ECU construction management program receives donation

The Coastal Plains Chapter of the Professional Construction Estimators Association has made an investment in the future of East Carolina University’s Department of Construction Management.

The PCEA presented a $5,000 check to Douglas Kruger, ECU construction management professor. The donation will benefit the Kruger-Williams Society, a foundation set up to endow the program in their honor.

Kruger and Sue Williams, an administrative assistant in construction management, will retire in June 2009 after devoting more than 60 combined years of service to East Carolina and the Department of Construction Management.

Jim Parker, a construction management alum and president of the PCEA Coastal Plains Chapter, said Dr. Kruger made an impact on him during the numerous classes he taught. Additionally, he said when he ran into Williams 16 years after graduation, she still remembered his name.

“Dr. Kruger and Mrs. Sue have built the construction management into one of the top five programs in the country,” said Parker, also an estimator for WIMCO General Contractors in Washington, N.C. “Each member of our chapter has benefitted personally and professionally for their efforts and this is a chance for us to show our appreciation.”

The overall goal of the Kruger-Williams Society is raise $6 million to operationally endow the construction program. Among the ways in which this money will be used includes, but is not limited to:

- Student activities
- Student and faculty research opportunities
- Faculty and staff development
- Improving learning capabilities in and out of the classroom

“I have been associated with the PCEA Coastal Plains Chapter since 1991, and it’s a great group of people” Kruger said. “We have always looked at our program as a family. Every year it gets bigger and better, but the people, our students, faculty and alumni, are what is the most important to our success.”

Since the foundation began a few months ago, the Kruger-Williams Society has raised more than $43,000 with hopes of eclipsing the $1 million mark before their retirement in June.

For more information, please contact Chris Stansbury, communications coordinator for the College of Technology and Computer Science, at 328-9611.
ECU honors outstanding employees

East Carolina University Business Services presented Quest for Excellence Awards for outstanding service to five employees during its annual summer recognition luncheon.

Receiving awards were Ginger Ferrell, Chuck Boulineau and Tim Daughtry of Greenville, Monique Barrett of Winterville and Donny Simmons of Grifton. The winners were selected by a committee of peers and received prizes from Business Services and the university's Treasured Pirate program.

Ferrell received the First Mate Award for consistently standing out as a team builder and motivator in her job as an administrative support specialist with Dowdy Student Stores.

Ferrell is a graduate of D.H. Conley High School, attended Pitt Community College, and is pursuing an accounting degree at ECU.

Boulineau received the Navigator Award for extraordinary efforts behind the scenes. As tech support analyst in the Department of Materials Management, one of his primary duties is serving as system administrator for ECU’s Purchase Order and Requisition Tracking e-procurement system.

Boulineau has worked at the university for six years. He is a 1996 ECU graduate with a degree in recreation and leisure studies and in 2001 earned an associate’s degree from Pitt Community College in computer programming.

Barrett received the Captain Award for superior customer service. As an administrative support associate in the mail services department, she is responsible for metering, sorting and delivering mail to the residence halls on campus and assisting in the billing process.

Barrett is a 2005 graduate of ECU with a bachelor's degree in business education information technologies.

Simmons received the Explorer Award for outstanding dedication and initiative. He is a bulk mail assistant at University Printing and Graphics.

In February, Simmons had to take on additional duties when his supervisor went on extended medical leave. He has worked at University Printing and Graphics for four years and is a graduate of Kinston High School.

Daughtry received the Business Services Leadership Award. He supervises a staff of 15 as manager of Central Stores and Receiving. His duties include purchasing for Central Warehouse and managing computerized inventory in accordance with state purchasing policies and procedures.

Daughtry was instrumental in providing the campus with bottled water during a water contamination crisis.

Daughtry, a 1981 graduate of N.C. State University, has been employed at ECU since 2004.

Shining Start Awards were presented to James Artis, Paul Goodson and Danny Langley with University Printing and Graphics; Terry Windham and Betsy Everett with Dowdy Student Stores; Katie Heacox of the 1 Card Office, and Karen Simmons with Business Services for their performances as new employees.
Cherie Speller: Cyberspace actions can have consequences in the real world

By Cherie Speller
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, November 23, 2008

Earlier this year, a workshop for sorority women at East Carolina University shared some of the pitfalls of social networking sites.

In a presentation called “Facebook and MySpace: Are They Really Your Friend?” Peter Romary, the director of student legal services at ECU, warned the women that once something gets into cyberspace, it can be hard to delete. With that in mind, he offered a rule to apply: "Do not put anything online that you would not be proud for grandmother to see."

Web postings by teachers in Charlotte and police officers in Durham suggest that employers should follow grandma on the list of rules to apply.

Several teachers in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district were disciplined for posting images and material on Facebook that school officials found objectionable, including one teacher who wrote, "I hate my students!"

In the story by the Associated Press, district spokeswoman Nora Carr said "several" employees are disciplined each year for what they post on the Internet. The district has an investigator specializing in such issues and it checks networking sites before hiring, she said.

And then internal investigators are examining whether some Durham police officers posted derogatory remarks about President-elect Barack Obama on their MySpace pages. In the AP article, Police Chief Jose Lopez Sr. said even though the remarks were made on a personal Web page, they could violate the department's code of conduct.

I know that social networking sites offer numerous benefits. They are designed to allow people to share information, chats, photos and videos with a network of "friends."

I have family members and friends who have pages on the sites for those reasons and some specific purposes, including chronicling a loved one’s journey while fighting a terminal disease.

During his presentation, Romary said he has a site to be more accessible to students. And, even Obama and Sen. John McCain each have a site to promote their political agendas.

Even though I don't have personal Web pages, I get how they can be fun and even useful. What I don't get is the tendency to display unscrupulous behavior, obscene language and derogatory remarks.

People forget that the Internet is the latest technology for mass communication; it's not a place to share deviant behavior.

As the teachers and officers learned, personal doesn't always mean private, and not everyone who sees your site will be a friend.

Cherie Speller is associate editor for readership and community news at The Daily Reflector. Contact her at (252) 329-9512 or cspeller@coxnc.com.

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Governor appoints local surgeon to state medical panel

The Daily Reflector

Sunday, November 23, 2008

Gov. Mike Easley this month named Greenville surgeon Dr. Paul S. Camnitz to the North Carolina Medical Board.

The 12-member board is the agency that licenses and regulates physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners in North Carolina. Its membership includes doctors, members of the public and a physician extender, such as a physician assistant or nurse.

Easley made four appointments to the board this month.

Besides Camnitz, he tapped a Raleigh ophthalmologist, Dr. William Foster, and reappointed two current board members to new three-year terms.

Camnitz is a clinical professor of surgery and head of the Division of Otolaryngology at the Brody School of Medicine.

A native of New York City, he has spent most of his life in North Carolina, graduating from Grainger High School in Kinston. He earned both his undergraduate and medical degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

He has served as chief of staff at Pitt County Memorial Hospital and has served on the boards of numerous other health-care and civic organizations in Pitt County.

Camnitz has won teaching awards from students at the medical school, and has been recognized 12 times since 1983 as Outstanding Teacher. Surgery, family medicine and emergency medicine residents chose him for awards in 2003 and 2004. In 2006, he was given the Distinguished Service Award by the UNC School of Medicine.

He is board certified in otolaryngology and facial plastic and reconstructive surgery.

Camnitz and his wife, Jill, have two grown children.

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Editorial: Stay low - Tuition hikes troublesome for N.C.

Sunday, November 23, 2008

North Carolina's constitution makes clear the state places great value on making higher education available to all by mandating it be as free from expense as possible. That principle has served the state well, and helped develop one of the strongest university systems in the country.

However, keeping tuition low should be given more deference when times are tough for North Carolina families, as they are now. And those schools considering steep increases should consider the harm they are likely to inflict as they price higher education beyond the reach of a greater share of citizens.

The Board of Trustees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill voted Thursday to increase tuition by 6.5 percent for in-state undergraduate students as well as a number of increases in student fees. That represents the largest tuition hike possible in the state university system, and sees the state's flagship school join North Carolina State University, UNC-Wilmington, Appalachian State, UNC-Greensboro and N.C. Central Universities in considering or implementing tuition increases.

Those schools are toiling to thrive in a contracting economy. The state is looking to reduce spending in the face of a projected budget shortfall even as enrollment continues to grow. Requests for need-based financial aid have increased dramatically and many schools are struggling in the turbulent financial markets. In July, Chapel Hill reported $320 million in investment losses on its $2.5 billion endowment.

Locally, the East Carolina University Board of Trustees considered a more modest tuition and fee increase of 2.41 percent at its meeting this week before electing to postpone a decision until next month. That represents a thoughtful strategy for the state's third largest university since board members are likely to have a more thorough picture of the financial climate at that time.

They should resist any increase for as long as possible. East Carolina's reputation of providing a strong education at an affordable price is well earned, and important to maintain considering it serves a region with a high rate of poverty.

For students, a higher education degree represents an opportunity for upward social mobility and provides the foundation to expand the limits of human knowledge. But it also serves the state because most public universities are fiscal engines for their communities so their expansion is an economic development strategy.

Tuition increases threaten to price a college degree out of the reach of some citizens, those who may have the talent to thrive in a university setting but not the means to afford attendance. North Carolina schools should be wary of that, and careful as they consider implementation of these hikes.
ECU launches Holiday Drive to help needy families

By ECU News Bureau

Saturday, November 22, 2008

East Carolina University’s Business Services has launched its annual Holiday Drive to help local needy families. Now in its 14th year, the drive collects toys, food and clothing from members of the ECU community to donate to local charities during the holiday season.

“There are a number of other wonderful holiday projects being held at ECU, such as the WZMB student radio station’s food and Teddy bear drive. Our holiday project is just another way to get involved,” said Leslie Craigie with ECU’s Business Services Marketing Department.

ECU departments will be participating by sponsoring a family, child or an adult in a local rest home through Pitt County Social Services. Departments also will put a “general collection” box in their lobbies, hold canned food drives or collect money to buy a bicycle and helmet for a child, Craigie said.

Donations of toys, food, warm clothing and household supply items can be left in collection boxes in places around campus through Dec. 12. They will be given to charitable agencies to benefit the people of Pitt County. Agencies include, Pitt County Social Services Children’s Protective Services Unit, The REAL Crisis Center, New Directions Family Violence Shelter, Flynn Christian Home, Pitt County Adult Services and the N.C. Food Bank.

For more information and for collection box locations, visit http://www.ecu.edu/services/HolidayDrive.cfm.

Joyner Library exhibits art by grad students

The gallery space at ECU’s Joyner Library features the work of graduate students now through Dec. 10.

The inaugural exhibit and competition, housed on the library’s second floor, includes dozens of works in ceramics, illustration, metals, painting, photography, sculpture, textiles and wood by students in the School of Art and Design.

“The Joyner Library took on a new, exciting direction to host current issues in contemporary fine arts, creative research and activity,” said Hanna Jubran, an ECU art professor who advised the Joyner Library Exhibit Committee. “By hosting this event, the library opened a new venue for artists to exhibit and catalog their work.”

USDA supports FoodMASTER initiative

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded a $150,000 Higher Education Challenge Grant to an ECU project that will use food and agriculture to help college students learn math, science and nutrition concepts.

ECU’s Department of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Department of Child Development and Family Relations received the grant, which will support a higher education component of the FoodMASTER initiative.

This is the second grant awarded to FoodMASTER this fall. The project received a $504,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health to support the development and distribution of a K-12 curriculum.

FoodMASTER is an interactive, food-based curriculum designed for students in kindergarten through college. It is based on the premise that children and adults interact with food every day and, without realizing it, are exposed to mathematical and scientific concepts each time they prepare food.

With the USDA grant, ECU researchers will develop college courses that use food to engage students in math, science and nutrition concepts and help them learn about the nature of living systems and the
promotion of healthy living.

The project will offer an on-campus gateway foods course and a service-learning course to nutrition students and family and consumer sciences education students. It will also offer an online course open to all.

“The gateway food science course will offer an inquiry-based approach to teaching food science,” said Virginia Carraway-Stage, registered diettitian and the project’s coordinator. “We are developing video modules around farmers’ markets, lab kitchen demonstrations and grocery store experiences and will feature chefs and food experts. The College of Human Ecology’s newly-renovated lab kitchen will take center stage in our classes, but all of our food demonstrations must be reproducible for online students using their own kitchens as labs.”

Melani Duffrin, ECU nutrition and dietetics faculty member, will supervise the project, develop multimedia materials and teach the sophomore-level courses. Nancy Harris, ECU nutrition and dietetics faculty member, will be the primary instructor for the senior level, serving-learning course.

ECU nurse practitioner wins state award

Dr. Linda Steele, director of the family nurse practitioner and adult nurse practitioner concentrations in ECU’s College of Nursing, has been awarded the 2009 American Academy of Nurse Practitioners State Award for Excellence.

The award is given annually to a dedicated nurse practitioner in each state. The honor was announced during National Nurse Practitioner Week, Nov. 9-15.

“It recognizes Dr. Steele’s excellence and dedication to practice, both key elements of the success of our nurse practitioner options here at the ECU College of Nursing,” said Dr. Sylvia T. Brown, acting dean and nursing professor.

Nurse practitioners are licensed, advanced practice nurses who provide high quality health care services in many settings such as health clinics, physician offices and hospitals.

Steele, an associate professor at ECU, received her bachelor’s degree in nursing and a master’s degree in psychiatric nursing from Southern Illinois University and a doctorate from the University of Texas. She has been a certified adult nurse practitioner for 30 years and holds a post master’s certificate in counseling.

She will be recognized during the 2009 AANP National Conference in June.

Farrell inducted to American Academy

Peter A. Farrell, ECU professor of Exercise and Sport Sciences, has been inducted to the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education (AAKPE).

The academy’s membership is considered a “who’s who” list of the top individuals in the fields of Kinesiology and Physical Education. In order to be elected, individuals must be nominated by a current member, be engaged in professional and/or scientific work in kinesiology or physical education and have demonstrated competence in the profession for at least 10 years.

Since the AAKPE was established in 1926, 491 individuals nationwide have been inducted into the Academy as Active Fellows. Farrell was inducted into the organization at a September ceremony.

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East Carolina holds Adapted Sports Day

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, November 22, 2008

The staff of East Carolina University Campus Recreation and Wellness spread the word on the benefits of sports and recreation to the wider Pitt County community Saturday, and the word was “fun.”

The activities and speakers during the 12th annual Adapted Sports Day reminded visitors to the Student Recreation Center that everyone, even the disabled, can enjoy the benefits of sports. It only requires a few innovative adaptations and the help of friends to transform a person in a wheelchair into a hockey warrior, rugby ruffian or volleyball star, said event host David Gaskins, ECU’s associate director of programs for campus recreation and wellness.

“Everyone needs to stay active for health, personal recreation and spiritual rejuvenation,” Gaskins said. “It provides such great satisfaction to people when they have something to look forward to doing and achieving.”

The adapted sports program at ECU is tailored primarily to the campus community but also prepares them for the wider world they will serve later, Gaskins said.

“We have two goals for this program,” Gaskins said. “We want to provide something special to serve our population of students who have a wide variety of disabilities that either impair their vision or mobility. We also have a huge program in adaptive physical education and recreation, and this is a way to provide students with practical experience that just can’t be duplicated in a classroom.”

The turnout of able-bodied student volunteers that are necessary to bring sports activities to the disabled was so big, Gaskins said, that some had to be thanked and turned away from this year’s event.

Activities included wheelchair versions of hockey, tennis, volleyball, rugby and fencing. For bowling enthusiasts, a wide range of adapted equipment is available for people of all ability levels to participate and compete. Ramps, ball pushers and ropes make the sport accessible even to the blind and visually impaired.

A slalom course was set up for wheelchairs with stops along the way to shoot baskets, pull ropes and navigate obstacles.

In all of the arenas, the volunteers were positioned to facilitate the games by retrieving balls, positioning players and even serving as referees.

“With the proper modifications, there is a way for just about everyone with a disability to participate in almost any sport,” Gaskins said.

The technology used to help people adapt for sports is, in some cases, nearly as amazing as the people it benefits.

Wheelchairs varied in shape, size and construction materials, equipped with straps and other types of tools and attachments for their athletes. The prosthetic legs worn by some competitors were made from highly advanced composite materials, with electronic devices attached to make adjustments as the user moves with it.

Most of the technology is the product of research to serve veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, who return by the tens of thousands with amputated limbs and service-related disabilities.
The theme of this year's event was "Stars and Stripes: Reaching New Heights."

The keynote address was given by eastern North Carolina native and Iraq War veteran Ed Salau, who spoke in great detail about his experience and the recovery process he underwent after he lost his leg in 2004 to a rocket propelled grenade.

"We're here today to celebrate the need to stay active despite disabilities," Salau said to a gym filled with people in wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs.

"The lesson I learned was to move forward. I didn't ask whether I could, but rather, 'How can I?'" Salau said.

The answer almost always involves reaching out to friends and family for help, he said, but that is not something that should hinder a disabled person.

"I have really good friends that ask me if I want to, and I say 'Sure,' and deal with the consequences later," Salau said.

He told the story of how he put together a prosthetic leg from spare parts he had and, with his friend's help, climbed Mount Ranier in Washington with a blind companion.

Diane Majewski, associate director of disability support services for ECU and volunteer coordinator for the event, said there is no shortage of people wanting to help the campus's disabled population.

"It's really just a matter of connecting a disabled student with the resources and people that can make it possible, and then show them how," Majewski said.

The 2008 award for the outstanding participant in the ECU adapted sports program went to Elexis Gillette, a former ECU student and two-time Paralympic medal winner in the long jump. Gillette praised the program, saying it has given much to the field of adaptive recreation.

Majewski looked around the gym packed with people in wheelchairs and those standing around them.

"There are no major differences between students with disabilities and those with able bodies," she said. "Everybody can participate in activities, everybody has to adapt and we're more alike than we are different."

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Economy will not stop ECU growth

By JOSH HUMPHRIES
The Daily Reflector

Friday, November 21, 2008

The tough realities of today's economy will not keep the UNC system — including East Carolina University — from delivering what ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard called a "bold budget" to the state legislature next year.

Ballard told ECU's Board of Trustees on Friday that economic problems probably will lead to cuts at every university in the UNC system, but added that the system will move forward with its proposal for growth through UNC President Erskine Bowles to the General Assembly.

Among the items on ECU's wish list is funding for indigent patient care, an expensive function of the Brody School of Medicine.

Ballard said that funding is difficult to obtain, because ECU does not own its own hospital like UNC-Chapel Hill. Still, treating patients who cannot pay is seen as part of the school's mission.

"It is absolutely essential that we get some reimbursement for the safety net that we provide for this region," he said.

The university also will seek $14 million for the first two years of operating funds for the School of Dentistry, and $300,000 for the East Carolina Heart Institute, set to open soon.

Ballard said the university will also try to get $15 million for a new bio-science building. "This is vital to recruiting great faculty and critical to the growth of east campus," Ballard said.

On Thursday, the board delayed action on tuition and fee increases after the executive committee determined that more information would be helpful before making a decision. The board will hold a special meeting in December to determine the rate increase of tuition and funding.

The executive committee to the board rejected a proposal from Ballard that would have raised tuition and fees by 2.41 percent. Several members of the committee indicated that the increase was too low, but a motion to raise the in-state tuition by 4.5 percent also failed.

Ballard's recommendation was lower than fee and tuition increases that are being considered at UNC-Chapel Hill, N.C. State, Unc-Wilmington, Appalachian State and UNC-Greensboro, where increases are being proposed at 5.5 percent or higher.

The Board of Governors limits tuition increases at the state's universities to a maximum of 6.5 percent a year.

ECU is the third largest school in the UNC system and ranks sixth for fees and seventh for tuition. Currently tuition is $2,445 and fees are $1,774.

The board also voted to pass along a report on climate change to Bowles that ultimately will end up with the legislature.

In July, Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight requested that North Carolina universities with research capabilities individually prepare reports on the potential effects of climate change on the state.

"Global Warming and Coastal North Carolina," the work of more than 60 ECU professors in an array of departments, details potential damages to the coast and makes recommendations on how state and local governments can prepare for those damages that may occur due to climate change.
3 with N.C. ties are Rhodes Scholars

SARAH LINDENFELD HALL, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

CARY - A UNC-Chapel Hill senior is headed to Oxford University next year as a Rhodes Scholar.

Aisha Ihab Saad of Cary learned this weekend that she was awarded the prestigious honor, which sends students to England for two to three years of graduate study.

Saad, who graduates in May, is majoring in environmental health sciences and Spanish. She plans to seek a master's degree in nature, society and environmental policy at Oxford.

Saad, 21, is particularly interested in studying environmental justice and bringing together opposing groups to create sustainable global development.

"It really is an awesome opportunity ... in such a forward-thinking institution," she said Sunday.

Saad has a Morehead-Cain Scholarship at UNC. The merit award pays for all four undergraduate years and four summer enrichment experiences. Saad said her education and experiences have helped to shape the career she’s pursuing now.

Saad has interned with government ministries in Peru and on the blood diseases ward of Cairo University's Teaching Hospitals. Last summer, she interned with Cherokee Investment Partners, which works to redevelop contaminated land. She went to India to better understand why activist groups there weren't supporting the company's plans.

But Saad's formative years helped shape some of her interests and abilities. Her family moved to the United States from Egypt when she was 6. She graduated from J.H. Rose High School in Greenville, N.C. Her parents are both college professors.

"Growing up, my family visited back and forth between Egypt and the U.S.," said Saad, the oldest of five children. "It became really apparent the contextual disparity."
Saad would eventually like to pursue a degree in environmental law.

Saad joins two other Rhode Scholars with North Carolina connections:

Alia Whitney-Johnson of Leicester, N.C., in Buncombe County, is a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology majoring in civil and environmental engineering. She is a former Truman Scholar and one of Glamour magazine's Top 10 College Women, according to MIT. She founded Emerge Global, a nonprofit organization that works to empower young Sri Lankan mothers made pregnant through rape and incest.

Julia Parker Goyer of Alabama is a 2007 Duke University graduate who created a program in which college athletes go to rural communities in developing countries to work with middle school-age children. Goyer was a varsity tennis player at Duke.

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Calmly answering the call at UNC

BY MATT EHLERS, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

CHAPEL HILL - Cynthia Snipes knows the man bleeds Carolina blue, so she's nice to him when he calls on Saturdays.

No, she'll say. Butch Davis can't come to the phone. He's coaching the football game you're watching on television. And no, neither can his boss. "Dick Baddour is not here on Saturdays," she says to him.

And on it goes for the campus operators at UNC-Chapel Hill: callers who disagree with team strategy and want to speak with football coaches and athletic directors during football games. Parents who want to make sure their freshmen are getting enough to eat. The occasional questions about Ouija boards, graduation tassels and directions to Chapel Hill -- from New York City.

It's not a job for everyone.

"It sounds crazy," says operator Cynthia Haymer, tapping her heart. "But you have to have it in here."

Four operators answer phones in the lower level of the R.B. House Undergraduate Library. If you call the main campus number -- 962-2211 -- during business hours or before 1 p.m. on Saturday, you will hear a friendly voice.

"Are you a real person?" is the No. 1 question the women say they receive.

Callers to the main numbers at N.C. State and Duke are greeted by live people as well, but UNC is the state's flagship public university and its operators are in a unique spot. For one, callers sometimes assume that the UNC number is one-stop shopping for any question regarding any of the UNC system's 16 schools. (It's not.) Plus, the word has gotten out that these operators will go the extra mile. People call about all kinds of crazy stuff.

In an average month, the women handle more than 12,000 calls. Many questions are
straightforward and are handled by the operators as they page through the campus directory or use Google for the answer. People need the number for professor so-and-so or wonder where they can park for basketball games.

Then there are the callers who defy explanation. A woman called once to ask about Ouija boards. Seems her son went to Virginia to visit his girlfriend, and when he returned home, he was acting funny. Could this be evil spirits?

Or the man, says manager Cherritta Nickerson-Salter, who called once a week to tell the women that drinking green tea saved his life. He just wanted them to know.

But there are unusual, heart-tugging calls as well. After the killing of student body president Eve Carson, a man wrote a song about her and called the main campus number. He wanted to sing it over the phone.

Another time, a soon-to-be graduate called the number in tears. She didn’t have a tassel to complete her graduation outfit, and she was scheduled to receive her diploma that day.

Standing outside the closed student store, she was desperate to get inside to buy a tassel, even as the operator could hear her parents in the background, telling her it would be OK to graduate without one. But the operator managed to track down someone inside the store.

Later, the parents called to say thank you.

Those kinds of calls help make up for the other sort. Not that these women are afraid to handle them.

"When it's a ridiculous call, you have to put that business voice on them," says operator Phyllis Alston. "I don't have to talk to them for five hours."

So if you need something, go ahead and call. But no foolishness, hear?
matt.ehlers@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4889

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College chiefs take pay cuts

Those with fattest salaries giving back

BY TAMAR LEWIN
THE NEW YORK TIMES

In the week since The Chronicle of Higher Education published its annual survey of university presidents' pay — a week in which the nation's economic troubles worsened — several of the highest-paid presidents said that they would give back part of their pay or forgo their raises.

Pat Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, said he had never heard of such a wave of givebacks.

"When you see a cluster like this," he said, "it seems like sort of belated recognition that this presidential pay thing has gotten out of hand. People are getting tuition increases, some faculty are facing layoffs — it just doesn't look too good for presidents, no matter how capable they are, to be getting so much money. Americans have had a touching faith in higher education; it's losing its good image with the public."

The chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis, Mark S. Wrighton, announced on Thursday that he would take a 5 percent cut from his base salary on Jan. 1 and another 5 percent reduction on July 1.

Wrighton, who announced his decision in an e-mail message to the university community, also pointed out that the university's endowment had declined about 25 percent since July 1, that some capital projects were being delayed and that faculty salary increases would be lower than in past years.

Wrighton said he had a base salary of about $560,000 and a total compensation package of about $780,000. He also earns about $360,000 from serving on two corporate boards.

"This was well under way before The Chronicle came out," Wrighton said. "I'm generously compensated. I know that. We're in very difficult financial times. I'm in a position that is not at risk, but the rest of the university community, especially in administration and support, must be wondering if their jobs are secure. I wanted to let the community know that I'm sensitive to the situation."

On Tuesday, Amy Gutmann, the president of the University of Pennsylvania, and her husband made a $100,000 gift to the university to support undergraduate research. Gutmann was one of eight private university presidents earning more than $1 million in 2006, a 40 percent increase from the previous year's pay, according to the Chronicle survey.

In Washington state, where there is talk of deep cuts in financing of higher education, the two highest-paid university presidents announced givebacks last week.

Show of sensitivity

Mark Emmert, the president of the University of Washington — and the nation's second-highest-paid public university president, according to The Chronicle survey — decided to forgo a raise this year. Emmert is paid about $900,000 a year from the university, plus $340,000 for serving on two corporate boards.

The president of Washington State University, Elson S. Floyd, who made $600,000 in his first year at the university and received a $125,000 raise over the summer, said he would take a voluntary $100,000 pay cut in response to budget problems.

The median salary for public university presidents was $427,400, The Chronicle said.
Louisburg College gets new boss

By Jane Stancill
Staff Writer

Louisburg College, the only private two-year college in North Carolina, named a new president Friday.

Mark David La Branche, senior vice president of external affairs at Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Ala., will lead Louisburg in its quest for survival.

Late last year, the financially troubled school was warned that it could lose accreditation. That would bring almost certain demise for the college, because students would no longer be eligible for federal financial aid.

Louisburg's last president, J. Michael Clyburn, resigned after less than a year. He had cut jobs at the heavily indebted college, which revived a long-dormant football program in 2005 in an effort to attract more students.

Last month, a review team from the Southern regional accrediting agency visited Louisburg and cited progress, according to a news release from the college, but Louisburg remains on probation. The appointment of a new president signals the college's intent to turn its fortunes around.

La Branche has been an administrator for six years at Huntingdon, which has been on probation by the same accrediting agency but subsequently regained its financial footing and increased enrollment by 40 percent in five years. At Huntingdon, La Branche helped oversee an increase in fundraising, which will be key to Louisburg's future.

"I believe there's a lot of opportunity at Louisburg," La Branche said in a telephone interview Friday. "I believe it has its place among higher education institutions in North Carolina and in the Southeast, and it has a very important mission."

Like Huntingdon, Louisburg is affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

Its status as a two-year college may be part of its problem. A private junior college has difficulty competing against public community colleges, which offer a two-year degree at a much lower cost than Louisburg's annual price of more than $21,000 for students who live on campus.

Louisburg has long provided a supportive environment for students who were not ready for a four-year institution. That mission is still alive, La Branche said.

"It's a place where students can begin to accomplish their dreams," he said.

La Branche himself attended a two-year college at the start of his higher education career. He went on to earn a bachelor of arts degree with a major in philosophy from the University of South Alabama, a master's of divinity from Emory University, and a doctor of ministry from Boston University School of Theology.

He has also been active in the public schools, serving as president of the Montgomery County (Ala.) Board of Education.

He was one of two finalists for the Louisburg job. The other was Judy Blankenship Cheatham, an English professor and administrator at Greensboro College.

The two candidates visited the campus this week to interview with faculty, staff and students. La Branche said he was upbeat about his new job, which starts Jan. 1.

"I see a lot of hope at Louisburg, I really do," La Branche said.

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DHHS sells a cabinet — files and all

BY LYNN BONNER
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It was just a few weeks ago that the state Department of Health and Human Services had to apologize after a laptop with tens of thousands of unsecured Social Security numbers was stolen from an employee.

It turns out the agency’s paper records weren’t much safer.

The state sold as surplus a file cabinet from the Caswell Developmental Center, a state facility in Kinston for people with mental retardation, to a buyer from Aberdeen on Oct. 9. The cabinet came with something extra — 57 client files still in it.

The buyer notified the state of his find Oct. 30, and the state retrieved the files that day, said Mark Van Sciver, a spokesman for the agency.

Twenty of the files have been reviewed so far, Van Sciver said. Two had personal information, and one had a client’s Medicaid number. The records were dated from 1989 to 1994.

The files were from a clinic that catered to people who needed special tools to help them communicate, Van Sciver said.

“The office had been moved a couple of times,” Van Sciver said. “Everyone connected to the files is no longer there. At some point, the file cabinets ended up in the surplus area. Quite frankly, they should have been checked.”

The agency will decide whether people whose information was accidentally sold with the cabinets will be told, Van Sciver said.