Guidance counselor Lauren Walters helps Tuquilla Bryant as she fills out an online college application at North Pitt High School on Tuesday morning. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

Glitches stall online college applications

By Kim Grizzard

The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, November 17, 2010

What was designed to be a free-for-all Tuesday at North Pitt High School turned into a freeze for all.

Computer glitches kept a number of students from taking advantage of the College Foundation of North Carolina's College Application Week. The emphasis, which continues through Friday, generated 50,000 online college applications in five days last fall, including more than 100 in a single day at North Pitt.

“Last year we had a record number done on that one day,” North Pitt Guidance Counselor Kim Bryant said Tuesday morning. “I've got 60 seniors coming. Out of 18 this period, so far we've had one or two (who were able to submit applications). Some of them have gone back to class upset.”

Students at D.H. Conley High School experienced similar system stalls on Monday as seniors tried to apply to North Carolina colleges and universities using CFNC.org. Ben Kittner, marketing research and public relations manager for CFNC, confirmed that heavy traffic on the organization's website had caused problems for several schools trying to use the service.

“The demand on the system is really high right now,” he said. “This year things have been working a little slower.”

On Tuesday, CFNC computer technicians were testing solutions to accommodate the increased number of users. Kittner estimated that CFNC was receiving about 600 college applications an hour from students in 425 schools statewide that were participating in College Application Week.
The emphasis, which began as a pilot project at 15 high schools in 2006, had expanded to more than 400 schools by 2009. Last year, more than 25,000 students submitted applications during College Application Week.

During College Application Week, 28 of the 36 private colleges and universities in the state waive their normal application fees for North Carolina students who submit applications through CFNC.org. In addition, all 16 public University of North Carolina system schools waive application fees for students with demonstrated financial need. Two of those schools, N.C. A&T State University and Elizabeth City State University, only accept fee waivers during College Application Week.

“The free aspect of it is a secondary issue,” Kittner said. “The purpose of it is to get students who might be the first in their family to attend college to have help (in completing applications). The idea is to get more people in North Carolina to apply to college.”

North Pitt senior John Atkinson applied to two schools Tuesday — Guilford Technical College and Pitt Community College. The state's 58 community colleges do not charge application fees, but Atkinson took advantage College Application Week “to go ahead and get it out of the way. “(Otherwise) I probably would have waited until January,” he said.

PCC Lead Counselor Kimberly Williamson, who was on hand at North Pitt to help seniors apply, said a number of students were completing applications to PCC. Student Michaela Frizzell plans to apply to PCC, but she spent her time Tuesday morning completing an application to Campbell University, where she could apply for free this week only.

“Application fees are so high now,” Bryant said. “You could spend $50, $70, $80, (East Carolina charges $65) just applying, and most parents don't have that. Even with the fee waivers, you only get four fee waivers.”

Boyd Pearson, counselor at Ayden-Grifton High School, said convenience is another reason students participate in College Application Week.

“They can sit down right here at my desk and do it,” he said. “What makes it easy is they have to apply through CFNC, all they have to do is when it (says) ‘Do you wish to submit your transcript?’ (is) send it electronically just by saying ‘Yes.’”

In recent years, the entire college application process has gone online, and not just during College Application Week.

Anthony Britt, director of admissions at ECU, said the university is able to handle the entire admissions process electronically, from the application to the student's SAT scores.

“We really don't go to the trouble of printing paper applications,” Britt said. “It's just not cost-effective, and the students prefer to do it online.”
According to the 2010 State of College Admission report, released last month by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, online applications accounted for just 58 percent of college applications in 2006. By 2009, four-year colleges and universities received an average of 80 percent of their applications online.

Karen Pumphrey, senior guidance counselor at D.H. Conley, can remember a time when she filled the trunk of her car with college applications for high school students. Now she rarely sees any paper applications. “We're almost down to none,” she said. “I have some schools that will send one. Most schools have gone completely paperless.”

J.H. Rose High School senior counselor Bernetta Bradley said that even recommendations can be submitted online. “Sometimes there are little glitches going on, and so you just kind of download the forms and you do snail mail,” she said. “When the technology is really on-point, it's an excellent option. I love it when it works. When it doesn't work, it's a beast.”

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Vice President Joe Biden wipes his eyes as he talks with the family of US Marine Corps David James Smith, from left, step father John Jones, father Dr. Leonard Smith, mother Mary Jane McWilliams, and step mother Olga Smith, at the grave of their son US Marine Corps Sgt. David James Smith, Frederick, Md., in Section 60, on Veterans' Day at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Thursday, Nov. 11, 2010. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

By Megan Eckstein @ The Frederick News-Post
Marine Sgt. David Smith's parents and stepparents planned to spend Veterans Day at Arlington National Cemetery, sitting at the grave of their son, who was killed in Afghanistan in January.

What they didn't plan on was running into Vice President Joe Biden and having an extensive, emotional conversation with the man who knows all too well about losing a child.

Mary Jane McWilliams and John Jones, Smith's mother and stepfather, and Leonard and Olga Smith, his father and stepmother, all noticed extra security on the way into the cemetery. Roads were blocked off, and they were not allowed to park in their normal spot near Smith's grave in Section 60.

At one point during the morning, Biden, who was at the cemetery to visit the Tomb of the Unknowns and participate in a wreath-laying ceremony, walked past them.

Biden chatted with several other families, and as he was on his way out, an Old Guard soldier pulled Biden over to say hello.
"He wanted to know what happened, he looked at the grave site and said, 'Oh, my God, that's recent,'" Leonard Smith said. "I told him what happened, and he just broke down crying."

Smith showed Biden a photo of his son and described his life -- a Frederick High School graduate, a Marine since 2003 and a student at East Carolina University -- as well as his death. A suicide bomber attacked Smith's unit on Jan. 23, and Smith died three days later.

"As we were talking, he just kept crying and crying," Smith said. "And then he says, 'God, look at me. I'm supposed to be comforting you guys and look at me.'"

Smith said Biden talked about his own son serving in the Army National Guard in Iraq, as well as the loss of his wife and daughter in 1972.

"He's a very genuine guy. I think he felt our pain because he's sort of been through it, losing a child," Smith said. "He said, 'You know, it takes a year before you wake up in the morning and you start thinking and you have a smile on your face before a tear.' We know what he was saying, so I hope in a year that's how it's going to be."

McWilliams said the fact that Biden is a military parent himself made the conversation more special.

"You could tell that honoring Veterans Day and the military really meant something to him," she said. "His own son just got back (about a year ago), so he knows, he knows what it's like. And he was very gracious."

The four took a picture with the vice president, with David's gravestone front and center in the photo. Smith also offered Biden one of the red bracelets the family designed as a fundraiser for a memorial scholarship. In yellow writing, the bracelet says "Sgt. David James Smith" and has sergeant stripes on either side of the name.

"A lot of people may have just put it in their pocket," Smith said. "I gave it to him, and it immediately went on his wrist."

Biden, in return, left a vice presidential coin on David's grave, which McWilliams took home with her to add to a growing collection.

The honor of having the vice president pay tribute to their son came on the heels of another big honor for David Smith's family.

East Carolina University invited the family onto the football field for the coin toss in last Saturday's game against Navy. McWilliams, her two other children, Kristen Forse and Daniel Brown, and David's girlfriend, Kimberly Mott, were welcomed on with a standing ovation from the crowd, while David's picture was shown on the screen.
They also attended ECU's military appreciation banquet the night before, where David was honored. And to top off the weekend, the university is setting up a scholarship fund for the David J. Smith Leadership Award, which the university said "is going to be considered the highest honor a student can receive," McWilliams said.

A former professor of Smith's is working on raising $25,000 to fund the award for years to come. One recipient a year will receive $500 and a coin with the award name on one side and three stars on the back that stand for leadership, integrity and service.

McWilliams was presented the very first coin printed.

McWilliams said the coin now sits in David's old bedroom with coins from former President George W. Bush, Biden, Living Legacy for Smith being an organ donor, various Marine officers and others.

"But the coin that meant the most to me is the David J. Smith Leadership Award from ECU because it was specific to David," McWilliams said. "It let me know how much he was loved and how much he did."

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Mike Sutton and Rob Arnold discuss the Stantonsburg Road-10th Street Connector project designed to connect ECU with PCMH/Brody through one, four-lane thoroughfare Tuesday night at the Michels Center. (Scott Davis/The Daily Reflector)

Project's relocation costs questioned
By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, November 17, 2010

The absence of local aid for relocating businesses and the manner in which property values will be assessed were the only issues that drew comments at a public hearing Tuesday for the Stantonsburg Road-10th Street Connector project.

Beginning at Memorial Drive, with improvements ending at 10th and Evans streets, the proposed four-lane road will create a central avenue between East Carolina University and Pitt County Memorial Hospital. The 1.4-mile stretch will widen symmetrically down Farmville Boulevard before crossing a residential neighborhood and rising into a bridge over the railroad tracks at Dickinson Avenue.

Approximately 60 people stayed for the formal public hearing Tuesday after a two-hour workshop, both held at the R.G. Michels Center. The workshop included the opportunity to ask specific questions of N.C. Department of Transportation right-of-way acquisition agents and request-focused maps. Greenville Public Works Director Wes Anderson said that portion of the meeting was well received and perhaps better attended than the public hearing.

Only four people spoke during the latter segment but Anderson seemed unconcerned. “A lot of citizens' questions have already been answered,” he said. “They're here to see if anything new is happening and really, there isn't.”

There have been 50 opportunities for the public to weigh in on various aspects of the project since Sept. 2005, according to Jeff Moore, project manager with partnering Raleigh consultant firm Kimley-Horn and Associates. Hardee and Cox Welding co-owner Janette Cox has been at many of those, asking that the 24 area businesses forced to relocate be adequately compensated.
“Nothing is moving forward to help business owners affected by this project,” she said. “Businesses will either have to close, lay off employees or take on insurmountable debt.” She said she was disappointed in local officials, except Councilwoman Rose Glover and Councilman Max Joyner Jr. The Greenville City Council adopted a plan in 2007 offering additional aid to homeowners displaced by the road. Approximately 30 residences will be removed.

Public Works staff presented information on the affected businesses more than a year ago, but was not directed to develop or fund an assistance plan. “It effectively died there,” Anderson said Tuesday.

Derek Sanderson asked how the amount needed for right-of-way property purchases is calculated. He was told a state-certified appraiser makes ballpark estimates. Manhattan Avenue resident Sheila Moore asked how fair market value is determined. N.C. DOT Senior Public Involvement Officer Eileen Fuchs said a home is compared to between three and five others, ideally in a one-mile radius.

Cox said the same thing is happening with business appraisals — officials look at the values around the businesses' current location rather than the area where they would have to relocate.

An estimated $26 million will go toward right-of-way acquisitions with another $19.6 million estimated for construction costs. Eighty percent of the project funding comes from federal money with the rest provided by the state.

A midday meeting on Tuesday offered the opportunity for public officials to ask questions of agencies guiding the project. Glover expressed concerns about a lack of sound barriers and potential health risks for neighborhood residents due to increased car emissions. Project leaders told her that all federal environmental regulations have been met.

Councilwoman Marion Blackburn said she was pleased with the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian walkways, including lowered portions around the bridge.

Purchase of properties along the right-of-way is expected to begin in fall 2012, with construction scheduled to start in fall 2014. Public input will be accepted through Dec. 16, when project partners will assess the information and consider any necessary changes.

Ref!Those who want to make a comment or ask a question about the 10th Street Connector should contact N.C. DOT Senior Public Involvement Officer Eileen Fuchs by mail at 1598 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1598; by phone at (919) 431-1610; or by email at eafuchs@ncdot.gov.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or (252) 329-9566.
Shawan Sutton and Deborah Moody, program director of the Intergenerational Center, attend an event to honor the late Dr. Lessie Bass at the Lucille Gorham Intergenerational Center. (Scott Davis/The Daily Reflector)

Editorial: Center gets it right
Wednesday, November 17, 2010

Certain issues affecting this community cannot be remedied by the action of one local board or one organization acting in the public interest. The more complex issues facing Greenville and Pitt County, such as juvenile crime or the drop-out rate in public schools, demand a more comprehensive, collaborative approach to make progress.

The Lucile Gorham Intergenerational Community Center on West Fifth Street provides residents one example of realizing the potential of cooperation and collective commitment. The programs there, forged through partnership and shared responsibility, have made a genuine difference in this community and serve as a model for how to tackle our most persistent and troubling problems.

The exterior of the Gorham Center is pleasantly attractive, but passers-by unfamiliar with the building would be hard pressed to imagine the valuable work done within its walls. The city's purchase of the former St. Gabriel's Catholic Church in 2005 provided the available space for a host of programs directed at serving the surrounding neighborhoods and the community as a whole.

What followed has been an extraordinary and successful partnership drawing the various entities that dominate the local landscape. The city conducts outreach programs through the facility. East Carolina University and Pitt Community College have been steady supporters and their education programs have been of great benefit to students across the age spectrum. Greenville police and the Pitt County Sheriff's Office hold crime seminars and help local residents who desire to help fight crime in their neighborhoods. The ECU School of Social Work operates from the center as does the Little Willie Center. All told, the collection of programs available through the Gorham Center intend to transform the community, targeting its persistent problems and seeking to inspire and
assist those with a desire to see change. Importantly, the center is a conduit for helping to address issues with many causes. Consider juvenile crime, which may be reduced through tutoring and other after-school programs as well as law enforcement outreach, all of which can take place under one roof.

The Gorham Center succeeds because of its leaders and volunteers, whose tireless effort is invaluable, but also because of a commitment to the center throughout Greenville and Pitt County. While it is easy to point out this community's failings and the things it continues to get wrong, the Gorham Center is a shining example of an initiative that gets it right.
Adapted recreation event Saturday

East Carolina University will host the 14th Annual Adapted Recreation and Wellness Day on Saturday from 1-4 p.m. at the Student Recreation Center. The event, previously known as Adapted Sports Day, has expanded to include a broader range of topics and activities.

“This year's event will introduce individuals to a variety of sports, recreation, and wellness activities which have been specifically modified to allow people with and without disabilities to participate,” said David Gaskins, associate director of ECU's Campus Recreation & Wellness.

Attendees will learn about and participate in events such as Power Hockey (played in motorized wheelchairs), Quad Rugby, Armchair Fitness, and Creative Movement as well as be involved in a special nutrition segment.

The event also will feature special guest and ECU alumna Rachelle Friedman, who is a member of the Raleigh Sidewinders Quad Rugby team.

The event is open to participants of all ages and abilities as well as the public. A $5 registration fee covers breakfast, lunch, the keynote presentation, all instructional sessions, entry into facilities and parking. Registration for the event begins at 12:15 p.m. at the Student Recreation Center. Individuals with hearing impairments should contact the Department for Disability Support Services at 737-1016 or dssdept@ecu.edu, at least 48 hours prior to the event.

This event is sponsored by ECU Campus Recreation & Wellness, Support Team for Active Recreation, ECU's College of Health and Human Performance, Greenville Recreation and Parks and Pitt County Community Schools and Recreation.

For more information, contact Mark Parker or David Gaskins at 328-6387.
Students discover learning experience in old city hall

ECU students (from left) Maggie Wade, Caitlin DeBussey and Anna Passkiewicz use a PowerPoint presentation to provide details of their proposal for Washington’s old City Hall. (WDN Photo/Mike Voss)

By MIKE VOSS, Contributing Editor
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Washington’s old City Hall could be converted into a welcome/tourism center and a distance-learning/computer center under proposals prepared by East Carolina University students.

Those proposals were presented Tuesday at Washington’s Civic Center. The students’ project was to develop usable plans to give Washington’s old City Hall a virtual makeover.

Hunt McKinnon, an assistant professor in ECU’s Department of Interior Design and Merchandising, met earlier this year 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 three presentations made Tuesday each called for using the ground floor of old City Hall as a welcome/tourism center that could house the offices of a nonprofit organization like the Washington Harbor District Alliance. The presentations had the second floor
being used as a distance-learning/computer center, where people could take online courses and take online tests for those courses in a secure environment. Monitors would make sure the student taking the online course is the same person who is taking the online test for that course.

The upper floor would also provide areas where people could use available wireless services to study and participate in educational institutions’ off-site learning programs.

On Monday, other ECU students presented their plans for old City Hall, which called for the first floor to house a green grocer and the upper floor serving as a residential area.

Dee Congleton, a member of the Washington Area Historic Foundation, attended Tuesday’s session. She was impressed with what she saw and heard.

“I’m very encouraged by the presentations today, and I particularly love the groups that were for reusing the floors, the stained-glass windows, the benches,” she said. “This is certainly a very positive effort by these young people on their presentations.”

The students said the project, especially interacting with community members, is providing them a real-world look at the challenges of finding adaptive reuses for old, historic structures.

“It’s definitely been an experience working with a historical building. This is the first time we’ve ever done anything with any kind of historical preservation and trying to keep the original facade and original finishings that are in the building,” said ECU student Anna Turner. “Also, presenting in front of this many people, this is the first time we’ve actually done a presentation where people have come in from the community. It’s good to hear people’s feedback and to hear what would happen if this building actually were renovated and used for this purpose. It’s really interesting to hear people express their concerns and express what their thoughts are on how the building would be reused.”

After evaluation of the feedback, the students will modify their plans to reflect that feedback, McKinnon said. Once their plans are modified, the students’ work will be turned over to the city, which owns old City Hall.

The city plans to use that work to help market the building, which it plans to sell.

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Colleges brace for new legislature

By Eric Ferreri – Staff Writer

Public universities in the Triangle are considering tuition and fee increases this week that will likely add hundreds of dollars to what students will pay in the 2011-12 school year.

Decisions made at UNC-Chapel Hill, N.C. State and N.C. Central universities this week are early steps in a long process that will conclude when a state budget is approved next year.

That adds a layer of uncertainty, because campus and system leaders say they're not sure what to expect from the legislature after Republican majorities were elected in the state House and Senate.

"The climate in the legislature has changed," said Glenn Adams, chairman of the NCCU board of trustees. "We're going to have to do more with less and be much more efficient."

The chief concern is the fate of revenue derived from tuition increases.

Campus leaders make an annual plea to retain that money for financial aid, faculty salaries and other uses. But some legislators prefer that tuition revenue go to the state's General Fund.

State Sen. Phil Berger, an Eden Republican poised to lead the state Senate in January, said campuses should decide on increases and reap the benefits.

"If we're talking about increasing tuition, that should stay on campuses rather than going into the General Fund," Berger said Tuesday. "I don't think you should be using tuition as a tax substitute."

At NCCU in Durham, campus leaders are considering a plan to raise tuition and fees about $240. The total cost would rise about $400, however, because NCCU is also considering increases to its housing rates, which vary depending on residence hall.
UNC-Chapel Hill officials expect to raise tuition $313 for in-state undergraduates. That's a 6.5 percent increase, the maximum allowed by the UNC system. Fees would rise an additional $46.22.

And at NCSU, leaders are considering a $300 tuition increase for in-state students, along with $102.30 in new student fees.

NCCU officials began considering the issue Tuesday. UNC-CH and NCSU trustees will discuss it this week.

All are balancing the desire to keep costs low with the importance of finding revenue. Across North Carolina, public university leaders see tuition increases as an increasingly important source of funds as budget cuts of 5 percent or 10 percent appear possible. At UNC-CH, the 6.5 percent tuition increase being considered this week would produce more than $15 million.

At NCCU, Chancellor Charlie Nelms said students understand the need for higher tuition.

"The students said to me, 'Chancellor, we don't want low-tuition, poor-quality anything!' " Nelms told his trustee board Tuesday. "My view is quality has some price."

Although the rate increases would hit students in the pocketbook, student leaders generally have endorsed the proposed increases - reluctantly.

Marcus Quickley, a senior at NCCU, said he has seen what budget cuts have done on his campus in many small ways, such as the disappearance of paper tests and assignments. Now, they are all online.

Paying more is worth it if the quality of the product is maintained, Quickley said. "It seems like a big number, but $400 [tuition increase] in comparison to how your education will benefit you?" he said. "It won't be that big a deal."

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NCAA focusing on UNC sanctions

By J. Andrew Curliss and Ken Tysiac – Staff Writers

The ongoing probes involving the University of North Carolina's football program are shifting from a focus on the players to sanctions on the program itself.

As UNC announced Monday that two more players - defensive end Michael McAdoo and fullback Devon Ramsay - have been permanently banned from play by the NCAA, it accounted for penalties against all 14 players who have missed games this season. UNC is appealing those two cases.

Still, the announcement signaled that the penalty phase for the players is at a conclusion after nearly four months of school- and NCAA-led investigations into agent-related benefits as well as academic misconduct.

UNC athletic director Dick Baddour said the end is in sight.

The NCAA's next move, though, will be to sift through the violations and determine penalties. And UNC could self-impose sanctions in anticipation of NCAA action.

Michael Buckner, a Florida lawyer who advises schools in NCAA probes but is not involved in the UNC situation, said North Carolina can expect stiff sanctions.

"This case is unique, both because of the number of athletes involved and certainly because of the number who have been declared ineligible," he said. Neither he nor an NCAA spokeswoman, when contacted Tuesday, could cite examples of schools that had five or more players permanently banned from play.

There is plenty to consider, according to documents and interviews:
• Players accepted impermissible benefits totaling more than $21,000. Four players - McAdoo, Ramsay, Greg Little and Robert Quinn - were declared
permanently ineligible by the NCAA. A fifth, Marvin Austin, accepted so many impermissible benefits that UNC didn't even petition the NCAA to get him reinstated.

- Players committed academic misconduct with the help of Jennifer Wiley, a tutor who also worked for coach Butch Davis, according to a letter dated Nov. 5 in which UNC cut ties with Wiley.

- John Blake, the former associate head coach, accepted what his lawyers have called "gifts" and "loans" from sports agent Gary Wichard - who also signed first-round draft pick Kentwan Balmer. Blake was Balmer's position coach at UNC. Blake resigned after UNC learned that he took money from Wichard.

Here's what can be expected as the NCAA moves forward in an attempt to determine possible program sanctions against UNC.

**Q:** How does this work?
At some point, the NCAA's enforcement staff will issue its findings. UNC and any others affected would have the chance to appeal.

A special NCAA committee on infractions then determines the penalties.

The chairman of that committee is Paul Dee, the former athletic director at Miami. Dee was the AD when head football coach Butch Davis left Miami in 2001 for the NFL's Cleveland Browns. Davis is in his fourth season at UNC.

**Q:** What factors will be considered?

Buckner said the NCAA will weigh heavily the number of players implicated and the length of time over which any violations took place. He said that if the NCAA views Blake as a type of agent because of money changing hands, it could significantly influence what happens. "That potentially would widen the severity," Buckner said.

One aspect that's expected to be in UNC's favor will be if NCAA investigators say the program was cooperative in the probes.
Still, chancellor Holden Thorp's recent statement that there's no evidence Davis knew of the violations won't necessarily help the program.

In a recently decided case at Michigan, Dee compared UM coach Rich Rodriguez to the captain of a ship.

"Some of the things that did occur did not get all the way to the coach," Dee said. "But ultimately, the coach bears a responsibility for the program."

Q: What are the possible penalties?
If the NCAA sanctions a program, it usually takes one or more of three actions:
• Reduce scholarships. This limits the number of recruits a program can bring in.
• Bans postseason participation. Losing bowl money hits a program in the pocketbook, and loss of exposure can hurt a program in recruiting.
• "Vacate" records. Wiping out wins in which ineligible players competed is a stain that lasts forever.

Some possible violations, including trips to California by Austin and former Tar Heels player Cam Thomas, took place before the 2009 season. So there's a danger North Carolina will have to vacate games from 2009 if players are deemed to have been ineligible.

The NCAA will not penalize UNC for the two wins in which Ramsay participated in 2010, according to UNC.

Q: How long will it take?
Thorp said in October that the investigation may take a year to complete.

There's a chance, too, that the NCAA's investigation of possible improprieties regarding Auburn and quarterback Cam Newton will take immediate precedence and slow the NCAA's progress on UNC.

Auburn is in the national title hunt, and Newton is the leading contender for the Heisman Trophy, so that situation requires immediate attention.

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