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My husband and I spent a wonderful two hours at the Wright Auditorium on a recent evening listening to Marvin Hamlisch and the ECU Orchestra. We have lived in Greenville only three years but feel right at home. We swelled with pride while listening to these young people. Hamlisch was also very proud of them. He later commented on our government having so much money to give to banks, auto industry and so many other things, but we never hear of them giving out any help to further the arts.

Bravo to Hamlisch for these words, and to the ECU Orchestra. We are proud of you.

CAROLE ADAMS
Greenville
Swift action
Easley plan could help North Carolina

Last week, Gov. Mike Easley announced his intention to accelerate the timetable for more than $700 million in construction projects in order to stimulate the state's economy and create jobs. With North Carolina dealing with the effects of a national economy in recession, the governor argues it is important to act quickly and decisively.

Questions have been raised about an outgoing governor saddling the state with so much debt as he prepares to leave office, and the Council of State should consider that point when it reviews this proposal next month. Still, this is a promising proposal to facilitate economic growth and merits support.

When the Council of State meets on Jan. 6, Easley hopes to win approval for expediting $722 million in building projects. The money will be used for new construction at campuses in the University of North Carolina system, for new prisons and expanding existing units, for the Wilmington and Morehead City ports, for a polar bear exhibit at the state zoo and other infrastructure improvements.

The governor argues his plan will create an estimated 26,000 new jobs, boosting the state's sagging employment numbers, and would generate millions in revenue for state and local coffers. East Carolina University would stand to reap $105.8 million for the School of Dentistry and the Family Medicine and Geriatric Center under this proposal.

With the gloomy economic news that continues to pour from Washington and New York, Easley believes that the state cannot afford to delay action that might encourage economic growth. By acting quickly, North Carolina can lock in low interest rates when it borrows the funding. And since this proposal intends to use bonds to pay for the projects, it does not require voter approval.

Labor Secretary Cherie Berry voiced some concern about the timing following the governor's announcement. The council would vote on the measure only four days before Governor-Elect Beverly Perdue takes office. And though the plan has Perdue's support, Berry contends that a package so large should be determined by those who will be asked to incorporate the borrowing into budgets for the next four years. To leave the issue to Easley would allow Perdue to distance herself from it.

While that objection does have some merit, it is not reason enough for the council to oppose this proposal. The governor is correct that the state must act quickly in an effort to minimize the effects of the economic recession, to keep North Carolinians working and to continue thoughtful investment in the state's future. This proposal accomplishes those goals and warrants support.
Attraction of home may be magnetic

BY WADE RAWLINS
STAFF WRITER

One of nature’s enchanting mysteries is how marine animals such as sea turtles and salmon cross thousands of miles of ocean but still find their way back to their birthplaces to reproduce.

Researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill have a new theory to help unravel the puzzle. According to their hypothesis, the animals imprint the Earth’s unique magnetic signature along a stretch of coast, then retain that information to guide them back there.

Kenneth Lohmann, a professor of biology at UNC-Ch who has spent 20 years studying how sea turtles navigate, said the Earth’s magnetic field varies, with each area of the coast having its own magnetic address. Migratory animals may learn an area’s unique magnetic signature, then use it to sense direction during their migration away from their birthplace.

Lohmann’s experiments involved placing young loggerhead turtles in pools of water surrounded by magnetic coils. When researchers altered the magnetic fields in the water, the turtles changed the direction they were swimming.

“They do, in fact, respond to those different fields,” Lohmann said. “This implies they have the sensitivity they would need for magnetic imprinting to occur.”

The new study seeks to explain the more complex navigational task when adult animals return to their home areas. The scientists suggest that marine animals may rely on two different mechanisms to return home.

First, magnetic imprinting may guide them back to the general region of their birthplace. Lohmann and his fellow researchers suggest.

Then, at least in the case of salmon, a second navigational mechanism involving sense of smell is used to guide the salmon more precisely to a specific river or even branch of a river.

Commenting on the theory of magnetic imprinting, Andrew Dittman, a research fishery biologist with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration in Seattle, said, “I think it’s a reasonable idea, but it’s indeed purely hypothesis.”

Dittman said scientists have concluded that salmon are guided by olfactory cues once they reach their home rivers, but it’s unreasonable to expect those cues could extend thousands of miles into the ocean.

Lohmann said he hopes the paper will stir discussion among scientists and eventually lead to a way of testing the theory. It’s complicated in the case of sea turtles because of their low survival rate and long growth period before they return to nest. Only one in 4,000 turtles survives to adulthood and returns to its birthplace after being at sea 20 years.

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that data to navigate.

“This is really the first plausible explanation for how it might work,” Lohmann said.

Scientists speculate that the homing instinct evolved as a survival strategy — if the birthplace was good enough for the adult, it would likely be safe for their offspring, also.

The new research appears in the latest issue of the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The National Science Foundation funded the research.

Earlier studies by Lohmann and others have shown that young loggerhead turtles and other marine animals can detect the Earth’s magnetic field and use it to sense direction during their migration away from their birthplace.

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UNC-CH student is Rhodes Scholar

FROM STAFF REPORTS

CHAPEL HILL — A UNC-Chapel Hill senior from Canada has won a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship.

Elisabeth "Lisette" Yorke, a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the women’s ice hockey team, is the second UNC-CH student to win the honor this year and the fourth with North Carolinians. Yorke is from Hillside Boularderie, Nova Scotia.

A biology major, Yorke will spend the next two or three years at Oxford University in England.

UNC had no women’s hockey team when Yorke arrived in Chapel Hill, so she won a spot on the women’s varsity rowing team.

She also played with the men’s ice hockey team for two years before persuading UNC athletics officials to start a women’s ice hockey club. The club is now is its second year.

Yorke’s shots on goal haven’t kept her from volunteering for community service. She periodically serves breakfast in a local homeless shelter, has tutored elementary school children and volunteers at the UNC Hospitals Jaycee Burn Center, visiting with injured and disfigured patients as a distraction from their pain.

Yorke’s Canadian honors include a Queen Elizabeth II Medal for superior academic performance and outstanding extracurricular and community involvement and a Lieutenant Governor General of Nova Scotia Medal for most outstanding 11th-grade student.

She was one of 12 Canadian Merit Scholarship Foundation recipients.

Yorke plans to seek a master’s degree in immunology, focusing on HIV-related processes.

As an undergraduate at UNC-CH, she conducted research on AIDS in Thailand and Cambodia. In one of her Morehead-Cain summer experiences, she volunteered in Rwanda, teaching English to hospital workers. While there, she befriended a Rwandan teenager who was HIV-infected, orphaned by parents who had died of HIV/AIDS and caring for her younger brother and sister.

Yorke is UNC-CH’s 43rd Rhodes Scholar and the eighth in the last seven years. Other U.S. universities with two Rhodes Scholars this year are Harvard, Northwestern, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California, Los Angeles.

Last week, UNC-CH senior Aisha Ihab Saad of Cary was named to the Rhodes Scholar list. So were 2007 Duke graduate Julia Parker Goyer and Alia Whitney-Johnson of Buncombe County, a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
What’s fit for the NCSU 4?

Even after we’d talked for about 30 minutes, the Rev. William J. Barber and I still had different ideas about what should happen to the four students ... ahem ... artists at N.C. State University who on election night scrawled their sadistic wish list on the free-expression tunnel at the university. Although most of the graffiti was painted over before it could be widely beheld, it’s safe to say the four expressionists expressed no support for President-elect Barack Obama.

Asked what he wants to happen to these Van Goghs of vitriol, the Rev. Barber, head of the state’s NAACP, said, “We believe there ought to be expulsion, at the least.”

Me, I say leave ‘em alone and let ‘em stew in the broth of their own hatred. If they truly believe what they wrote — and there’s no reason to think they don’t — it’ll consume and destroy them soon enough. It can’t be easy being them and possessing 19th century minds on a 21st-century university campus that fosters inclusion. That, and realizing that their hate-filled hieroglyphics actually unified the campus, should be punishment enough.

I want these prejudiced Picassos in school for another reason. There, at least, they might actually have their hearts, minds and eyes opened. Remember, reverend, a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

Barber is right about one thing, though: The university should identify them, but only so other students will know not to wear their “I love Obama” or “I’ve got a brain” T-shirts around them. Then, perhaps the school could give them community service — although what community they could serve that doesn’t include the KKK is beyond me.

How about making them watch “Roots” 100 times and write a research paper on it? Nah, that probably wouldn’t work: They’d just watch the movie backward so it would have, for them, a happy ending.

I respect the Rev. Barber and the NAACP. Without it, I’d probably be on somebody’s veranda asking, “Y’all want some mo’ mint in dis heah julep, suh?” or on a boat grunting, “Lift that barge, tote that bale ....”

That doesn’t mean that Barber shouldn’t be castigated for comparing, as he did during our conversation, the caveman-like drawings and ravings of the NCSU 4 to the murderers of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., President John F. Kennedy and voting rights activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and Viola Liuzzo. “They were all shot in the head, and that’s what [the NCSU students] wrote they wanted to do to Obama,” Barber said.

Oy. How does Barber respond, I asked, to people who contend that the organization has lost its way; that it, too, is fighting yesterday’s battles while ignoring the ones that need to be fought? For instance, I’m guessing the parents of 16-year-old Adarius Monquell Fowler, gunned down on Raleigh’s Tarboro Street on Nov. 21, couldn’t care less about what those guys write.

Shouldn’t the NAACP be confronting the so-common-it’s-hardly-news-anymore violent death of yet another black boy?

“We do,” Barber said, citing the NAACP’s work with N.C. Central University’s School of Social Work and Goldsboro police to “recode” gangbangers. “We take on a lot of issues that don’t get the front-page treatment. We’re a multifaceted organization. ... We’re under the radar screen for a lot of people.”

Dealing with issues of more relevance — and there are many that are more relevant than the cave writings of Neanderthals — would put the organization back on the radar screen.
Today's debate: Higher education

How to curb college costs

Our view:
Schools let prices spiral upward; now they're slow to control them.

The recession has triggered a quiet panic in higher education. Some parents are insisting that their children apply, or transfer, to less expensive public colleges. Those public schools, meanwhile, face sharp drops in funding from state legislatures.

So what are college presidents doing to tighten their belts in hard times like everyone else? Well, some recently took pay cuts or freezes. University of Washington President Mark Emmert, for example, agreed to hold his annual salary at $900,000.

Put aside for a moment the question of why Emmert makes more than twice as much as the president of the United States. Leadership by example has its merits, but the larger issue here is that colleges have a pressing need to get beyond symbolic cost cutting and figure out ways to offer affordable and successful educations to more students, especially those of limited financial means.

This was a problem even before the economy swooned; now it has taken on new urgency. It's not just a problem for individual families, but for society as a whole.

An educated Baby Boom generation propelled the United States into the forefront of innovation. Now, the nation is fast losing its edge. Measured by the percentage of workers ages 25-34 who hold at least an associate's degree, the U.S. is part of a four-way tie for 10th place.

Building a better-educated workforce starts with making education accessible. Instead, colleges have allowed costs to spin out of control. Since 1982-84, college tuition and fees have risen 439%, compared with 251% for medical care, 147% for median family income and 106% for consumer prices, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Average prices for the current school year are $25,143 for private four-year colleges and $6,585 for public four-year colleges.

Simple ways to rein in costs include requiring professors to boost teaching loads and retreating from the "amenities war," in which colleges compete to build the fanciest athletic complexes. Too few schools, however, are taking even these modest steps.

Making matters worse, many colleges hand out money to students who don't need it — so-called merit aid to attract students with higher test scores. In fact, students coming from families of incomes of more than $100,000 a year win more aid from colleges than lower-income students.

Many college leaders have been content to let students and their parents take on an unhealthy amount of debt rather than curb costs. Now, however, that tuition aid has grown more scarce, and private loans are harder to come by.

The economic crisis should be seen as an opportunity for higher education leaders to make substantive changes they have mostly avoided — changes that won't come from symbolic salary trims. In academia, as in the auto industry, now is the time for leaders to show they "get it."
We’re controlling spending

Opposing view:
College presidents are making hard choices to keep tuition affordable.

By Molly Corbett Broad

Recent reports make clear that efforts by colleges and universities to keep tuition increases to a minimum are paying off. Tuition this fall showed very modest increases and, in the case of community colleges, went up more slowly than inflation.

Much of this is because colleges and universities have long pursued systematic reductions in operating costs, such as outsourcing business services, sharing some computer operations, and banding together to save money on software licenses and library subscriptions. Faculty have also cut the cost of purchasing specialized scientific equipment by using high speed, robust networks to conduct research.

But now the economic crisis has created new budget pressures. Every president I know is coping with a sudden loss of revenue — whether from reduced state support, steep losses in endowment earnings or anticipated declines in charitable giving. At the same time, they must grapple with ever-increasing labor and health care costs, rising energy and food prices, the high cost of keeping pace with scientific and technological progress, and the crushing burden of state and federal regulation.

On top of ongoing cost savings, colleges and universities have responded with additional actions that show a willingness to make hard choices. Dozens have implemented hiring freezes, offered incentives for early retirement, imposed travel restrictions and halted plans for construction. Presidents and chancellors from a number of well-known institutions have also refused or returned raises, emphasizing the importance of leading by example.

Still, it will take far more than budget cuts to ensure that next year’s tuition increases will be as good as this year or better — in light of the current economic climate there are no assurances, and higher education leaders are worried. But colleges are trying to get ahead of the game. I know they will do their part — embracing the opportunity to be part of the solution and exhibiting leadership in reducing cost while broadening avenues of access to a quality education.

Molly Corbett Broad is the president of the American Council on Education, which represents more than 1,600 college and university presidents.
Giving Students Cash for Grades
Programs in Washington, D.C., and Chicago offer students financial rewards for class work

By Jessica Calefati
Posted November 28, 2008

While growing up in Daytona Beach, Fla., Roland Fryer understood the benefits of becoming the best basketball player or the fastest track athlete in the school. Those individuals could hope to one day compete in the NBA and the Olympics. But what Fryer did not understand at the time were the benefits of becoming a good student, and he suspects many other students in cities across the nation now are just as unaware as he was then.

To help these largely poor, minority students comprehend the value of working hard in class, Fryer has partnered with administrators in three urban school districts to offer students money in return for their classroom achievement. Students of randomly selected elementary, middle, and high schools in Chicago, Washington, and New York City can earn hundreds or thousands of dollars in a single school year just for being good students. Fryer hopes these short-term rewards can convince these kids of the long-term benefits of academic success.

Fryer is a professor of economics at Harvard University and in January of this year became the youngest African-American to receive tenure at the nation’s top institution for higher education. He also serves as CEO and lead researcher for the Education Innovation Laboratory (EdLabs), a $44 million, three-year research and development institute that focuses on fostering innovation and collecting objective measurements of the effectiveness of urban K-12 school district programs and practices.

"Four to five percent of revenue from any given business is set aside for research and development, and in the medical field that proportion is even higher," Fryer says. "But in education, there is no research and development. That's why we are using private funding from the Broad Foundation and others to offset the costs of implementing these pilot
programs. We want to figure out what works, not risk burdening school districts with costs of programs that don't work."

Though he has unfortunately been labeled the "incentives guy," Fryer says there is no silver bullet that will single-handedly close the achievement gap and improve academic performance among minority students in urban school systems, incentives included. For this reason, EdLabs will research a variety of strategies that might help bolster student achievement. Incentives just happened to be the first model Fryer tested. If the program works, Fryer says it is scalable and can be publicly funded, and if it doesn't work, then he will not continue it.

In Chicago, Fryer helped public schools CEO Arne Duncan implement an incentive program for about 3,750 high school freshmen in 20 schools because Duncan expressed concern about the high rate of students who drop out in ninth or 10th grade. At the end of every five-week marking period, Green for Grades participants can earn $50 for every A, $35 for every B, and $20 for each C they receive in English, math, science, social studies, and physical education. But for Duncan, Freyer's incentive program is just one piece of a multifaceted effort to keep high school students in the classroom. Duncan also had 16,000 freshmen voluntarily return to school one month early to receive mentoring and academic support, and he has been working to improve the rigor of the curriculum taught in all of Chicago's public schools.

It is too soon to tell whether Chicago's incentive program will have lasting effects on academic achievement and student retention, but from what Duncan has seen so far, he feels "very, very, very encouraged" that the program will succeed. "The kids who are working hard are now the heroes of the school. They are the popular kids," Duncan says.

But Duncan also knows what he is competing with to keep students in school at all, let alone keep them in school and have them succeed academically. Duncan says up to 85 percent of students in Chicago's public schools live below the poverty line and that he is in constant competition both with gang members who encourage kids to drop out and sell drugs and with parents who urge their children to drop out, get a job, and help support the family. "People in the outside world have no understanding of what our students deal with on a day-to-day basis and the unbelievable obstacles and hurdles they overcome to be
successful," Duncan says, adding that one boy told him he planned to use his money to help his mother pay their electricity bill.

In Washington, the graduation rate is "extraordinarily low," says schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, and drops as low as 30 percent in some schools. Research and data show that middle school is the time when students rate education's importance in their lives and often crystallize their plans to drop out once they reach high school. For this reason, Rhee requested that D.C.'s incentive program target the 3,700 middle school students in 14 middle schools, where it has been in operation since September.

Rhee says students she has spoken with directly seem enthusiastic about Capital Gains, adding that she has heard the same of students in the District's high-need schools. Students can earn up to $100 every two weeks for academic success, controlling their behavior in class, and arriving to class on time among other achievements. Though Rhee says she understands critics who dislike the concept of paying students to do what they should already be doing in school, she says she has not heard such criticism from a single parent of a child participating in the program.

Rhee hopes Capital Gains will get middle school students excited about succeeding academically in high school and even in college, but she understands why these students have a hard time imagining that hard work now will pay off later. "Many of these kids do not have access to adults who have graduated from college, and they don't necessarily understand the value of education," Rhee says. "Expecting students to do well in middle school is asking them to make a calculation on skills that will help them graduate from high school and succeed in college, ideas that to them are foreign and very far away."

Though they are not the norm, Rhee says she has encountered some sixth-grade Capital Gains participants who have held back urges to spend their money on clothes or cellphone accessories. These students, Rhee says, are already saving their earnings for college.

Tags: Chicago | money | students | student engagement | Washington, DC | education

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Tennessee State bans JuicyCampus from campus servers

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TENNESSEE— A popular, controversial Web site has been banned from Tennessee State University servers in Nashville, Tenn., making it the first state-funded university to impose a ban on the Web site.

The decision was made to ban JuicyCampus.com from the university's servers after an upset student's parent complained to Michael Freeman, vice president for student affairs, about an anonymous comment posted about her child.

Freeman would not comment on the specifics of the anonymous comment except to say he felt there was a safety concern.

JuicyCampus is a Web site targeted towards college students who are encouraged to post anonymous comments with the latest gossip from their campuses. There is no registration process and anyone can post an anonymous comment.

Tennessee State University's ban became public after Matt Ivester, CEO and president of JuicyCampus.com, sent an open letter to media outlets decrying the decision by Freeman.

In the letter, Ivester derided Freeman’s decision as "Orwellian" and "joining the ranks of the Chinese government in internet censorship."

Freeman disagreed, saying the site is still accessible to students using third-party companies such as a Blackberry or an iPhone.

"The Chinese government blocking a site means no one can get to that site," Freeman said. "Tennessee State University on a private network, blocking a site, where folks still have access to it, is a bit of a difference in blocking don't you think?"

Freeman said he made the decision on Nov. 12 — the same day the mother made the complaint. He said he did not consult legal professionals to determine if banning the site would impose First Amendment violations.

"Well, I had my own sense that it would not," Freeman said. "Having been in higher ed for a while, I've dealt with a number of different issues over the years."

Freeman backed up his decision by providing a written legal opinion from the school's Office of Chief of Staff and University Counsel stating that the university's servers were not public forums.

The opinion also stated the ban did not violate the First Amendment for two reasons. The first reason explained was that students have newer ways of accessing the Internet using their cell phones and through other wireless network providers.

"They don't need our network," the written opinion stated. "There may have been a time when students did not have access to the Internet outside of computers, but those days are long gone."

The second reason was that the university is funded through state appropriated funds and student enrollment fees set out in the school's policies.

"The University can limit the use for which this resource is provided because, legally, our computer network is not a public forum as, according to the U.S. Supreme Court, a public entity's provision of internet access does not create a public forum," TSU's legal opinion stated.

http://www.splc.org/printpage.asp?id=1838&tb=newsflash

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The school's legal department went on to say that a 2003 United States Supreme Court decision, *United States v. American Library Association*, protected the school from any First Amendment liability.

Adam Goldstein, legal advocate for the Student Press Law Center, disagreed saying the case referenced was a federal funding-related lawsuit that would not apply to colleges.

"Even if the network isn't a forum, they still can't censor the site," Goldstein said. "You don't get to censor anything you feel like because you don't like the speaker."

But TSU's legal opinion stated that the use of Internet filtering software to block certain Web sites would not violate anyone's First Amendment rights, according to that same lawsuit.

Goldstein explained that *U.S. v. American Library Association* did discuss the use of Internet filtering software as a way to prevent minors from accessing pictures that were pornographic or deemed harmful. But, under that same lawsuit adults at libraries would still be able to request the filter be taken off for things minors were not able to access.

"The ALA case states nothing more than that the federal government can require attempts to block pornography on computers accessible to minors as a condition of getting federal funding," Goldstein said. "It doesn't say that a college can filter anything it wants anytime someone complains."

Freeman also backed his decision by saying there was a Tennessee Board of Regents policy that directed the school's network be set up solely for educational and research purposes. He said he looked at the site and determined the site did not apply to the policy.

Ivester said students at TSU should be upset about the ban.

"They should be absolutely outraged," he said. "I think it's just completely incompatible with the ideals of higher education. Limiting information online is not something a school with a true academic mission would do."

Freeman said what he did not like most about JuicyCampus was that the site was made up completely of anonymous comments. Ivester disputed that by saying the Supreme Court holds anonymous speech constitutionally protected.

"His (Freeman) inability to quell the concerns of an angry parent and explain the free speech implications is really not an excuse," Ivester said. "What he should have said is 'if you have a problem with the site, take it up with the site. (Tennessee State University) doesn't have anything to do with that.'"

Ivester also said he would support a lawsuit opposing the censorship any student at Tennessee State University would want to bring against the school.

"And to the extent that students are looking for help with that, they should contact us at cs@juicycampus.com," he said. "And, we'll try to connect them with the right resources, whether it's lawyers or free speech advocacy groups or whoever will be able to point them in the right direction."

JuicyCampus.com currently gets about 150,000 visits a day and about one million unique visitors a month, according to Ivester.

*By Alberto D. Morales, SPLC staff writer*

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