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Blackout for ECU offense

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, November 05, 2009

A scheduled blackout in the stands Thursday night at East Carolina carried over onto the playing field.

ECU football fans donned black shirts in support of their team, but the Pirates could not solve the stalwart defense of visiting No. 22 Virginia Tech, which effectively turned the lights out in a 16-3 win.

The Pirates (5-4) played great defense as well, keeping the score within 10 points for much of the game. But on the offensive end, a few critical miscues smeared the Pirates' chances for points and complemented the play of the defense of the Hokies (6-3).

"It was frustrating. We knew it was going to be a low-scoring game," fifth-year ECU coach Skip Holtz said after his team failed to beat at least one Atlantic Coast Conference opponent in the regular season for the first time in his tenure with the Pirates. "We were going to rely on our defense, try to control the ball a little bit with our running game. Offensively, we ran the ball really well."

The Pirates, trying to upend a ranked Virginia Tech team for the second consecutive season, could not take the initiative away from the Hokies despite the game's plodding, meticulous pace which produced just one touchdown all night.

ECU passer Patrick Pinkney (167 yards, 0 touchdowns) outdielded Tech QB Tyrod Taylor (137 yards, 0 touchdowns). But Tech freshman back Ryan Williams stole the show with his 179 yards rushing.

Dominique Lindsay led the Pirates with 69 ground yards.

The scoring died completely in the second half at 13-3 until Matt Waldon stroked his third field goal of the game to finish the scoring with less than two minutes remaining in the fourth quarter.

In the second half, the Virginia Tech offense nickel-and-dimed its way behind Williams (179 yards), who joined Marshall's Darius Marshall as the only backs to rush for 100 yards against ECU this season.

The ECU offense, meanwhile, mustered 277 yards of total offense to Tech's 379, and accrued 14 first downs, eight less than the Hokies.

Yellow flags flew at the worst possible moments for the Pirates, who were penalized eight times for 79 yards.

"It seemed like every time we had a 10- or 15-yard play, you look back and there was always a flag on the ground," Holtz said. "It wasn't just the 10-yard penalty, it was taking a big play away from us on offense. That takes the air out of your balloon a little bit."

As has been the case in each of the last two meetings between the teams, critical mistakes swayed the momentum.

Early in the third quarter, the Pirates shot themselves in the foot after successfully driving to the Virginia Tech 18-yard line. Two big bursts in the run game — an 18-yard gain from Lindsay and a 16-yard stroll by Giavanni Ruffin — had the Pirates headed for the end zone, but Ruffin lost the handle on his next hand-off, and Tech was headed back the other way.
It was the second promising ECU drive squelched by a mistake, as the Pirates saw a first quarter touchdown erased by a holding penalty.

"We didn't capitalize on the big plays," said Lindsay, whose 20-yard touchdown was called back. "We had opportunities where we went down the field and didn't get anything out of it.

"Turnovers and penalties killed us. We should have been more disciplined."

Late in the third with the score still 13-3, the Pirates drove behind wide receiver Dwayne Harris in the wildcat formation and found the going just as tough as Pinkney did.

With Pinkney back under center in the fourth, the senior fired and missed Harris down field, then threw behind Darryl Freeney to stifle a drive. A second drive in the fourth met with the same result, never crossing the ECU 40-yard line.

Virginia Tech seized control in a sluggish game with just over two minutes to play in the opening half. Already leading 6-0 after a pair of Waldron field goals, Taylor took off through to his left from the ECU 13-yard line, steered around a couple of blocks and dove, planting his right hand and the football into the front corner of the end zone, giving Tech a 13-0 lead.

ECU countered to score its only points of the half during a furious two-minute drill in which Pinkney continually found Alex Taylor, who made five catches in the half for 60 yards. As time expired in the half, Ben Hartman connected on a 24-yard field goal to make it 13-3 at the break.

The teams also traded fumbles to no avail, but Tech's 252-yard production in the first half was boosted by six ECU penalties for 60 yards.

Lindsay's touchdown in the first quarter erased by one of those infractions, a 10-yard holding call against offensive lineman Terence Campbell, and the drive ended when Pinkney zipped a short pass to tight end Rob Kass, who fumbled the ball away.

Both Kass (right knee) and defensive back Dekota Marshall (broken leg) left the field and are feared lost for the season.

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Police report few game-related incidents

The Daily Reflector

Friday, November 06, 2009

East Carolina University police reported few incidents connected to Thursday night’s football.

At halftime, one arrest had been made of an individual who resisted officers trying to eject him from the stadium for an alcohol violation, Major Frank Knight reported shortly after 9:30 p.m. There were six to 10 ejections for alcohol violations by that time, he said.

“It’s getting a little bit chilly, the crowd is enthusiastic, and everything is going well,” Knight said.

Law enforcement said traffic congestion started about 4 p.m.

James Tripp, chief of investigations with Pitt County Sheriff’s Office, said at that time he encountered traffic backed up to the interchange where U.S. 264 Bypass meets Stantonsburg Road.

Greenville police were unavailable for comment.

Greenville Fire-Rescue Battalion Chief Tony Smart said emergency medical personnel treated six to eight people for a variety of medical issues. A medical transport crew also had to transport an ECU football player to Pitt County Memorial Hospital for treatment of a leg injury.

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ECU students getting taste of chanting

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, November 05, 2009

There are no rules for chanting.

You don’t have to be musical. You don’t have to belong to a certain faith. You don’t have to sit with your legs crossed or keep your eyes open or closed. You just have to give up two things: Looking good and being right.

At least that’s what Greenville City Councilman Calvin Mercer says.

By day, Mercer heads East Carolina University’s religious studies department. The chanting is only one portion of a larger monastic project. Intended to give students a sense of life as a monk or ascetic, it requires minimal Internet and cell phone usage, eating additive-free food, no alcohol or sexual activity, truth telling and acts of kindness.

Wednesday night, however, Mercer provided students with examples of chanting and meditation. Eight participants sat in a circle, many on pillows, and echoed Greek and Hebrew phrases for nearly half an hour at varying speeds and volumes.

“Eee-Ay-Sous.”

“Ag-Ga-Peh.”

“Ad-Do-Nai.”

That was followed by a more common guided meditation — eyes closed with Mercer directing students through a peaceful landscape based off the Bible’s 23 Psalm — and a walking meditation where focusing on each movement is key. The session ended with the most difficult meditation of all: Laughing for eight minutes straight.

The students will meet twice at Mercer’s home for exercises like these and discussion during the four-week long endeavor.

The challenges differ for each participant. Freshman Elise Ericksen said finding the right foods is nearly impossible while living on campus without a car.

“I’ve basically been living off salad,” she said.

Marilyn Orlovsky isn’t a student but one of two community members also taking part in the project. Mercer opened the monastic project to the public approximately five years ago and advertises the chant nights in his twice-monthly constituent communication newsletter.

“I thought I had a leg up on the young people because I eat better and already do some meditation,” Orlovsky said. “It’s a challenge to break your habits ... no sugar, no eating in front of a computer or the TV.”

On the plus side, her blood pressure has decreased already, she said.

Warren Crowder uses a cane, so the walking meditation was no easy feat for him. He said it’s also hard to explain to friends and family the reasons for the sudden change in behavior.

“Anyone’s normal diet and routine to this is a big change,” the freshman said.
But Crowder also noted a heightened awareness expressed by several of his classmates.

"You become more attuned to some of the subtle things, like the difference in (different types of) rice," he said. "Or with the relaxation techniques at night, how many springs there are in my ECU-issued cardboard mattress."

It's a sign that the "participatory observation" assignment is effective, Mercer said. He has taught the monastic project for a decade, encouraging discipline, purification and concentration.

"It cuts against the drift of culture in a big way," he said. "Students have to make serious changes."

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Both teams struggle to find paydirt

By Tony Castleberry
The Daily Reflector

Friday, November 06, 2009

East Carolina unveiled a spiffy new midfield logo for its nationally-televised football game against Virginia Tech and both teams proceeded to spend a lot of time stepping on it.

Neither the Pirates nor the Hokies planted their cleats in the end zone very often, unless they were chasing one of the four punts that bounced their way over the goal line for touchbacks.

Virginia Tech, ranked 22nd in the latest Associated Press Top 25 poll, scored the game's only touchdown in a defensive battle that ended with the Hokies winning 16-3.

Neither team scored after halftime until Tech's Matt Waldron kicked his third field goal of the game with 1 minute, 13 seconds left to play in a contest that was mostly a battle of field position and dueling punts from Tech's Brent Bowden and ECU's Matt Dodge.

"We knew it was going to be a low-scoring game," Pirate coach Skip Holtz said. "I think the difference was us turning the ball over twice down here inside the red zone."

The most crucial giveaway came early in the third quarter with the Pirates trailing 13-3 and driving on their second possession of the second half. Giavanni Ruffin fumbled at the Tech 18-yard line. Tech's Lyndell Gibson recovered and ECU's offense didn't get that close to the Hokies' end zone the rest of the game.

To East Carolina's credit, its defense didn't let VT break the game open as Bowden and Dodge spent nearly the entire second half trading punts. Dodge booted the ball eight times for a total of 372 yards and a 46.5 yards per punt average while Bowden finished with seven punts, 314 yards and a 44.9 ypp mark.

"I've talked about the respect I have for (Tech) coach (Frank) Beamer and his program," Holtz said. "They're not going to beat themselves. They're not going to turn the ball over. They're going to play sound, fundamental football and that's what they did tonight....We had our opportunities, we just didn't capitalize on them."

Missed chances

Pirate quarterback Patrick Pinkney missed at least four wide open receivers in the first half with overthrows and the Pirates, despite running only four fewer plays (35) than Tech (39), finished with 182 total yards of first half offense to the Hokies' 252.

Six first half penalties totaling 60 yards contributed to ECU's lack of offensive productivity while Virginia Tech helped its cause by committing only one penalty for 10 yards before halftime.

That miscue didn't occur until there was 7:33 left in the second quarter.

Extra points

The game against the Hokies was the first Thursday night contest for ECU since a 39-34 loss to Louisville on Nov. 15, 2001, in Dowdy-Ficklen...Tech lost the coin toss for the ninth time in nine games this season.

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Dramatic North Carolina

This year's edition of "The North Carolina Literary Review" (East Carolina University and the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association: Greenville; 259 pages, $15 paper) is especially dramatic. With the theme of North Carolina drama and a redesign, the Review steps to center stage as the most handsome such publication in the state.

Theater in North Carolina gets overshadowed. The state's novelists, poets and story writers hog the spotlight, upstaging the playwrights. The Review, edited by Margaret Bauer of the English department at East Carolina, brings the dramatists from the darkened wings in this edition.

You can't talk about North Carolina drama without talking about Paul Green. By reprinting a 1960 interview with the playwright in his Chapel Hill home, the Review lets Green get in a word, too. "The real theater of our country should be – and is rapidly becoming – the theater of the people, the amateur theater," he told an interviewer. "The death of drama in America that everybody is worried about, I believe, is nothing more than the righteous whittling down to size of Broadway."

In addition to novels and stories, Green wrote seventeen outdoor historical plays, "four of which are still in production in Texas, Kentucky, Ohio and North Carolina," writes Laurence Avery, who is retired from the English department at UNC-Chapel Hill. Avery notes that each summer across the country 35 to 50 such dramas are staged. "But in terms of his legacy, the thing to understand is that this vigorous national movement grew ... from the first of his outdoor historical plays, "The Lost Colony," which opened in the summer of 1937 at the Waterside Theater on Roanoke Island." It's still in production today, the oldest such drama in the country.


"Ultimately," Simpson writes, "it scarcely matters whether one calls 'musicians' theater' a new musical form, a sub-genre, or an identifiable hybrid. Certainly it is an approach to stagecraft that has served a lot of us musicians (many with Tar Heel roots) quite well over most of four decades."

The only play by story writer Elizabeth Spencer of Chapel Hill is reprinted here. The wickedly funny short play, "Husbands Found Dead," is here, too. It was written by Kat Meads, a graduate of the MFA creative writing program at UNCG. (There's also a nice interview with Meads, a native of Currituck County.) Sam Post, a resident of Salisbury, is here with three of what I would call short-shorts. Interesting.

June Guralnick, who now lives in Apex, writes in one piece that in 1997 she was artist in residence at Rockingham Community College in Reidsville. She planned to work on a play about the Jazz Age.

"It took a few months before I realized that a seismic volcanic shift – the end of the Industrial Era – was erupting in this corner of the world," she says. "I wasn't sure how to understand or respond to what I was seeing and hearing. To better grasp what was happening around me, I determined to find out more about the history of mills in the Piedmont."
The result was “Finding Clara.” Guralnick describes it this way: “The play counterpoints the life of Mary Victoria Woolson, a North Carolina 'linhead,' with her idol, silent screen actress Clara Bow, against a background of labor and racial unrest in pre-Depression 1929 America.” Excerpts of the play are reprinted.

One notable interview is with Jim Grimsley, the North Carolinian who is director of the creative writing program at Emory. He's a playwright, and many of his novels and stories are set in North Carolina. He surveys the state of Southern drama.

This edition of the Review has more than drama. The section titled North Carolina Miscellany includes a snapshot of what's up across the state in poetry and fiction with reviews and interviews. I can't remember if it's in this section, but there's a good interview with Betty Adcock, the outstanding poet who lives in Raleigh. The analysis of "Kate Vaiden" by Reynolds Price as an example of Southern gothic realism is rewarding, too.

The new design, while full of movement and abounding in entry points, should be reined in. The doddads get in the way of clarity and coherence at times. In the parsing of a Tennessee Williams play set in Asheville about the Fitzgeralds, the graphics went overboard. I suppose they reflected the chaos of the Fitzgeralds' lives.

Another annoyance: The Review lacks a workable table of contents. You're made to do a lot of thumbing through when you're trying to find something you've read and want to look at again. The Review contains a lot of literary award stories. You know, the grip and grin kind like, oh, Rotarian of the Year. They are hardly arresting reading.

Even so, North Carolina is fortunate to have such a publication. It merits your support. http://www.nclr.ecu.edu/

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Posted by Charles Wheeler on Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 7:37 pm

200 E. Market Street, Greensboro, NC 27401  (336) 373-7000  (800) 553-6880
With Doctors in Short Supply, Responsibilities for Nurses May Expand

By MICHELLE ANDREWS

Marilyn K. Yee/The New York Times In many states, nurse practitioners perform medical services once provided only by primary care doctors.

If the health care system is overhauled, patients and practitioners are likely to face a primary care bottleneck, experts say. An estimated 30 million newly insured people will begin making appointments for check-ups and other routine care with physicians who are already stretched thin caring for existing patients.

The increase in demand may well put an end to a simmering policy dispute over the circumscribed role of nurse practitioners in medical care. If tens of millions of new patients enter the health care system, it seems clear that nurse practitioners will be needed to perform many of the tasks now performed by physicians.

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who typically have a master's degree in nursing. Numbering roughly 125,000 nationwide, more than three-quarters of them train in primary care, making them the largest group of non-physician primary care providers, according to a study by the American College of Physicians. (Physician assistants, another type of non-physician provider, generally work for specialists rather than in primary care.)

As this blog has noted, the American Academy of Family Practitioners projects a shortfall of 40,000 physician generalists — family practitioners, pediatricians, general internists and geriatricians — by 2020, even without significant changes to the current health care system. No one expects that nurse practitioners can fill that gap. The nursing profession faces its own supply challenges, with shortages of all types of nurses estimated at 260,000 over the next 15 years.

But the health care bills moving through Congress contain provisions that would increase funding for nurse training programs, including one aimed specifically at boosting the number of advanced practice nurses, which include nurse practitioners.

State laws that define nurse practitioners' "scope of practice" vary, but in general they perform many of the tasks that primary care doctors do: they diagnose and treat illness, order tests, prescribe drugs and make referrals to specialists. Twenty-two states allow nurse practitioners to practice independently, without physician involvement. In other states, they work with varying degrees of oversight and input from physicians.

Nearly a quarter of primary-care physician practices have nurse practitioners on staff.
Although doctors and nurse practitioners work amicably together in clinics and medical offices around the country, skirmishes over how much independence nurse practitioners should have periodically erupt among policy-makers. Physician organizations, sensitive to encroachment on their patient turf, argue that nurse practitioners, who have less clinical training, may miss a diagnosis, especially with patients who have multiple chronic conditions. "We think that collaborative work and use of the team approach is preferable," said Dr. Lori Heim, president of the American Academy of Family Practitioners.

There are financial considerations in addition to clinical ones. Nurse practitioners earn significantly less than primary care physicians and can provide comparable care at a lower cost. A RAND Corporation study that examined ways to control health care spending in Massachusetts found that increasing the use of nurse practitioners and physician assistants for certain types of office visits could save up to $8.4 billion by 2020.

Federal funding for nurse education has always been a sore spot among nurses. Unlike doctors in training, whose residencies are almost entirely funded by Medicare, most nursing education is self-financed. Nurse education received a little over $300 million in federal funding in 2006. Half of that amount was restricted to hospital diploma programs, which graduate only about 5 percent of nurses today.

The Senate Finance Committee bill would provide $50 million annually from 2012 through 2015 to fund a Medicare demonstration program for graduate nurse education. Participating hospitals would receive Medicare reimbursement for their education and clinical instruction costs. Meanwhile, the House health reform bill that was unveiled last week would authorize an additional $638 million to support nurse training from 2011 to 2015, including training for advanced practice nurses.

"This bill recognizes that we need more resources for graduate nursing education," said Brenda Cleary, director of the Center to Champion Nursing in America, a program of the AARP Public Policy Institute.

Physicians, too, recognize that looming primary care shortages are too big for them to address single-handedly. "There is more than enough medical care required for both nurse practitioners and primary care physicians to do," said Ms. Heim.

As for patients, "There's never been a problem with consumers thinking they're getting second-rate care with nurse practitioners," said Linda Aiken, a professor of nursing and sociology who directs the Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania. Quite the opposite. Patients who were cared for by nurse practitioners were more satisfied, some studies have found, and they believed nurse practitioners did a better job at patient education and communication.
The Coming Shortage of Doctors

Our aging population is challenge enough. Try to get an appointment after health-care reform.

By HERBERT PARDES

None of the health-care reform proposals advancing in Congress address a fundamental problem that will soon face this country: a critical shortage of doctors. There were reform ideas put forward in Congress that would have addressed this problem. Most notably, Rep. Joseph Crowley (D., N.Y) and Sen. Bill Nelson (D., Fla.) have proposed training an additional 4,000 new physicians to add to the 25,000 entering the profession each year. But their proposals haven’t made it into the bills on which congressional leaders hope to vote.

If the doctor shortage is not addressed and health-care reform is signed into law, millions of Americans will likely find themselves able to obtain insurance for the first time—but may be unable to find a doctor without a long delay. Why? Because expanding the number of insured patients but not the number of doctors will only increase the demand for services that already must meet the demands of an aging population. We must make sure there are enough health professionals to meet those new demands.

Even in the absence of health-care reform, according to the American Association of Medical Colleges, the U.S. will face a shortage of at least 125,000 physicians by 2025. We have about 700,000 active physicians today. One factor driving this shortage is that the baby-boomer generation is getting older and will require more care. By 2025 the number of people over 65 will have increased by about 75% of what it is today—to 64 million from 37 million today.

Doctors are also aging. By 2020, as many as one-third of the physicians currently practicing will likely retire. If health-care reform adds millions of people to the health-care market, the shortage of doctors will be even greater than it is projected to be now.

It is important to note that the shortage the country will soon face isn’t just of primary-care physicians. It is true that there aren’t enough primary-care doctors and nurse practitioners. But it is also true that we need more cardiologists, neurologists, general surgeons, pediatric subspecialists, urologists and other highly trained specialists.

Nonetheless, the few ideas to address the coming doctor shortages that were briefly considered in Washington treated the problem merely as a shortfall of primary-care doctors. One idea is to shift unused federal training funds to hospitals that need more positions, but only if those funds are used for primary care. Another is to move primary-care physician training out of hospitals and into federally qualified health centers. A third idea is to take training dollars away from doctors and instead use it to train nurses and other professionals.

None of these ideas would actually increase the number of doctors. At most the first two ideas would increase the number of primary-care doctors at the expense of the number of specialists.

But that’s not likely to happen either. The fundamental reason why medical students are not entering primary
care on their own is that they can’t afford it. Medical-school tuition can cost a student as much as $50,000 a
year. Some doctors start out owing hundreds of thousands of dollars before they are even able to open a practice.
Going to medical school is a little like taking out a mortgage, only without getting a house in return.

Once doctors do start treating patients, they are squeezed between what they earn from government programs
and insurance companies on one side and escalating malpractice insurance rates on the other. Meanwhile,
specialists can often charge more and pay less in other costs than primary-care doctors. The reality is that many
physicians cannot afford to go into primary care.

To address the shortage of doctors and the incentives that compel young doctors to eschew primary care,
Congress needs to think about how to increase doctor pay, institute malpractice reform, and provide subsidies to
reduce the amount of debt doctors have to take on. Residency caps should also be raised so teaching hospitals
can train more doctors. Without these actions new doctors would be foolish to enter primary care, and
thankfully our medical schools do not recruit foolish people.

Dr. Pardes is president and CEO of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital.
Analysis: College students need lessons in failure

By Justin Pope, The Associated Press

Disgraced ex-New York Times reporter Jayson Blair talking to college students about ethics?

What's next? The former head of Lehman Brothers on financial risk management?

Such was the blogosphere’s snarky tone last week when Washington & Lee University in Virginia announced Blair would speak Friday at a journalism conference there.

But if the cheap irony of a famous fabulist lecturing on ethics was too much to resist, perhaps it could also prompt colleges to think more seriously about something they often shy away from: the value of exposing students to, and preparing them for, failure.

STUDY: Today's youth think quite highly of themselves

NARCISSISM: Are social networks changing students?

For some people, like Blair, failure is spectacular and public. For others, it's just failing short of expectations — in their careers or personal lives.

But you won't find many examples of either type among the guest speaker announcements of college bulletins. Instead, you'll find a parade of winners — titans of the arts and commerce and politics, many of them alumni, returned triumphantly to campus to inspire the next generation (and, implicitly, to demonstrate to customers the college is worth up to $50,000 a year).

They may well talk about past failures on their eventual path to success.

But rarely is the podium held by someone who just failed.

That's understandable — but too bad. Teachers say failure is something so-called Gen Y students want to hear more about.

“They are very concerned with failure,” said Rich Honack, a lecturer at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and expert in generational cultures. Current 20-somethings “have always succeeded. They've always gotten trophies when they go out for a sports team. They've always gotten 'A's. Their parents have told them be the best and protected them from failure.”

GENERATION GAP? Parents, kids today more in harmony than prior generations

But in a way that makes failure all the more terrifying.

Visitors to Kellogg, a top-tier business school, often are grilled about the times they messed up, Honack said. When former General Electric CEO Jack Welch talked to students, they were especially curious how his career recovered after, as a young chemical engineer, he blew the roof off a factory and almost got fired.

But of course Welch went on to become one of the most successful CEOs ever. Honack couldn't think of any outright failures who'd spoken lately on campus.

Anthony Kronman, author of the 2007 book Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life, says the high-achieving students in his freshman Great Books class at Yale are often most riveted by the flawed characters in their readings.

In Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War, they are most drawn to Alcibiades, a 5th-century B.C. Athenian politician who made too many enemies and squandered his talents. Less interesting are the heroes (though in ancient Greece, even the heroes had no shortage of failings to discuss).

Kronman, who has also taught ethics at Yale's law school, thinks there's a benefit to talking about failure from an academic and personal distance. He's skeptical the in-person presence of those who've come up short adds much.

"When you bring someone back who's screwed up, it's very, very difficult to prevent the event from becoming an uninstructive 'mea culpa' and a quest for some kind of redemptive validation," he said. That's natural, but complicates "an honest and useful assessment of what went wrong."

It's also no surprise most people who've messed up prefer to talk about other things. When Eliot Spitzer, driven from New York's governorship in a prostitution scandal, speaks next week at Harvard, his topic will be "What Should Be the Rationale for Government Participation in the Market."

Still, there are people who have publicly wrestled with their own failings. On the website Slate.com last spring, writer Timothy Noah lamented how many new college graduates were getting commencement advice from the accomplished but boring. Success is admirable but uninstructive, while failure is far more informative — and interesting.

"People typically have a much easier time recounting, in often vivid detail, where they screwed up in life than they do explaining what they did right," Noah wrote.

He advised colleges to ditch the usual commencement suspects — Oprah Winfrey, Warren Buffett, Colin Powell. Instead, invite speakers like media critic David Carr, the author of a brutally self-critical memoir of the harm he caused others with his substance abuse. Or Katha Pollitt, a columnist and poet whose memoir unflinchingly recounts a disastrous love affair (Noah: "Worthwhile message. Don't let love make you stupid.").

Of course, it's an exaggeration that college students are sheltered entirely from exposure to failure. Service-learning is booming on many campuses, like Notre Dame,

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where the former longtime president Father Edward Malloy teaches a class for first-years who come to know and hear the stories of homeless people.

But while such experiences may teach valuable empathy, few students at a top school like Notre Dame expect ever to be homeless themselves. A failure students can truly relate to hits home in a different way.

Such is the value of hearing from Blair, who perhaps can help students understand better the pressures they will feel trying to break into the highly competitive news business.

"There is always going to be pressure to cut corners," said Edward Wasserman, the journalism professor at W&L who invited Blair. "I suspect what we're going to find is that he got where he was through half-steps, small steps, rather than a huge leap into completely impermissible behavior."

There are corners of collegiate life where it's impossible to hide from failure. In one such corner, success inevitably comes, on average, just half the time — college sports.

In his 2006 book *Excellence Without a Soul*, former Harvard University dean Harry Lewis recounted an encounter with a bespectacled young dean from one of the college's residential houses. The dean asked Lewis if it was true the university planned to admit fewer athletes. Lewis replied it was true, though he was surprised the man was interested. He didn't seem like a sports fan.

"That would be terrible," the dean told Lewis. "They add so much to the House. They are the only people here who know how to lose."

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