THE DAILY CLIPS

November 18, 2009

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

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Doctors square off on health care reform

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

The national health care debate rages everywhere from the halls of Congress to town halls and water coolers all over the country. On Tuesday night, two of Greenville's most prominent doctors offered their insights on health care reform.

Dr. Charles Willson, ECU clinical professor of pediatrics and chair of the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission, and Dr. Stephen Powell, ECU professor of cardiovascular sciences, took different sides in the debate, but both agree that reform is needed.

The two doctors squared off at a health care reform debate organized by the students of East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine and attended by more than 100 people.

Brody School of Medicine dean, Dr. Paul Cunningham, served as the moderator for the debate, which included discussion of everything from the cost of medical services to tort reform and insurance companies.

"We are finally seeing the people who know the most about health care coming out and speaking," Willson said. "Let's not let others who do not know as much or care as much as we do set the day."

Willson, who largely supports the U.S. House bill recently approved by a narrow margin, said that two doctors who disagree can describe the strengths and weaknesses of the health care system from different points of view and both be correct.

"Our health care system is broken," he said. "We do not have a health care system, we have a sick care system. It has been estimated that our children will not live as long as we have or as healthfully."

Powell agreed that health care reform is needed, but he strongly disagrees with many aspects of the House bill.

"Health care reform is needed, but the House bill is hastily crafted and special-interest laden," he said.

"It does nothing to control the cost of health care in the future, and the unintended consequences of the bill cannot be measured for a long time."

Powell said the politics of health care reform is dangerous and leads to things in the bill that shouldn't be there and excludes things that should.

"Do we really trust that 218 politicians in the House and 60 in the Senate can decide what is best for you and your patients?" he asked the audience composed mostly of medical students and doctors.

The two doctors agreed on a lot of points while disagreeing on the best ways to address the issues.

Willson and Powell agreed that the reforms should address tort and malpractice lawsuits. The threat of litigation causes doctors to perform unnecessary tests and procedures, they said. Doctors should not be punished for treating patients in the best way they see fit, they said.

"This is a completely broken system and plaintiff attorneys pay experts to say whatever it takes to win," Powell said. "No doctor needs to be drug through that kind of scenario for doing the best that he can."
Both doctors want to see a focus on primary health care, and the House bill includes funding for medical students to pay off student loans who go into primary care. A stronger focus on "medical home" care would decrease the costs of health care, they said.

Primary care physicians can provide tracking, physicals, follow-ups and preventive care better than specialists, Willson said.

"Doctors have to come together and reinforce the idea of patients having a medical home," Powell said.

They disagreed on whether health care is a right or a commodity when prompted by a written question from the audience on the issue. Powell said it is not a right.

"If health care is a right — is food a right?" he asked.

"You cannot have something for nothing. Somebody has to pay for health care."

Willson said that people who are sick enough will be treated in emergency rooms with care that is much more expensive than if they had insurance and went to a primary care doctor first. He said people without insurance avoid care until their illness is severe.

"I know it's good public policy if all Americans are afforded the possibility to be as healthy as they can be," Willson said. "Let's go ahead and provide reform now."

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Route, plan chosen for 10th Street Connector

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

A steering committee selected the long-awaited site plan for the proposed Stantonsburg Road-10th Street Connector at a Tuesday morning meeting.

The project intends to connect East Carolina University to Pitt County Memorial Hospital along one four-lane road with a planter median, sidewalks and bike lanes. The committee selected a symmetrical widening along Farmville Boulevard between Line Drive and 14th Street named “J Modified,” said City Engineer David Brown. The other two options widened either to the north or the south.

Portions of 14th and 10th streets, and the area north of Dickinson Avenue surrounding Pennsylvania Avenue will also be affected by the project, but were equally affected by all three proposals.

The steering committee is composed of Brown, Community Development Director Merrill Flood and one representative each from ECU, PCMH and the N.C. Department of Transportation.

Months of studies and public hearings went into the decision. Brown said the location of Sycamore Chapel Baptist Church, formerly Philippi Church of Christ, weighed against any decision to widen to the north. Another factor was a petition by residents living along Farmville Boulevard, who wrote in favor of widening equally on both sides.

“J Modified” affects more residences than either of the other two plans, but fewer businesses and educational or non-profit institutions. Brown estimates that 30 residential properties will have to be purchased by N.C. DOT to ensure the right-of-way space needed for construction, as well as 24 businesses and seven institutions.

N.C. DOT will provide compensation and relocation money for homeowners and renters displaced by the project. The Greenville City Council also allotted funds to compensate homeowners and recently directed city staff to explore a similar program for affected business owners.

Brown said the meeting was open to the public but no one attended.

The city still must conduct a number of environmental and other assessments based on the plan selection. Brown expects that work won’t be completed until June 2010. The N.C. DOT will hold a public hearing following the studies.

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Protection

At the rate H1NI flu vaccine is showing up at clinics in North Carolina, a swine flu shot could be high on people's Christmas lists. It wasn't supposed to be this way, but a national shortage of the anti-influenza vaccine has made the flu's return this fall an exercise in patience.

That's true for people who want to increase their chances of avoiding influenza (almost everyone) and for the medical and public health officials who have had to tell telephone callers and e-mailers, over and over, that there aren't yet sufficient supplies of vaccine on hand.

Under the circumstances, officials were right to focus on getting the highest priority groups - pregnant women most of all - vaccinated first.

And surely, after overly optimistic predictions by national health officials late this summer that sufficient H1N1 vaccine would be available by mid-October, officials here don't want to mislead people now by forecasting unrealistic delivery dates.

Still, elements of the vaccine distribution process appear to be mysterious and inefficient, and despite all the flu-related facts available on the Web and elsewhere, there's a lack of information about how much vaccine is actually available. Instead, on what seems to be a near-random basis, pharmacies or public health departments announce limited vaccine availability, and people flock to get their flu shots before the doors close.

This is where government agencies need to do better. Someone - and it might as well be the state health director, Dr. Jeffrey Engel - needs to spell out the vaccine distribution criteria (Engel recently suggested that more of the available vaccine is being channeled to private primary care providers, the better to focus on the high-risk groups). It would be helpful to have an accounting of the doses that have been allocated to North Carolina - more than 1 million as of last week, according to federal authorities.

It wouldn't hurt, either, to update the public on what percentage of pregnant women and at-risk children have been vaccinated, and to spell out the order, if any, in which various age groups should get in line behind them.

Nationally and in North Carolina the anti-swine flu campaign has done many things right. The federal government acted swiftly earlier this year in authorizing, and funding, intensive vaccine production by the private companies that make it. However, those companies ran into difficulties. It turned out that although the H1N1 vaccine is a good, effective medicine, it's harder to produce in quantity than had been anticipated. That accounts for the slow, although accelerating, pace of delivery.

Also, public information efforts, especially on Web sites such as flu.gov and flu.nc.gov, are very well done - as far as they go. Too often, however, they've simply provided a convenient way to find out that the local health department has no H1N1 vaccine and doesn't know when to expect some.

Medical authorities say that for most people who get it, the H1N1 flu is no worse than regular, seasonal
flu (people seeking protection from both varieties need separate vaccines). And there are some signs that
the current wave of swine flu has peaked in the state. Yet because of its effects on vulnerable people, the
illness merits the utmost care - and more information on how the vaccination effort is going.
Sara Magdeline Storey Batten

Sara Magdeline Storey Batten passed away peacefully on Monday, Nov. 16, 2009, at her home in Greenville. She was predeceased by her husband, Dr. James W. Batten of Greenville and Micro. Mrs. Batten was born on Nov. 6, 1915, on the family farm outside of Murfreesboro. She was the daughter of Gladstone and Eldorado (Doe) Storey. She is survived by a brother J. Lewis Storey of Murfreesboro; and a sister Hazel Fisher of New Port News, Va. Preceding her in death were sisters, Minam and Gladys. She graduated from Chowan College and began her teaching career at Glendale School. When Dr. Batten was hired to also teach there, the principal announced to those having dinner at the teacherage, “I have hired Miss Storey a husband today.” They were later married and remained very much a devoted couple for over 59 years. She also taught at Micro School for many years until she stopped to care for the medical needs of her father-in-law, Mr. Albert Batten. She and Dr. Batten both attended UNC Chapel Hill in 1958 where she received her Masters in Library Science in 1959. She and Dr. Batten then moved to Greenville where she was able to fulfill her love of books by working in the library at ECU. She retired from that position after serving for over 25 years. She and her husband were members of and attended Micro Free Will Baptist Church for many years until her declining health prevented her from making the journey from Greenville on a regular basis. Mrs. Batten was loved by all that knew her and always admired for her intellect and quiet, gentle nature. She was the epitome of a southern charming lady that never spoke ill of anyone. She was dedicated to her husband in everyway and was very instrumental in providing research for the 17 different books he authored. Thanks to Silvercare and Hospice of Greenville for meeting her medical and daily needs in the last 3 5 years of her life. Her two primary care givers were Willie Mae Blount and Cynthia Barfield. They were devoted to her and added many days and nights of pleasure to her life. A special thanks to her neighbors and friends, Dr. Bill and Margaret Pritchard for their many visits and acts of kindness they gave over the last 41 years. Dr. Bud and Carrie Joyner provided daily meals and visits at the time of illnesses of both Dr. and Mrs. Batten. Mrs. Batten will be greatly missed by Donnie E. Lassiter, whom she considered her “son” and he his “mother,” along with his wife Linda, son, Trent, daughter, Sara and her husband Mike. Miss Sara and Dr. Batten were very proud of their two “grand children” and always enjoyed their visits. Funeral service will be held today at 2 p.m. in the chapel of Parrish Funeral Home in Selma. Burial will be at a later date. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to Micro Free Will Baptist Church, P. O. Box 247, Micro, NC 27555, or for the Sara S. Batten Special Collection Endowment, make checks to ECU Foundation and mail to ECU Foundation, Greenville Center, 2200 South Charles Street, Suite 1100, Greenville NC 27858, Attention Marci Romary.

Published in The Daily Reflector on November 18, 2009
Grisham set for UNC grads

CHAPEL HILL -- John Grisham, author of 23 books, including several best-selling legal thrillers, will give UNC-Chapel Hill's spring commencement address.

Chancellor Holden Thorp will preside over the ceremony at 9:30 a.m. May 9 in Kenan Stadium.

"John is an engaging speaker who will have a profound message for our graduates and their families," Thorp said in a news release. "His prowess with the written and spoken word makes him an excellent choice for a commencement speaker. He has an inspirational story to share."

Thorp chose Grisham in consultation with the University's Commencement Speaker Selection Committee, which is made up of an equal number of students and faculty.

The author spoke at two North Carolina Literary Festivals held on campus, in 1998 and the most recent festival in September. His daughter, Shea, graduated from UNC-CH last year and teaches in Raleigh.

Grisham's last book, "Ford County," was published Nov. 3 and is his first collection of short stories. "The Innocent Man," published in 2006, was his first work of nonfiction. Nine of his books have been made into movies.
November 18, 2009

Labor Fight Ends in Win for Students

By STEVEN GREENHOUSE

The anti-sweatshop movement at dozens of American universities, from Georgetown to U.C.L.A., has had plenty of idealism and energy, but not many victories.

Until now.

The often raucous student movement announced on Tuesday that it had achieved its biggest victory by far. Its pressure tactics persuaded one of the nation’s leading sportswear companies, Russell Athletic, to agree to rehire 1,200 workers in Honduras who lost their jobs when Russell closed their factory soon after the workers had unionized.

From the time Russell shut the factory last January, the anti-sweatshop coalition orchestrated a nationwide campaign against the company. Most important, the coalition, United Students Against Sweatshops, persuaded the administrations of Boston College, Columbia, Harvard, New York University, Stanford, Michigan, North Carolina and 89 other colleges and universities to sever or suspend their licensing agreements with Russell. The agreements — some yielding more than $1 million in sales — allowed Russell to put university logos on T-shirts, sweatshirts and fleeces.

Going beyond their campuses, student activists picketed the N.B.A. finals in Orlando and Los Angeles this year to protest the league’s licensing agreement with Russell. They distributed flyers inside Sports Authority sporting goods stores and sent Twitter messages to customers of Dick’s Sporting Goods to urge them to boycott Russell products.

The students even sent activists to knock on Warren Buffett’s door in Omaha because his company, Berkshire Hathaway, owns Fruit of the Loom, Russell’s parent company.

“It’s a very important breakthrough,” said Mel Tenen, who oversees licensing agreements for the University of Miami, the first school to sever ties with Russell. “It’s not often that a major licensee will take such a necessary and drastic step to correct the injustices that affected its workers. This paves the way for us to seriously consider reopening our agreement with Russell.”

Other colleges are expected to do the same. Analysts say the college market occupies a significant part of Russell’s business. Because Fruit of the Loom does not detail Russell’s sales, it is not known how large a part.

In its agreement, not only did Russell agree to reinstate the dismissed workers and open a new plant in Honduras as a unionized factory, it also pledged not to fight unionization at its seven existing factories there.
Mike Powers, a Cornell official who is on the board of the Worker Rights Consortium, said Cornell had canceled its licensing agreement because it viewed Russell’s closing of the Honduras factory as a flagrant violation of the university’s code of conduct, which calls for honoring workers’ freedom of association. He applauded Russell’s agreement, which was reached with the consortium and union leaders in Honduras over the weekend.

“This is a landmark event in the history of workers’ rights and the codes of conduct that we expect our licensees to follow,” Mr. Powers said. “My hat is off to Russell.”

John Shivel, a spokesman for Russell and Fruit of the Loom, said, “We are very pleased with the agreement between Russell Athletic and the Workers Rights Consortium, and look forward to its implementation.”

He declined to discuss why Russell had adopted a friendlier attitude toward unionization after years of aggressively fighting unions.

In a statement Russell released jointly with the apparel workers’ union in Honduras, the company said the agreement was “intended to foster workers’ rights in Honduras and establish a harmonious” relationship.

“This agreement represents a significant achievement in the history of the apparel sector in Honduras and Central America,” the joint statement said.

In the past, the Honduran workers condemned Russell’s behavior, saying that it had fired 145 workers in 2007 for supporting a union. The union’s vice president, Norma Mejia, said at a Berkshire Hathaway shareholders’ meeting last May that she had received death threats for helping lead the union. Russell denied the assertion.

Union leaders in Honduras hailed the agreement, which would put hundreds of laid-off employees back to work in a country whose economy has been hit by a political crisis over who will lead it.

“For us, it was very important to receive the support of the universities,” Moises Alvarado, president of the union at the closed plant in Choloma, said by telephone on Tuesday. “We are impressed by the social conscience of the students in the United States.”

This was in no way an overnight victory — it came after 10 years of building a movement that persuaded scores of universities to adopt detailed codes of conduct for the factories used by licensees like Russell. In addition, the students, sometimes through lengthy sit-ins, pressured their officials to create and finance an independent monitoring group, the Worker Rights Consortium, that inspected factories to make sure they complied with the universities’ codes.

When the consortium issued a detailed report accusing Russell of violating workers’ rights, United Students Against Sweatshops began its nationwide campaign.

Scott Nova, executive director of the Worker Rights Consortium, which has more than 170 universities as members, said: “This represents the maturation of the universities’ codes of conduct. There’s a recognition by the universities of their ability to influence the actions of important brands and change outcomes for the better.”
He said the agreement was “unprecedented” in terms of scope and size and in “the transformative impact it can have in one of the hardest regions of the world to win respect for workers’ rights.”

Mr. Nova also praised Russell for changing course. “I think the executives at Russell recognized it was time for a new approach,” he said. “They decided it was important for the success of their company.”

As part of its campaign, United Students Against Sweatshops contacted students at more than 100 campuses where it did not have chapters, getting them involved, including at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, where Fruit of the Loom has its headquarters. The group helped arrange a letter signed by 65 members of Congress, who voiced “grave concern about reports of severe violations” of labor rights at Russell.

This time around, the students did not feel the need to resort to sit-ins to persuade university administrators.

“The schools remember our sit-ins of the past,” said Dida El-Sourady, a senior at the University of North Carolina. “There’s an institutional memory that students will escalate their tactics, and this could become a very big deal, a lot bigger than people holding signs.”

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Medical Schools Quizzed on Ghostwriting

By DUFF WILSON

Senator Charles E. Grassley wrote to 10 top medical schools Tuesday to ask what they are doing about professors who put their names on ghostwritten articles in medical journals — and why that practice was any different from plagiarism by students.

Mr. Grassley, of Iowa, the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, sent the letters as part of his continuing investigation of so-called medical ghostwriting. The term refers to publication of medical journal articles in which an outside writer — sometimes paid by a drug or medical devices company whose product is being studied — has done extensive work on the article without being named on the publication. Instead, one or more academic researchers may receive author credit.

Mr. Grassley said ghostwriting had hurt patients and raised costs for taxpayers because it used prestigious academic names to promote medical products and treatments that might be expensive or less effective than viable alternatives.

"Any attempt to manipulate the scientific literature, which can in turn mislead doctors to prescribe treatments that may be ineffective and/or cause harm to their patients, is very troubling," the senator wrote.

Some journals, medical associations, writers’ and editors’ groups and pharmaceutical companies themselves have called for crackdowns on ghostwriting. But some universities that employ the professors who put their names on the articles have been slow to respond. Merck, Wyeth (now part of Pfizer), GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca are among the companies accused by lawyers and investigators of providing ghostwriters for research papers.

Mr. Grassley asked the universities to describe their policies on both ghostwriting and plagiarism and to enumerate complaints and describe investigations into both practices since 2004.

Dr. Ross McKinney Jr., director of the Trent Center for Bioethics at Duke University, said faculty who took credit for a ghostwritten paper should suffer the same penalties as students who plagiarized.

"But it is a very, very difficult thing to prove, just as it turns out that plagiarism is hard to prove," he said in an interview.

Mr. Grassley's letters went to the top medical schools for research as ranked by U.S. News and World Report this year, in order: Harvard, Johns Hopkins, the University of Pennsylvania, Washington University in St. Louis, University of California, San Francisco, Duke, Stanford, the University of Washington, Yale and Columbia.
Most of them already have policies against ghostwriting or honorary authorship of research papers, a review of their Web sites shows.

Harvard Medical calls the practices “deplorable.” Duke says, “Severe and/or repeated offenses will result in formal disciplinary action.”

Arthur L. Caplan, director of the Penn’s Center for Bioethics, said there was a difference in degree, if not in kind, between ghostwriting and plagiarism. Faculty members who sign their names to ghostwritten papers for research credit usually have some agreement with the paper, he said, even if, improperly, they did not write it. Students who plagiarize a paper may know nothing about the subject.

“Ghostwriting and plagiarism, they’re on a continuum,” Mr. Caplan said. “They’re related. I wouldn’t say they’re twins, but they’re cousins.”

Mr. Grassley’s letter highlighted the disparate treatment of students and professors who claimed authorship of a paper that was not their own.

“Students are disciplined for not acknowledging that a paper they turned in was written by somebody else,” Mr. Grassley wrote. “But what happens when researchers at the same university publish medical studies without acknowledging that they were written by somebody else?”

The medical schools were asked to answer the questions by Dec. 8.
College Ivy Sprouts at a Connecticut Prison

By ALISON LEIGH COWAN

Christopher Capozziello for The New York Times Three of the 19 inmates in Beth Richards’s expository writing class. All competed mightily for the spots and are earning Wesleyan University credits.

CHESIRE, Conn. — In many ways it was just another day, another class of Wesleyan University, one of the more selective colleges in the Northeast. The topic was multiculturalism in schools. The discussion focused on methods of evaluating the rhetorical skills of various commentators, from Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. to Dinesh D’Souza.

One student pored over the text, his glasses perched at the tip of his nose. Another raised his hand again and again, eager to speak. A third lobbed grenades into the discussion. Several worried aloud about their homework, a research paper due in a few weeks.

Unlike other Wesleyan classes, though, each of the students — all men — had numbers like 271013 or 298331 on their khaki shirts. They were, in fact, inmates at the state prison here and all part of a daring, privately financed experiment in higher education that takes murderers and drug dealers and other inmates with histories of serious crime and gives them an opportunity to get an elite college education inside their high-security prison, the Cheshire Correctional Institution.

Wesleyan’s Newest Admits

After years of slim pickings for prisoners who craved higher education, two Wesleyan University students convinced their school to bring an elite college education to inmates at a high-security prison.

- Read inmates’ application essays and course work

Though community colleges and others, like Boston University, have long had inmate programs, the two-month-old Wesleyan program is one of a few in the country where the selection process is highly rigorous, where academic potential is the primary criterion and where past criminal conduct, however heinous, is not considered in admission.

Some 120 inmates applied at Cheshire for 19 spots in the program. The process required them to submit essays, some of which can be read here, on weighty matters like Frantz Fanon’s view that language helped “support the weight of a civilization” or Sigmund Freud’s thoughts on happiness.

The instructors were impressed with Jose Cordero’s answer to one admission question: What figure, past or present, would he like to meet? Mr. Cordero, who is serving 65 years for murder, said he would like to meet the Constitution, since it is a “living” document.

He got a fat envelope, filled with blank paper for his future assignments. The rejected got those dreaded skinny ones.
Next semester, the inmates will study chemistry, biology and politics. This fall, their courses consist of expository writing and Sociology 152, the same introductory course Professor Charles C. Lemert has been teaching to generations of Wesleyan students at its nearby Middletown campus where tuition, room and board cost roughly $51,000.

“My father does college planning,” said Michael Luther, a 23-year-old who has been incarcerated since he was 15, “and a lot of students he recommends for Wesleyan don’t even get in. When he heard I had this opportunity, he was proud.”

On Wednesdays, students from the Wesleyan campus come to the prison for joint discussion groups with the inmates. The prison is a high-security center that houses roughly 1,350 inmates. It is the place where all of Connecticut’s license plates are made, and it offers a variety of other classes beyond the Wesleyan program, though not college level. The motto posted in the school wing reads “Non Sum Qualis Eram,” or “I am not what I once was.”

Indeed, all the inmates in the program have records that speak clearly about their past wrongdoing. The class has six convicted murderers, two convicted drug dealers and a kidnapper. Collectively, the class faces more than 600 years in prison. Several students, in fact, have little prospect of ever using their college credits in a career: prison will be their home for this lifetime.

But many of them speak with pure clarity about the reasons they were drawn to school again: idle curiosity, intellectual interest, a longing to be part of the big conversations of the day, and a desire for self-respect.

“It’s rejuvenating,” said Antonio Rivera, 23, who likes to read history and is less than halfway through a 12-year sentence for drug dealing.

Clyde Meikle, 38, of Hartford is serving a 50-year sentence for fatally shooting a man with whom he tussled over a parking spot. Ten years ago, he earned his high school diploma in prison. He likes to set a positive example for what he calls “the younger cats.”

“For me, it was a self-esteem thing,” he said.

Across the country, colleges faced with shrinking endowments are trying to cut corners, not add programs, and many colleges have given up their inmate education programs in the years since the Clinton administration decided it would no longer subsidize them with Pell grants.

Four years ago, in fact, Wesleyan balked at a proposal to install such a program.

But the university has a long history of civic engagement that traces back to its Methodist roots. It is named after John Wesley, an 18th-century minister who championed prison reform and helping the downtrodden. Two students, Russell Perkins and Molly Birnbaum, who had volunteered in prisons as students, revived the idea last year when they were
seniors and figured out a way to finance it.

They obtained nearly $300,000 from the Bard Prison Initiative, a program that already pays to offer Bard College courses in a handful of New York prisons. That should fully pay for Wesleyan’s program for two years and provide partial financing for two more.

“Wesleyan has taken a courageous stand here,” said Max Kenner, the executive director of Bard’s program, who said he is convinced that education is a key tool for reducing recidivism.

How to finance the program over the long term is still under discussion, as is the question of whether an inmate who completes the course work will necessarily receive a Wesleyan degree.

But the instructors insist that the standards are identical — that an A in prison is the same as an A on campus and that the inmates will be entitled to use the university’s career services upon release.

Crime victims and their advocates question whether the investment will be worthwhile. “I appreciate the need to educate offenders, but I’m saddened we don’t spend that kind of money or take that kind of time to rebuild the lives of crime victims,” said Michelle S. Cruz, Connecticut’s independent victim advocate.

Sam Rieger, a Waterbury man whose 19-year-old daughter was murdered by a man now incarcerated at the Cheshire prison, agreed. “This does not make sense to me,” he said of the Wesleyan program. “What is the point?” He said the money should be spent on victims or on trying to help young people make better choices.

On a recent Monday at the prison, Beth Richards, the inmates’ English professor, looked around the class and sought to assure them that they have the same ability to succeed as their main campus counterparts. “Remember,” she said, “for most of literary history, people did it with pencil and paper. I agree you have limitations, but you have no limit on your brain.”

The discussion turned to whether multiculturalism had a place in schools.

Damien Thomas, 33, who is serving a 120-year sentence for two murders, said he took issue with the concept of the melting pot. “The salad bowl theory is better,” he said. “Everyone keeps their different shapes and forms but still contributes something to the salad.”

University administrators say they will raise additional money to finance the program privately so as not to siphon money from Wesleyan’s core mission. That was among the concerns raised by the faculty when it gathered to vote on the proposal last spring.

The vote was first scheduled to be taken on May 6, but it was postponed when a Wesleyan junior, Johanna Justin-Jinich, was murdered that day at the bookstore, turning a tranquil campus into a raucous crime scene. The faculty endorsed the plan two weeks later by a
show of hands, with some dissent.

"If anything is unanimous at a Wesleyan faculty meeting, we'd be worried," said Michael S. Roth, Wesleyan's president. He said he shared some of the faculty's initial concerns, but "the students convinced me."

The university has not fully wrestled with what it would do if inmates were released before completing their studies. Bard faced this issue in May, when a female inmate became eligible for release weeks before her graduation. She extended her stay to receive her diploma.

"Oh, my," Dr. Roth said upon hearing about the inmate. "I don't know if that would be the solution I'd want to hear." He said Wesleyan would be "as helpful as possible to someone who had that kind of dedication."

During her class in the prison, Professor Richards walked a fine line between energizing her students with the demands of real scholarship and scaring them back into their cells. "My job," she said, "is to make you at least partially paranoid."

"Mission accomplished," said Michael Fauci, 28, a convicted robber.

Vasco Thring, 34, wanted to know whether unwittingly using a phrase like "education begins at home," which may have been said by someone else before, in a paper constituted plagiarism.

"You are all worriers," the professor said. "That's fine. If I have a choice between a group that doesn't give a rip or worriers, I'll take the worriers. But trust your intelligence."

"You're allowed," she said, "to make mistakes here."