THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU trustees to consider tuition, fee hikes

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, November 19, 2009

The East Carolina University Board of Trustees will consider tuition and fee increases this week.

The executive committee to the board will discuss three proposals for tuition increases during today's committee meeting at the East Carolina Heart Institute.

Under the most modest proposal, that combines new fees and tuition, it will cost $235 more to attend ECU for an undergraduate resident of North Carolina in 2010.

The first proposal, set with guidelines by the North Carolina General Assembly, would increase tuition by 8 percent for the 2010 academic year from $2,491 to $2,690 for undergraduate residents of the state.

The idea behind the large increase would be to substitute tuition for state appropriations and it would raise $5 million for ECU, according to the committee’s agenda.

However, University of North Carolina President Erskine Bowles is expected to ask the General Assembly to set different tuition increases for the universities.

The second proposal being considered would increase tuition by 3.6 percent for next year to $2,581 for in-state undergraduate students. The proposal also would increase tuition for all undergraduate and graduate students by 3.6 percent across the board. It would generate a $3.5 million increase in revenues.

The third proposal officials will consider would include a substantially lower increase across the board for all students.

It would use an average of the increases to students over the last three years and increase tuition by 2.2 percent or about $55 for undergraduate residents. It would generate about $2.8 million.

Officials are also considering raising fees for athletics, education technology, transit, housing, dining meal plans and orientation.

The athletics fee would increase by $30 to $526 per year to improve facility and operations needs, according to the agenda.

An increase in the education technology fee would tack on another $40 to the cost of attendance and the transit increase would add another $10.

Housing would increase by $100, dining meal plans by $70-$100 and orientation by $30.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@reflector.com or (252) 329-9565.

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Local doctors oppose new mammogram guidelines

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, November 19, 2009

A number of local doctors are firmly against a panel revising guidelines for breast cancer prevention practices.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force announced Monday that women don't need routine mammograms until they are 50 years old, and then recommends the procedure every other year until age 75. Prior conventional wisdom suggests screening for women at age 40 and continuing annually, barring poor health, into old age.

The study also discourages the teaching of self-exams to women of all ages.

Dr. Rachel Raab, an oncologist and breast cancer specialist at East Carolina University, said routine mammograms and self-testing are essential to catching breast cancer in time for successful treatment.

"There has been a decline in the death rate from breast cancer starting in the 90s," Raab said. "If breast cancer is caught earlier, it can certainly be cured."

She said many of her colleagues — from breast surgeons to mammogram readers — at the Brody School of Medicine's Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center also are concerned. Raab noted that serving a rural area already presents a unique set of challenges. Transportation, limited access to care, lack of insurance, low income and concerns about pain can all be barriers to women getting mammograms.

"We're already struggling to get women in," she said.

Dr. Nick Habal, with Carolina Breast & Oncologic Surgery, said he was "stunned and dismayed" by the announcement and how drastic a change the panel proposes. He said the new guidelines don't take any new data or findings into account, and the opinions are based off numbers from European nations. Those countries have very different populations and risk profiles than the United States, Habal said.

He also criticized the failure to provide any alternative or improved options for breast cancer detection.

Doctors speculated that the rate of false-positive mammograms among younger women may be motivating the revised advice. They're also concerned that efforts to save on healthcare costs also could be a factor.

"It could probably save billions of dollars but the costs of more intensive therapies will be high," Raab said.

Early detection often means the difference between removing a lump and losing a breast.

Raab added that people need to remember this is only one agency's finding. The American Cancer Society, the American Society of Breast Surgeons and the American Society of Breast Diseases are three groups that have already spoken out against the new guidelines.

"We will not change our policy and our recommendations for breast screening," Habal said. "Most patients we have here, yes, they dislike the mammogram. But I'd rather have that five minutes of pain and be reassured that things are OK than not know what's going on."

Dr. Gwendolyn Knuckles of Women's Health Center of Greenville, said women will still be able to make that choice. The gynecologist noted that though the language of the guidelines is stronger than it should be, the number of women in their 40s developing breast cancer is low. She said it's an emotional issue because those women are in the prime of their lives and often raising children.
“People just have to make a decision about how much intervention they’re going to have for the benefit they’ll receive,” Knuckles said. “Of course, that’s for women without established risk factors. If it remains covered by insurance, I will not at all be bothered by it.”

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East Carolina's Rock

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, November 19, 2009

It's a big couple of weeks for East Carolina football, but much bigger ones for a member of the ECU football family.

While the 6-4 Pirates are sizing up their final two games of the regular season and a chance to make a second straight Conference USA championship bid, ECU defensive line coach Thomas “Rock” Roggeman is awaiting word on how effective his months of treatment for Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma have been.

While he's waiting, the Notre Dame graduate and five-year veteran of coach Skip Holtz's staff was nominated for the FedEx Orange Bowl-Football Writers Association of America Courage Award, which will be presented at the end of the season.

Roggeman entered August camp with the team, but was ultimately forced to devote all of his energy to his treatment.

But that doesn't mean Roggeman doesn't have his mind on the Pirates as they prepare to host UAB in a C-USA East Division clash Saturday.

“He's still living it, every single day,” Holtz said of Roggeman.

Holtz said Tuesday Roggeman's treatment had been intensified the last six weeks and that the results of that more aggressive approach would be known soon. On Wednesday night, Holtz said Roggeman should learn of his progress by the end of next week.

Despite undergoing treatment, Roggeman has hardly evacuated his post.

According to Holtz, Roggeman, who's also spent time at Alabama State, Alabama A&M, Louisville, Eastern Michigan, UNLV and Murray State, is still working.

Roggeman gets a copy of the Pirates' game film every week and breaks it down from home. He makes notes for the players and stays in almost constant contact with the team.

"It's 1:30 in the morning, I'm getting on the airplane and I get a text from coach Rock saying how proud he is of this football team,” Holtz said, referring to last Sunday night after the Pirates won at Tulsa. "When you talk to him, all he can talk about is ECU football and these players.

"He's a special person, and this is going to be a big week for where we are and the progress we've made over the last six weeks."

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ECU students squeeze new uses from winery discards

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Students in an East Carolina University food science course have developed new ways to use discarded grapes from a local winery.

Melani Duffrin’s class used grapes and seeds from the Duplin Winery to develop new food items such as granola bars, ice cream, chutney and gummy candy.

"We are looking at the long range plans in terms of what we can do with grape products that come from processing wine," Duffrin said.

The winery discards 42 tons of grapes every year, said Gary Ange of Duplin Winery.

Students displayed their creations in the Golden Corral Culinary Center on campus this week for the public and representatives from Duplin Winery.

"I think it is amazing," Ange said. "I had no idea what I would see. We have always said that the nutritional value of the muscadine grape goes far beyond wine."

Grape skins have high contents of resveratrol, an antioxidant that is believed to fight cancer, lower blood sugar and benefit the heart.

Bryan Goforth, Chase Calder and Martha Barnes created a muscadine chutney for their project that was served with cream cheese and biscuits.

They said the product, which had a tangy bite, would be aimed toward adults who want to live a heart-healthy life.

"We ended up with a great product," Calder said. "This really made you think about possibilities because all of the ingredients were raw and none of them were processed."

Calder said he hates to see food go to waste and the project helped him think about ways to use food that is often discarded. He hopes to go to culinary school and open a restaurant some day.

"This taught us how to use food really well," said Goforth, who hopes to be a child nutritionist. "We took a basic product and made something nice that we could sell."

Ange said he will take the recipes back to the Duplin Winery in Rose Hill, where the company has a small bistro, to try them out. He also said the company is considering working with vendors to find ways to use grape discards the winery generates. The partnership with the class at ECU offers a great starting point, he said.

Duffrin said the project benefitted students because they were forced to think in new ways and get hands-on experience with food creation. The project also could help the environment by using grapes that would be thrown away.

"We are proud to be associated with ECU," Ange said. "We want to continue to do things that are better for the common good and will keep products out of the landfill."

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Pack's grad rate lags

A seven-year snapshot of graduation rates released Wednesday by the NCAA placed the N.C. State men's basketball program in the bottom half of the ACC academically.

The latest seven-year graduation success rates, or GSRs, painted a different picture than the Academic Progress Rates released in May by college athletics' governing body. Using a different formula and examining a different time frame, the previously released APRs placed the Wolfpack men's basketball team atop the ACC, with an Academic Progress Rate score of 995 out of possible 1,000. The APR measured the progress toward graduation of students who entered school from 2004 through 2008.

However, according to Wednesday's GSRs, which examined the records of student-athletes entering school from 1999 through 2002, N.C. State's GSR in men's basketball was 45 percent, ninth-best among the ACC's 12 schools.

N.C. State's football program also posted a GSR, for students entering from 1999 through 2002, of 57 percent, a rate trailing those of the other five Football Bowl Subdivision schools in the Carolinas. It also put the Wolfpack's graduation success rate at 11th out of 12 ACC football.

N.C. State officials said Wednesday that the APRs released this spring provide a more accurate academic assessment of the university's teams.

"It's really clear as mud," said Carrie Leger, who directs the academic support program at N.C. State. "The numbers come out, and it's not comparing apples to apples. It's a different group of students."

Leger said N.C. State already has data showing that graduation rates moving forward are going to improve significantly. N.C. State athletic director Lee Fowler said that men's basketball players transferring out of the program almost seven years ago had a big effect on the graduation rate released Wednesday.

"[Coach] Sidney [Lowe] never had anything to do with these kids that are being reported right now," Fowler said.

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SciQuest's big get: a UNC system deal

SciQuest, a Cary technology company whose software allows businesses and universities to order supplies and services online, has signed a major new client: the University of North Carolina.

The UNC system's general administration will use SciQuest's technology to reduce costs as part of a broader effort to bolster its fiscal health. To cut costs, the system also has been cutting hundreds of administrative jobs.

"From day one of my tenure, we've been working on multiple fronts to operate our entire university more efficiently and effectively," UNC President Erskine Bowles said in a prepared statement. "SciQuest has a proven track record of enabling cost savings."

The UNC contract, which could be worth "a couple million bucks over several years," isn't SciQuest's biggest deal, but it has the potential to be in the top five, CEO Stephen Wiehe said. The total value will depend on how much UNC uses SciQuest's technology and whether all the colleges in the 16-campus system sign on.

But it's an important victory for the local company to finally sign the state's university system.

"We've been very successful with schools outside of North Carolina, but this is a point of pride for us," Wiehe said. SciQuest has had a contract with East Carolina University since 2005 and also has deals with state systems in Illinois, Missouri and Tennessee.

So far, 13 of the UNC system schools have indicated they expect to use SciQuest software, said UNC chief of staff Jeffrey Davies. N.C. State and UNC-Chapel Hill already use PeopleSoft, another type of software that has procurement features, but those campuses are considering switching, Davies said.

SciQuest, founded in 1995, employs more than 160 people. Last year, the company helped universities, pharmaceutical and biotechnology corporations and other customers process about $5.6 billion worth of transactions. That includes buying products such as computers, office supplies and lab equipment.

The pace of new contracts slowed considerably late last year and early this year as the economy tanked, Wiehe said. But business is rebounding in the fourth quarter as the economy recovers and contracts that had been delayed get signed.

"There's still some uncertainty, some concern about the economy," he said, "but money is getting freed up."
Students protest tuition increase

CHAPEL HILL -- A planned tuition increase at UNC-Chapel Hill is meeting some opposition from students who want more say in the process.

About a dozen students toting protest signs attended a board of trustees committee meeting Wednesday. They had not signed up in advance and were not allowed to speak.

They may try again this morning when the full board considers the tuition and fee increases.

"We're against the fact that students are left out of the process," said Laurel Ashton, a sophomore from Asheville. "And we know there is money out there. We want to know why it can't be reallocated so tuition won't be increased."

Ashton said students want more information on budget cuts and a role in the tuition planning process.

Students serve on the committee that gave Chancellor Holden Thorp tuition proposals to review earlier this semester. The university also has maintained and consistently updated a Web site with reams of budget information.

It isn't enough, Ashton said.

"I've been to that Web site a lot and have left feeling I really didn't get enough information," she said. "There's not one place that really lays out what departments have been cut, which people have been laid off."

Thorp has recommended a tuition increase of $200 for all in-state students. Out-of-state students would get hit harder: a $1,127 increase for undergraduates and a $732 increase for graduate students. Fees for all students would rise $96.01.

The larger increase for nonresident students has created some discontent, but campus and UNC-system leaders have long viewed those students differently than North Carolinians. Tuition for out-of-state students has often been set with market and competitiveness data used as guidelines.

"I don't feel we have the same obligation to keep tuition as low as practicable for out-of-state students as we do for in-state students," UNC-system President Erskine Bowles said recently.

Still, out-of-state students pay far less than they might elsewhere.

This year, nonresident undergrads pay $23,513 in tuition and fees to attend UNC-CH. Four of the public universities to which UNC-CH is most often compared - UCLA, UC-Berkeley, the University of Virginia and the University of Michigan - all charge nonresidents at least $8,000 more. Michigan charges out-of-state students $34,937 this year in tuition and fees.

The whole conversation may be largely moot.
The 2009 General Assembly has already set rates for 2010-11 that will raise in-state tuition $200 or 8 percent, whichever is less. That decision trumps anything on the campus or UNC-system level, but Bowles said last week that legislative leaders are willing to listen to other tuition proposals.

If the General Assembly's edict holds, all tuition revenue raised would go into the state's general fund. If it decides next year to adopt a university tuition plan instead, revenue raised would be used for campus needs, and half of it would be set aside for financial aid.

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A healthy partnership against flu

CHAPEL HILL -- People express frustration about not immediately getting the pandemic H1N1 vaccine for high-risk relatives, and some suggest that this temporary delay is another example of governmental inefficiency and a foretaste of what will happen if health care reform legislation is passed.

As a physician, I believe that a historical perspective provides a more accurate view of our nation's remarkable response to the H1N1 flu pandemic.

The second wave of the 1918 flu, which killed tens of millions around the world at the end of World War I, hit Camp Devens near Boston in September of that year. The army hospital was overflowing with some 8,000 critically ill soldiers, and dedicated doctors and nurses hopelessly witnessed some 100 deaths a day. When respected physician and medical researcher Dr. William Henry Welch visited and examined the lungs of a young man who had died from the flu, he was shaken by the sight and exclaimed, "This must be some new kind of infection or plague."

Welch and the physicians of his day were well acquainted with bacteria and suspected that there were much smaller infectious agents known as viruses. No one at that time, however, had seen a virus and no one had any idea about their composition and action in the human body.

My first exposure to epidemic flu came when I was a resident in a New York hospital during the 1957 Asian flu epidemic. A previously healthy 35-year-old man was admitted with flu and acute respiratory distress. Antibiotics were available to treat his secondary bacterial pneumonia but there were no antiviral medicines and no intensive care units with respirators. Despite treatment in one of the nation's best hospitals he died.

It was not until the late 1990s that the 1918 flu virus was isolated and its genetic code determined, but it took the federal Centers for Disease Control only weeks this year to determine the genetic code of the new H1N1 virus after illnesses with this virus were identified in Mexico.

This knowledge permitted the difficult decision by the U.S. and other major governments to fund the preparation of the new H1N1 vaccine by the foremost vaccine companies. Time did not permit raising the necessary funds from other sources and the companies would have been fiscally irresponsible to undertake such an effort on their own.

Knowing the genetic structure of this H1N1 flu virus also made possible prompt and specific genetic-based diagnostic testing by the CDC, which then provided the test materials to other laboratories. These tests allow physicians to provide optimal patient care and the public health community to follow this pandemic in real time as it spread around the globe.

The local, national and global approach to the H1N1 pandemic is truly unprecedented in medical history. To a large measure this success represents an extraordinary return on a half-century of investment by American taxpayers in federal programs such as the National Institutes of Health's biomedical research and training grants. It is also a tribute to the vision and political courage of many presidents and
members of Congress - both Republicans and Democrats - who appropriated funds for these programs.

The knowledge, technologies, space-age materials and educated scientists and physicians resulting from these and other government programs have been utilized by for-profit entrepreneurial companies to provide us with today's diagnostic tests, vaccines, antivirals, antibiotics and equipment such as monitors and ventilators for the care of patients in sophisticated intensive care units.

Fortunately this pandemic to date has had a much lower mortality than the 1918 pandemic. But all the funding and effort is well spent, since it better prepares us to deal with a more deadly flu epidemic or bioterrorist attack in the future.

Rather than lamenting the inevitable temporary imperfections of a massive effort to respond to the flu pandemic, we should be celebrating that we live in a nation where the government takes bold steps to address threats to our health and where the business community uses the government-funded new knowledge and technology to provide us with the tools we need to meet these threats.

William W. McLendon, M.D., is a professor emeritus at the UNC School of Medicine.
In the Army now

The U.S. Army's Special Operations Command trains elite soldiers in the Green Berets, Rangers and other units that specialize in behind-enemy-lines combat.

Now, in agreement with the University of North Carolina system, those soldiers will have access to additional education at UNC campuses, particularly in the area of languages including Arabic, Pashtu, Urdu and others specific to the Middle East. That's an obvious benefit in these times, when the gathering of intelligence and simply dealing with citizens in the Middle East is all important.

The soldiers also will have available training in the medical field and technology. While some of this has been going on, formalizing the connections and making such training more accessible to these special troops is important. It should be a productive relationship, and the Army will be funding the effort.

There ought to be a benefit as well for regular students who'll be exposed to the experiences of these soldiers. Professors also will benefit, because Special Operations soldiers have real-life experience that can be shared.

This was true during and after the World Wars, Korean and Vietnam, when soldier students added a new dimension to lectures and discussions, not just of war but of foreign cultures.

UNC system President Erskine Bowles had it right, then, when he described the agreement as an "opportunity" for the university.

For the Army, it's a chance to take soldiers to a new level when it comes to understanding the nuances of languages. That's all-important in troubled regions where American troops need to be as familiar as possible with war-torn cultures, and to understand the ways and means of terrorism. A university with broad expertise and resources can help.

"Win-win" is an overused phrase. In this case, however, it really does apply.
November 19, 2009

On College Football Game Days, Efforts to Deter Binge Drinking

By PAT BORZI

MINNEAPOLIS — Shortly before the kickoff of the Minnesota-Illinois college football game at the new TCF Bank Stadium this month, two Minnesota students — one male, one female — slipped into an unmarked entrance about five minutes apart. They dressed appropriately for the unseasonably warm and sunny day, in short-sleeve maroon-and-gold Gophers attire. And they greeted Amy Barsness, a university official, like an old friend.

Then Barsness offered each of them something an old friend usually does not offer: a small, rectangular box with a straw. A Breathalyzer.

The students are among more than 50 in Minnesota’s Check BAC program, begun by the student affairs department this season to help deter binge drinking at football games. BAC stands for blood alcohol content.

Modeled after a program at the University of Wisconsin, Check BAC (pronounced check back) allows student season-ticket holders who are ejected from a game for intoxication offenses to attend future games by submitting to blood alcohol testing. Students under 21 must be alcohol-free; those 21 or older cannot exceed a BAC of 0.08. The two students at the Illinois game registered a 0.00 on the breath analyzer.

“If you want to go to a game again, you have to show us you’re sober next time,” said Sharon Dzik, the director of the university’s student conduct office.

Toben F. Nelson, an assistant professor at Minnesota’s School of Public Health who has written about college drinking, said he did not know of any other major Division I universities with such programs.

Alcohol is not sold in TCF Bank Stadium, the on-campus stadium that opened in September. While university officials concede they cannot stop under-age drinking, the number of students cited for drunken behavior in the stadium has not been as high as feared. Gerald D. Reinhart, Minnesota’s vice provost for student affairs, said in the first six home games, the police ejected 78 people, 56 of them students, for alcohol-related disturbances. TCF’s capacity is 50,700, and student season tickets number about 10,000.

Students ejected from games at Minnesota are entered in the Check BAC program, which requires them to meet with a counselor. After that, those who fail a game-day breath analyzer, or enter the stadium without submitting to the test, lose their season tickets. So far, three students have had their tickets revoked, according to the university. Reinhart would not disclose what the program cost, but he said the student conduct office’s budget covered it.
Fewer students landed in Check BAC than in Wisconsin’s Show and Blow program, which Wisconsin’s assistant dean of students, Ervin Cox, said included 94 students in six home games out of about 13,000 with season tickets.

“If alcohol was served in that stadium, our problems would be multiples worse than they are now,” Reinhart said. “The percentage having trouble with alcohol is very small. We didn’t know what to expect, but we were pleased that it was manageable.”

Paul Strain, the Minnesota student association president and a football season-ticket holder, said he had not heard many complaints from fellow students. “Most people say, if you get to the point where you’re that wrecked at a game, you should blow through a pipe,” he said.

Minnesota previously played 27 seasons at the Metrodome, where the university had no control over beer sales. Knowing the change was coming, Minnesota officials sought stricter guidelines for alcohol use, hoping to discourage excessive drinking on game days.

A 2007 study at the University of Texas found that its students drank more on football game days than on Halloween, New Year’s Eve or the last day of fall semester classes.

Under-age drinking has been particularly worrisome at Minnesota. A 2003 disturbance after the Gophers’ N.C.A.A. men’s hockey championship caused an estimated $150,000 in property damage. Last April, the police arrested 12 people after a riot in a neighborhood near campus that coincided with the university’s Spring Jam celebration. Both times, the university police cited excessive drinking as a factor.

Initially, Minnesota planned to sell beer and wine in suites and premium seating areas while prohibiting it in the stadium’s lower bowl, which includes the student section.

But last May, the State Legislature passed a law requiring the university to offer alcohol throughout the stadium, or not at all. The university’s Board of Regents, on the recommendation of Robert Bruininks, the university president, voted by 10-2 to make the stadium alcohol-free.

Bruininks said the decision cost the university about $1 million in revenue. Two football suite holders and a handful of club seat subscribers canceled their contracts over the decision, and the university offered 10 percent discounts to entice others to stay.

Michigan, Ohio State and Minnesota are the only universities in the Big Ten with dry stadiums; none of the other on-campus facilities in the conference sell beer in general seating.

Minnesota permits tailgating with alcohol in campus lots. But kegs or drinking-game paraphernalia are not allowed.

“We applaud the decision to ban alcohol in the whole stadium,” Cox said. “You can have a couple of beers and a brat at a tailgate. But if you’ve got to drink at a college football game, there’s a problem with that.”

A tailgate culture with heavy drinking led Wisconsin to adopt its program in 2007, Cox said, although students ridiculed the Show and Blow name. Minnesota student affairs officials learned of the program while touring Big Ten campuses and decided to adopt it with a different name.
“This was an opportunity to really create excitement on campus and have people feel good about this environment and this community,” Reinhart said. “We didn’t want to mess it up by being draconian in our measures, but we didn’t want to mess it up by being too lax and really having bad behavior interfere with the game-day experience.”

One student in Check BAC, who requested anonymity to avoid being stigmatized on campus, admitted drinking too much beer at a keg party and nearly passing out in the stadium, where a spectator alerted the campus police.

“The cops aren’t going up to people who look fine and say, ‘Are you drinking?’ ” the student said. “They’re going up to people who are out of control. I think anyone who is in the program pretty much deserves it.”

Reinhart said students in Check BAC often felt remorseful.

“For some students, it’s an intervention,” he said. “If anything, this is a signal to the students that their behavior has crossed a threshold.”

To Nelson, that is not enough. While calling Check BAC “a fine policy,” he said universities and municipalities would not bring under-age drinking under control unless they make alcohol harder to obtain.

“Will it put a dent in the big problem and reduce heavy drinking?” he said. “I don’t think so.”
Academic Researchers’ Conflicts of Interest Go Unreported

By GARDINER HARRIS

Few universities make required reports to the government about the financial conflicts of their researchers, and even when such conflicts are reported, university administrators rarely require those researchers to eliminate or reduce these conflicts, government investigators found.

In a report expected to be made public on Thursday, Daniel R. Levinson, the inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services, said 90 percent of universities relied solely on the researchers themselves to decide whether the money they made in consulting and other relationships with drug and device makers was relevant to their government-financed research.

And half of universities do not ask their faculty members to disclose the amount of money or stock they make from drug and device makers, so the potential for extensive conflicts with their government-financed research is often known only to the researchers themselves, the report concluded.

The report is the latest in a series of investigations that have found that conflicts of interest in academic research are at best lightly supervised. Federal rules require that researchers report to their universities any outside income that may conflict with government-financed research, much of which comes from the National Institutes of Health. Those rules also require universities to manage those conflicts in ways that protect patients and the integrity of research.

But a long-running investigation by Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa, has found that the enforcement of these rules is based on an honor system that is often violated.

Sally J. Rockey, the N.I.H.’s acting deputy director for extramural research, said that the agency announced in May that it was considering changes to its rules governing conflicts of interest and that Mr. Levinson’s recommendations would be considered as part of that process.

“N.I.H. strongly believes that it is vital that all research be conducted with the highest scientific and ethical standards,” Dr. Rockey said. “The introduction of bias in the conduct of N.I.H.-supported research is antithetical to these principles and will not be tolerated.”

Eric G. Campbell, an associate professor at the Institute for Health Policy at Harvard Medical School, said universities had no interest in putting real limits on the incomes of their star researchers for fear that those researchers would leave for institutions with fewer restrictions.

“This report clearly raises the question of whether these institutions are capable of managing these conflicts themselves,” Dr. Campbell said.

In 2006, 41 universities reported to N.I.H. that 165 researchers who had received grants from the agency had potential financial conflicts. Hundreds of universities receive such grants, and surveys show that about half of academic researchers report having financial relationships with drug makers. So the reported conflicts probably represent just a fraction of the actual number of conflicts.
Most of the reported conflicts involved equity ownership in companies that could be affected by the results of government-financed research. In only a third of the cases did the universities specify to the government the size of the financial conflict and, among those, six had equity stakes valued at greater than $100,000. But in only 29 of the cases did the universities require researchers to reduce or eliminate their stakes. In most cases, the universities deemed that some sort of the disclosure of the conflict was enough to manage it.