WINTERVILLE — Student loan debt now makes up the largest portion of personal debt in the country, State Treasurer Janet Cowell said during a visit with students Monday.

The debt surpasses the amount even racked up on the nation’s credit cards, Cowell said during a discussion at Pitt Community College about the challenges of funding education.

Cowell is visiting three community colleges this week to promote the “Advance Money Management for Community College Students” online tool. It’s designed to help students evaluate their finances and determine how much they can expect to pay back after they graduate.

“We are trying to make sure that North Carolinians trying to fund their education can do that without getting in over their heads,” Cowell said.
PCC President Dennis Massey said his school processed a record number of financial aid applications this year because of tuition increases and more people furthering their education because of job losses.

The college had received 12,000 financial aid applications by Monday, according to Joanne Ceres, director of enrollment management and registrar.

Out of those applicants, more than 3,900 students received almost $8.4 million in Pell Grants, and more than 4,000 students received $8.6 million in loans.

Nearly 20 students from Pitt and Edgecombe community colleges discussed with Cowell how they were paying for school.

Many of the students said they were limiting their use of loans.

Obtaining financial aid can be frustrating because there is an extensive application process, said Ada White, who is attending PCC. Financial aid advisers are helpful, she said.

Aaron Mullen, who is studying business administration at Pitt Community College, said he also found the financial aid process frustrating.

Mullen received a few academic scholarships but didn’t qualify for most grants because his parents earned too much money, he said.

While his parents helped him pay for this semester, he is applying for a loan to pay for next semester’s expenses.

“The main issue with a lot of students is they work 40 hours a week and they find they can’t get (aid),” said Alice Brown, who is studying medical office administration at Pitt.

Others at the meeting had lost their jobs and were struggling to support their families while funding college.

Brenda Heath was laid off from her job two years ago and no longer receives unemployment. She participates in work study to avoid loans.
While work study and grants cover her school expenses, it doesn’t provide much money for her family’s living expenses, making her husband the sole breadwinner, she said.

Heath is studying to be a medical assistant and would like to continue on to become a licensed practical nurse, she said, but it’s unlikely she’ll be able to do so because of the expense.

Brandy Ham, a Wilson resident attending Edgecombe Community College, said she was a regular visitor to her school’s financial aid office and always was searching for new scholarships and grants.

Many community college students are able to complete their education without loans, said Steve Brooks with the Community College Foundation of North Carolina. But with more people returning to school because of job losses, loans are being used more often, he said.

Brooks demonstrated how the CFNC.org website allows students to calculate their school and living expenses, determine how much money they need and what resources are available.

There also is an option showing students the average starting pay for jobs in the state and whether those jobs would allow them to pay off their student loans.

The Advance Money Management for Community College Students is available at cfnc.org. Find it by clicking on “financial literacy” under the Check it Out column.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or 252-329-9570.
Letter: Guns on campus not the solution
Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Regarding the Nov. 23 letter, “Allow legal firearms on campus,” do you people think this is the wild, wild West? What if guns were allowed on campus, and the person with the umbrella had been shot by a gun-toting student or faculty member because that person thought he was carrying a gun, just as people originally thought?

What are you going to say, “Oops, my bad?”

You say school zones would become safer because the bad guys wouldn’t know who was strapped, therefore they would be less inclined to start something. I say if the bad guy knew guns were allowed on campus, instead of being more methodical in his actions, he would take out as many innocent victims as possible in as little time before he left the scene. And what if you have the law-abiding, gun-carrying students misidentifying another innocent student who’s drawn their weapon to protect their Second Amendment right? Wild, wild West for sure.

ROBERT JOHNSON
Greenville
I was in Shakespeare class on Nov. 16 when the girl next to me showed me a text message saying, “School’s on lockdown, there’s a gunman on campus.” This was the first communication I received about the so-called gunman. It wasn’t until the professor began to dismiss us an hour later that he learned of the lockdown — not from an ECU official, but from a student relaying her text message.

Nobody knew what a lockdown entailed. Were we allowed to leave the classroom? Would they tell us when the lockdown was over? My professor found a number to call on the ECU Alert page. A student stepped out to call the number, then stepped back in a moment later.

“I asked what to do, and the lady said to ‘follow safety procedures,’” the student said. “So I asked what those were and the lady said, ‘whatever you feel is safe.’”

We had no guidance, nobody telling us what to do, no ECU Alert either warning or reassuring us. Eventually it was decided that we could leave the classroom but should stay in the building. We joined the throng in the common area, where nobody was sure how seriously to be taking the threat.

Students were stepping outside the unlocked doors to smoke. Half-formed rumors were being spread. Some students were saying the gunman was on 10th Street and had started shooting people. Others said there were hostages in the Austin Building, or maybe it was Rivers and there were actually two gunmen. Nobody was telling us anything official to confirm or deny these rumors — we believed them all.

It wasn’t until three hours later, when the lockdown ended and we went home to turn on the TV that we found out the real story: the one ECU should have been keeping us updated about.

SARAH JAKUBOWSKI
Greenville
ELIZABETH CITY

Dental center plans progressing

Construction of a proposed $3 million dental facility should begin no later than early next year at the site of the old Vicki Villa restaurant along North Road Street, an East Carolina University official said.

Dr. Greg Chadwick, interim dean of ECU's School of Dental Medicine, said the project has taken a critical step, thanks to city approval of a final site plan of the property. The facility will be a 7,800-square-foot building with 16 examination rooms, with the goal being to teach dental students and to serve as a clinic for indigent and low-income area residents.

Chadwick said ECU is in the process of selecting a contractor. He said he did not know the specific date for the opening of bids, but noted, “We're right close to that right now.”

— The Daily Advance
Like most folks who are old enough, Balinda Ferree remembers exactly where she was and what she was doing when she learned President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated.

Ferree, however, took it a step further and preserved a keepsake from that tragic day – the teletype announcing the president’s death – because she recognized its historical significance.

“I knew it would be important, so it just seemed the right thing to do to save those teletypes,” says Ferree, a High Point native who now lives in Seagrove.

On that date – Nov. 22, 1963 – Ferree was a 19-year-old clerical worker for High Point radio station WHPE, which was owned and managed by her father, Gary Davis. During those days, radio stations received their news via teletype machines, and Ferree – who had been a huge Kennedy supporter – watched and listened intently as the story of his assassination developed.
“I remember my dad standing over the teletype machine – him and maybe one or two other people – and he was broadcasting right there off the teletype machine, because the news was coming in so fast and furious,” Ferree recalls. “Everyone was just in shock. That’s one of those days you never forget.”

For years, Ferree saved the teletypes in a box that traveled with her every time her family moved. She would occasionally open the box and look at the old pages, which instantly took her mind back to that fateful day in American history.

“This year, though, we were doing some work on the house and had to take the box out of the closet, and it just really gave me an odd feeling looking at those old teletypes,” Ferree says. “I remember thinking, ‘These are important – somebody needs to have these.’”

Thus began her quest to find a permanent home for the teletypes. Last week, she and her husband, John, formally donated the historic papers – some 130 pages’ worth – to the East Carolina University Archives in Greenville, where they are part of a larger exhibit devoted to Kennedy’s 1960 visit to what was then East Carolina College.

“ECU has an interesting history with Kennedy, and it was apparently a very big deal when he came there,” Ferree says. “They have photos and videos of his visit, and they have audio of the speech he made. They just have a wonderful exhibit about him.”

That’s what helped the couple make the donation to ECU.

“There just couldn’t be a better fit,” Ferree says. “To have the teletypes not only be at a university, but to have them where there’s a personal tie, that makes them even more special.”

The teletypes are on display on the second floor of ECU’s Joyner Library.
Adrienne Willis Jungmann painted the winning artwork for the StarNews holiday mug this year. Ken Blevins

Portrait of an artist

Adrienne Willis Jungmann's ‘Wilmington Riverfront' is featured on the StarNews mug

By Mike Voorheis

Adrienne Willis Jungmann and her mother were cleaning out her mom's attic, sorting through boxes and uncovering memories.

They stumbled across some artwork – not a turkey made by tracing her hand or stick figures standing in the linear grass with a circular yellow sun in the corner of the art. No, little Adie Willis, even as a 7-year-old, saw the world with more vision than that.

"Our home was actually in perspective," Jungmann said of her drawing, which wasn't a school assignment, but rather one of the first pieces of evidence that Adie was destined for a career in art.

Adrienne's talent shone before she was completely comfortable having her work displayed and judged. Still, she joined the art club at East Carteret
High School, and when the annual art club calendar was released, two of the 12 pieces of art were Adrienne's work.

Adrienne pursued her dream at East Carolina University, where she took every art elective she could before receiving her BFA with a concentration in environmental/architectural design. Now, Adrienne Willis Jungmann's architectural renderings are used to sell homes and illustrate floor plans for some of the top firms in the Cape Fear Region.

When her kids were still young enough to be strapped into safety seats, Jungmann could drive down the highway and point to a billboard in a developing neighborhood.

"Who did that sign?" she'd ask her children, Hannah and Joshua. "It was your mommy!"

The kids grew to recognize Jungmann's art before she could even ask the question, and they surely could see their mom's pride in her work.

"When I finish a piece, I look at it and critique it to death," Jungmann said. "I won't sign my name to something I'm not proud of. I won't put my name on it if it's not the best I can do."

Jungmann considers herself fortunate to be succeeding in a career in which she can showcase her artistic ability. But, as you might expect, floor plans and Computer-Aided Design & Drafting work don't fulfill all of her artistic desires. She longs to express herself with absolute freedom.

Several years ago, she spent significant time pursuing her passion for creating art – not architectural renderings to help promote business but beautiful scenes that might inspire something deeper than commerce.

"A lot of times, I paint the familiar, whether it's beautiful or not," Jungmann said. "An old set of doors can be interesting if you think about their character and wonder who traveled past those doors. If you take the time, you can find beauty in just about anything."

Lately, those opportunities have been rare. Her son, Joshua, now 10, recently had spinal surgery in Chapel Hill. The sterility of a doctor's office is not the best place to find artistic inspiration, so the window to Jungmann's creative
outlet has been closed for the past few years.

Soon, Jungmann says, she hopes to recapture the feeling she had on a particular afternoon in 2007. That afternoon gave her the inspiration for the artwork displayed on this year's StarNews mug.

As she stood on the grounds of the Battleship North Carolina, she looked across the Cape Fear River at the Wilmington riverfront. She was struck by the beautiful, placid scene – boats were docked, colorful trees filled in the gaps between buildings and the steeple of First Presbyterian Church pierced the blue sky. While some of us might have the vision to snap a photo, Jungmann analyzed the angles, pitches and shadows of the buildings from different perspectives and took some snapshots home to work with.

Jungmann painted the scene once and sold the original almost immediately. She painted it a second time and sold it again. She painted it three or four times before she entered it in the StarNews contest, she said.

Out of more than 180 entries from 90 artists, Jungmann's "Wilmington Riverfront" was chosen as the winner, putting her in the company of such renowned artists as Ivey Hayes and Deborah Cavenaugh.

It's not the first time Jungmann has won a competition to have her artwork displayed so prominently. Twice her work was chosen as the signature artwork for the Parade of Homes.

These days, her kids are too mature to point and giggle when they see their mom's artwork on a billboard. But a functional piece of artwork still has its place.

Hannah, now 14, has discovered the Pumpkin Spice Latte from Starbucks. Maybe, five or so years from now, she'll be sitting in a dorm room on a cold January morning, dreading a cold walk across campus to that first class. Maybe she'll pour a hot drink into a mug with a depiction of the Wilmington Riverfront. And it'll provide her enough warmth to brave the day.