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Students to unveil plans for old City Hall

By MIKE VOSS
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Adaptive reuse proposals for Washington’s old City Hall are scheduled to be presented next week.

Several East Carolina University students have been assigned to develop usable plans to give Washington’s old City Hall a virtual makeover. Those plans will be unveiled from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday and Tuesday at the Washington Civic Center.

Hunt McKinnon, an assistant professor in ECU’s Department of Interior Design and Merchandising, recently met with city officials and members of the Washington Harbor District Alliance and Washington Area Historic Foundation to develop a blueprint for the project. McKinnon and several of his students visited old City Hall late last month, with students taking measurements and closely examining the structure.

The ECU students will present their designs by using architectural layouts and wall elevations.

The ECU class involved with the project is offered in two sections this semester, with each section instructed to take a different approach regarding use of old City Hall. One section has been told to develop a plan that calls for retail space on the building’s first floor and apartments on the second floor. The other section has been charged with developing plan that incorporates offices and a Harbor District visitors center on the first and second floors, a computer-ready location and classroom space that could be used by local educational institutions to assist with off-site learning programs.

“Besides giving the ECU students a hands-on practical exercise in planning and design, the designs will be available as suggestions for future development of the property. The City of Washington and the WHDA Economic Restructuring committee are currently in meetings and are developing requirements for an RFP bid process on the structure,” reads an e-mail from the Washington Harbor District Alliance to several media outlets.
Recently, the city spent about $18,000 to maintain the building, which it owns. Old City Hall is on the west side of North Market Street between Main Street and Second Street.

Several city officials are expected to attend at least one of the two sessions, said Beth Byrd, WHDA’s director, in a brief interview Wednesday. John Rodman, the city’s planning and development director, plans to attend both sessions.

Rodman said he hopes the ECU students’ work will “show us some uses the building can be used for and then we, in turn, can use those uses to help market the building.”

During the City Council’s Aug. 23 meeting, City Manager James C. Smith told the council there are “a number of developments there” in regard to old City Hall. Smith said a developer expressed interest in acquiring the property. The developer, later identified as Rehab Builders, expressed interest in placing two retail shops in the ground floor of the building and two apartments upstairs in the building, according to Smith.

At its Aug. 23 meeting, the council indicated it planned for the city to sell the property by using the upset-bid process.
Yow: ECU has advantage
By Ronnie Woodward
The Daily Reflector
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While addressing the Greater Greenville Sports Club on Wednesday, N.C. State athletics director Debbie Yow didn't wait long to discuss her recent comments about the ECU-N.C. State rivalry.

She didn't back down from them either.

Yow reiterated her statement that ECU has a “psychological edge” in the series, saying that's her personal opinion rather than an excuse for the Wolfpack's recent loss to the Pirates in Greenville.

“I haven't reached a point where I'm so politically correct that I can't state the obvious,” Yow, who spent two years as a student at East Carolina, said to the mostly pro-ECU crowd at the Hilton. “Generally speaking, when we play ... my opinion is that you're going to have the psychological edge.”

Yow compared the rivalry to other intrastate matchups across the nation.
“When Kentucky plays Louisville, Louisville has the edge. I worked at Kentucky and I know the difference in how they feel about each other,” she said. “When Texas plays Texas Tech, I think Texas Tech generally has the edge. That's not an excuse that State lost, but it's just part of the series.”

Yow said she would address the future of the series in 2015, but not any sooner. The schools are scheduled to play in Raleigh in 2013 and in Greenville in 2016.
The Wolfpack leads the overall series 16-11, but ECU has won six of the last 10.

East Carolina athletics director Terry Holland was in attendance. Yow praised the work he has done at East Carolina, the current facilities at the school and the performance by the Pirates in their 33-27 overtime win over State on Oct. 16.

“You won, we lost. I was there, and it was painful,” she said. “I'm not sure I've seen a team play that well in the first quarter. It was stunning.”

Yow also discussed the challenges athletic directors face. “Terry and I might be talking to the faculty about graduation rates in the morning and then in some type of business session in the afternoon, trying to figure out how to generate funds for a jointly-used facility and to balance our budgets,” Yow said.

Yow took the AD job at State in June after holding the same position at Maryland for 16 years. The Terrapins won 20 national championships during her tenure.

D.H. Conley cross country runner Blake Justice was named the sports club's scholar athlete of the month.

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Prognosticating the Pirates is not easy
Thursday, November 11, 2010

Every year around this time, the question starts popping up in the majority of my conversations. The inquiry often comes in several different forms, but always boils down to a central theme: “Are the Pirates gonna be any good this year?”

Friends, co-workers, guys I play pickup basketball with, pretty much anybody I talk to this time of year wants my take on how East Carolina's men's hoops squad will perform. In years past, as recently as last season as a matter of fact, I'd usually tell folks that I felt the Pirates would be better than the season prior, and I'd be honest while doing so.

See, every season since I started covering the team in 2006 for The Daily Reflector, it seemed I could always find reasons to believe ECU could play better, follow the lead of a new coach, win more games.

The team did show moderate improvement in '07-08 and '08-09 under Mack McCarthy, but regressed last season, a campaign in which I believed the team had a chance to go .500.

All this goes to show that I probably can't predict the Pirates' future with any more accuracy than the average fan, but I am around the team more than most folks are, so I should have a more informed opinion of the Pirates, right?
Well, judging from everything I've seen and heard so far this season, while also remembering seasons past, I'm left with conflicting opinions on the outlook for ECU and first-year coach Jeff Lebo.

I know five starters return this season...from a team that finished 10-21 a season ago. I know Lebo has a reputation as a program-saving coach...who's facing perhaps the biggest challenge of his professional career. I know point guard Brock Young is a special player...who had surgery on his right knee two months ago and is still on the rehabilitation grind. I know there's an excitement surrounding the team...but that's usually the case just before the real games begin.

Someone with first-hand knowledge of the inner-workings of the team knows exactly how he feels about the Pirates and he didn't hesitate to share those feelings. “I know the history of the basketball program, or the lack thereof,” Lebo said. “I'm not afraid of that. I think and believe and know that we will get this thing turned and moved in the right direction.”

Whether or not East Carolina's long-suffering program gets “turned” this season is anybody's guess, but Lebo's track record and enthusiasm lead me to believe that better days are nigh for Pirate hoops.

That's not a prediction, mind you. I haven't had a lot of luck making those.

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Exploris class goads Wolfpack over poor diet

RALEIGH—The odds were stacked against the Exploris Middle School seventh-graders even before they began urging N.C. State University students on Wednesday to change their food habits and eat healthy.

With the smell of free pizza in the air to mark NCSU's Homecoming Week, the middle-schoolers explained to the college students why they should eat fresh food instead of processed. They even suggested those students who still live with their parents eat as a family and not individually.

"They were definitely listening to us," said Lila Olson, 12, of Raleigh. "They were paying attention."

Travis Conte, 21, an NCSU senior, isn't so sure his classmates will heed the advice, though. He recalled his days as a freshman living on campus, where students seemed to survive on microwave ramen noodles and pizzas.

"College students are stereo typically unhealthy, but there are a large concentration of students who do eat healthy," Conte said. "It's not as easy on campus."

The student group that runs the campus farmers market at the Brickyard welcomed the seventh-graders, who are finishing their studies on how food makes its way to people's plates. Sonja McKay, a seventh-grade teacher at Exploris, a charter school in downtown Raleigh, said they wanted the challenge of educating college students about healthy eating.

At one booth, Anne Freeman and Lucas Meeks, both 12, touted the benefits of eggs from your own chickens or from local farmers.

At another booth, Jonathan Strum and Ian Robertson, both 12, pitched shopping at local farmers markets, even if it means not getting some products that are out of season.
"It's better for the environment and for your health to eat local food," said Ian, who lives in Raleigh.

Sisi Fiabema, 23, an NCSU senior, was both impressed and frightened when Lila Olson told her that Chicken McNuggets contain a form of lighter fluid. The students cited Michael Pollan's book "Omnivore's Dilemma" as their source for that information.

"I'm definitely not going to eat chicken nuggets at McDonald's again," Fiabema said.

But the seventh-graders didn't keep Fiabema from joining other NCSU students who waited in line to get a free slice from Marco's Pizza.

"We're broke college students," Fiabema said. "It's free. They raised our tuition by $900."

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As Donors Retrench, Challenges for Universities

By GERALDINE FABRIKANT

AS the stock market soared for two decades, college and university endowments swelled with gifts. Over the last 10 years, contributions to higher education have risen an average of 4.1 percent a year, despite the downturn.

These endowments allowed many public universities to help offset declines in government contributions and let many private universities increase financial aid to a widening number of families that could not afford the high costs of education.

But in 2009, giving to 1,027 universities and colleges plummeted 11.9 percent, to $27.85 billion, according to data compiled by the Council for Aid to Education, the greatest single annual decline since the Depression. Fund-raising advisers and experts anticipate a slow recovery.

Indicators are that overall giving for fiscal 2010 may be flat; data for the year, which generally ended June 30, is not available yet. A handful of institutions have already released their numbers. At Harvard, for example, giving was down 1 percent, to $596 million, and Yale also had a slight decline. Chicago was up 1 percent, and for the University of Texas, Austin, giving rose more than 3 percent.

Behind those numbers are changes in giving styles that make the job of fund-raisers even more difficult. “I have been in the business for 40 years, and I have never seen such a tough environment,” said William P. McGoldrick, a partner at Washburn & McGoldrick in Latham, N.Y., which advises higher education institutions on how to raise money.

He added: “Whether you are supporting a child who does not have a job or benefits, or worrying about imminent changes in the tax law, people are very cautious. Donors,
especially major donors, ask tougher questions about institutions than they did when they trusted leadership throughout society.”

In the past, donors were often willing to make gifts that were paid over a number of years, but fund-raisers are finding a reluctance to commit for more than one year. “Instead of a donor pledging a gift for $500,000 over five years, they will give $100,000 and wait and see about the rest,” said Trish Jackson, vice president for development at Smith College.

For the University of Texas, Austin, about 30 percent of donors who make a bequest decline to put a value on the amount of the gift because they are unsure of what it will be worth, said Kevin Hegarty, vice president and chief financial officer.

John Lippincott, president of the Council for Advancement and Support to Education, which provides services in alumni relations, said: “The greatest impact of the recession, aside from the impact on people’s net worth, is that it has created great uncertainty. In that atmosphere, people are reluctant to make long-term commitments.”

Long-term gifts are extremely important to institutions because they provide certainty that a specific amount of money is guaranteed to come into the endowment in subsequent years, whatever the economic situation.

As the gap between the superwealthy and others has increased, fund-raisers have come under pressure to court the superrich. “It used to be that 20 percent of your donors provided 80 percent of your revenue,” said Tom Farrell, vice president for alumni relations at the University of Chicago. “Today, 5 to 10 percent of your donors generate 80 percent to 90 percent of your revenue.”

At Yale, for example, $3.2 billion has been raised toward its $3.5 billion capital campaign. “According to our analysis, one-half of 1 percent of the donors have given 75 percent of the total,” said Inge Reichenbach, vice president for development.

As a result, some universities have been honing their skills at courting the wealthiest donors. Institutions have developed programs to reach out to donors who can give major gifts, which for some start at $1 million and for others, $5 million, said Tim Rippinger, senior associate vice president for development at Marquette University in Milwaukee.

At Columbia, which is completing a $4 billion campaign that started six years ago, Lee Bollinger, the president, said, “Big ideas attract big gifts, because people of big wealth respond to opportunities for major institutional advancement and big opportunities for growth.”

Columbia is planning a second business school campus in Manhattanville, to which the financier Henry R. Kravis has pledged $100 million. The late John Werner Kluge, who built the Metromedia broadcast empire, pledged $400 million for financial aid.
In 2009, gifts to the 20 universities that raised the largest amounts of money accounted for 26.2 percent of all giving. Among them were Stanford, Harvard, Cornell, and the Universities of Michigan, North Carolina at Chapel Hill and California at Berkeley and at San Francisco.

The slowdown in giving comes at a crucial time for American colleges, as state governments continue to cut financing. Mr. Hegarty said that in the mid-1980s, the University of Texas, Austin, received roughly 50 percent of its financing from the government. Today it is 14 percent.

“And the tuition is controlled by the government,” he added. That means the university cannot raise tuition to meet any shortfall.

At Stanford, Martin Shell, vice president for development, said that despite the increase in support that came with the stimulus, in real terms, government financing has been declining, so the university is increasing its emphasis on fund-raising, particularly for gifts that can be used for general budget purposes, as opposed to restricted gifts.

Some colleges report an increase in anonymous giving. “Out of our top gifts over $1 million, probably about 30 percent are anonymous,” Mr. Rippinger of Marquette said. “It used to be a rarity. Now people want to be charitable, but they don’t want to advertise. They think it will bring an unfavorable light on them, because in a bizarre way, they think it might look flashy, or people worry that others will seek them out to donate to their list of things.”

Mr. Shell said that he, too, was finding more interest in anonymous giving. “Now, some of our donors are saying that we can use their names privately with other people, but they do not want any publicity about their gifts.”

Perilously for some colleges, including the University of Texas, Austin, as budgets are cut, so are fund-raising operations.

The good news for Stanford, at least, is that though giving was down last year, the number of donors rose. “People want to help, and they are participating,” Mr. Shell said.
London Tuition Hike Protests Turn Violent
By SARAH LYALL

LONDON — A demonstration against government proposals to cut education spending and steeply increase tuition for university students turned violent on Wednesday as protesters attempted to storm the building that houses the Conservative Party.

The protesters scuffled with police officers, set off flares, burned placards, threw eggs, bottles and other projectiles and shattered windows at the building, 30 Millbank, in Westminster. A small group of demonstrators, some of whose faces were obscured by ski masks, climbed to the roof of a nearby building, waving anarchist flags and chanting “Tory scum.”

The protest was dispersed about 10 p.m. Fourteen people, including seven police officers, were injured, none of them seriously, the authorities said. Thirty-five people were arrested.

An estimated 52,000 people from across the country also massed near Parliament on Wednesday to condemn the government’s education proposals, which would allow universities to charge £6,000, or $9,600, to £9,000, or $14,400, in tuition a year, up from a cap of £3,290, or $5,264. The protest was the largest street demonstration against the government’s plans, which were announced last month, to cut public spending by $130 billion by 2015. Unions and public employees have promised more demonstrations and strikes, particularly as details of the cuts become clear.

Tuition is a politically sensitive subject in Britain, where universities are heavily subsidized by the government. Until the late 1990s, when the Labour government introduced tuition, students paid nothing to attend college.
The current government, a coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats that has ushered in an age of budget austerity, has announced plans to cut teaching grants to universities and said it had no choice but to raise tuition.

That has presented a dilemma for Liberal Democrats — the more vulnerable members of the coalition — who made abolishing university tuition a core element of their platform in the general election last spring. Joining the Conservatives in proposing tuition increases has been hard for many Liberal Democrats. Their leader, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, was taunted Wednesday in the House of Commons by members of the opposition Labour Party.

“In April he said that increasing tuition fees to £7,000 a year would be a disaster,” Harriet Harman, the deputy leader of the opposition, said of Mr. Clegg. “What word would he use to describe fees of £9,000?”

Accusing him of “going along with Tory plans to shove the cost of higher education onto students and their families,” Ms. Harman told Mr. Clegg that he was like a college freshman who meets “a dodgy bloke” during the first week of classes “and you do things that you regret.”

“Isn’t it true he has been led astray by the Tories?” she asked.

Mr. Clegg responded that he had to make compromises as part of a coalition, and because the country’s finances had been left in such poor shape by the previous government. But, he said, he had prevailed on the Conservatives to make the proposals fairer and more progressive.

Under the plan, students would borrow money from the government to pay tuition, as they do now. They would not start repaying the debt until they earned at least £21,000 a year (about $38,000 at current exchange rates), an increase from the current level of £15,000 ($24,100). They would then pay 9 percent of their income above that level to settle the debt. The debt would be wiped out after 30 years.

Student leaders have made it a priority to denounce Liberal Democrats who support the higher tuition, and they said on Wednesday that they would try to recall any legislators who had broken their election promises on the issue. Some Liberal Democrats have said they would abstain from the vote to increase tuition when it comes up in Parliament.

Aaron Porter, president of the National Union of Students, said the proposed increases were doubly unfair, since they were paired with cuts of about 40 percent in the money the government pays to subsidize teaching at universities. “We should be clear that the government has asked students to pay three times as much for a quality that is likely to be no better than what they are receiving now, and perhaps worse,” he said.
“You are your own worst critic,” the popular saying goes. Despite this phrase being mostly used to comfort someone with a harsh self-opinion, I am beginning to think this is a good thing. In fact, I want to try being—maybe not the worst, but—a better critic of myself. Finding my faults before others do is usually beneficial. Yet, while self-assessment is the easiest to receive, there are advantages in all forms of evaluation.

For a university student, there’s some aspect of criticism in every homework assignment, midterm, peer evaluation and paper. In this one week, I have received all the above responses in abundance and then some, including from unexpected sources. As I prepared my interview material, these responses have been becoming crucial to my self-improvement. I admit that it is not always easy to hear criticism, especially while trying to skyrocket my self-confidence to deal with the current job market. For me, it helps to look at what substantial points are made and re-evaluate from there. What points can I take away from these comments and use to make a realistic change?

With my first job interview on top of everything this past week, I couldn’t help but make some parallels. If a job interview goes well, the interviewee receives positive feedback in the form of a second-round interview, and eventually the job. However, 99.9% of the time, the interviewee will not receive negative feedback, otherwise known as “constructive criticism,” from a job interview. Unfortunately for students and lucky for interviewers, companies do not usually call back to say why an interviewee was not selected. In this case, the reflection on what went wrong is a solo process.

Before I stepped into my interview on Wednesday, I tried to think not only of reasons they would hire me, but reasons why they wouldn’t. As a senior, there are some aspects of my resume I cannot change. I cannot change my major or significantly raise my GPA.
However, there are always different strengths and stories to highlight for every interview. Sometimes inviting in criticism is the best way to discover a new approach.

And if you can’t take the heat? Stay in the kitchen anyway—the warmth can only get easier to handle.