading up to Saturday’s homecoming game against Tulane and Monday’s “Midnight Madness,” the university’s safe alternative to downtown bar-hopping for students on All Hallows Eve.

Today students can hear real-life stories of fellow students’ Halloween experiences at 4 p.m. in the Mendenhall Student Center great rooms. The focus is how to stay safe and healthy while still having fun on Halloween. Activities include skits showing the effects of alcohol, illegal activities and unsafe sex.

Tonight patrons can be treated to a murder mystery dinner theater at 6:30 in Mendenhall in the Office of Student Activities’ production of a “Country Fried Caper,” a country-themed “whodunnit” over a buffet dinner. Dressing to theme is encouraged but not required.
Tickets are available at the ECU Central Ticket Office. The cost is $15 for faculty or staff and $10 for students. Two tickets per person are allowed, and space is limited. The dinner is included in the ticket price. The table that correctly identifies the murderer will win prizes.

Also starting today, students can get “frightfully fit” with haunted versions of popular group fitness classes this week at the Student Recreation Center.

On Wednesday, Aycock Hall will offer a College Hill Haunted House from 7-10 p.m. All proceeds from the $1 entry fee will support Pitt County youth sports.

Tours of the historically haunted spots on campus will be offered Friday through Sunday night starting at 7 p.m. in Mendenhall, along with ghost hunting tips from a paranormal investigator.

Hendrix Theatre will offer a free screening of the “Rocky Horror Picture Show” on Sunday at 9:30 p.m. preceded by a costume contest at 9.

The university’s Recreation Programming Lab and Winterville’s Parks and Recreation Department will present Winterville’s Trail of Terror on Friday from 5:30-10:30 p.m. at East Sylvania Avenue in Winterville.

A pumpkin-carving contest and Halloween-themed lunch will be hosted by Campus Dining on Monday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The carving contest will begin at noon with judging at 1:30 p.m.

The Halloween activities will culminate with “Midnight Madness” from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. in Mendenhall, with movie screenings, a costume contest, a dance, fortune telling, refreshments and more.

A homecoming step show from the National Pan Hellenic Council will be held at 7:30 p.m. Friday in Wright Auditorium. Tickets are $10 for ECU students, $20 for the public ahead of time and $25 at the door.

On Friday, the ECU Alumni Association will hold a homecoming luncheon at 11:30 a.m. in Mendenhall Student Center Great Room. University Archivist Dr. John Tucker will present “Leo Jenkins’s First Year: Reflections on a Decisive Presidency.” The cost is $10 for alumni
association members and $15 for non-members. Tours of campus by bus and foot will follow.

An alumni awards ceremony will be held 6 p.m. Friday at the Hilton Greenville.

Saturday will begin with a complimentary alumni breakfast at 9 a.m. in the Taylor-Slaughter Alumni Center.

The ECU Homecoming Parade will begin at 10 a.m. Alumni can listen for the Marching Pirates, see floats elaborately decorated with this year’s theme “PeeDee Goes to Hollywood,” and wave at the 2011 Alumni Award recipients and this year’s Homecoming King and Queen candidates.

The alumni tailgate will be held 1-3 p.m. in time for kickoff at 3:30 p.m.

For more information or to register and buy tickets, visit www.piratealumni.com or www.ecu.edu/halloweek or www.ecuarts.com.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
The Wilmington Star News
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Editorial - Legislators shortsighted to end N.C. Teaching Fellows program

What does it say about a state’s commitment to education when it kills a highly regarded program that brings some of the best and brightest students into the teaching profession? After being taken to task during his series of town hall meetings, N.C. House Speaker Thom Tillis now says maybe the Honorables were wrong to eliminate the Teaching Fellows Program, and may revisit it when it meets in November. They were wrong, and they should restore funding.

The vote to phase out the program was part of this year’s apparent war on teachers, which also included drastic cuts in education funding, slashing in half funding for the N.C. Center for the Advancement of Teaching and passing a bill to rescind a provision allowing teachers to pay for membership in the N.C. Association of Educators through payroll deduction. (It was the only payroll deduction targeted. Gov. Beverly Perdue vetoed it, but the legislature may attempt an override next month.)

Republican leaders have protested charges that they are bent on undermining teachers and the public schools, but their actions will have that effect. Improving the public schools – and there is plenty of room for improvement – requires better training and support for teachers. The Teaching Fellows and NCCAT programs have helped provide that.

The Teaching Fellows program, in particular, has been heralded as a success. A recent University of North Carolina study found that graduates of the program are, overall, more effective and stay in the state’s public schools longer than their peers. It has received national attention and was recently featured in The New York Times under the headline “A State Grooms Its Best Students to Be Good Teachers.”

Competition for the scholarships is fierce, and on average fellows enter college with higher SAT scores and higher grade point averages than their peers. While competent teachers need qualities other than stellar academic performance, it’s good public policy to try to recruit the brightest students for the profession that provides the educational foundation for our future workers and leaders.
The fellows program was created in 1986, while Republican Jim Martin was governor, as an incentive to do just that. It comes with a $6,500 annual scholarship and a number of strings attached, including the requirement to teach in North Carolina public schools for at least four years and to participate in special programs during college. Students who fail to complete the program or to meet its terms must repay the scholarship at 10 percent interest.

Seventy-five percent of fellows who successfully completed the program were still teaching in their fifth year, a better track record than for teachers who were not part of the program. About 56 percent of those who have graduated from the program were still in the state’s public schools last year. That figure does not include about 2,000 current undergraduates or fellows who may have been on maternity leave, in graduate school, or who are now teaching in another state.

The program’s annual budget is $13 million, less than the amount the General Assembly cut from the New Hanover County Schools this year. That’s a small price to pay for a program that has proven its value.

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McNeill wants best of homecoming
By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector
Tuesday, October 25, 2011

Being scheduled as someone else’s homecoming opponent is not always desirable for college football teams because it carries with it an implication that the host team doesn’t want to disappoint its alumni with a loss.

East Carolina got the better of that situation last weekend when the Pirates (3-4, 2-1 Conference USA) outlasted Navy, 38-35, at the Midshipmen’s homecoming game in Annapolis, Md. This Saturday, struggling Tulane comes to Greenville as ECU’s homecoming foe.

Second-year ECU head coach Ruffin McNeill, a 30-year veteran of the coaching business, said there isn’t much sleep to be lost over a homecoming game, whether it’s as a host or a guest.

“I’ve been there,” McNeill said of the Pirates’ clash with Tulane, a team which carries the distinction of being the homecoming visitor to four other schools this season. “I remember it being the homecoming game the first game of my coaching career when I was at Austin-Peay (as the linebackers coach in 1987). I thought, how many homecoming games can I go to? I went to about eight in a row. It was the first game of the season and it was homecoming.”

With his team in search of a third straight win against a Green Wave team with an interim coach, a 2-6 overall record and a 1-3 mark in C-USA, McNeill continued to stress steady growth for his team.
Tulane has lost five straight. The team and former head coach Bob Toledo parted ways a couple of weeks ago, and offensive line coach Mark Hutson stepped in for the remainder of the season on Oct. 18.

“We know we’re going to face a Tulane team that’s going to be very emotional,” McNeill said of the 3:30 p.m. kickoff in Greenville. “We’ve just got to make sure we take care of our business and stay the course.”

**Key call**
The Navy game hung in the balance for the Pirates with 38 seconds left in the fourth quarter. With ECU leading the game by the same score by which it won, Navy quarterback Trey Miller threw a pass to Matt Aiken near the goal line, and the receiver pulled in the pass and lunged into the end zone, but the ball popped loose as he hit the ground.

Although ruled an incomplete pass on the field, the play was reviewed. A Navy touchdown would have likely sealed a 42-38 Midshipmen win, but the officials upheld the ruling on the field, a decision McNeill said was the correct one.

“He didn’t bring (the ball) into his body. It was no good,” McNeill said of Aiken’s attempted reception. “You’ve got to tuck it. That’s what the rule says. It was a tough call, but they reviewed and made, I thought, the correct call, especially for the Pirates.”

**Injuries**
As has been the case the last several weeks, ECU will have to wait and see how numerous injured players respond to treatment this week.

Perhaps the biggest question marks loom in the running game, which thanks to sophomore Torrance Hunt against Memphis (98 yards, touchdown) and junior Reggie Bullock against Navy (104 yards, three TDs) has helped keep the Pirate offense clicking in recent weeks.

Bullock, the lead starter, returned against Navy after being forced to miss the Memphis game with a left thigh bruise, but then sustained an injury to his right leg at Navy and will miss the Tulane game. Hunt is listed as probable for the Green Wave despite leaving the Navy contest with a left ankle injury.
Joining Bullock on the sideline will be inside wide receivers Justin Hardy (right knee) and Justin Jones (right wrist surgery), and offensive lineman Adhem Elsawi (left knee).

An offensive line which has played arguably its best two games of the season the last two weeks might get a further boost if senior center Doug Polochak can return from his knee injury. He is questionable for Tulane, as is starting sophomore defensive end Derrell Johnson (left leg). Also considered probable is redshirt freshman nose guard Terry Williams (concussion).

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or 252-329-9595.
A lost Way

The "Carolina Way," it's always been called. Dean Smith, the basketball coaching legend who played fair, graduated his players and stood up for noble causes, spent his career in Chapel Hill and retired as the personification of all that was right with college athletics. Through the years, as other universities wrestled with scandal, alumni of UNC-CH were proud of their alma mater's sterling reputation.

Now, for the first time in 50 years, the university is on the brink of sanctions from the NCAA, the governing body of college athletics. This Friday, a meeting in Indianapolis will determine what penalties the school will suffer in the wake of a football program's skewed priorities and an embarrassing mess involving academic misconduct, improper player contact with agents (and benefits provided by them), and an assistant coach with cozy connections to a professional agent. The News & Observer's Dan Kane, Anne Blythe and Ken Tysiac reviewed the story thus far on Sunday.

Explanations as to how all this happened from the current academic leaders who should have known better are lacking.

Former Chancellor James Moeser, who came to Carolina from the football powerhouse Nebraska, was involved in Davis' 2006 hiring, along with Dick Baddour, the athletic director now headed for early retirement. Davis was a formerly successful college coach who also worked in the professional ranks.

High-priced talent

Moeser and Baddour wooed Davis heavily, as they felt the heat from boosters unhappy with a program that in their view wasn't measuring up. For around $2 million a year, the Carolina suitors got their man.

They maintained that his hiring didn't mean UNC-CH would become a football powerhouse with lots of winking at academic qualifications. Baddour bristles at the notion that Davis' hiring was a signal that academic standards would be lowered.

The most unsettling information in the Sunday report may have been that provided by Cynthia Reynolds, a former academic coordinator for the
athletic department. Reynolds has hardly "turned" on the coaches and the program, though she was let go by the department. But she was candid enough to acknowledge that players were so pressured to focus on football that the priority in monitoring their academic work was keeping them eligible.

In a truly depressing revelation, Reynolds said advisers would steer players toward courses of study they were confident the athletes could pass, and away from those that would be more time consuming. And, she said the players would be warned that if they took academic loads that were too demanding, they might be risking their athletic eligibility.

**An unfunny joke**

Nobody would claim that the Carolina football program was unique in such practices. Still, it amounts to disgraceful exploitation and makes a horrible joke of the term "student-athlete."

But no wonder: Davis expected too much. "It's studying notes, it's watching tapes," he told tarheelblue.com in 2007. "It's taking the DVDs back to your room and (watch them) when you've got some spare time at night right before you go to bed. There is just a whole mentality and whole culture that young kids have to learn that."

In other words, it's playing college football as if it were a full-time job. Which was the problem. And as Davis began to win, academic leaders including current Chancellor Holden Thorp failed to scrutinize the program closely enough.

Thorp kept standing by Davis (doubtless with the approval of many boosters) even after it became apparent there were serious problems in the program. Now the university will reap what Davis sowed, with the passive approval of its leadership. Will the Carolina Way be found again?
UNC study: Weight may hinder flu vaccine's benefits

BY JAY PRICE - jprice@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL That annual flu shot may be significantly less effective if you're overweight, according to a new study by UNC-Chapel Hill researchers.

The vaccinations may be less likely to prevent flu if you're oversized and also less effective in reducing the illnesses' severity if you do catch it, according to the study, published today in the International Journal of Obesity.

"Basically what we're finding is that with increasing BMI (body mass index), from overweight to obese, the immune response to the vaccine is not as robust as it is for individuals who are at a healthy weight," said Melinda Beck, a professor and associate chairwoman of nutrition at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and senior author of the study.

People who are overweight should continue to get the vaccinations, Beck said, because even a limited boost to the immune system may be enough to protect against flu. Also, the effects found in the study weren't universal to all the overweight participants.

The vaccine, usually reformulated each year to target the strains likely to be most prevalent, stimulates the body's immune system, which then generates antibodies that fight flu viruses.

The study involved 461 patients who were vaccinated in late 2009 at a UNC clinic and had blood samples drawn a month later, and a representative subset of 74 who were tested a year after the shots.

They divided the subjects into weight classifications based on body mass index, a simple way of estimating body fat based on height and weight.

The study found the level of those flu-fighting antibodies had jumped a month after the vaccination, reaching similar high levels regardless of body mass.

A second set of blood tests 12 months after the vaccination, though, showed antibody levels were significantly more likely to drop greatly among individuals who were overweight and obese.
The level fell four-fold among about half the obese subjects tested, but dropped that much in fewer than 25 percent of those whose weight was in the range considered healthy.

The researchers also studied a type of white blood cell that plays a part in the body's response to flu vaccine. These cells can reduce the severity of the illness if the antibodies produced by the vaccine don't prevent it.

A year after vaccination, those cells were significantly less likely to generate an infection-fighting protein in people who were overweight. This is the first study to show these effects of body mass on the immune response to flu vaccine, though obesity has been shown to reduce antibody response to vaccines for tetanus and hepatitis B.

The results of the study, Beck said, may offer an explanation for something researchers noticed during the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic, that people who were overweight were more likely to contract and die from flu.

The findings also build on results of two earlier studies by the research team that showed overweight mice were less able to fight flu infections, more likely to die of them and appeared to have impaired immune responses to flu.

Researchers are still several steps away from looking into potential real-world changes that could help people who are overweight, such as a different form of vaccine or a second, "tune-up" vaccination part-way through the flu season.

First, Beck said, her team needs to determine whether the drops in antibodies and the ability of the white blood cells to fight flu really translate to a higher likelihood of catching the flu and getting a worse case.

It's possible even the weaker immune response among people who are overweight is enough to properly protect people from flu, Beck said.

"We still want people of all sizes to get vaccinated, because it may be enough," she said.

Price: 919-829-4526

**Flu prevention tips**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend several measures in addition to vaccination that can help prevent catching or spreading flu:
Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw away the tissue after use.

Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities.

While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

**Are you overweight?**

A simple body mass index calculator and chart for determining weight category, from underweight to obese, is available at nhlbisupport.com/bmi.
Medical school enrollment on the rise

For those worried about the shortage of doctors in the U.S. healthcare system, here is a bit of good news: The number of students enrolling in medical schools has reached its highest level in more than a decade.

More than 19,200 people entered their first year of medical school this year, a 3% increase over 2010, according to new data from the nonprofit Assn. of American Medical Colleges.

The number of new medical students has been growing steadily since 2001, when medical schools reported 16,365 first-year students.

Medical schools also are attracting more applicants. The association said 43,919 students applied for admission this year, the largest number in a decade.

The figures show that medicine remains an attractive choice for college graduates in search of fulfilling careers, according to Dr. Darrell G. Kirch, the association’s president.
The potential for large paychecks is not a significant driver of the growing enrollment, Kirch said, noting that medical students can expect to accumulate an estimated $161,000 in debt on average by the time they finish school.

"Today’s college undergrads are very service-oriented," he said. "They are drawn to medicine because they like the notion of meaningful work."

The numbers of applicants and new students from most major racial and ethnic groups increased in 2011, although some of the gains were modest, the association said.

For example, 1,375 African Americans enrolled for the first year of medical school this year, up from 1,350 in 2010. Similarly, 1,633 Latino students entered medical school in 2011, up from 1,539 in 2010.

— Duke Helfand
7 college admissions myths

By Jenna Johnson and Valerie Strauss

Help is here for the frantic seniors and their parents who are spending practically every waking moment fixated on getting into college (and there are plenty, with more than 3.22 million projected to graduate from high school next year) and for younger students who will eventually be in the same boat. Below we bust some of the most basic — and persistent — myths about admissions that can take applicants in the wrong direction and drive anxiety to unhealthy levels.

1. It’s best to set your heart on one school and really go for it.

There are hundreds of colleges in this country, and most students can find success and happiness at any number of schools. It’s important to be realistic in deciding where to apply. Nearly eight out of 10 college graduates say they would go back to the same college if they had to do it again, according to the American Council on Education. And don’t listen to your opinionated classmates and their definitions of what constitutes the perfect school. Some groups of friends have found it healthier for their relationships (and egos) to not discuss test scores, acceptances or scholarship offers.

2. The tuition price listed in brochures is what everyone pays.

Flipping through college guides can be heart-stopping, especially with dozens of private schools now charging more than $50,000 a year for tuition, housing and fees. But that’s just the sticker price. Last year, that rate was reduced by more than 40 percent for the average student through institutional grants and scholarships, according to an industry study. In an effort to make it easier for families to compare pricing, the federal government now requires that colleges and universities put a “net price calculator” on their Web site. Although these estimates are not perfect, they give students a better idea of what they might be asked to pay each year. And everyone should fill out the free application for federal student aid, even if you think you won’t qualify for aid; 1.8 million students who would have qualified for federal financial aid did not apply, the council reported in 2006.

3. The admissions department adores you.
Many schools dump lots of money into transforming their campus visits into personal experiences, building connections through social media and making average students feel aggressively recruited. They also flood mailboxes with personalized invitations to apply, and are sometimes even willing to waive the application fee. Don’t think this makes you special. Realize that this is all strategic marketing. Despite the overly personal facade, admissions departments are receiving numbers of applications and the evaluation process is often a technical, impersonal one.

4. It’s best to crowd your application with a volume of extracurriculars.

In most cases, admissions staffers are not impressed by long lists of extracurriculars that fill in every single line on the application. In asking about your out-of-class interests, colleges usually want to hear about your interests, passions and leadership. Rather than spreading your time and dedication over a dozen activities you care a little about, focus on a couple that mean the most to you.

5. It’s better to have a high GPA than to take difficult classes.

It’s always better to challenge yourself, even if it means a lower grade. Just don’t fail.

6. Essays don’t really matter much in the end because grades and test scores are so dominant in admissions decisions.

Don’t believe it. A poorly written, typo-filled essay can kill any application, and a beautiful piece can lift a student over another who looks similar on paper. Yes, college admissions officers can often tell if a student didn’t actually write the essay. Some compare the writing with SAT and ACT essays. And no, don’t think every subject will work as long as it is well written: Admissions officers have no interest in a student’s love life, brushes with the law or the trip to Costa Rica to fulfill a community service requirement in which the applicant wound up learning more from the locals than the locals got from the applicant.

7. Recommendations from famous people can give an applicant a huge boost.

In some cases, recommendations can make a difference. Admissions officers at public colleges will sometimes give a second look at a student if asked by a state legislator who controls education funding. And private schools won’t want to inadvertently upset billionaire donors. But — and this is an enormous but — in most cases, schools want recommendations from people who actually know a student’s academic and social abilities. A university
dean told parents about getting a written recommendation from a famous actor about a student whom he did not seem to know well. That happens more than you’d think, and admissions officers just laugh when they see them. Not even a recommendation from President Obama could guarantee admission to a school.

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In College, Working Hard to Learn High School Material

By MICHAEL WINERIP

In June, Desiree Smith was graduated from Murry Bergtraum High. Her grades were in the 90s, she said, and she had passed the four state Regents exams. Since enrolling last month at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, Ms. Smith, 19, has come to realize that graduating from a New York City public high school is not the same as learning.

She failed all three placement tests for LaGuardia and is now taking remediation in reading, writing and math. So are Nikita Thomas, of Bedford Stuyvesant Prep; Sade Washington, of the Young Women’s Leadership School in East Harlem; Stacey Sumulong, of Queens Vocational and Technical; Lucrecia Woolford of John Adams High; and Juan Rodriguez of Grover Cleveland High. “Passing the Regents don’t mean nothing,” Ms. Thomas said. “The main focus in high school is to get you to graduate; it makes the school look good. They get you in and get you out.”

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg has made the rising graduation rate — to 61 percent in June, from 46.5 percent in 2005 — the No. 1 symbol of his educational accomplishments. But that rate is less impressive when paired with the percentage of graduates who need remediation in all three subjects.
when they enter LaGuardia or other City University of New York community colleges: 22.6 percent in 2010 (2,812 students), up from 15.4 percent in 2005 (1,085).

“A few years ago, we noticed the numbers really jump,” said John Mogulescu, the senior university dean for CUNY. Over all, 74 percent of city high school graduates enrolled at the system’s six community colleges take remediation in at least one subject, but those needing all three are at the highest risk of dropping out. So in 2008, CUNY started a program with a few dozen students to see if an intensive semester focused on just the three subjects — five hours a day, five days a week — could make a difference. The program, known as Start, has since expanded.

Of the 302 enrolled so far, 241 stayed the entire semester, 159 of whom were able to pass all three remediation tests. This semester, the plan was to have 630 Start students at the six campuses, but there was such demand, more than 700 were accepted.

A major attraction is cost. Full-time students at LaGuardia pay $1,800 a semester; three remedial classes would dominate a schedule without counting toward graduation. Start costs $75.

“The $75 was big,” said Ms. Smith, who has been working at a McDonald’s since she was 14.

She and the others say that the Start courses go deeper than their high school classes did, and that teachers ask open-ended questions. “In math in high school if you got called on to answer a problem and gave no answer, the teacher moved on,” said Pedro Vargas, a 2011 graduate of Richmond Hill High in Queens. “Here they keep asking, they want you to explore.”

Most Start instructors do not have traditional academic backgrounds. Sarah Eisenstein, who teaches reading and writing, worked in adult education. One day last week she did a lesson on interpretation versus text-based evidence, using a short story by Nicholasa Mohr. She had numbered each of the 74 paragraphs beforehand, making it easier to cite and follow evidence.

Ms. Eisenstein does not feel obliged to talk when it gets quiet. “So they fill the silence,” she said. “It takes a lot of practice.” And while she works to prepare them for the tests, she does not do test prep. “For us, the depth is more important than the breadth.”

Ms. Washington, 18, said that in high school, a lot of time was spent gaming the system. “The big thing they cared about was keeping the graduation rate
up,” she said. “Whatever they had to do to get you to graduate — if it means like a little trick to get you out, tell you to do this, do that and you’re out.”

Shael Polakow-Suransky, the city’s chief academic officer, said that standards had not been lowered to graduate more students, pointing out that since 2007 the state has added one Regents exam each year as a requirement to graduate. He also said part of the reason remediation had risen was that in 2008 CUNY raised the math score needed to pass the placement test.

But he also said, “We think the numbers are unacceptable.”

Mr. Polakow-Suransky said that Regents tests should be overhauled because they drive the curriculum, yet do not measure what students need to know for college. Many of the students who require remediation are scoring between the 65 needed to pass and the 75 the state has set as the score to be college-ready. “The real solution is not to play around with the cut scores,” he said. “It’s to give kids more challenging, rich and authentic work.”

Community colleges have their own reasons to create programs like Start. A recent study by Complete College America found that 13.9 percent of community college students get an associate’s degree within three years. But for those who require remediation, the number drops to 9.5 percent. (CUNY’s most recent three-year graduation rate was 15.5 percent.)

The Start program worked for Nathan Rambharose, who participated in 2009. He said the course gave him the tools to learn. His current grade-point average at LaGuardia is 3.2. His plan is to graduate this spring, go on to get a bachelor’s degree, and eventually become an information-technology instructor in the public schools.

Mr. Rambharose goes to college at night, after working from 5 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in a bookstore at La Guardia Airport. One of the best things about the job, he said, is that when the store is empty, he can read the books. Recently he has finished “Three Cups of Tea,” “A Thousand Splendid Suns” and “The Kite Runner.”

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Robert Gebeloff contributed reporting.