Greenville police have obtained an arrest warrant for an ECU student suspected of killing an Army paratrooper early Saturday at a house party in the city.

Police said Christopher W. Brauer, 19, of Durham was expected to surrender to authorities on an open charge of murder in connection with the death of Pfc. Keyonn Parkin, 19.

Parkin reportedly had traveled with friends from Fort Bragg to attend a Halloween party at Pirates Place, where he was stabbed and killed by Brauer during a fight over a stolen wallet, Police Chief William Anderson said Tuesday afternoon at a news briefing at police headquarters.

Parkin’s friend, Pfc. Robert Michael Perry, 19, stole the wallet from a bedroom as he was retrieving his coat, Anderson said. He was confronted by Brauer and other men after he left the apartment about 12:30 a.m.

Parkin, unaware that Perry was being accused of stealing the wallet, went to his friend’s aid, Anderson said. Brauer pulled a knife during the argument and stabbed Parkin, the chief said.

Detectives recovered the knife at another location during the course of their investigation, he said.

Brauer was developed as a suspect through interviews and information gathered by police. He remained free in Durham as Anderson made the announcement.

A warrant for Perry’s arrest on a charge of misdemeanor larceny also has been issued, Anderson said.
The chief directed officers to release little information about the incident as it was investigated. Initial reports listed it as an assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill. The department did not acknowledge that a homicide had occurred until Tuesday’s 5 p.m. news briefing.

“We did what we needed to do to close this investigation. We had to be very careful,” Anderson said.

Investigators sorted through information from a large number of witnesses and interviews, the chief said.

“There were a lot of witnesses that had to be interviewed throughout this period, up until a few hours ago ....,” Anderson said. “We believe we now have a very accurate account of what took place.”

Perry, in an interview Monday with The Daily Reflector, said he had misplaced his jacket and lagged behind as Parkin and another friend were leaving the party.

He picked up a jacket and wallet that was not his own by mistake, he said, got into an argument with a person he did not know and returned the wallet.

When he returned outside, Perry said, he saw a group gathered around Parkin and went over to see what it was about and noticed Parkin bleeding and unconscious.

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@reflector.com or 252- 329-9571.
Costumed robber strikes on campus
By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, November 2, 2011

The boldness of an armed robbery at ECU on Tuesday was highlighted by the abundance of law officers in the area because of Halloween, the campus police chief said.

A man wearing blue coveralls and a Michael Myers mask from the horror movie “Halloween” committed the robbery shortly after 1 a.m. between West End Dining Hall and Clement Residence Hall, Chief Scott Shelton said.

The lone victim, a male whose identity was not disclosed, was walking from the dining hall, near the edge of campus, heading toward the downtown area. The robber, also alone, approached him from behind, Shelton said.

The victim told police the robber pointed what appeared to be a handgun at the him, demanded “everything you’ve got,” then left the area on foot heading south, Shelton said.

The campus periphery, particularly along the downtown rim where the robbery occurred, was being heavily patrolled, he said.

“It might have been less an act of boldness on the robber’s part and more of intoxication,” Shelton said.

The uninjured robbery victim was not a student, Shelton said. He approached an officer nearby and reported what happened, Shelton said.

The robber was not caught, but investigators are reviewing surveillance video and interviewing people who were in the area, Shelton said.

The chief said that the presence of costumed Halloween revelers throughout the campus left officers unable to determine whether the gun was real.
Tuesday’s incident was the first armed robbery reported on ECU’s campus in two years, university officials said.

Two strong-armed robberies that did not involve a weapon have been reported on campus since September.

The numbers show ECU remains a safe campus, Shelton said.

“The latest crime report showed little change in the incidence of violent crime on ECU’s campus,” he said. “The actual numbers are very low.”

Several robberies and a stabbing death have occurred in areas adjacent to campus in the last month.

Anyone with information about Tuesday’s reported armed robbery is asked to contact the ECU Police Department at 328-6787.

Information also can be provided anonymously at www.ecu.edu/police.
Infant mortality rate in N.C. drops

BY JAY PRICE - jprice@newsobserver.com

RALEIGH North Carolina's infant mortality rate took its sharpest drop in two decades in 2010, dipping from nearly eight deaths per 1,000 live births to seven, state officials announced Tuesday.

It's the lowest rate ever recorded in the state, down from 12.6 per 1,000 in 1988, when North Carolina's rate was the worst in the nation, and down from about 100 deaths per 1,000 live births in the early part of the 20th century.

The biggest gains were among African-American families, long a focus of public health initiatives in the state because of infant mortality rates that are more than double those for white babies.

The rate for African-American infants improved by nearly 20 percent, falling from 15.8 deaths per 1,000 births in 2009 to 12.7. The rate for white infant deaths fell from 5.5 deaths per 1,000 births to 5.3.

State Health Director Jeff Engel cautiously embraced the improvements.

"Obviously this is good news, but of course we'd like to see that gap (between white and African-American rates) shrink," he said. "I'd also like to see this continue for two or three years so that it's clear that it is a trend."

Infant mortality is considered a key measure of the overall health of a population. It reflects not only the health of mothers and children but also underlying disparities among socioeconomic and racial groups.

Engel and other state officials credited the improvements to a patchwork of several state- and federally funded programs implemented at the county level and aimed at maternal and child health.

One of the most expensive, and most successful, targets high-risk mothers, he said. The Nurse-Family Partnership, which gets some of its funding from private sources, pays for a registered nurse for every 25 families, targeting high-risk moms who are young, poor and having their first child. Nurses work with the mothers for two years, beginning before a baby is born, coaching and lending them support.

Because of the cost, it can be funded only in a few counties, Engel said.
Similar initiatives in other states have been under way for years and have proved effective not only in improving infant mortality but also by other measures of success among children as they grow, including reduced rates of teen pregnancy among girls and of crime among boys, he said.

Another program, called Healthy Beginnings, worked with 900 pregnant minority women in 2010 without losing a single infant. It emphasized the importance of breast-feeding, taking vitamins and maintaining healthy weight as well as infant sleep safety techniques.

In a news release, Gov. Bev Perdue said the improved mortality rates showed the validity of such programs.

"These encouraging numbers underscore the results when we invest in education, including public health education," Perdue said. "The statistics also show the foresight of our steps to protect the most vulnerable in our society."

The programs are part of an effort stretching back more than 20 years, when North Carolina had one of the highest infant death rates in the country. The Associated Press reported Tuesday that some child advocates warned that the progress made since then could be lost because of budget changes state lawmakers made this year, including the elimination of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund and the ending of a state grant to a clinic at East Carolina University specializing in high-risk pregnancies.

"Unfortunately, decisions by our state legislators in 2011 could put North Carolina back into the dark ages when it comes to infant mortality," said Rob Thompson, executive director of The Covenant With North Carolina's Children, a coalition of child advocacy groups.

Nationally, the overall rate for infant mortality fell slightly, from 6.8 per 1,000 births in 2009, to 6.7. North Carolina was tied with Oklahoma for 44th among the states - the same rank it held for 2009. Mississippi had the worst rate, 10.3, and Massachusetts the best at 4.8.

Price: 919-829-4526
Editorial: ECU eyes turn to ACC
Wednesday, November 2, 2011

When the Atlantic Coast Conference considered expansion in 2003, Virginia Gov. Mark Warner pressured University of Virginia President John Casteen to reject additional teams if Virginia Tech was excluded. That ended up being a tremendous win for the conference, which added a perennial football power and a respected academic institution to its ranks.

A similar power play is under way in North Carolina, only state leaders here believe pushing East Carolina University toward the sputtering Big East Conference will provide the long-term security needed for Pirate sports and the region’s future. A better fit increasingly seems the ACC, and state leaders — with the help of UNC system officials — should impose a full-court press on behalf of eastern North Carolina.

The Associated Press reported Tuesday that the Big East intended to extend invites to six institutions — Boise State, Navy and Air Force for football only and SMU, Houston and Central Florida for all sports — in a move that would further weaken Conference USA. The timing was cruel irony, coming only days after Gov. Beverly Perdue joined U.S. Sens. Richard Burr and Kay Hagan in supporting East Carolina’s bid for Big East membership that now seems likely to fail.

If the Big East cannot add one or more of those schools, it is possible the conference could come knocking in Greenville. However, even these moves may not be enough to maintain viability, and East Carolina need not go down with the ship. It would instead do better to look inward — at the North Carolina-based ACC — as a future for its sports programs.

After all, it is the ACC, not the Big East, that stands assured of retaining its automatic qualifying bid to the lucrative Bowl Championship Series. It is the ACC, not the Big East, that purports to be an academic conference that forges ties between member institutions, partnerships that will serve the interests of the region and the state as a whole. It is the ACC, not the Big
East, in which East Carolina’s traditional rivals — including the University of North Carolina and N.C. State — compete, generating the type of excitement that creates revenue for all.

There is an assumption that East Carolina would be a poor fit for the ACC; certainly growing pains are assured. But the future of eastern North Carolina is inextricably tied to the fortunes of East Carolina University. Those prospects seem strongest in the ACC, and the school should have the same enthusiastic support for this bid as for the Big East.
GREENVILLE

Book award winner visits

The winner of the 2009 National Book Award for fiction will visit East Carolina University for events with students and a public reading of his work.

Colum McCann, recognized for his novel "Let the Great World Spin," will be on campus for the Contemporary Writers Series, which is sponsored by the ECU Division of Research and Graduate Studies and the Department of English.

McCann will speak on "The Art of Fiction" on Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the Bate Building, Room 1031. On Nov. 10, he'll meet with students in the classroom before giving a public reading of his work at 7:30 p.m. at the Greenville Museum of Art, 802 Evans St.
New Cubs GM Jed Hoyer has demonstrated the ability to put a team together since he was 13

New city, new team, new curse?

Maybe. But in some of the most important ways, Jed Hoyer is stepping into familiar territory as he takes over the Cubs’ general manager role — right down to reuniting with pals Theo Epstein and Jason McLeod at the top of the baseball hierarchy.

If anything, Hoyer has been doing this GM thing at a pretty high level for almost 25 years — and back then without the help of the Internet or quantitative analysis beyond what he could contrive with a pencil, paper and a set of box scores.

“He was very seriously into it . . . from just going to the paper first [to scour box scores],” Jed’s dad, Dr. Robert Hoyer, said of the fantasy league his 13-year-old son joined through a family friend and Boston attorney.

Except for the junior-high upstart from New Hampshire, the league was made up of adult professionals in Boston.
“At first people traded with him, treating him like it was kind of cute, this kid with his team,” said Jed’s mom, Annie Hoyer, a psychiatric nurse at East Carolina University, where Robert also practices. “They were indulgent at first, but pretty soon they learned he was a shark and weren’t cutting him any slack.”

Hoyer, now 37, downplays the success he had as a kid fleecing some of Red Sox Nation’s best and brightest, but he does admit he won his league at least a “couple of times.”

Of course, this new gig’s not nearly as cute, and Cubs Nation doesn’t have much indulgence left in its tank after all these years.

But he won’t be going it alone, either.

“He’s been a general manager for two seasons now, but he’s been thinking like a GM for a long time,” newly minted Cubs president Theo Epstein said of his former “right-hand” man in Boston.

With the news conference Tuesday at Wrigley Field, Hoyer took a prominent seat among the reunited Theo Trio of former Red Sox executives who pulled all-nighters, damaged office interiors with late-night games of golf and Wiffle ball and, along the way, helped produce World Series titles in 2004 and 2007.

They are nearly a decade older now — wiser, Hoyer says — but energized, it seems, by their renewed alliance in their purpose on the North Side.

“There is something intoxicating about going into a new situation,” said Hoyer, who spent the last two seasons as the San Diego Padres’ GM, with McLeod running his scouting and player-development efforts.

Epstein calls Hoyer “as dynamic an operator at the major-league level as there is in the game.”

Epstein calls McLeod “the rarest commodity in the industry. . . . He’s an impact evaluator of baseball talent.”

Together, they take the reins of a still-growing Cubs front office that is in the midst of such an extreme overhaul — down to the language of evaluation and possibly the scouting grading system — that the organizational meetings have been pushed from this month to February.

But it’s nothing new to the new guys in charge, who were part of a similar overhaul in Boston.
And while their relationships and like-minded purpose remain key, the big difference this time around is the new age dawning for them. In other words, they’re all older and married now — and more likely to spare the cramped interior of the Cubs’ offices after hours.

“It changes,” said Hoyer, whose wife, Merrill, and he are expecting their first child in January.

Epstein has a young son, and McLeod has three kids.

“The hard work certainly doesn’t stop, but working until 9 and going out to dinner, then going to the gym together at 11 o’clock at night, that stuff’s not going to happen anymore,” Hoyer said. “The other thing is, I think we all know how to do this job better than we did at that time. Experience allows you to know the landscape. You know what things are really important, what things aren’t.”

“Think about it then: Theo was 28, I was 28, and he was sort of drinking from the fire hose of being a GM. And it resulted in a lot of crazy hours. We still really work hard; we’re just a little more sane about it and a lot more family-friendly.”

That said, it’s an overtime job Hoyer, Epstein and McLeod are taking on, regardless of the division of executive labor and the “consensus” decision-making model that involves the inevitable “debates” and “arguments” they’ll use to make some of those decisions.

It’s only because of his strong relationship with Epstein, Hoyer said, that he was willing to give up some of the autonomy he had as the Padres’ top baseball-operations guy and join the Cubs’ revamped front office.

For Hoyer, this 103-year-strong challenge was a lifetime in the making and a destination few people who knew him as a kid or a college kid didn’t see coming.

“I couldn’t imagine him not having a life that had baseball in it,” his mom said. “I’ll put it that way.”

A Little League star who went on to become a three-sport standout in high school and the best player on his Wesleyan University baseball team — he still owns the school record for career saves — Hoyer grew up in a family of doctors.

“But I don’t think that ever crossed my mind — or his,” said his dad, who points to a day in 1986 when, on a trip to Florida, he and Jed’s grandmother dropped Jed off at a Cincinnati Reds spring-training game to get autographs.
‘‘We went to get lunch, and when we came back, we couldn’t find him anywhere,’’ Robert said. ‘‘He was in the dugout.’’

Jed was picked from the crowd to be the batboy for manager Pete Rose’s Reds that day. It turns out it was his first job in major-league baseball.

Twenty-five years later, he’s in position to try to pull off the most elusive achievement in major-league history, one that has devoured countless others in his job before him.

‘‘His great skill is that he is focused in the moment better than anyone I know,’’ said Wesleyan baseball coach Mark Woodworth, Hoyer’s teammate and roommate during the school’s run to the Division III finals in 1994. ‘‘He once started both games of a doubleheader and won both of them. He showed up one day and was told he was starting the first game [on the mound] and ended up catching both games. He shows up as an assistant video guy for the Red Sox, and within a year he’s a special assistant to the GM. That takes focus in the moment.

‘‘It’s making whatever you’re doing in the moment the most important thing, and, in turn, he turns it into gold. I’ve seen it over and over. . . . I’m not surprised that he’s a national baseball executive, that he’s famous or well-known in his field. Not at all.’’
Peace College offers to house Wake academies

BY THOMAS GOLDSMITH - tgoldsmith@newsobserver.com

CARY William Peace University is poised to forge an alliance with Wake County schools to bring Wake's new boys and girls leadership academies to its Peace Street campus near downtown, Superintendent Tony Tata said Tuesday.

The single-sex academies are part of the recently adopted student assignment plan and are designed to create future leaders through "team cohesiveness, academic rigor and personal attention," system officials said.

Tata said an initial proposal that students would take part in a JROTC program is being modified to affect ninth-grade students only.

The single-sex leadership academies could open next fall under a memorandum of understanding between Wake County and Peace to establish an early college campus, Tata said.

"William Peace has moved very quickly to put both of the academies on their campus," Tata said.

Wake County has a history of successful collaborations with colleges and universities, he said. Peace President Deborah Townsley also expressed her enthusiasm for the new venture.

"We support any worthwhile efforts to expand educational opportunities in our community, and I believe this program is deserving of further attention," she said.

The Wake Board of Education will have to approve the arrangement.

Initially, Wake staff had considered the underused schools Longview, River Oaks Middle School and Mary Phillips High School for students displaced by changes involving the academies. The system will continue to examine ways to make better use of those schools and strengthen student services there, Tata said.

Later in the meeting, Tata said the alternative schools in Wake County operate with too much autonomy and will get a thorough review in the next year. The administration will be looking at matters including who is chosen to attend the schools and how curriculum is determined.
The announcement about the leadership academies came during a mostly routine last meeting of the board members who have led the 146,000-student system since 2009, when a Republican majority took office.

The balance of power on the nine-member board could shift, depending on the results of the District 3 runoff Tuesday between incumbent Kevin Hill and challenger Heather Losurdo. A win for Losurdo would maintain the GOP majority; a win by Hill would create a Democratic majority.

Goldsmith: 919-829-8929
It's McColl-Richardson Field

When the Charlotte 49ers play their first football game in their on-campus stadium in 2013, they'll do so on McColl-Richardson Field.

The school announced Tuesday the football field will be named for two Charlotte business and sports icons -- Carolina Panthers owner Jerry Richardson and former Bank of America CEO Hugh McColl.

"Can you think of two people more associated with the development of Charlotte over the last 30 years?" said UNC Charlotte chancellor Phil Dubois. "I can't imagine finding two better."

49ers athletics director Judy Rose wouldn't reveal how much money Richardson and McColl have contributed to the program. The school is valuing the naming rights on the field at $2.5 million, and Rose said Richardson and McColl's donations put the program "well on our way toward that."

The school also is selling naming rights to the 15,000-seat stadium (which began construction in April) for $5 million.

"With their names going on the field, other (potential sponsors) will say, 'Gosh, look at the names they have associated with this school,"' said Rose. "They add tremendous value and credibility to our program."

When Richardson first considered bringing NFL football to the Carolinas in 1987, McColl was the first person whose advice he sought.

"We haven't failed on a lot of things we've tried to do together," said McColl. "So I doubt we will on this, either."
‘Freshman 15’ weight gain a myth, study says

By Valerie Strauss

The common belief that college freshmen gain 15 pounds on average is wildly exaggerated, according to a new study that says the average gain is really three pounds.

The study, conducted by researchers from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan at Dearborn, further says that that one factor that has an influence on weight among freshmen is heavy alcohol consumption.

The “Freshman 15” turns out to be a media myth, the study concludes, one that is powerful enough to be cited commonly as truth. In fact, the study says, women gain an average of 2.4 pounds during their freshman year and men 3.4 pounds.

The study was co-authored by Jay Zagorsky, research scientist at Ohio State University’s Center for Human Resource Research, and Patricia Smith, a professor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Using information from a longitudinal survey of youth commissioned by the Labor Department and conducted by the center, the researchers looked at weight data from 7,418 young people over a period of years.

The researchers learned that throughout a college career, female students gain on average seven to nine pounds and male students 12 to 13 pounds. No more than 10 percent of college freshman gained 15 pounds or more, the study said. And a quarter of freshman reported losing weight during their freshman year.

The researchers looked at various factors that could be connected with weight gain, including whether students lived on or off campus, attended class full-or part-time, and enrolled in public or private colleges, according to an Ohio State release about the study.

The only thing that seemed to significantly affect weight was heavy drinking of alcohol, which was defined as consuming six or more drinks on at least four days a month.