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ECU board approves 3.6 percent tuition hike

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Friday, November 20, 2009

The East Carolina University Board of Trustees discussed a range of tuition hikes for the coming academic year at its meeting Friday.

Tuition and fees will go up at ECU next year, but a change in state law no longer gives officials at the university level the authority to set the tuition rate.

A preliminary plan approved Friday by the board would boost undergraduate resident, graduate resident and graduate non-resident tuition by 3.6 percent. It would boost undergraduate non-resident tuition by 6.6 percent.

If the ECU plan is used, undergraduate resident tuition would increase from $2,491 to $2,581. Undergraduate non-resident students would pay $14,205, a jump from the 2009 rate of $13,325.

The board combined a recommendation from the executive committee and a recommendation from trustee David Brinkley to boost revenues by increasing the cost for non-residents. Trustees said the price for out-of-state students continues to be a deal as ECU tuition rates are among the lowest of similar institutions across the country.

"We are not punishing out-of-state students as we appreciate what they contribute to the university," trustee David Redwine said. "They are still getting a great value."

But the plan approved Friday will only be used if officials from the University of North Carolina system can convince the General Assembly to give the power to set tuition back to the UNC Board of Governors.

The state has the power to set tuition increases across the entire University of North Carolina.

The General Assembly rate across the board would be an 8 percent increase in tuition or $200, whichever is lower at the particular university.

For ECU, the plan would increase tuition by $199 for the 2010 academic year from $2,491 to $2,690 for undergraduate residents of the state.

If the 8 percent increase stands at ECU, the General Assembly will leave the increased revenue, about $5 million at ECU, but will reduce the amount of state appropriations by $5 million to the university. The state would do the same thing at each of the 16 UNC schools.

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard was not optimistic about the General Assembly giving the power back to university officials to set tuition rate increases.

"If the current law stays — and I suspect it will — we will have no choice," Ballard said Thursday. "But there is a possibility that we would be able to set our own rate."

ECU officials do have the authority to increase non-resident tuition above and beyond the state approved rate of 8 percent. The board voted Friday to increase non-resident tuition by the same rate whether the ultimate tuition increase is left to the UNC system or the General Assembly. Non-residents would still see an increase of $880 in tuition.

The board also raised fees for athletics, education technology, transit, housing, dining meal plans, and
orientation, which would increase the cost of attending ECU by at least $110 for incoming freshman who live on campus. The board also improved a plan to increase the cost for some parking plans.

The athletics fee will increase by $30 to $526 per year to improve facility and operations needs.

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

Housing fees will increase by $100, and dining meal plans by $70-$100 based on the meal plan chosen, and orientation will rise by $30.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@reflector.com or (252) 329-9565.
ECU offers online program on ethnic, rural health disparities

East Carolina University is offering a new online program focusing on ethnic and rural health disparities (ERHD).

ERHD is an online, non-credit certificate program designed for health care professionals and other individuals interested in broadening their understanding of health issues and improving their skills in working with ethnic health disparities. The program is composed of 16 modules that may be taken individually or as a full series.

Modules include: Ethnic Health and Health Disparities (modules 1-4); Global Public Health (modules 5-8); African American Health (modules 9-12); and Medical Anthropology (modules 13-16).

A certificate of completion and continuing education units (CEUs) may be awarded to those who meet the program requirements. These modules are now available for registration.

For information about the instructor and overview of the program, visit online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9kS1ny99BQ.

To register, visit online at http://cpeprogrmas.ecu.edu/ShowSchedule.awp?--GROUP-HEALTH-Health,+Wellness,+and+Healthcare or contact the Division of Continuing Studies at cpe@ecu.edu or 328-9198.

The Division of Continuing Studies is offering the program in partnership with the Department of Public Health at the Brody School of Medicine and the Department of Anthropology at the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences.
Students’ persuasive speaking project nets $600 for local charities

The Daily Reflector

Sunday, November 22, 2009

Communication students at East Carolina University collected $600 for three local charities as part of a class project on persuasion.

The students made their first $200 donation Thursday to the Little Willie Center in west Greenville. Their goal was to provide the center with extra money for its Thanksgiving holiday needs.

The ECU students also will donate $200 to Wounded Warriors and $200 to Greenville’s Building Hope Community Life Center.

The students collected the money as a project in a class called “Business and Professional Communication” at ECU’s School of Communication. Their assignment was to select a charity, and then persuade friends, families and work mates to donate to it.

There was a caveat: Each student also had to tell potential donors that although any donated money would go to a charity, it might not go to the charity the student named.

Later, the students gave persuasive speeches on why their particular charity merited a split of the donations the class collected. The class then voted and the top three vote-getters got a donation.

The Little Willie Center started in 1990 to provide a safe haven for “latchkey kids” who stay home alone while their parents work. It offers after-school tutoring and mentoring, and has a vegetable garden that the children help tend.

Building Hope, also in west Greenville, is a faith-based program that serves at-risk elementary and middle school children.

Wounded Warriors serves the Wounded Warrior Battalion at Camp Lejeune.

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Students give time to make difference in community

By Kelley Kirk
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, November 22, 2009

While some students enjoyed sleeping in on fall break Oct. 15-16, nine East Carolina University students were up early assisting Habitat For Humanity in Durham and the Food Bank of Eastern North Carolina in Greenville that Monday and Tuesday.

Those students represent just a handful of young adults who make volunteering part of their extracurricular activities.

Shawn Moore and Michael Loeffelman of ECU’s Volunteer and Service-Learning Center work with students every day, placing them with organizations in need of assistance within the community. Moore works as a liaison between the school and community to recruit volunteers and maintain community partnerships. Loeffelman’s job with the VSLC is to recruit, coordinate and provide orientation to the student volunteers and volunteer groups.

Moore said that in 2007-2008, their office had approximately 10,000 volunteers giving about 32,000 volunteers hours to 52 North Carolina counties, three states and two countries.

And with close to 300 student organizations at ECU, there are thousands of students volunteering in our community for a variety of reasons.

For some students it’s a requirement of their course studies, for others it’s to earn extra credit, and then there are those that give their time simply because they love it.

For Ankit Zalavadia, his desire to volunteer came from an awareness about the importance of community service in today’s society.

“This generated an urge to volunteer-based activities as an integral part of my undergraduate career at ECU,” Zalavadia, 22, said.

The biochemistry and applied physics senior has given more than 750 hours of volunteer time to various organizations, including more than 200 hours to Pitt County Memorial Hospital. In 2008, he was a student leader on a trip to Panama Beach, Fla., cleaning up the beach. Every Tuesday you can find Zalavadia at the Pirate Learning Center from 6:30-9 p.m. assisting his fellow students with their studies, and he’s just started to volunteer at Sterling House, an assisted-living facility.

Devang Patel, 21, accumulated more than 300 hours of volunteer hours at PCMH and plans to either go to medical school or earn a master’s degree in public health. In addition to the hours volunteered through PCMH, Patel works with ECU-READS, a program for first-grade students to work on their reading skills.

He initially volunteered with the VSLC at ECU through T.R.I.P.S., which offers optional volunteer trips, like the one organized during fall break in October. T.R.I.P.S. stands for Turning Responsibility Into Powerful Service.

“Last spring break, we had a trip to Georgia, due to all the flooding,” Moore said.

Zalavadia was a student leader on that trip to Americus, Ga., when he and five other ECU students worked with Habitat for Humanity painting, laying floorboards, roofing and constructing walls.

“Volunteering often starts out as extra credit and becomes a passion,” said Loeffelman.
He said that it's not uncommon for a student to work for a one-time event and want to give more because the experience was so enjoyable.

"Those one-time events get students in and then keeps their interest," Loeffleman said.

Theresa Esslinger is one of those people for whom volunteering became a passion.

She's been with the Boys & Girls Club since September 2006, working first as a tutor at the Farmville unit, then as an office assistant in the Minges unit on Fire Tower Road. She is currently the unit director at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Pitt County Jarvis unit, where she volunteered before being hired full time.

"I have been here for two years. In July 2008, the director stepped down and I got the job that afternoon," she said.

Esslinger said the Jarvis unit has a particular need for tutors for at-risk children and would have a difficult time fulfilling client needs without the more than 75 students volunteers who visit the center each week.

"Our program wouldn't be as effective without the one-on-one pairing that we have," Esslinger said.

Since taking on the full-time position as unit director, she's seen growth in the number of children attending the center, which requires more committed student volunteers.

"When they first arrive ... I tell them if they can't make a commitment, then I don't want them here," Esslinger said.

Seems a stern request, but one to which students respond.

"We ask that they give one hour a week. A lot come in more than that," Esslinger said. "I've got really good volunteers, and it's a fun place to come."

Scott Councilman took the idea of kids having fun and turned it into a fitness program called Pirate Playtime, a student-led program that takes ECU student volunteers into schools for after-school activities.

"The program promotes good health and exercise, and it's a good way to have fun," he said.

Pirate Playtime is a very popular after-school program in Pitt County and is now in its third year of operation, according to Moore of the VSNC.

Councilman, 21, started volunteering because he said it's a great way to make a difference in someone's life and to give back to the community.

"My family instilled in me the value and rewards of helping others. I was raised in the church, and this offered several opportunities for volunteerism. I especially like working with the youth group and mentoring to the young people involved in our programs," Councilman said.

He co-founded Pirate Playtime with fellow student Katharine Burley.

In addition to volunteering locally, Burley, 21, has taken her volunteering to other continents.

She spent two months during the summer of 2008 working in orphanages in Ghana, West Africa, and she taught English in Costa Rica in 2006.

"I really feel that by working with diverse populations, it builds a sense of community and global understanding and awareness," she said.

She hopes in the future to own her own international nonprofit organization dedicated to educating care-givers and securing resources to allow institutionalized children to thrive in supportive environments.

In addition to Pirate Playtime and her volunteer work abroad, Burley has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, Stafford Glen Assisted Living, MLK Day Challenge, Million Meals, Ronald McDonald House and was the service chairwoman for Phi Sigma Pi National Co-Ed Honor Fraternity.

Burley likes to focus her time on one organization at a time. She currently volunteers with the Rocking Horse Ranch's Therapeutic Riding Program. The facility provides equine-assisted activities and therapy to children and
adults with a variety of disabilities.

"I only had to volunteer once to get hooked. It's such a great feeling being out in the community in a constructive way," Burley said.

Contact Kelley Kirk at kkirk@reflector.com.

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ECU Notes: Health sciences faculty recognized for published works

ECU News Services

Saturday, November 21, 2009

Eighty-six East Carolina University health sciences faculty members were honored Nov. 3 at the fourth annual Faculty Author Recognition Awards for their published works.


“We express our gratitude to all of our authors for their hard work and impressive productivity,” said Dorothy Spencer, associate vice chancellor for communication and information resources and director of Laupus Library, which coordinated the awards and hosted a luncheon for the honorees.

“This is absolutely at the heart of what a university is all about,” Dr. Phyllis Horns, vice chancellor for health sciences, said. “We’re not just here to disseminate knowledge, but to generate knowledge.”

Horns presented book authors a Laupus bronze, a special award named for the first dean of ECU’s medical school, William E. Laupus. They were James Hupp, dean of the School of Dentistry; Martha Libster from the College of Nursing; Assad Movahed from the Brody School of Medicine; and Elizabeth Layman, Bonita Sasnett and Mark Stebnicki from the College of Allied Health Sciences.


“There are far more faculty who have published than are here today,” Dr. Stephen Thomas, dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences, said. “I challenge everyone in this room to encourage your fellow faculty to participate and be recognized.”

Thomas recognized 17 in the College of Allied Health Sciences: Richard Bamberg, Paul Bell, Martha Chapin, Kathleen Cox, Anne Donica, Denise Donica, Susie Harris, Monica Hough, Terry Jones, Michael Kennedy, Robert Kulesher, Elizabeth Layman, Amy Cross McMillan, Patricia Royal, Bonita Sasnett, Mark Stebnicki and Leonard Trujillo.

“I think this event is so special because it gives us a time to talk to one another and build community in our division,” said Dr. Sylvia Brown, dean of the College of Nursing, who noted the importance of collaborative research and scholarship. Nursing faculty more than doubled the number of peer-reviewed manuscripts published since last year.

“It’s phenomenal what you’ve accomplished,” Brown said.

Brown, who also published, recognized 24 faculty including Bonnie Ainsley, Martha Alligood, Melydia Edge, Martha Engelke, Paul Gambrell, Laura Gantt, Elizabeth Jesse, Barbara Kellam, Kim Larson, Martha Libster,
Maura McAuliffe, Connie Mullinix, Janice Neil, Annette Peery, Marie Pokorney, Pamela Reis, Donna Roberson, Mary Ann Rose, Ann Schreier, Elaine Scott, Nancy Stephenson, Mary Wilson and Carol Winters-Moorhead.

Spencer recognized four authors from Laupus Library: Amy Blevins, Melissa Nasea, Katherine Rickett and Roger Russell.

For the first time, the event was co-sponsored by the Friends of Laupus Library and Matthews Medical Books. Several members of the Friends group joined the celebration including Dr. Richard Eakin, co-chairman of the inaugural board and chancellor emeritus at ECU.

ECU's Healthy PIRATES win award for program

ECU's Healthy PIRATES won the Outstanding Creativity in Personal Safety award for its cancer prevention program called “Peace.Love.Pirates.Cure” during the 32nd annual BACCHUS Peer Education Network conference Nov. 5-8 in Orlando, Fla.

"Peace.Love.Pirates.Cure" is a mix of education and entertainment designed to raise awareness about different types of cancer. This year's event was held Oct. 7 on campus and has been well attended during the last two years.

Most collegiate groups across the country address the typical issues on campuses such as sexual health, tobacco and alcohol usage, as well as nutrition and body image. ECU’s Healthy PIRATES chose a different path.

"Our students jumped into relatively unchartered waters and are succeeding,” Georgia Childs, assistant director for peer health in the ECU Student Recreation Center, said. "They recognized, even as college students, cancer impacts everyone’s lives including their parents, family or friends. They chose to shine a spotlight on cancer awareness and prevention, and I’m thrilled their efforts have been recognized."

"Peace.Love.Pirates.Cure” educated more than 700 participants about how to conduct self-exams and how to quit smoking as well as how to cope when a family member is diagnosed. Additionally, a skin cancer screening booth, and representatives from Relay 4 Life and Locks of Love were on hand.

Childs, who also serves as the Peer Health Area 12 consultant representing several Mid-Atlantic States, said the hard work and determination of these students speaks volumes about East Carolina on a national stage.

"Too often we hear about the negative actions of kids on campuses and this sheds such a positive light on what college students can accomplish,” Childs said. "They become strong leaders who help and empower other students to make smarter, healthier decisions."

The Healthy PIRATES leaders include Logan Schertzinger, president; Brandon Rasberry, vice president; Donna Rea, secretary; Frances Aulisi, treasurer; Melanie Ramsey, historian.

"Peace.Love.Pirates.Cure” is a collaborative effort partnering the American Cancer Society, Campus Recreation and Wellness, Student Health Service, the Department of Health Education and Promotion, ECU Physicians, Healthy PIRATES, the ECU Women’s Studies Program and Colleges Against Cancer.

Three initiatives aim at improved public service

In response to UNC Tomorrow, East Carolina University’s Office of Engagement, Innovation and Economic Development (OEIED) is undertaking three initiatives aimed at public service and economic transformation.

ECU's three-tiered approach is characterized by increased levels of community outreach and scholarly engagement and is broadly defined as the Community Enhancement and Economic Transformation Initiative (CEETI).

The office's goal is to target distressed eastern North Carolina communities and to provide technical assistance, financial and human resources, economic development products and the expertise of ECU's faculty, staff and students to help increase competitiveness, build stronger and more vibrant communities, and stimulate economic transformation throughout the region.

The Community Enhancement and Economic Transformation Initiative includes three primary components: the Municipal Management and Innovation initiative; the Talent Enhancement and Demonstration Grants program; and the ECU Outreach Network.
The Municipal Management and Innovation initiative (MMI) engages ECU resources on behalf of small, low wealth, limited resource and limited capacity municipalities in eastern North Carolina. MMI provides communities with technical assistance to increase local capacity in administration, management, project management, program development, and grant writing.

The work is being piloted in Aurora, a Beaufort County town of 600, as well as Grifton in Pitt County and South Mills in Camden County.

ECU and the North Carolina Department of Commerce are collaborating on a program designed to strengthen less-prosperous communities in Eastern North Carolina.

The Talent Enhancement Demonstration Grants (TEDG) program will provide technical assistance and financial resources to increase competitiveness and build stronger, more vibrant and more capable communities.

The Department of Commerce awarded grants of up to $75,000 to Beaufort, Edgecombe, Hyde, Jones, Pamlico and Pitt counties, as well as the Town of Aurora. The selected counties will receive a customized menu of capacity building and related economic development products over a 24-month period.

The seven TEDG communities recently began a comprehensive grants management and administration training course at ECU.

The ECU Outreach Network works directly with local governments and community organizations to help prioritize organizational resource needs, identify potential resource providers and prepare grant applications that support increased capacity and sustainable community and economic development initiatives. ECU’s Outreach Network is engaged in six eastern North Carolina communities and will be directed by Dr. Janice Tovey.

Pirates Treasure set for Dec. 3-4

The Pirates Treasure program aims to curb the amount of waste left in campus neighborhoods or sent to landfills by departing ECU students.

Instead of trashing reusable items, students are encouraged to drop off their unwanted household goods at the Pirates Treasure donation site. From there, nonprofit organizations and social services groups will distribute items to local families in need.

This year, donations will be collected from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Dec. 3 and Dec. 4. Items should be taken to the central drop-off point at the Willis Building, First and Reade streets, Greenville.

The program is sponsored by the City of Greenville and ECU Off-Campus Student Services in collaboration with ECU Volunteer and Service-Learning Center.

For more information, visit www.ecu.edu/studentlife/offcampus.

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Workers display latest Queen Anne’s Revenge findings

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, November 21, 2009

Local researchers continue to uncover artifacts that offer clues about one of the world’s most notorious pirates and his flagship.

Workers with the Queen Anne’s Revenge conservation project on Friday revealed their latest findings from the wreckage of a ship presumed to be that of the pirate Blackbeard.

Officials displayed cannons, cuff links, belt buckles, syringes, wine bottles and more during the event held at East Carolina University’s West Research Campus. Visitors got a close look at the latest discoveries and toured the conservation laboratory where researchers break down concretions and prepare artifacts for display.

Since the wreck of the purported Queen Anne’s Revenge was discovered near Beaufort in November 1996, researchers say they have discovered about 700,000 individual artifacts. About half of the wreckage is awaiting excavation, they say, and about 80 percent of what has been pulled from the ocean still is in the conservation process.

“This is huge insight into what these people were doing, what they were eating, the games they were playing and the kind of life they had on board,” project coordinator Mark Wilde-Ramsing said. “It also allows us to look at the technology of the period. It is not just an archaeological site. It is an educational resource for the state.”

Most of the conserved artifacts are stored and displayed at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort. Others have been distributed for display at the Knights of the Black Flag exhibit at the N.C. Museum of Natural History in Raleigh and the Museum of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City.

Records indicate that the ship sank in 1718. David Moore, nautical archaeologist with the N.C. Maritime Museum, said many of the artifacts such as a dated bell point to the early 18th century when Blackbeard was wreaking havoc on the waters. Portions of the ship also suggest that it was built by the French, a trait consistent with the Queen Anne’s Revenge. The amount of artillery and ammunition on board also was more than an average ship would have been hauling, he said.

Moore noted that researchers also have discovered gold dust, and French and English reports say the ship was carrying gold dust when it was captured.

“It is it,” Moore said. “All artifacts point to it. It is circumstantial evidence. Taken individually, it doesn’t necessarily carry a lot of weight. But when you add it all together, to me and everybody here it really points a big finger at this being Queen Anne’s Revenge.”

Sarah Watkins-Kenny, chief conservator with the project, said objects typically take from one to three years to prepare for display depending on their size and composition.

Officials use a 12-step conservation process that includes, among other steps, removing concretions and soluble salts from the objects, X-rays and adding a protective coating. Since 2003, the concretions have been stored at the university’s conservation lab through a partnership between the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources and ECU.
Watkins-Kenny said the conservation of the entire wreckage will take 30-40 years, depending on funding and the number of people working on the project.

"A tremendous number of answers to a lot of our questions are already sitting out here in the laboratory and we just have to get to them," Moore said. "We have a lot of work to do."

There are three permanent staff members working with the project along with several ECU graduate assistants and volunteers. Wilde-Ramsing said the project's minimum operating budget is $100,000. Funding is provided by the state and grant programs, he said.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@reflector.com or (252) 329-9574.
NCSU approves tuition increase

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Board of Trustees at N.C. State University voted unanimously Friday to approve an across-the-board tuition increase.

In-state undergraduates will pay roughly 3 percent more, or $150 a year; out-of-state, 1.2 percent or $200. In 2007, the board raised tuition by $100 for in-state students and $200 for out-of-state.

The increase still must be approved by the UNC Board of Governors.

Schools in the UNC system are largely handcuffed by the General Assembly, which earlier this year mandated that tuition for in-state students in 2010-2011 must rise $200 or 8 percent, whichever is less. Revenue from that tuition hike will go into the state's general fund rather than to the campus, as is customary.

On Thursday, UNC-CH trustees voted to raise in-state tuition for undergraduates by $200 and out-of-state tuition by $1,127.
H1N1 cases defy Tamiflu

Doctors track cluster at Duke

BY SARAH AVERY
STAFF WRITER

A cluster of four Tamiflu-resistant cases of H1N1 flu at Duke University Medical Center has raised concerns that changes in the virus may make severe infections more difficult to treat.

Three of the Duke patients died. All were adults, two women and one man, and they had other major diseases, said Dr. Cameron Wolfe, an infectious disease specialist at Duke. He said a fourth patient remains hospitalized.

Doctors use Tamiflu as the front-line defense to ease the symptoms and duration of flu infection, and international health authorities have been watching the H1N1 virus closely for signs it has mutated to overpower the therapy.

Another anti-viral drug, Relenza, remains potent, but it generally can't be taken by preschool-aged children or people with asthma and other respiratory diseases.

The Duke cluster comes at the same time a hospital in Wales reported five Tamiflu-resistant cases, and the World Health Organization began investigating a more virulent strain of H1N1 virus that appeared in Norway.

But state officials said Friday there is no evidence that a drug-resistant H1N1 strain is becoming dominant. In fact, they said, 99 percent of H1N1 flu cases remain treatable with Tamiflu.

"Reports of resistance have been very few," said Dr. Zack Moore, a medical epidemiologist with the state Division of Public Health. He said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported about 21 instances of resistant flu in the United States, not counting the Duke cluster or any others that might have come to light this week.

The Duke patients were housed in the same unit of the hospital over the past six weeks.

The CDC, which has headed the nation's response to pandemic flu, was called to investigate. Lab tests this week confirmed the patients all had the resistant strain. Wolfe said it remains unknown how and where the patients contracted the virus.

"We're trying to work back to see when their symptoms started to manifest, and when it looks like they may have come into contact with influenza," Wolfe said.

North Carolina has reported three prior instances of people coming down with Tamiflu-resistant flu, including the infection of two summer campers in the western part of the state that became a national case study.

Wolfe said it's highly unlikely the earlier cases and the current cluster are related.

However, worries over whether Tamiflu will remain an effective treatment against H1N1 are heightened by the flu virus' knack for evolving. Last year's strain of seasonal flu, for example, was widely resistant to the antiviral medicine.

Dr. Megan Davies, state epidemiologist, said the H1N1 virus continues to cause a relatively mild bout of illness, so most people who get sick have no need for Tamiflu.

"The mutation is a moot point to most of us," Davies said.

The development arises as cases of flu are beginning to taper off in North Carolina. After hitting a peak in mid-October, the state reported 489 new flu cases last week through its surveillance of participating doctors' offices, clinics and hospitals. But another spike in flu cases is expected as seasonal flu starts circulating later this winter.

Davies said the best protection against illness is a flu shot. She said the state has ordered 1.5 million doses of H1N1 vaccine so far this fall, and most have been delivered.

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Matthews man killed at ASU

Butler High graduate Jay Derby, 20, was accidentally shot at party, police say.

By Ely Portillo
elyportillo@charlotteobserver.com
Posted: Monday, Nov. 23, 2009

An Appalachian State University student from Matthews was killed in Boone early Sunday in what police say was an accidental shooting at an off-campus party.

Jay Derby, 20, was a 2007 graduate of Butler High School studying business, his father Mike Derby said.

When Mike Derby last talked to his son, Jay Derby was planning his trip home for Thanksgiving break.

"He was doing well in school, his grades were good, he was looking forward to coming home," Mike Derby said. His son was one credit hour from being a junior and planned to graduate in 2011.

At about 5:30 a.m. Sunday, two Matthews police officers knocked on Mike and Susan Derbys' door.

"They said that Jay was shot while at a party," Mike Derby said. "It was a tragic accident."

The shooting was reported about 12:30 a.m. at the App South apartment complex on Faculty Street. The off-campus complex caters to students, according to its Web site.

"We thought it sounded like bowling upstairs," Melissa Vega, who lives in the apartment below, told Observer news partner WCNC.

Paramedics found Derby dead when they arrived.

Police have turned the case over to the Watauga County district attorney to decide if charges are warranted, according to WCNC reports.

Instead of preparing to spend Thanksgiving with his son, Mike Derby is planning his funeral.

When Jay Derby was young, Mike Derby coached him on baseball teams and taught him
saltwater fishing, which he said the pair loved doing together.

Mike Derby said his son enjoyed snowboarding and wakeboarding, but was happy doing almost anything. "He was one of those people who loves life and loves doing things with people," Mike Derby said.

Appalachian student Matthew Diggs knew Derby from their days together at Butler. "I was stunned" upon learning of the shooting, Diggs told WCNC. "He was one of the biggest-hearted guys. He could bring a smile to your face just off a stupid joke."

Derby fell in love with Appalachian somewhat unexpectedly. "He intended to go there for a few semesters, raise his grades and transfer to UNC," Mike Derby said.

But Derby soon realized Appalachian was where he wanted to stay. "He loved the mountains and loved App State," Mike Derby said. "He said, 'This is where I want to graduate from.'"

After school, Derby wanted to start a business. Said Mike Derby: "He wasn't sure what type of business, but he knew he wanted to... be his own man."

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Cuts bring distress to Meredith campus

Meredith College may have fewer than 2,300 students, but these scholars, along with teachers, staff and alumna, form a loyal and fiery group.

So when the possibility of budget cuts hit the Hillsborough Street campus this year, tempers boiled, rumors flew and students began gathering signatures.

It's a cycle that is repeating itself at colleges and universities nationwide as endowments shrink and the troubled economy dictates that more students need financial aid. But in an insulated world like Meredith, the Southeast's largest private women's institution, even the tiniest tweaks to programs or curriculum are amplified.

Administrators have cut about $1.4 million from this year's budget, discontinuing majors in French, women's studies and public history. Contributions to employee retirement accounts were stopped. Nineteen positions were eliminated in the spring, and five faculty members will lose their jobs soon because of the curriculum cuts. The reductions represent a 2.5 percent decrease from the $57 million budget set for 2009-2010.

A committee identified 11 majors for possible elimination, areas in which administrators say students were showing less interest. In addition to those cut, the list originally included religion and music.

"We were intellectually and emotionally involved in doing that review," said Meredith College President Maureen Hartford. "But we had to let go of some of those personal feelings and assumptions to do what needed to be done for the college."

Canceling the French major is "absurd," said Julia Houtchings, a 20-year-old French major from Siler City who started a petition in an effort to save the program. She became interested in the language in high school and plans to teach French or perhaps become an interpreter.

"I love the way it sounds," she said. "I love the way it looks. I love the influence it has on the English language."

Students such as Houtchings who are already majoring in the discontinued programs will be able to finish their degrees. Hartford herself earned a master's degree in French at UNC-Chapel Hill, so she understands the passion for the language. But at Meredith, that passion is dwindling. In the 2008-09 school year, just three students graduated with a degree in French.

Meredith was experiencing boom times just a few years ago. It constructed a science and math building, renovated dormitories and built a soccer field and track.

The campus is not alone in its budget crunch. Raleigh's Peace College, another private institution for women, saw its endowment shrink from $52 million to $37 million from the end of 2007 to the end of 2008. Peace College's current budget is $18.2 million. And UNC-Chapel Hill's endowment slipped from $2.2 billion to about $1.8 billion.
When Meredith students returned in August and learned about the budget-cutting proposals, the atmosphere was tense and stressful, said Amy Damone, student body president, who also serves as a student representative on the college budget committee.

They worried about the future of their programs, while they heard rumors from teachers about what might happen. More recently, administrators began holding forums to share the budget-cutting measures with students.

The brunt of cuts has fallen upon faculty and staff. There were no raises this year, and those making $90,000 or more were asked to take an additional voluntary 5 percent salary reduction. Along with the retirement cuts, the number of free classes that employees can take has been reduced from two to one.

Eloise Grathwohl, an English professor and chairwoman of the faculty council, has sent e-mail messages to faculty and staff, decrying further cuts to class offerings and advocating for a creative plan to return the school to growth.

"I think the faculty is realistic about this. We realize the atmosphere in which we're working," she said. "I'm convinced that when we come out of this situation that we'll be stronger."

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E-books' next test: school texts

BY JOSEPH GALANTE
Bloomberg News

As Sony's e-book devices vie with the Kindle to win over readers, the real showdown may come later: when a shift to electronic textbooks at schools threatens to eclipse the current market for the products.

Sony and Amazon.com's Kindle are both expanding into the academic world. Students at Blyth Academy in Toronto do all their reading on Sony devices, and five U.S. universities are testing the Kindle.

The days of students lugging around heavy textbooks may be numbered, said Sony executive Steve Haber.

``The only ones upset about this are going to be chiropractors,'' Haber, who oversees the digital reading unit, said this week in an interview. ``It makes perfect sense to move to education.''

Within five years, textbooks will be the biggest market for e-book devices, dwarfing sales to casual readers, predicts Sarah Epps, an analyst at Forrester Research in Cambridge, Mass. Corning, which is developing glass screens for e-readers, expects textbooks to fuel about 80 percent of demand for those components by 2019.

``Print will expire faster in the textbook world than in the trade book world,'' Epps said. ``The technical barriers will disappear and five years is enough for the content to catch up with demand. The potential is there.''

WAVE OF PRODUCTS

The Kindle accounts for about 60 percent of the U.S. digital reader market, while Tokyo-based Sony has 35 percent, according to Forrester.

Sales of digital reading devices will double next year to six million units, Forrester estimates. While the Kindle and Sony lead the field, Barnes & Noble has developed its own e-reader. And a wave of startups, including IReX Technologies BV and Plastic Logic, aim to win customer loyalty while the market is still young.

``When we talk to the folks in the industry, whether it's at the university or publishing level, everybody thinks, yes, things could be a lot less expensive if delivered electronically,'' said Ian Freed, a vice president at Amazon.com. ``With textbook publishing there is an opportunity to make everything a lot more convenient at a lower cost.''

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Amazon.com, based in Seattle, fell seven cents to $128.92 at 10:56 a.m. New York time in Nasdaq Stock Market trading. Sony declined 2.4 percent to 2,410 yen in Tokyo trading today.

Textbook companies are open to the idea of electronic versions, in part because they could reduce sales of used textbooks. An electronic book can't be transferred to another Kindle, so there's no "used" version to worry about.

``That's a revenue stream publishers and authors are not participating in," said Frank Lyman, executive vice president at CourseSmart, an online marketplace started by five publishing companies to sell their textbooks.

E-textbooks accounted for about 3 percent of total U.S. college textbook spending during the current school semester, according to Student Monitor in Ridgewood, N.J. Digital textbooks may reach 20 percent of total textbook sales in five years, CourseSmart's Lyman said.

The transition to digital ``can't happen quickly enough," said Rik Kranenburg, group president for higher education professional and international publishing at New York-based McGraw-Hill. ``The books and digital products will merge and become much larger than the market for traditional content providers."

**BLIND STUDENTS**

E-readers face other challenges in the textbook market. The University of Wisconsin-Madison and Syracuse University said last week that they won't recommend the Kindle for their schools unless Amazon.com makes it easier for blind students to use the product.

Intel introduced a handheld device this month for $1,499 that reads printed text aloud.

The market for digital textbooks goes beyond colleges. There are 68 million potential customers in the United States if you include primary and secondary schools, according to the National Center of Education Statistics.

The shift also could be a boon for component makers, including Corning. ``I see a lot of possibilities for electronic textbooks," said Jill VanDewoestine, a program manager at the Corning, N.Y.-based company. ``The availability of color displays is really going to enable this whole new market."

For now, most e-readers are black and white. The Kindle DX model, which Amazon.com released in May, has a 9.7-inch screen and costs $489. IRex, based in Eindhoven, Netherlands, makes a device with an 8.1-inch screen for $399.

Sony has multiple versions of its reader, including a touch-screen model, and Barnes & Noble unveiled a $259 reading device called the Nook last month.
Pa. university students must pass fitness class

By KATHY MATHESON Associated Press Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A Pennsylvania university's requirement that overweight students take a fitness course to graduate has raised the hackles of students and the eyebrows of health and legal experts.

Officials at historically black Lincoln University said Friday that the school is simply concerned about high rates of obesity and diabetes, especially in the African-American community.

"We know we're in the midst of an obesity epidemic," said James L. DeBoy, chairman of Lincoln's department of health, physical education and recreation. "We have an obligation to address this head on, knowing full well there's going to be some fallout."

The fallout began this week on Lincoln's campus about 45 miles southwest of Philadelphia, where seniors — the first class affected by the mandate — began realizing their last chance to take the class would be this spring.

Tiana Lawson, a 21-year-old senior, wrote in this week's edition of The Lincolinian, the student newspaper, that she "didn't come to Lincoln to be told that my weight is not in an acceptable range. I came here to get an education."

In an interview Friday, Lawson said she has no problem with getting healthy or losing weight. But she does have a problem with larger students being singled out.

"If Lincoln truly is concerned about everyone being healthy, then everyone should have to take this gym class, not just people who happen to be bigger," she said.

The mandate, which took effect for freshmen entering in fall 2006, requires students to get tested for their body mass index, a measure of weight to height.

A normal BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9. Students with one that's 30 or above — considered obese — are required to take a class called "Fitness for Life," which meets three hours a week.

The course involves walking, aerobics, weight training and other physical activities, as well as information on nutrition, stress and sleep, DeBoy said.

As of this fall, DeBoy estimated about 80 seniors — 16 percent of the class — had not had their body mass index tested nor taken the fitness class. Some of those students will likely be exempt from taking the class once they get their BMI results, he said.

Health experts applaud the school's intent, if not its execution. Mark Rothstein, director of the bioethics institute at the University of Louisville's School of Medicine, said being forced to disclose such health information is "at least awkward and often distasteful."

And it doesn't necessarily lead to the best outcomes, he said, noting that "when the (health) goals are imposed on people, they don't do that well in meeting them."

DeBoy stressed that students are not required to lose weight or lower their BMI; they must only pass the class through attendance and participation.

Some experts said recent amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act might lead to exemptions for morbidly obese students, who could argue that participating in the class would be dangerous.
Also, students need more than exercise, said Marcia Costello, a registered dietitian in the Philadelphia area. The university should make sure its dining halls and vending machines offer healthy choices, she said.

Costello, an assistant professor of nursing at Villanova University, also noted that body mass index can be misleading. Since muscle weighs more than fat, "it is possible to be overweight and still be physically fit," she said.

Lawson, a mass communications major, said while she believes her current BMI would exempt her from the class, she's going to take it anyway "because I would like to be healthier."

"This was a decision that I made," she wrote in The Lincolonian, "and that's the way it ought to be."

Lincoln University: www.lincoln.edu

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Atheist student groups flower on college campuses

By ERIC GORSKI (AP) - 1 day ago

AMES, Iowa — The sign sits propped on a wooden chair, inviting all comers: "Ask an Atheist."

Whenever a student gets within a few feet, Anastasia Bodnar waves and smiles, trying to make a good first impression before eyes drift down to a word many Americans rank down there with "socialist."

Bodnar is the happy face of atheism at Iowa State University. Once a week at this booth at a campus community center, the PhD student who spends most of her time researching the nutritional traits of corn takes questions and occasional abuse while trying to raise the profile of religious skepticism.

"A lot of people on campus either don't know we exist or are afraid of us or hate us," says Bodnar, president of the ISU Atheist and Agnostic Society. "People assume we're rabble-rousing, when we're one of the gentlest groups on campus."

As the stigma of atheism has diminished, campus atheists and agnostics are coming out of the closet, fueling a sharp rise in the number of clubs like the 10-year-old group at Iowa State.

Campus affiliates of the Secular Student Alliance, a sort of Godless Campus Crusade for Christ, have multiplied from 80 in 2007 to 100 in 2008 and 174 this fall, providing the atheist movement new training grounds for future leaders. In another sign of growing acceptance, at least three universities, including Harvard, now have humanist chaplains meeting the needs of the not-so-spiritual.

With the growth has come soul-searching — or the atheist equivalent — about what secular campus groups should look like. It's part of a broader self-examination in the atheist movement triggered by the rise of the so-called "new atheists," best-selling authors who denigrate religion and blame it for the world's ills.

Should student atheist groups go it alone or build bridges with Christian groups? Organize political protests or quiet discussion groups? Adopt the militant posture of the new atheists? Or wave and smile?

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As teenagers move into young adulthood, some leave God behind. But not in huge numbers.

More than three-quarters of young adults taking part in the National Study of Youth and Religion profess a belief in God. But almost 7 percent fewer believe in God as young adults (ages 18 to 23) than did as teenagers, according to the study, which is tracking the same group of young people as they mature.

What young adults are less likely to believe in is religion. The number of those who describe themselves as "not religious" nearly doubled, to 27 percent, in young adulthood.

Growing hostility toward religion was found, too. About 1 in 10 young adults are "irreligious" — or actively against religion — after virtually none of them fit that description as teenagers.

At Iowa State, most of the club's roughly 30 members are "former" somethings, mostly Christians. Many stress that their lives are guided not by anti-religiousness, but belief in science, logic and reason.

"The goal," said Andrew Severin, a post-doctoral researcher in bioinformatics, "should be to obtain inner peace for yourself and do random acts of kindness for strangers."

Severin calls himself a "spiritual atheist." He doesn't believe in God or the supernatural but thinks experiences like meditation or brushes with nature can produce biochemical reactions that feel spiritual.

When the ISU club began in 1999, it was mostly a discussion group. But it soon became clear that young people who leave organized religion miss something: a sense of community. So the group added movie and board-game nights and, more recently, twice-monthly Sunday brunches to the calendar.

"It's nice to be around people who aren't going to bash me for believing in nothing," said Ericlyn Rector, a freshman from Sioux City who, like others, described community as the club's greatest asset.

Members also seek to engage their peers at Iowa State, a 28,000-student science and technology school where the student body leans conservative. There's a "Brewhouse and Views" night at a local coffee house and talks by visiting speakers common to any college campus.

"This is not a group of angry atheists. It's a group of very exuberant atheists," said faculty sponsor Hector Avalos, a secular humanist and well-known Biblical scholar who used to be a Pentecostal preacher. "Their primary aim is not to destroy the faith of Christians on campus. It's more live and let live."

The "Ask an Atheist" booth is the club's most visible outreach. On a recent Friday, a handful of members stand ready to intercept students on their way to eat lunch or withdraw money from a nearby ATM.

Traffic is slow. Scott Moseley, a Bettendorf, Iowa, senior, stops for a polite conversation.